



Establishment of Migrant Information Centres Visit to Vietnam 18-21 December 2016

Summary Report

Under the framework of the *EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project*, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized a visit, from 18 to 21 December 2016, for Chinese officials of the Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration (BEEA), Ministry of Public (MPS), to Vietnam to study the concept of *Migrant Information Centres (MICs)*. Mr XIONG Shuren, Deputy Director, Division of Exit and Entry Administration for Chinese Citizens, led the Chinese delegation. Other MPS delegates included Deputy Director of General Office, officials from Political Division and the International Cooperation Division of BEEA.

This visit provided the opportunity for Chinese officials to become familiar with the concept of MICs and information provided through the MICs to prospective Vietnamese migrants. Through detailed discussions with local authorities, Chinese MPS officials received a comprehensive understanding of the MICs' structure, operations as well as its role. In addition, they learnt about the different models that IOM and ILO's MICs presented to promote safe migration in Vietnam.

The Chinese delegation met with the officials of ILO's Bac Ninh Migrant Worker's Resource Center. This



centre is well integrated into the government Employment Service Center of the Provincial Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs in Bac Ninh. The services provided include: training, community outreach and counselling. Specifically, the centre provides information and guidance on labour laws, labour market information, policies, and rights of migrant workers, and access to training. ILO Vietnam provided support in the establishment of the centre and continues to provide support for the running operations and. The centre also organizes job-fairs and job posting services for vacancies abroad and a

database of employment opportunities in Vietnam and overseas. The officials highlighted that the services on offer were free of charge to the migrants and the centre provided more reliable, detailed and precise information than that provided by recruitment agencies. The Chinese delegates raised several questions related to the operations (including funding, partnerships, relationship with recruitment agencies etc.). The local officials highlighted the importance of the operational handbook and training developed by ILO to enhance the capacity of the staff in their work and services to migrant workers. The centre organizes several information outreach activities in the local community, local media, the internet and partners with local civil society organizations such as the local Women's Union to promote the centre and relevant services.



The delegation also visited the IOM Migrant Resource Centre in the capital city of Hanoi, which was established in June 2014, partnership with the Department of Overseas Labour (DOLAB) and the Viet Nam’s Women Union (VWU). The centre is now operated and fully funded by DOLAB. While IOM no longer provides financial support to the centre, DOLAB provides regular updates to IOM on the work of the centre. The centre is housed on the first floor of DOLAB’s office building, centrally located and easily accessible by the public. A customer-friendly environment was set up including the services of a computer and reference material (such as country destination leaflets). The staff of the centre collect data on each client visitor to be able to review the operations and processes of the centre. The centre provides information and counselling services to potential labour migrants on subjects including:

- labour market and employment opportunities overseas;
- destination country profiles;
- contacts of relevant assistance offices/organisations;
- common risks of irregular migration.

The counselling services are provided either directly at the centre or online through the centre’s website, or by the client calling the telephone hotline. Information is disseminated through leaflets, mass media, as well as participation in public policy dialogues in local communities. The DOLAB centre has strong links with other government authorities to be able to provide all the necessary information to answer the queries it receives. Particularly, the centre has a referral system involving other government agencies



and authorities, through an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism, when questions are posed by the migrant is not related to DOLAB’s remit. The centre collects client profiles and statistics for the necessary adjustments and improvements of the services offered. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) database was created to answer general questions and concerns from migrants. Services offered by the centre focus onto three stages of the migration cycle: before deciding to work abroad, pre-departure, and returning from abroad. For the first stage, the centre provides comprehensive introduction about Vietnamese laws, regulations, labour policies and employment conditions of destination countries (including the development of 15 destination country profiles). For the pre-departure stage, the centre gives advice and counselling to the labourers and helps to solve difficulties, such as labour disputes. Finally, the centre provides guidance on the return and reintegration into Vietnam. The centre works closely with a network of government agencies, social-political organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other social partners for further referral. The centre also widely distributes information to the general public to promote regular and safe migration and the risks of irregular migration. Until August 2016, 300,000 people accessed the website of the centre to get relevant services.

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Lastly, the delegation visited the IOM office in Hanoi to learn more about the experience on operating



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the MICs and also to have the opportunity to reflect upon the possible way-forward towards implementation of MICs in China. IOM Beijing provided a summary of this visit to the Chinese delegation outlining the specificities of both centres visited and of the Vietnamese system and how this relates to the situation in China. Deputy Director Xiong, Head of Chinese delegation stressed that the Chinese authorities still need to evaluate internally what would be the best MIC model for China and several consultations need to be done both at central and provincial level to find the best mechanism to coordinate with the different public authorities involved in migration.

The Deputy Director suggested involving the Exit & Entry Agencies that are licensed and monitored by BEEA since these agencies tasks are to inform Chinese travelling abroad. Deputy Director Xiong also suggested to undertake joint MPS-IOM field visits for further elaboration on the MIC concept in China, especially to Fujian, Zhejiang and Dongbei Provinces which all have strong tradition of migratory flows to Europe.

IOM and ILO in Vietnam provided the following recommendations based on their experience on implementing MICs:

- It is useful to have MICs located both at a central and provincial level;
- In addition to safe migration, MIC's should also focus on reducing the risk of human trafficking and exploitation;
- Different migration flows have different characteristics. Thus the need to define the target group to have a better understanding of the responsibilities and priorities.

Challenges:

- In Vietnam it is very common to get information by word of mouth (informal communication), therefore community events are very useful as outreach to the general public;
- Staff at MICs need to be well trained, especially on counselling skills. No-one can cover all the information since the information is changing every day, so information network is very important.

Outcomes:

This visit broadened the understanding and knowledge of Chinese officials in terms of the concept and operational aspects of MICs. Through detailed discussions with local authorities, Chinese officials got information about the structure, functions and roles of MICs. It also provided a good opportunity for the Chinese delegation to review China's existing situation and explore the possibility of establishing similar centres in China with the assistance of IOM and ILO, aiming at raising awareness of regular migration opportunities to potential Chinese migrants and reduce irregular migration.



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The visit laid a very good foundation to further adopt the MIC concept to the Chinese context and identify possible models for establishing similar centres in China. The Chinese delegation made the following concrete suggestions for the way-forward:

- BEEA will conduct further internal consultations and research on the establishment of MICs.
- Organising a meeting for Exit and Entry Agencies to discuss and explore their requirements for setting up similar facility and the services provided by MICs.
- Organise field visits to selected provinces with a considerable number of migrants going abroad.
- Identify the possibility of developing online services linking with official websites to help Chinese citizens get authoritative migration information.
- Explore the possibility of using the existing Visa Application Centres in China to disseminate relevant information on safe migration.
- Further discussions on developing and producing information materials.

The Chinese delegates expressed high satisfaction with the results and provided very positive feedback. They felt that the discussions and exchanges with Vietnamese counterparts were well-targeted and very useful. They grasped helpful, practical and comprehensive information about Vietnamese good practices and experience in operating MICs. Through this exchange visit, the Chinese delegates expressed their willingness to identify a suitable model based on China's situation and context.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Agenda & List of participants

Annex 2: Evaluation Summary