



רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה
Population and Immigration
Authority



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American Jewish Joint
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2016

Data

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

- Data on Agricultural Workers in the Framework of the Thailand Israel Cooperation Project -



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 pilot projects were signed with the governments of Nepal and Sri Lanka in the caregiving sector. To this day, about 23,628 male and female agricultural workers arrived in Israel from Thailand as part of TIC project – 19,202 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 to 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 on TIC workers collected since the establishment of the hotline and specifically since the launching of the computerized system in 2014.² In addition, the booklet presents findings from a telephone survey, conducted for the first time, among 25 agriculture 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.

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 The data in the different parts of the booklet is accurate as of 31.12.2016.

Inquiries and Complaints Received by the Hotline

In the years 2014-2016, the hotline received 3,497 inquiries or complaints from 2,603 workers



2014

1,291 Inquiries or Complaints

2015

1,405 Inquiries or Complaints

2016

801 Inquiries or Complaints

Source of Complaints



- Hotline
- TIC Project in Thailand
- Thai embassy
- Other

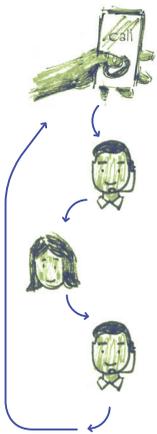
	2016	2015	2014
Hotline	83%	77%	96%
TIC Project in Thailand	16%	11%	3%
Thai embassy	1%	10%	1%
Other		2%	

Complaint Handling Procedure



3. 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, the Israel Police.

Example of complaint handling procedure by the PIBA Complaint Coordinator:

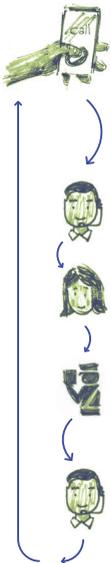


A Thai agricultural worker called the hotline and asked for assistance in finding a new place of employment, since he said he was working in an uncultivated field and feared snakebites. The hotline translator provided him with contact details of the manpower agency with which he was listed to obtain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

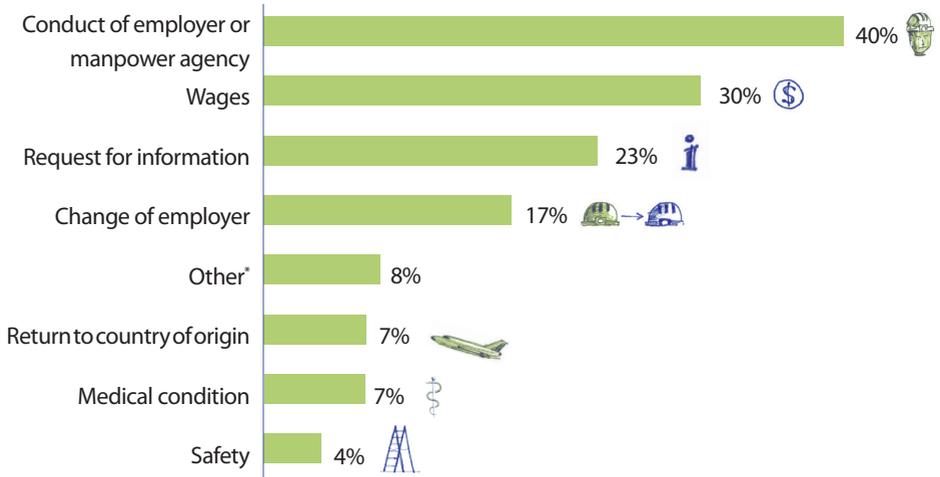
The coordinator transferred the case to the PIBA Enforcement Unit.

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.

5 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 calls on employer or manpower agency conduct:

- 26% manpower agency, agency translator, or employer unavailable
- 18% employer conduct
- 11% accommodation



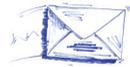
Breakdown of wage complaints:

- 57% wages do not comply with the law
- 30% wages paid without slip
- 24% unpaid wages



Breakdown of calls requesting information:

- 78% questions regarding workers' rights in different fields (for example: change of employer, wage conditions, visa)
- 25% locating a manpower agency



Out of calls on other subjects:

- 75% unemployed worker
- 31% worker without a visa
- 40% 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 3,655 inquiries and complaints that reached the hotline in the past 3 years:



1,256

complaints required a response from the hotline

out of which

1,253

✓ were addressed and closed



1,189

complaints were transferred to PIBA

out of which

1,186

✓ were addressed and closed



773

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

out of which

440

✓ were addressed and closed

437

complaints were closed for other reasons.⁴



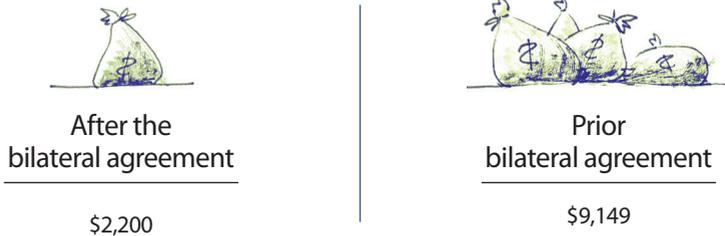
4. The worker could not be reached by telephone, the worker had left Israel, or complaints were lodged prior to the implementation of the computerized system.

7 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,⁵ to date the agreements have saved workers in agriculture some \$51,981,600.

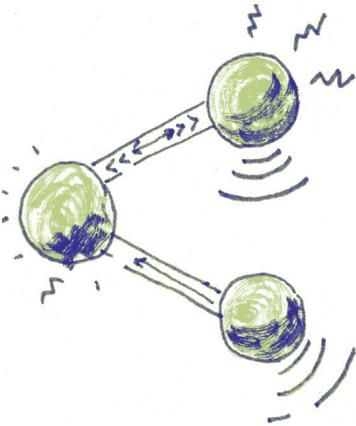
Cost of arriving to work in Israel since the bilateral agreements came into effect⁶



5. See Rebeca Raijman and Nona Kushnirovich (2015): "Recruitment of Foreign Workers in the Agricultural and Construction Sectors in Israel – the Impact of Bilateral Agreements."

6. 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.

Findings of Telephone Survey Among 25 Workers who had Contacted the Hotline⁷



Sources of information on rights and employment conditions⁸

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

72%

of workers are aware that health insurance exists for them.



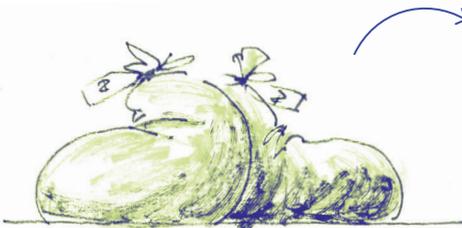
7. 25 Thai agricultural workers were interviewed for the Survey.

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

The workers transfer
64%
 of their wages
 (remittances) to
 their families in
 their country of
 origin.



The main use of the remittances
 in the country of origin:⁹



Savings	18%
Daily expenses	18%
Building a house	2%
Payment of debt	18%
Children's education	26%

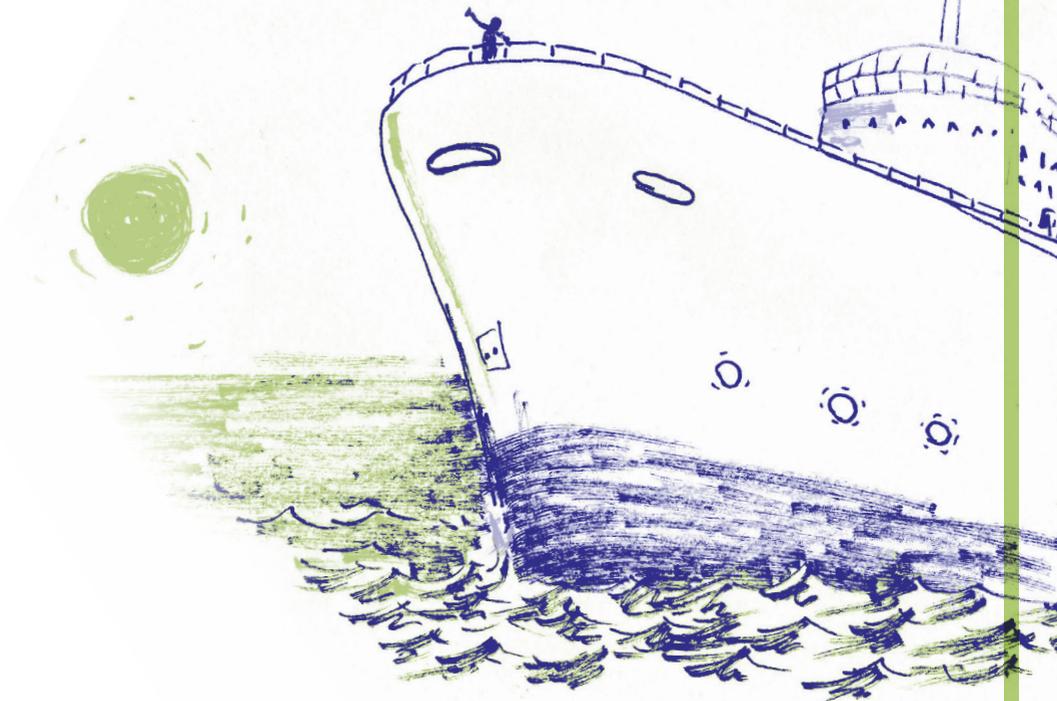
9. This question in the survey allowed for multiple answers; The chart presents the most common ones.



Workers' plans after return to their country of origin¹⁰

Work in the same sector	64%
Opening a business	20%
Immigration to a third country	12%
Constructing a house for their family	4%

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



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