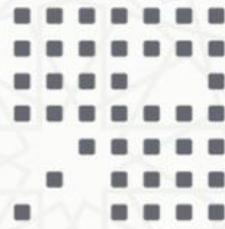


مائیگرنٹ
ریسورس سنٹر



MIGRANT
RESOURCE
CENTRE

Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries

MRC Islamabad- Annual report 2018

Introduction

Pakistan is one of the top ten emigration countries in the world. Emigration has been an important issue in the country for the last decades and the Government of Pakistan is continuously developing legal and institutional frameworks aiming to support and encourage legal migration. Notwithstanding the fact that migration has been a major source of financial contributions to Pakistan's economy, it has become apparent that the public needs better access and awareness on legal migration – its opportunities and challenges.

Based on this, the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) was established in 2016 in Islamabad under the auspices of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development with the support of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). A second MRC was furthermore established in Lahore under the auspices of the Department of Labour Punjab.

The centre is supported by the EU funded projects “Support to the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration” (2015 – July 2017) and “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries” (Aug 2017- Jul 2021).

The MRC Islamabad has reached over 78,000 potential migrants through community outreach sessions and individual counselling within its three years of existence. In addition, even wider outreach was accomplished through an extensive media campaign, an estimated 1.2 million Pakistanis.

The objectives of MRC are:

- **Providing clear, accessible and understandable information to outgoing, intending and potential migrants** on possibilities for **safe, legal and orderly migration**, as well as rules and regulations, including relevant pre-departure information
 - Providing **pre-departure orientation** (where applicable) and information on work and living conditions abroad, their rights and obligations, access to protection mechanisms and information on return processes
 - **Raise awareness** of and providing clear information to potential migrants and local communities **on the risks and dangers associated with irregular migration.**
-

The MRC is providing information and counselling to intending and potential migrants on safe migration and raises awareness on legal migration opportunities and mechanisms. The team furthermore informs on the dangers and consequences of irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking in order to empower the people and encourage them to make informed choices, as well as referral to skills providing institutions and trade testing centres.

The MRC does not only provide information to the public and migrants but also for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the facilitation or communication of migration related issues. The MRC conducts information sessions at relevant institutes, such as vocational and technical training schools, universities, colleges and schools as well as with the communities and during conferences and other events.

Summary on activities and achievements in 2018

From January to December 2018, the Migrant Resource Centre Islamabad has accomplished many triumphs to its credit. The MRC progress can be better appraised by having a glance at its ongoing activities. Its significant activities can be categorised as:

- Counselling services to the walk-in clients.
- Orientation sessions on safe and informed migration in Vocational Training Institutes, Universities and Colleges.
- Orientation meetings and coordination with Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs).
- Orientation meetings and coordination with Education and Emigrant Consultants.
- Orientation meetings and coordination with NGOs.
- Coordination with Foreign Missions
- Linkage and referral mechanisms in collaboration with governmental departments and agencies.
- Pre-Departure Orientation Sessions at the Protectorate of Emigration Office (PoE).
- Community Outreach with CHRS (NGO) and Black Box Sounds (Media Consultation Company) in Mirpur (AJK) and Punjab.
- Organised a seminar on “Migration and Development: Role of Migrant Resource Centres in Safe Migration” to mark the International Migrant Day in collaboration with International Islamic University, Islamabad.

1 MRC Core Activities

1a. Counselling services to walk-in clients

Counselling is one of the key services provided by the MRC. Counselling related to safe and informed migration, irregular migration and the hazards related to irregular migration is provided at the Centre on a regular basis to the walk-in clients.



The clients are counselled individually and in groups on the basis of their interest, qualification, skill, experience and job/ study opportunities available. The counselling includes information on the safe migration process, making an informed decision, the cost/ benefit analysis and hazards/ consequences of irregular migration.

In 2018 the MRC counselled over 209 clients at the Centre, out of which 194 were male and 15 were female. A part from this, 148 distant clients were

facilitated via telephone and through Skype.

Activity	Male	Female	Total
Counselling Services provided to Walk-in clients	194	15	209
Counselling Services provided to the clients via Telephone/Skype	126	22	148

The MRC received clients from all walks of life but the foremost beneficiaries were young workers interested in information on job opportunities abroad, particularly in the GCC countries and students who were planning to take admission in European universities

1b. Orientation sessions at TVET institutes, universities and colleges

The outreach strategy of the MRC includes orientation sessions on safe and informed migration for the community and especially for youth. For this purpose, the MRC teams reached out to technical training institutes, universities, colleges, youth forums and other community events.



Technical training institutions are the hubs of semi-skilled work force mostly intended to work in GCC countries. For this purpose, the MRC delivered orientation sessions on safe and informed migration at the technical and vocational institutes (TVET) throughout the year.

In 2018, the MRC Islamabad conducted 40 sessions on safe and informed migration in the technical

training institutes and 10 sessions in universities and a total of 7,079 students attended these sessions comprising of 5,980 Males and 1,099 females.

The list of the TVET centres/ universities/institutes where MRC have delivered the sessions is attached as Annex 1.

Activity	Male	Female	Total
Orientation on Safe and Informed Migration in educational institutions	5,980	1,099	7,079

The participants at TVET always showed keen interest in the information delivered to them and engaged with questions. Most of their concerns were about the process of migration, ways to avoid exploitation during the migration process and in the host country, identification of licensed OEPs and the government fee structure. They were also interested to know the ways to migrate legally and how to avoid fraud. The administrations of these institutes appreciated the activities and encouraged the MRC team to provide this information to everyone. The senior management of several technical institutes also proposed to train their teaching staff and to make safe migration a part of their curriculum so they can continue informing students and peers who are still not aware about the safe and informed migration process.

The MRCs also target larger youth groups at universities. University students have different interests than TVET students. While young adults with technical skills prefer to migrate to the Gulf, university graduates prefer to go to Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and Germany. A few also intend to go to Malaysia and China. University students are always more interested in knowing about opportunities available in Europe for higher studies, work and settlement.



The sessions conducted in universities were very interactive as the students asked a lot of questions and shared the real-life incidents of irregular migration. Participants here seemed surprised and shocked after getting to know the realities of irregular migration as they were not fully aware of the risks and dangers involved in this process. At the end of each session MRC brochures and IEC materials were distributed and an MRC poster was also displayed on the noticeboards.

1c. Meetings with Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs), Education and Emigrant consultant

Meetings with the Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) and Education and Emigrant consultants aim to introduce the MRC programme, objectives and services as well as to educate the OEPs on the issues of irregular migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. These are one of the continuous activities of the MRCs thorough out the year.

Meetings with Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs)	100
Meeting with Education and Immigrant Consultants	45

The MRCs offer support services to the OEPs for their clients, such as counselling and pre-departure briefings. OEPs are the only registered agencies authorised to process work visas. These OEPs are registered with Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), Government of Pakistan and aim to promoting safe migration, raising awareness of the community and discourage the work of other agents.

1d. Pre-Departure briefings at Protectorate of Emigrant (PoE) office, Rawalpindi

Pre-departure briefings at the Protectorate of Emigrants Office (PoE), Rawalpindi, is another important activity undertaken by the MRC. Pre-departure briefings are essential for the protection of migrants and migrant workers. These briefings provide basic information to departing migrants to ease their transition into the country of destination and empower them with necessary and useful information to maximise the benefit of their overseas employment experience.



In 2018, the MRC provided pre-departure orientation to 20,866 potential migrants who were ready to go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Malaysia and South Korea for employment.

During pre-departure orientation the counsellors provide detailed information on:

- migrant workers' rights and duties,
- safety and health at workplace,
- general working and living conditions in the destination country,
- key challenges one might encounter and coping strategies, and
- a detailed list of all-important contacts in case of emergency.

1e. Meetings with Stakeholders

Meetings and coordination with stakeholders are vital for the effective functioning and visibility of the MRC. The MRC team is in continuous contact with all the relevant government ministries/departments, law enforcement authorities, academia, civil society, international organisations and diplomatic missions.



Governed by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, the MRC holds Quarterly Progress Review Meetings together with ICMPD and regular meetings with the respective government officials.

In addition, the MRC Islamabad conducted **38 meetings** further with the stakeholders during this year.

The Migrant Resource Centres in Pakistan are the first of its kind and thus many national and international stakeholders showed keen interest in knowing more about the work of MRC, its dynamics

and the services which MRC is offering to potential and intending migrants and also to the migrants abroad. Over the course of this year, MRC Islamabad facilitated the visits of dignitaries from MOPHRD, BE&OE, OPF, OEC, EU, BHC, Turkish Embassy and German Embassy.

The delegates from ILO, GIZ and World Bank also visited MRC office.

MRC visits to stakeholders	38
Stakeholders visits at MRC	32

The MRC teams paid due respect and gratitude to all the visitors and gave them comprehensive overview of MRCs aims, objectives and services. With this practice MRCs have been able to establish strong linkages with the stakeholders and cooperate with them in the areas of common interest.

2 Further MRC initiatives

2a. Seminar to mark International Migrants Day

International Migrants Day is an international day observed on 18 December proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 December 2000, taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world. This day is observed in many countries including Pakistan, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations.



The MRC organised a seminar at the International Islamic University, Islamabad titled “Migration & Development, Role of MRCs in promoting safe migration”. The seminar was arranged in collaboration with the Department of Sociology at International Islamic University. The seminar was attended by 200 male students and faculty members.

Prof Dr. Saif Abbasi presented his research paper “The Effects of Overseas Migration on the Families left behind in Pakistan” and discussed the key findings.

Hina Maqsood, Project Officer MRCs introduced ICMPD and its work in Pakistan to the audience. Shahid Naveed, MRC Coordinator read a paper on Migration & Development reflecting the linkage of the phenomenon of migration and development and how migrant workers contribute to the economies in sending and receiving countries.

Khayyam Sohail, MRC Counsellor spoke about MRCs, its services and how these Centres are contributing in the promoting safe migration and raising the awareness level of intending migrants.

Earlier this year the MRC also participated as key speaker in a seminar on raising awareness on the issue of irregular migration and migrant smuggling in collaboration with the “Association of Pakistan Education and Immigrating Consultants”. Role of MRC was highlighted in educating people on the grim realities of human trafficking besides consequences of migrant smuggling.



2b. Community outreach with Black Box Sounds and CHRS in Mirpur and the Central Punjab



Apart from the community sessions at universities and TVETs in the Islamabad/Rawalpindi area, the MRC team also conducted orientation sessions on safe and informed migration in the districts of Gujrat, Jhelum and Mandi Bahauddin in collaboration with Black Box Sounds and in Mirpur (AJK) in collaboration with a prominent NGO, named Complete Humane Resource solutions (CHRS), which mainly works in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The MRC staff contributed to the community sessions on safe and legal migration.

2c. Training to the Vocational Counsellors and Job Placement officers (VC&JP) at Peshawar

Vocational Counsellors and Job Placement Officers (VC&JP) play a vital role at the Technical Training Institutions. The MRC team conducted a training with Vocational Counsellors and Job Placement Officers in Peshawar in association with GIZ to educate and train them on the issues of safe migration, migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

A total of 24 VC&JP officers from different technical and vocational institutes from KPK were trained. The training proved very beneficial for the participants as they play a fundamental role in the dissemination of information among students in their institutes. All the participants took keen interest in the subject matter and asked different questions on the services of MRCs and relevant GOP departments. Overall, the training session was very interactive and useful for the participants. We are hoping to do more sessions in the similar fashion in other cities in association with GIZ in the near future.



2d. Awareness Raising Stalls



Awareness-raising stalls are also a good way to reach out to ordinary members of the public about issues such as migration. MRC team searched opportunities to execute the idea of setting up stalls at community and especially at youth events. Such opportunity was provided by International Islamic University Islamabad. During the cultural week in March, the university administration invited MRC to setup a stall to inform and guide the university graduates about legal ways of migration as most of them were interested in avenues available for higher education. MRC team setup an awareness raising

stall in the University for Four days and about 3500 students visited MRC stall and collected information of their interest.

2e. Coordination and Information Session with the OEPs and Journalists

Relationship building with the key stake holders and keeping them informed about the project activities is an indispensable part of the project to meet its objectives. For this purpose, MRC regularly holds meetings and information sessions with the stake holders.

A coordination meeting with the Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) was convened at MRC. A group of 18 OEPs participated in it. MRC objectives, activities and achievements were shared with them. We encouraged them to avail MRC counselling services for their clients in order to empower them and encourage them to make informed choices. The OEPs appreciated MRCs work and expressed their interest to enhance cooperation on the issues of migration and raising awareness on safe migration.



An interactive session with a group of journalists from print and electronic media was also arranged to share with them MRC rationale, objectives and services. The purpose of this session/ meeting was to share MRC objectives and progress/ achievement till date with the media personnel and seek their support for MRC activities coverage. The meeting was very productive in terms of establishing contacts with the media personnel and to invite them to write stories on the issues of migration, irregular migration and the hazards associated with it. The journalists appreciated the MRC work and promised to provide their support.

3 MRC lessons learnt

- The MRC needs to be further integrated into the government structures to become more effective and part of the overall migration governance of Pakistan
- To attract walk-in clients at the MRC, a smart and sustainable awareness campaign through various media outlets is vital.
- Cooperation through counters/information booths at airports, passport offices, OPF regional offices will ensure further access of the public to MRC services.
- Networking with other authorities in the field of migration is essential to support a comprehensive pre-departure and migration system in Pakistan.
- Airing of PSMs and documentaries on safe migration at the protectorate and passport offices to raise awareness on legal migration and processes to follow.
- Ensuring community outreach through local partners, NGOs/ community organisations to ensure effective networking in the communities;
- Creating linkages with the Facilitation and Reintegration Centre under OPF to include information on post-arrival assistance already in the pre-departure briefings
- A follow up mechanism for grievance handling system must be introduced;

Plans and recommendations for the year 2019

Following the lessons learnt of 2018 and the guidance of the Government of Pakistan, the MRC proposes a number of new activities:

1. Development and dissemination of information material targeted on specific migration / pre-departure issues
2. Development of online knowledge base of legal pathways for migration
3. Stronger social media presence and engagement of youth
4. Community theatre, on migration issues, including remittances
5. Orientation sessions with potential migrants in the community through Labour Unions
6. Coordination meetings with press club members to promote safe and legal migration in the media
7. Outreach to local communities through NGOs
8. Personal testimonials on migration experiences
9. MRC Newsletter
10. Cooperation with Union Counsels
11. Cooperation other organisations on activities carried out on safe migration issues (i.e. ILO, IOM, GIZ and OPF)

Annex I: MRC Success Stories

1- Facilitation in Death Insurance Claim

Mr. Hussain Akhtar a resident of district Kalhar Sayedan, Punjab came to know about MRC after being referred by the PoE office, Rawalpindi. He visited the PoE office inquiring about the procedure of insurance claim for his late son Bilal Hassan, who died in an accident in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Mr. Hussain visited the PoE office for the first time and was unaware of the required documents of insurance claim, where he was referred to the MRC.

After confirming from the PoE office on the required documents and procedures, the MRC counsellor informed Mr. Hussain that he needed to send the documents to the Pakistani Embassy in Jeddah for attestation. As Mr. Hussain was illiterate and did not know how to contact and to whom. He requested the MRC to facilitate in this matter and to provide assistance.

As per client's request, we called the Community Welfare Attaché (CWA) in Jeddah and spoke to him over the matter and asked him to facilitate the client. The CWA was very much accommodating. The MRC team also provided assistance to the client in writing the application and sending the documents to the embassy.

Two weeks later, Mr. Hussain called at MRC confirmed that the claim process had been started and a decision was expected in two months. The client was highly appreciative of MRC services, guidance and support and acknowledged that without MRC guidance it would have been a very difficult task for him to get the information and the way forward.

2- Facebook Alert: January 2018

The MRC team received several requests via email to verify job offers from different parts of the country. These job offers were from a company called OZIMTECH which was recruiting for Canada and Germany and targeting engineers. The MRC Team reached out to their contacts at the German and Canadian Embassy who confirmed that these offers were not genuine. The MRC team also put out an alert regarding this company on the MRC Facebook page and seven more people contacted the MRC who had been in correspondence with the same company. Afterwards, the MRC had a meeting with the First Secretary from German embassy to discuss such scams and how to counter them together. The MRC discussed the recent trends of fraudulent job offers in Germany and Canada by Ozimtech.

3- Job offer Scam

Abid Hussain, a young technical diploma holder, was among many other youngsters who wanted to make their career in the Gulf Countries. Owing to massive unemployment, faked job offers are very common practice here now-a-days.

On June 20, 2018 he noticed an advertisement published in daily newspaper "The Express" for jobs in Qatar and applied for the job. As per instruction, he submitted his testimonials and C.V. on the given what's app Nos. and waited for the response. A few days later, he received an email that he had been selected for the job and he will have to appear for a Skype interview but he will also have to pay Rs: 150,000 (1,200 US dollars) as consultancy charges before travelling to Qatar. Hassan called the MRC to seek advice if the job offer is genuine.

MRC counsellor explained him the recruitment procedure and pointed out how the job offer seemed fake. By understanding the recruitment procedure, Hassan realized that the job offer may be faked and refused to proceed further and make any payment to the so-called employer.

4- Assistance in Grievance handling

Ayyaz, 25 years, called MRC from Noshera to have assistance for his grievance against an OEP at Rawalpindi who had taken a huge amount of money from him to send him to Brunei. Ayyaz had paid 140,000 to the OEP in different occasions but had receipt of only 20,000 with him as proof for the payment. On reviewing his documents, it was confirmed that the OEP was registered with the Bureau so the MRC proposed to register a complaint against the malpractice of the agent at the Protectorate Office, Rawalpindi. Keeping regards of MRC referral, the officials at the protectorate office called the concerned parties for the hearing the very next day. Although, Ayyaz did not have any documented proof for the full payment, but the OEP had to confess that the complaint was genuine as the concerned authority had the full information of the case from MRC as well. The OEP offered Ayyaz to pay his money back or send him to Brunei in the next few weeks. Ayyaz opted for the 2nd choice.

Annex-II: Educational institutions for MRC outreach activities

MRC delivered awareness raising sessions on safe and informed migration at technical and vocational institutes throughout the year in the following TVET centres in Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Jhelum, Gujarat, Mandi Bahauddin, Attack and Mirpur (AJK).

1. Punjab Vocational and Technical Training Institute, Rawalpindi.
2. Punjab Vocational and Technical Training Institute, Gujarat.
3. Punjab Vocational and Technical Training Institute, Mandi Bahauddin.
4. NLC Technical College Dina.
5. Askari Institute of Technology, Rawat.
6. Pak-Emirates Institute of Technology, Rawalpindi.
7. IUSE institute of Technology, Rawalpindi.
8. Institute of Rural Management, Rawalpindi.
9. Walyat Institute of Technology, Rawalpindi.
10. Federal Institute of Technology, Rawalpindi.
11. Institute of Engineering and Technology, Rawalpindi
12. Baraq Institute of Technology, Rawalpindi
13. Government College of Technology, Rawalpindi.
14. Government College of Technology, Taxila.
15. Government College of Technology, Attack.
16. National Institute of Science and Technology, Islamabad.
17. National Training Bureau, Islamabad.
18. Mirpur College of Technology.
19. Mirpur Post Graduate College for Women.
20. Mirpur Post Graduate College for Women
21. Foundation University, Rawalpindi.
22. FAST University, Islamabad.
23. NUML University, Islamabad.
24. International Islamic University, Islamabad.
25. FUUAST, University, Islamabad.
26. Muslim Youth University, Islamabad.
27. Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.
28. COMSATS, University, Islamabad.
29. Preston University, Islamabad.
30. SZABIST University, Islamabad.

Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) provide clear, accessible and understandable information to potential, intending and outgoing migrants on possibilities for safe, regular and orderly migration as well as information on the risks and dangers associated with irregular migration. A team of counsellors provide relevant guidance during the pre-migration/planning phase, conduct pre-departure orientations, and provide information on work / study opportunities and living conditions abroad. The counsellors can also guide you on the rights and obligations of migrants abroad, recruitment processes, legal and cultural practices in destination countries and support services for the readdressal of complaints.

The two Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) are operational under the auspices of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) in Islamabad and the Labour and Human Resource Department, Punjab (LHRD) in Lahore.

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