



רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה
Population and Immigration
Authority



Founded by the
American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee

2016

Data

of the Hotline for Foreign Workers
Established as Part of the
Bilateral Agreements



Background

The aim of the bilateral agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers¹ in various fields is to put an end to the phenomenon of illegal recruitment fees, while recruiting highly suitable workers aware of their rights and obligations in Israel. The bilateral agreements contribute to the prevention of harm to workers, modern slavery, and human trafficking.

In 2012, the Israeli government signed a bilateral (inter-governmental) agreement with the government of Thailand, implemented as the Thailand-Israel Cooperation project (TIC) with the aim of preventing the collection of illegal recruitment fees from foreign workers in the agricultural sector. Later, similar agreements were signed with the governments of Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania in the construction sector, and, in 2015, agreements to implement a pilot project were signed with the governments of Nepal and Sri Lanka in the caregiving sector. In addition, beginning in 2010, seasonal agricultural workers from Sri Lanka arrived in Israel as part of a bilateral agreement.² To this day, about 29,890 male and female workers arrived in Israel as part of these agreements – 23,870 of whom were still in Israel at the end of 2016. The bilateral agreements are under examination and development prior to the drafting of additional agreements in the future.

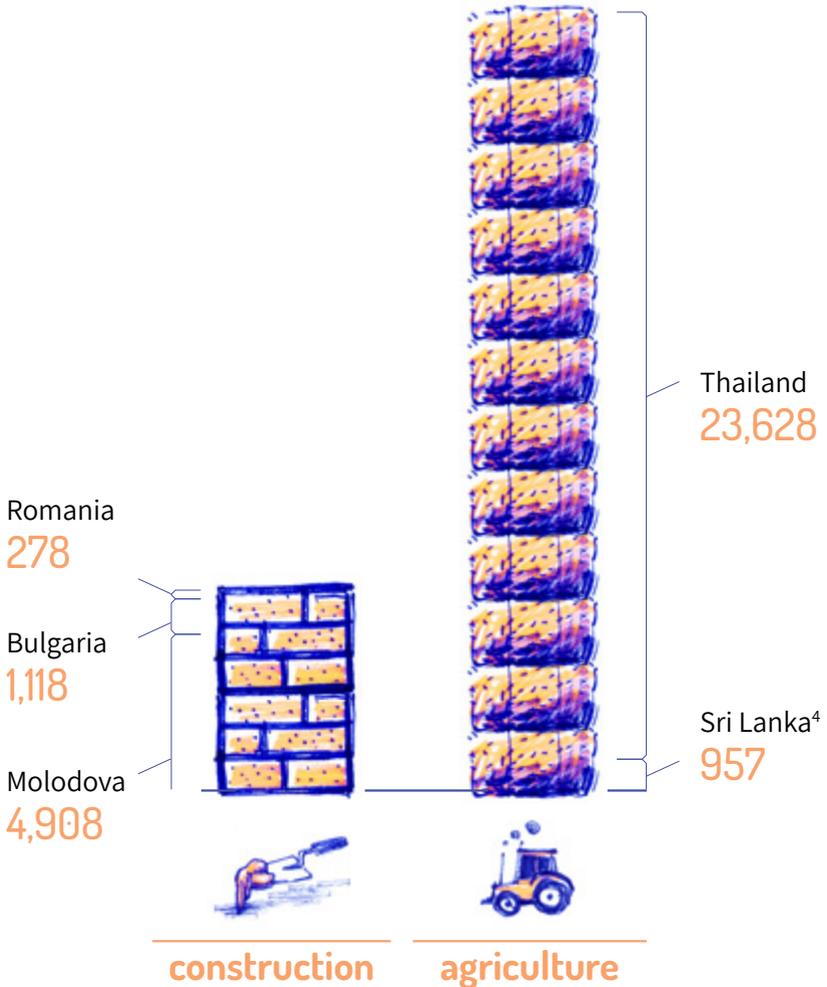
As part of the bilateral agreements, in July 2012 the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) founded, in collaboration with the Population and Immigration Authority (PIBA), a telephone hotline for foreign workers in Israel, providing a resource for workers in their own language. This hotline is operated by CIMI; the calls to the hotline are registered as inquiries or complaints and transferred to PIBA, which then refers them to the care of the relevant units in the authorized government ministries, according to the type of inquiry or complaint. The call data is compiled by a computerized system that directs the calls to their appropriate destinations, and allows for the systematic collection of data and its analysis.

This booklet presents data collected since the establishment of the hotline and specifically since the launching of the computerized system in 2014.³ In addition, the booklet presents findings from a telephone survey, conducted for the first time, among 50 agriculture and construction workers who had utilized the hotline.

CIMI, a non-profit organization founded by JDC-Israel, operates in collaboration with PIBA, governmental and non-governmental organizations in the workers' countries of origin. The organization assists in advertising the possibility of arriving to work in Israel as part of the bilateral agreement, sorting suitable workers, and coordinating their trip to Israel. CIMI also provides instruction to workers and information about their rights.

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1. The terms in this booklet refer to the different groups as formulated in Israeli law. They do not necessarily reflect the terms used by CIMI and the way in which the organization views the use of these terms.
 2. Seasonal workers arrive for a period of 4 to 8 months in order to serve the needs of the agricultural sector. At the end of the season, the worker returns to his or her country (unlike a permanent worker, for whom the employer must find alternative employment with other farmers at the end of the season). In addition, the employer may invite the same, already trained, seasonal worker in the following year.
 3. The data in the different parts of the booklet is accurate as of 31.12.2016.

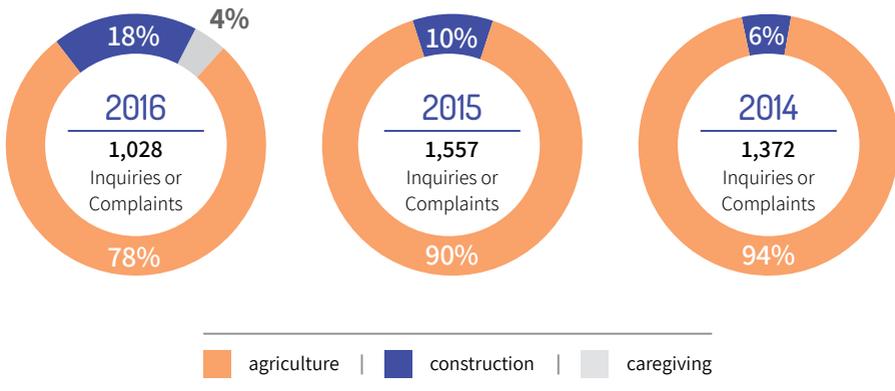
2 Foreign Workers Arriving as Part of the Bilateral Agreements the End of 2016: Sectors and Countries of Origin



4. In 2016, 359 seasonal agricultural workers arrived from Sri Lanka. This is a significant increase, compared to about 80 workers per year in previous seasons.

Inquiries and Complaints Received by the Hotline⁵

In the past 3 years, 3,957 inquiries or complaints were recorded by the hotline, made by 2,981 workers



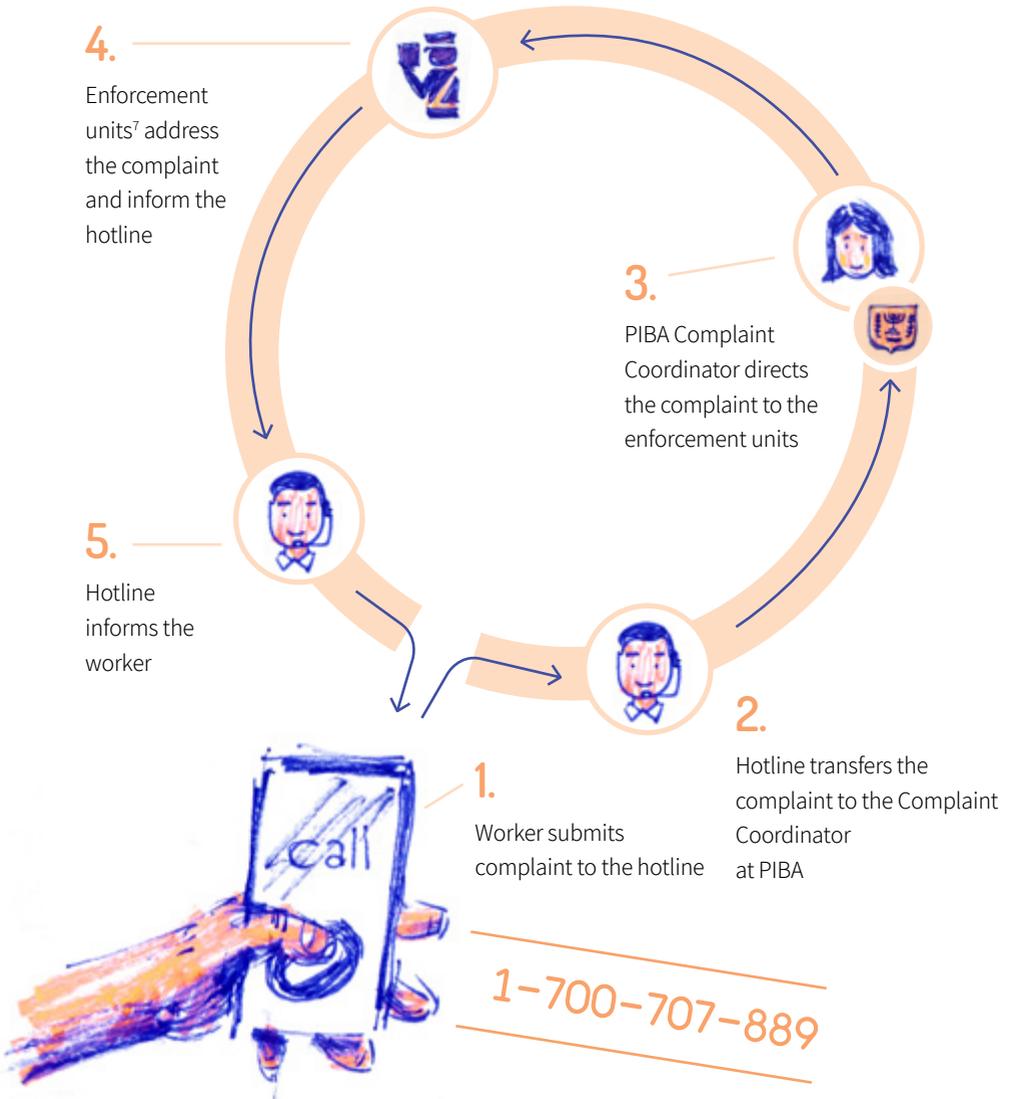
Source of Complaints



	2016	2015	2014
• Hotline	82%	79%	95%
• TIC Project in Thailand	13%	10%	3%
• Other sources ⁶	5%	11%	2%

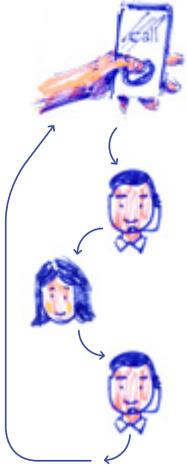
- The difference in distribution of complaints between the sectors stems from the variance in the number of foreign workers arriving as part of the bilateral agreements in each sector.
- Other sources include: the Thai embassy in Israel, the La Strada organization (Moldova), the Moldovan Employment Bureau, the Romanian Labor Ministry.

Complaint Handling Procedure



7. The enforcement units include PIBA Enforcement Unit, the Regulation and Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services, the Ombudsman for Foreign Workers' Rights at the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services, and the Israel Police.

Example of complaint handling procedure by the PIBA Complaint Coordinator:

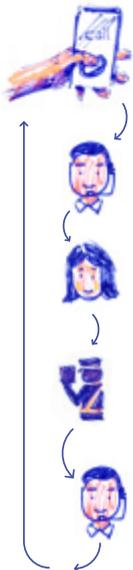


A Thai agricultural worker called the hotline and asked for assistance in finding a new place of employment, since he said he was working in an uncultivated field and feared snakebites. The hotline translator provided him with contact details of the manpower agency with which he was listed to obtain assistance in transferring to a new workplace. A short time later the worker called the hotline again, saying he was unable to contact the agency.

The hotline transferred the case to PIBA Complaint Coordinator, who contacted the agency immediately and instructed it to act on the complaint in order to assist the worker in transferring to a new employer.

A few days after contacting the agency, the hotline translator contacted the worker. The worker reported he had been transferred to a new employer to his satisfaction, and thanked the hotline for the swift response to his request.

Example of complaint handling procedure by the PIBA Enforcement Unit:



A Thai agricultural worker called the hotline to report poor living conditions: 21 crowded workers were sleeping in one room and sharing a single bathroom. In addition, the worker reported conflicts between the numerous workers, for some of whom the employer had not arranged a valid permit.

The hotline transferred the call to the PIBA Complaint Coordinator, marking it as urgent.

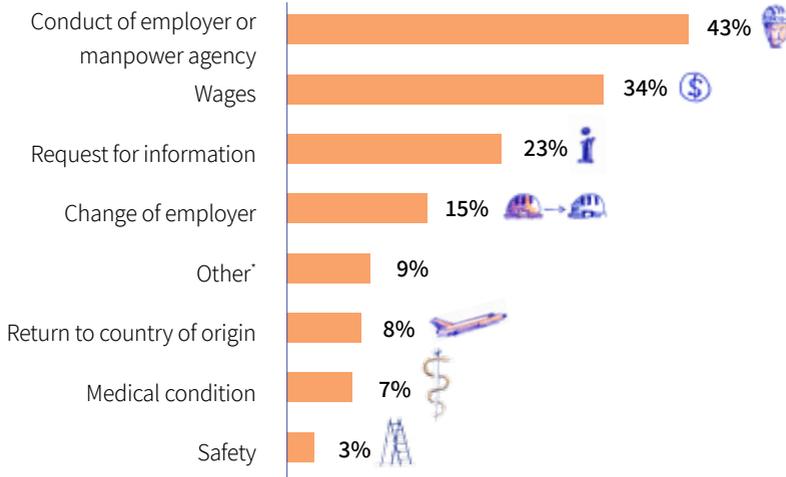
The coordinator transferred the case to the PIBA Enforcement Unit.

Inspectors from the PIBA Enforcement Unit were dispatched to the workplace, where they confirmed the worker's report. Accordingly, a criminal charge was filed against the employer and he was obliged to correct the shortcomings immediately.

In a return call from the hotline to the worker about a month later, the worker reported that the living conditions had improved since the inspection, and said he would contact the hotline as needed.

6 Issues of Inquiries and Complaints

Number of times an issue was raised as a percentage of total inquiries and complaints



* Other issues include: unemployed worker, no visa, or family members wishing to locate a worker.



Breakdown of complaints regarding the conduct of an employer or a manpower agency:

- 16% employer conduct
- 12% manpower agency or employer unavailable
- 11% accommodation



Breakdown of wage complaints:

- 56% wages do not comply with the law
- 25% unpaid wages
- 24% wages are paid without a slip



Breakdown of calls requesting information:

- 85% questions regarding workers' rights in different fields (for example: change of employer, wage conditions, visa)
- 21% locating a manpower agency



Out of calls on other subjects:

- 75% unemployed worker
- 40% worker without a visa
- 29% locating the worker by a family member

Summary of the Handling of Inquiries and Complaints

Inquiries and complaints are referred to the responsible bodies according to their subject. The length of time needed to address the complaint varies in accordance with the content and subject.

Out of the **4,119** inquiries and complaints submitted to the hotline in the past 3 years:



1,373

complaints required a response from the hotline

out of which

1,369

 were addressed and closed



1,343

complaints were transferred to PIBA

out of which

1,338

 were addressed and closed



883

complaints were transferred to the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services

out of which

463

 were addressed and closed

520

complaints were closed for other reasons.¹⁰



10. The worker could not be reached by telephone, the worker had left Israel, or complaints were lodged prior to the implementation of the computerized system.

8 Bilateral Agreements – the Cost of Arriving to Israel

The bilateral agreements significantly reduced the phenomenon of illegal recruitment fees. As a result, the cost of the trip to Israel was reduced from tens of thousands of dollars, to a few hundred dollars paid legally.

Based on data being collected on the subject,¹¹ to date the agreements have saved workers in agriculture and caregiving (not construction) some **\$52,568,355**.

Costs of arriving to work in Israel, since the implementation of the bilateral agreements¹²



In the construction sector



With bilateral agreement

Bulgaria → **\$250**
Moldova → **\$313**
Romania → **\$311**



Prior bilateral agreement

China → **\$21,759**

11. The data for Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Nepal are taken from CIMI, which accompanies the workers on their trip. The data for Thailand is taken from the study by Rebeca Rajjman and Nona Kushnirovich (2015): "Recruitment of Foreign Workers in the Agricultural and Construction Sectors in Israel – the Impact of Bilateral Agreements." Data for the Philippines is from the Kav LaOved report, "Black Money, Black Labor" – annual report for 2016.
12. Following these agreements, the expenses of foreign workers related to the trip to Israel mostly include the cost of medical exams and airfare to Israel. In the agricultural sector, the expenses also include a recruitment fee in accordance with Israeli law.



In the agricultural sector



After
bilateral agreement

\$2,200



Prior to
bilateral agreement

\$9,149



In the caregiving sector



As part of
bilateral agreement pilot

Nepal → \$743

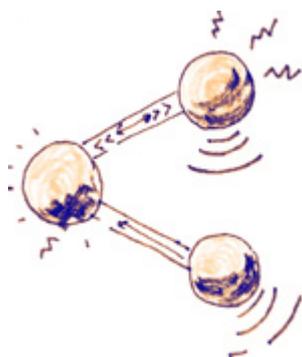


Without
bilateral agreement

Philippines → \$10,688

10 Findings of Telephone Survey Among 50 Workers who had Contacted the Hotline¹³

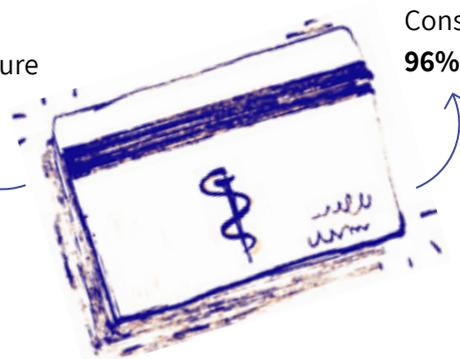
Sources of information on rights and employment conditions¹⁴



	Agriculture	Construction
> The hotline in Israel and organizations in the country of origin	40%	14%
> Internet (including Facebook pages)	29%	11%
> Other workers	7%	25%

Percentage of workers aware that health insurance exists for them

Agriculture
72%

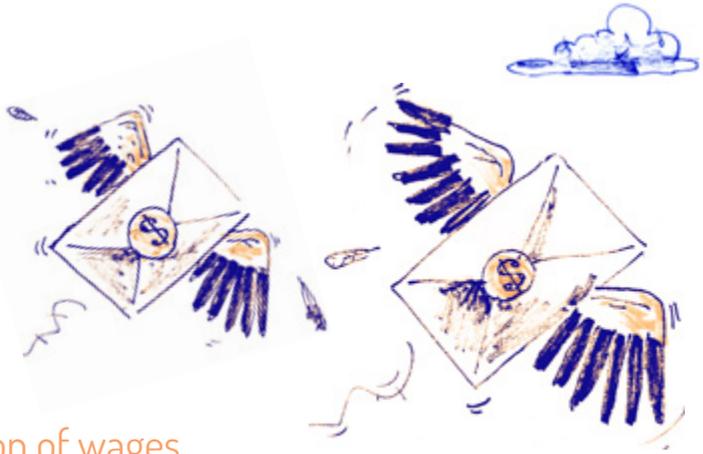


Construction
96%

13. 25 Thai agricultural workers and 25 construction workers from Moldova and Bulgaria were interviewed for the survey.

14. This question in the survey allowed for multiple answers; The chart presents the most common ones.

Construction
74%



Average portion of wages transferred (remittances) from workers to their families in their countries of origin

Agriculture
64%

Main use of remittances in the country of origin¹⁵

Construction		Agriculture
6%	Savings	18%
25%	Daily expenses	18%
31%	Building a house	2%
16%	Payment of debt	18%
14%	Children's education	26%



15. This question allowed for multiple answers; the chart presents the most common ones.

Plans following the worker's return to his or her country of origin¹⁶

Agriculture

64%

Working in the same sector

20%

Opening a business

0%

No plans

12%

Immigration to a third country

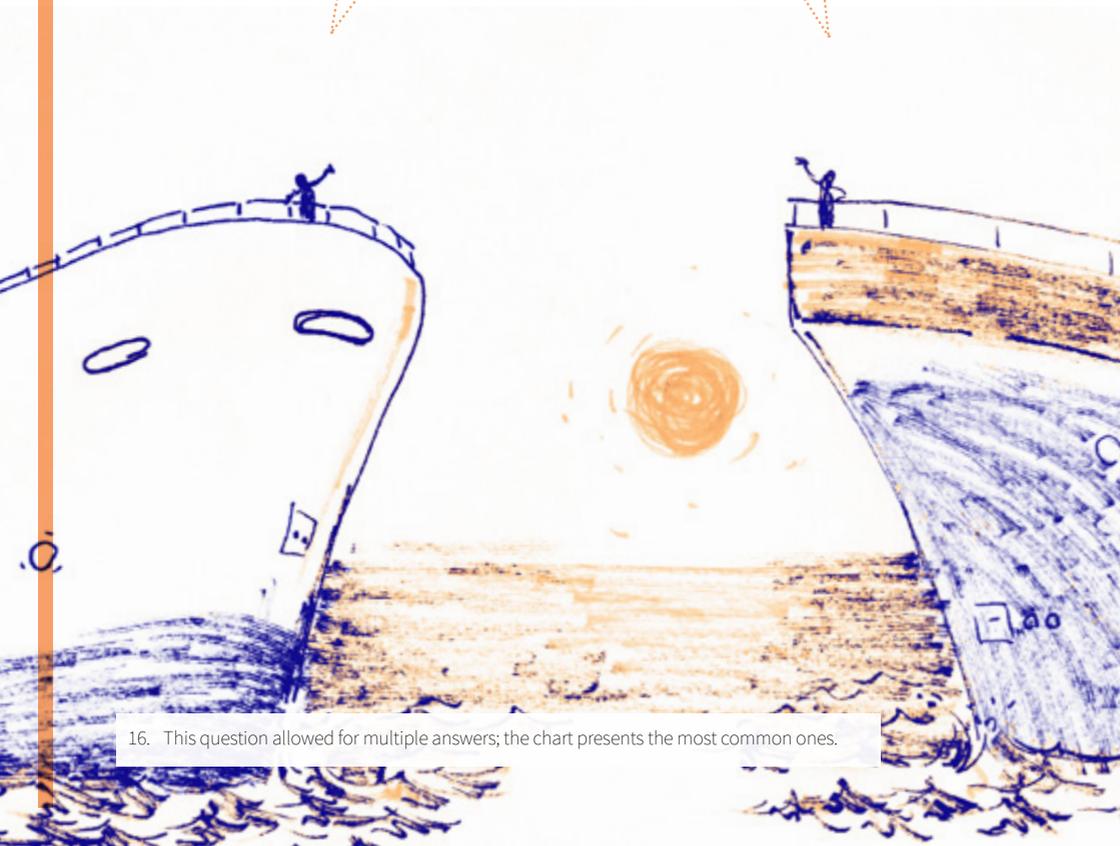
Construction

16%

13%

35%

20%



16. This question allowed for multiple answers; the chart presents the most common ones.

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