

**MRC Study Tour and Workshop
30 October – 1 November 2013, Cambodia**

SUMMARY REPORT

In an effort to share good practices and lessons learned, and guide future directions in the delivery of support services through MRCs, the ASEAN and GMS TRIANGLE projects organized a study tour and workshop to observe and reflect on the operation and management of MRCs supported by the ILO. Participants attended from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam, all Southeast Asian countries sending migrant workers abroad. The MRCs or support services provided in these countries vary according to their modalities, the length of time of operation. For example, the MRCs in Myanmar will only open in early 2014. While the one stop resource centre in the Philippines is not supported by the ILO TRIANGLE projects, the government officer was invited to share relevant experience from the Public Employment Service Offices.

The objectives of the study tour and workshop were to:

1. Learn about the operations and management of MRCs in Cambodia, and compare the different modalities of operating an MRC – through government institutions, civil society and trade unions
2. Share good practices and identify strategies to improve the delivery of support through the MRCs in all countries

The agenda and presentations from the workshop are available upon request.

The following report provides a summary of some of the good practices that were identified, and suggestions that emerged from group work for strengthening the quality of support services and MRC management; and some of the follow up activities that the ILO TRIANGLE projects should consider.

SELECTED GOOD PRACTICES:

Cambodia

- The MRC in Phnom Penh is based in the compound of the Ministry. There were concerns that this would limit the number of visitors, but the strategy is to situate the MRC close to other services for migrants and job seekers – such as work permit application office and health check centre.
- The MRCs did not have a format for handling complaints (the regulation on complaints was just recently adopted) and so used the labour dispute format and reconciliation minute. The ILO and Ministry are currently working on developing a standardized form and procedures.
- In one dispute involving 32 people that paid an illegal broker, the MRC worked with the workers and provincial department worked the authorities to catch the broker and recover the money.
- Good collaboration between the provincial department and the Governor's Office in Prey Veng meant that statistical information on labour migration was able to be

gathered across Prey Veng quickly. The MRCs have enabled the collection of improved data on migration within and outside of the country.

- Commune and district leaders are active and informed – MRC staff participate in the scheduled commune monthly meetings to disseminate safe migration message as well as promote MRC services. Safe migration is integrated into the plan of the local authorities.
- MRC in Kampong Cham has communicated directly with NGOs and embassies in destination countries to resolve problems and locate workers who have lost contact with their family members.

Philippines

- One-stop resource centres (OSRCs) are backed by a local ordinance (Provincial Ordinance No. 77 series 2012) which includes an annual budget allocation in case of changes in local leadership – and council must provide additional funds if needed.
- In the case of legislative change, national offices publish and disseminate the law and the Department of Labour or partners give trainings at centres, and also training local leaders at village meetings – providing lunch as a draw card!
- When they receive complaints, recruitment agencies are contacted and have 30 days to respond, if recruitment agencies do not attend the hearing the Provincial Department will rule in favour of complainant. In cases where they rule in their favour, the complainant will receive 100% of the claim (similar laws in Viet Nam and Cambodia).
- Rather than going through legal channels to resolve cases of recruitment agencies taking payment without placement, the case is handled by the MRC manager who requests return of replacement fee – often the preferred approach of migrants (also practiced in Cambodia).
- OSRCs provide a pre-employment seminar orientation for jobseekers and potential migrants, to influence their decision making on future livelihood options, the pros and cons of migration, etc. (similar to the safe migration outreach activities, but with more detail than currently practiced in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam).

Viet Nam

- In Thanh Hoa province, there are five sub-offices of the employment service centre at district level that serve as ‘satellite offices’ for the MRC/ESC.
- Volunteers are mobilized to support MRC/ESC staff in carrying out the outreach activities; and job centre focal points provide links to jobs at local levels.

OUTCOMES of GROUPWORK

Suggestions for ensuring the sustainability of MRC services

- Incorporating MRC services into local and national policies and plans
- Promote adoption of MRC indicators by local authorities in their reporting and monitoring processes. For example, deployment of migrants or irregular migration flows from a province may currently be the only indicators to determine the current situation in a province; however, number of complaints handled may also be considered.
- Possible contributions from migrant workers, for example, through a welfare fund– need to develop quality of services to a standard where people are willing to pay.

- Certification of MRC staff to ensure professionalism, link to future career development.

Suggestions for improving reporting and measuring impact

- Endline survey will be conducted in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam – to measure if people more aware of safe and legal migration channels; change in migration intentions.
- Review irregular versus regular migration flows in target areas.
- Further MRC staff training on reporting – developing information management systems – utilising complaints forms, databases.
- Linking reporting indicators and reporting timetables for job centres with ILO reporting requirements, to reduce duplication.
- Collect feedback from migrant workers on MRC services.

Tools and capacity building requirements

- More training for commune resource people – outreach.
- Development of MRC staff – regular training to keep updated on migration information.
- Getting village volunteers and returnees involved.
- Inter-MRC communication and sharing experiences.
- Infrastructure – technical aids, visual learning equipment – TV, DVD player, projector.

Proposed additional services for MRCs

- Job matching – having a skills inventory of each village – consultation on jobs available locally.
- Skills development advice and training – integrate services from job centre-run MRCs to other MRCs.
- Communications access – linking migrant workers with families at home – Skype, phone, email facilities in MRCs, family counseling.
- Support direct employment – linking directly with overseas employers.
- Financial literacy training.
- Training for family members – financial literacy, complaints process.
- Labour dispute settlement and complaints.

Suggestions for future partnerships:

- Trade unions
- Job centres
- Mass organizations – youth, women
- Schools
- Police
- Legal Support Services / Bar Association
- Courts / prosecution
- NGOs / local CSOs in origin and destination, including MTV EXIT, WorldVision
- Cooperation between MRCs – in-country and in destination
- Anti-trafficking committee (national and provincial)

- National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ASEAN
- Commission of human rights

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

- Check the Philippines Guidelines for centres against the MRC Operations Manual, compare the ‘intake form’ with the GMS TRIANGLE’s client card, and also review the complaints forms and procedures in responding to the needs expressed in Cambodia and Vietnam.
- For communications plan: more messaging on the actual/ultimate costs of irregular migration; consider billboards to advertise MRC services;
- Develop criteria for the selection of recruitment agencies that MRCs can refer workers to. In Cambodia, the provincial departments noted that not all licensed recruitment agencies register their local branch office/agent. Registration and receptiveness to complaints are some of the criteria that can be considered. These criteria should be discussed with the recruitment agency associations and added to the MRC Operations Manual as guidance.
- Work more closely with returned migrant workers to provide guidance to would-be migrants and intending migrants, through counseling, outreach and pre-employment/pre-departure training.
- Translate My Name is Saray into Laotian and possibly also into Burmese languages for training purposes.
- Strengthen links between sending and receiving MRCs, e.g. upcoming bilateral meeting between the Cambodian and Thai trade unions; proposed mission of DOLAB and MRC staff to Malaysia; etc.
- Review client cards and MRC staff practices to ensure confidentiality when providing information, counselling and training. Personal information will be required when handling complaints, but may serve to discourage people visiting the MRCs, particularly those run by government agencies.
- Further integration of MRC functions into job centres, through their planning, budgeting and reporting processes. For example, in data collection, Cambodian and Lao job centres could also collect information on “interest in finding a job abroad” when registering jobseekers.
- Consider the integration of MRC services into trade union offices, e.g. the CLC offices in Siem Reap and Svey Reing.
- Establish Referral Directories in Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Myanmar listing service providers that can be utilized by potential, current and returned migrant workers by province. Update and distribute the Cambodian Referral Directory including pre departure services.