



Providing Services to Migrants:

Assisting countries of origin to provide relevant information and training to potential migrants and to create migrant service centers

Migration is reality in many developing countries of the world. It is often a spontaneous decision made by the migrant or the family and is not based on reliable and well-researched information. Often such move is accompanied by the long process of migrants adaptation in the receiving country or a hasty return back to the country of origin. In such scenario both sending and receiving countries are at a lose-lose situation. The sending country is losing an able worker, potential taxpayer, while the receiving country has to deal with the migrant who is not equipped with knowledge and skills in order to make his migration a success.

Under such circumstance, the sending country is parting with one more of their able workers while the receiving country that faces/deals with the new arrival who is not equipped to quickly integrate into the working culture and as such becomes vulnerable to various abuses.

The rate to which migrant will succeed in the destination country is largely due to the migrants readiness to immerse himself/herself in an unfamiliar circumstances. It is therefore crucial to make sure that prior to making the decision weather to migrate and where, migrant be provided with the accurate up to date information about the country of destination. Moreover, if the potential migrant has already made the decision the availability of training in the shortage skills, language training, cultural training will equip migrants to adapt to their new circumstance successfully.

Today, together with you I would like to **look why do sending countries need assistance with the provision of information to migrants, what assistance is needed, and how it can be delivered in an effective and cost efficient manner.**



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Countries of origin : availability of information and services to migrants

It is important to keep in mind that the divide between sending and receiving countries is still significant. Even though great strides have been made in the stabilization of political and economic climates sending countries have not yet joined the “Information Highway” that is easily accessible to the rest.

Many sending countries can be described as having:

- Low level of technological infrastructure – low level of or lack of internet connections
- Lack of “technical savvy” human resources that also have experience in research and in determining the validity of information – only small number of citizens know how to use internet as an effective research tool (usage of technology is still not included in school curricula in most developing countries, or if it is it is focused on programming rather than on practical usage)
- Still existing concepts of “classified information” – when information is kept/known /withheld and given only to the privileged
- Or the opposite “ anything is true as long as it comes from familiar source”, that is the distrust of information coming from the official sources and complete dependence on the information obtained through the network of family, friends and useful connections.

In practical terms, countries of origin encounter constraints such as lack of facilities, equipment, and state and private based information services that are staffed with knowledgeable and capable staff.

The above-mentioned constraints have hindered the availability and accessibility of relevant information and training to migrants as a result migrants rely on the informal family networks for information.

Practical implications: Creation of Migrant Service Centres in the countries of origin

Establishment of Migrant Service Centres is efficient and cost effective way to assist sending countries to provide relevant information and training to potential migrants.



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Migrant Service Centres are multidimensional centers focused on migrant needs. Main functions of MSCs are:

- Research, compilation, verification and dissemination of the information
- Direct Services to migrants – advise /counseling on migration related matters
- Organization of training and orientation sessions as requested either by migrants or organizations representing employers in the host/receiving countries
- Capacity building of the government's structures in the sending country to take over the provision of information to the potential migrants
- Data Collection/Profiling of potential migrants. Compilation of reports on migration flows.

In order to provide quality services to migrants, MSCs cooperate closely with other organizations that deal with migration management, services to migrants. Migrant Service Centres function in close partnership with the Embassies, NGO's and GOs, media, educational institutions.

What Information and Services do Migrant Service Centres offer to migrants?

In order to determine what information and services are needed I shall make a distinction between two very broad groups of migrants: potential migrants, those wishing to migrate to other countries and returnees – migrants wishing to return to their country of origin.

Information and Services to potential migrants

Accurate information is a powerful decision making tool. Without the proper and timely information one is not able to assess the situation properly hence making wrong decisions based on distorted facts. In migration, it is rather related to the decision making process that migrant adapts, i.e. trying to determine whether the benefits of migration will outweigh the costs.¹ In order to aid migrants in their decision making process it is crucial to ensure the access to accurate information.

¹ Harry Papapangos and Rodger Vickerman, Borders, migration and Labour Market Dynamics in a Changing Europe”, www.kent.ac.uk/economics/research/europe/ERRSBoarders

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Without accessible and accurate information the way is open for abuse such as smuggling of irregular migrant workers or trafficking of human beings. Effective border control alone will not put an end to such abuse. Equipping migrants with information and using as a decision making tool is a key to curbing irregular migration and abuse of migrants.

Also accessibility to accurate information for migrants contributes to management of migration in an orderly way. If migrants know about the existence of regular ways of migration for labor purposes and are informed about bi-lateral agreements in force, they most likely will choose regular and legal means of migration.

What information should be available and accessible to potential migrants?

Pre-Departure	Information on the country of destination/receiving country – situation in the labor market, clusters of industry with the shortage of skilled labor. Information on employment – type of contract, housing, pay, benefits, rights and obligations of migrant workers. Pre-departure training opportunities. Travel documents, information on the process of obtaining work permits and entry visas.
Transit	Travel costs (who will pay?), is travel assistance available
Stay	Information on Embassies and services offered to labour migrants through the consular representatives. Contact info for NGO's working with migrants. Required registration/documentation for long-term stay/procedures for permanent residence. Right to family reunification? Cultural Associations

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Services to potential migrants - training

As availability and accessibility to information is crucial to all the migrants, so is the availability of training for economic and permanent migrants. The availability of the quality training programs that equip migrants with knowledge and skills needed in the sending country will ensure the quick and successful adaptation of the migrant in the labor force of the receiving country.

There are several types of training, which can be offered:

Administrative orientation	Training on the administrative structures and procedures: permits, taxes, healthcare, workplace grievances, rights and obligations of migrants
Vocational training	Additional vocational training to meet the host country /EU standards and to offer to the host country specialists in the areas experiencing the shortage of skilled workers
Language training	Sectoral language training as it relates to the sectors with shortage of qualified labor.
Cultural orientation	Training on the culture of the receiving country

What Information and Services do Migrant Service Centres offer to returnees?

Information on the country of origin (should be accessible before the return):

- Situation in the labor market,
- Economic situation,
- Ways to transfer the savings/money
- Taxes -
- Availability of housing
- Education opportunities for children
- Healthcare

What services should be offered to returnees:

- Assisted return
- Assisted reintegration – through job brokering, vocational training, language training for the children, social events.

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- Referrals to other organizations dealing with returnees and their reintegration back into their country of origin.

IOM Experience in creation of Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans

In order to test the concept of the provision of the services to migrants, IOM with the funding from the European Commission within the framework of HLWG budget line, has launched the regional Project “ Promoting regular migration in the Western Balkans through the establishment of regional Migrant Service Centres providing information and migration related services.

Migrant Service Centres have been established in Albania, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro), The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia. United under the umbrella of a network, these Centres compliment each other through information sharing as well sharing of the tasks. Research on EU 25 on legal channels of migration, immigration programs, visa procedures, work permit procedure has been carried out and information packs pertaining each topic are being compiled and translated into the local languages. A common website is being developed through which migrants from the region will be able to access information in their native languages.

Joint Efforts: OSCE and IOM joint experience in Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Funded by OSCE and the Danish government, IOM has opened an information resource centre for labor migrants in the Tajik capital in January 2004. The Centre endeavors to address some of the concerns such as employment conditions abroad, travel and documents requirements, migrant's right, maps and contacts. In addition, information on risks of trafficking and smuggling in persons, how to channel remittance and tips for economic migrants are also offered.

Future: Empowering sending countries to take charge of provision of relevant information and training to migrants

It is recognized that at the moment the services to migrants are offered primarily by International Organizations however, the future of service provisions to migrants lies within the Governmental and non-governmental local organizations.

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It is our hope that countries of origin will recognize the need for such services, and adopt moral, legal and financial responsibility to help their migrants. Migrant Service Centres shall take on an advisory role at first and assist governments with training programs connected to the provision the service to migrants by information sharing and organization of training courses.

In the meantime, cooperation between the key stakeholders, international organizations, sending countries, Governments and non-governmental organizations and migrant themselves, will ensure that quality information and services are delivered to migrants.

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Countries of origin: availability of information and services to migrants

Constraints:

- Lack of technological structure, facilities
- Financial and human resource shortages
- Concept of “classified information”

Practical implications: creation of Migrant Service Centres in the countries of origin

Main focus:

- Research, compilation, verification and dissemination of information to migrants
- Direct services to migrants: counselling, provision of training
- Capacity building of governmental structures to provide service to migrants
- Data collection

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Information and Services to potential migrants

Information

- Decision-making
- Pre-departure
- Transit
- Stay

Services – training

- Administrative orientation
- Vocational training
- Language training
- Cultural orientation

Information and Services to returnees

Information

- Pre-return
- Post return/reintegration

Services

- Direct services
- Referral services



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Centres providing information and service to migrants

- EC funded IOM Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans
- OSCE IOM information resource Centre for migrants in Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Future

- Links with Governmental and non-governmental local organizations
- Gradual hand over of the provision of the services to local partners
- Provision of services to migrants by the local structures in the countries of origin

Conclusions

- Migrants should have access to information and training in the countries of origin
- Creation of migrant service centers is an efficient way of meeting the needs of migrants
- Through the cooperation of International organizations and local government and non-governmental stakeholders provision of services to migrants shall be ensured