



RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANT  
WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE  
AND CONSTRUCTION IN ISRAEL:



# THE IMPACT OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

Rebeca Raijman and Nonna Kushnirovich



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# RECRUITMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE AND CONSTRUCTION IN ISRAEL: *THE IMPACT OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS*

Rebeca Raijman and Nonna Kushnirovich<sup>1</sup>

Labor migration to Israel started in 1993 when the government approved the massive recruitment of foreign workers for the agriculture and construction sectors. Until the end of 2012, the official recruitment of foreign workers in these two sectors had been privatized and was conducted through recruitment agencies (in both Israel and countries of origin) which extracted exorbitant fees from the migrants in order to work in Israel (Raijman and Kushnirovich, 2012)<sup>2</sup>. To combat this, the Israeli government decided to sign bilateral agreements with some countries from which migrants were usually recruited. To date, bilateral agreements have been signed with Thailand for workers in the agriculture sector and with Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania for workers in the construction sector.

Under the agreement with Thailand signed in 2010<sup>3</sup>, a newly created framework of cooperation, the Thailand-Israel Cooperation on the Placement of Workers (TIC), is in charge of the recruitment of migrant workers in agriculture, and the management and supervision of the recruitment process is conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Israeli and Thai private agencies are no longer directly involved in such recruitment. Israeli local agencies are now

responsible for the workers only after their arrival, a service for which they are permitted to charge a fee set in advance<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, bilateral agreements were signed between the Israeli and the Bulgarian, Moldovan and Romanian governments (in December 2011, October 2012 and June 2014, respectively) whereby labor migrants are to be recruited to work in the construction sector in a fair and transparent manner, with the objective of avoiding the payment of illegal recruitment fees.

In this report we examine the extent to which the implementation of official forms of recruitment through bilateral agreements (hereinafter BA) have had an impact on (1) the forms of recruitment and amounts of money paid by the workers before departure, and (2) the migrants' working and living conditions after arrival in Israel. In the case of Thai workers, we compare information obtained before implementation of the bilateral agreement (see Raijman and Kushnirovich, 2012) with data collected after it (2013-14). In the case of Bulgarian and Moldovan workers, we only collected data after the implementation of the bilateral agreement; therefore, we cannot evaluate the extent of change and instead describe the present situation.

1. We express our sincere thanks to Anda Barak-Bianco, who was a research assistant and main collaborator during the study. Thanks to Yahel Ash Kurlander for insightful comments and to CIMI staff: Yonathan Paz, Ilan Cohn and Zehava Tesfay for fruitful cooperation and support
2. Raijman, R. and Kushnirovich, N. (2012). Labor Migration Recruitment Practices in Israel. Final Report. Jerusalem: Ruppin Academic Center and CIMI, Center for International Migration and Integration. <<http://www.ruppin.ac.il/pages/1623.aspx>>.
3. Although the Israeli government resolution on the signing of a bilateral agreement with Thailand was passed in 2005, the current agreement was signed in December 2010 and became operational only in May 2012.
4. Israeli manpower agencies deal with issues of health, mobility among employers and any other issues concerning migrants' needs during their stay in Israel.

## Methodology

Because of the difficulties inherent in gathering data on migrant workers, representative samples could not be assembled. Instead we used the so-called “snowball” sampling technique. The interviews lasted two hours on average and were conducted by interviewers who spoke the migrant workers’ native languages, enabling us to contact a wide array of migrants including those who had

not approached any NGOs or submitted complaints to the CIMI-operated Hotline for complaints and information. The total number of interviews is 55 Thai respondents before the BA and 50 after it<sup>5</sup>; 25 Bulgarian respondents (after the BA); 30 Moldovan respondents (after the BA).

Despite the small sample size, we trust the collected data as it evinces closely consistent trends regarding recruitment processes and costs.



## 1. LABOR RECRUITMENT

### Arrivals under the Auspices of Bilateral Agreements: 2012-14

Since 2012, about 15,000 labor migrants arrived in Israel under the auspices of bilateral agreements (see Table 1). The majority (86 percent) came from Thailand to work in agriculture and the rest came from Bulgaria and Moldova to work in construction (7 percent for each group).

Recruitment from Bulgaria ceased

in 2014, and currently migrants in the construction sector are recruited from Moldova and Romania. The official quota assigned to this sector is about 8,000 workers, but the data show that this quota has not been filled because of several problems related to recruitment and availability of workers willing to come to Israel (Zeira and Moshe, 2015)<sup>6</sup>.

5. The geographical distribution of Thai respondents interviewed after the BA is as follows: 29 in the north, 5 in the center, and 15 in the south.

6. See, Zeira, Gideon and Neta Moshe (2015). Issues on Employment of Foreign Workers. June, 11. Jerusalem: Knesset Research and Information Center.

Source: PIBA, special analysis

Table 1: Labor Migrants Arriving under the Terms of BAs, by Year				
	2012	2013	2014	Total
<b>Construction</b>				
Bulgaria	764	244	-	1,008
Moldova		211	773	984
<b>Agriculture</b>				
Thailand	2,137	5,783	4,680	12,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>2901</b>	<b>6,238</b>	<b>5,453</b>	<b>14,592</b>

**Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Labor Migrants by Sector and Country of Origin**

	Thailand before BA	Thailand after BA	Bulgaria	Moldova
<b>Percent Male</b>	94.5	98.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Age (years)</b> Average (s.d.)	31.98 (5.2)	33.2 (4.9)	45.5 (8.6)	38.9 (7.8)
<b>Years of Schooling</b> Average (s.d.)	9.9 (3.3)	9.1 (4.8)	11.1 (2.3)	11.0 (1.8)
<b>Labor Force Activity before Departure</b> Belonged to the labor force (%)	98.1	96.0	72.0	53.3
<b>N</b>	55	50	25	30

It is estimated that about two-thirds of the migrant workers in the construction sector are Chinese who arrived before the implementation of the bilateral agreements in this sector <sup>7</sup>.

### Selected Socio-demographic Characteristics

Table 2 provides information on selected socio-demographic characteristics of labor migrants. The data reveal that the agriculture and construction sectors are male-dominated. Workers from Thailand in the agriculture sector tend to be young (32-33 years on average), have attended only 9 years of formal schooling on average, and most of them belonged to the Thai labor force before departure.

Migrant workers in construction tend to be older and have relatively higher levels of education than those in agriculture: the average age is 46 and 39 for Bulgarians and Moldovans respectively, and both groups reported 11 years of formal education. Pre-departure rates of labor force activity reveal that 72 percent of the Bulgarian workers in the sample and only 53 percent of the Moldovans belonged to the labor force before departure.

### Finding out about Job Opportunities in Israel

Figure 1 provides information on the most popular ways migrants learn about jobs in Israel. The data reveal that before implementation of the BA, the most popular method used by Thai workers to find out

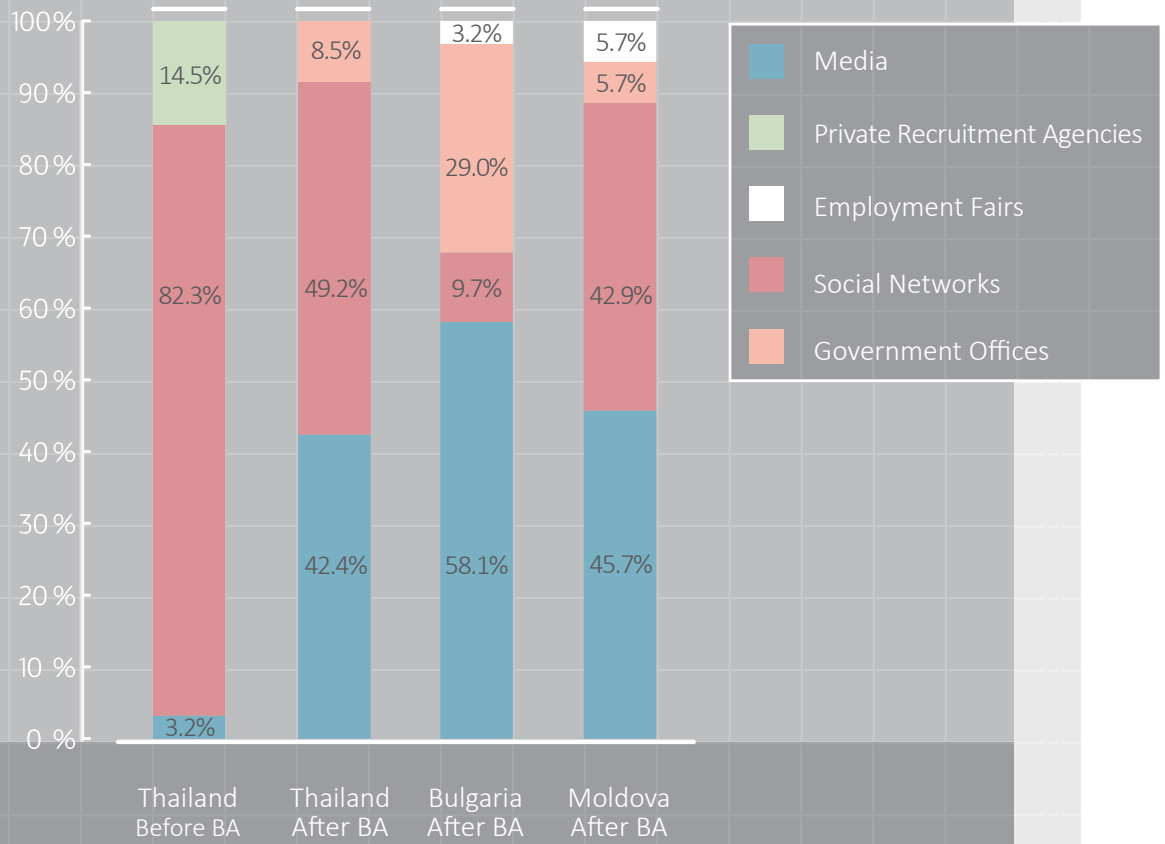
about job opportunities was social networks - friends, relatives or acquaintances (82.3 percent) - which usually put potential immigrants in touch with private recruitment agencies.

Following the BAs, the proportion of immigrants using social networks declined to 49 percent, and a large proportion (42.4 percent) learned about job opportunities through the media (e.g. radio, TV, newspapers, billboards) where information was published. Thus information about work opportunities in Israel can now be accessed by a wide public, not just by people connected to persons controlling the information (social networks) or the activities of sub-agents and agents of private recruitment agencies. This change in the ways prospective migrants find out about job opportunities in Israel may be interpreted as an indicator of the success of the bilateral agreement. The new form



7. It is estimated that at the end of 2013, 66 percent of migrant workers in construction were Chinese. See Protocol 42, Knesset Special Committee for the Examination of the Problem of Foreign Workers, June 17, 2014, p. 3.

Figure 1- Finding Out about Job Opportunities in Israel





of recruitment results in transparent and controlled mechanisms that broaden access to information and clarify transactions.

The majority of Bulgarian workers who arrived after the implementation of the BA (58 percent) learned about job opportunities in Israel through the media (newspapers, radio, TV), but also through governmental employment agencies (29 percent). Moldovan labor migrants arriving under the auspices of the BA learned about job opportunities in Israel through two main venues: the media (mainly internet) (45.7 percent) and social networks (42.9 percent).

### Reasons for Choosing Israel as a Destination

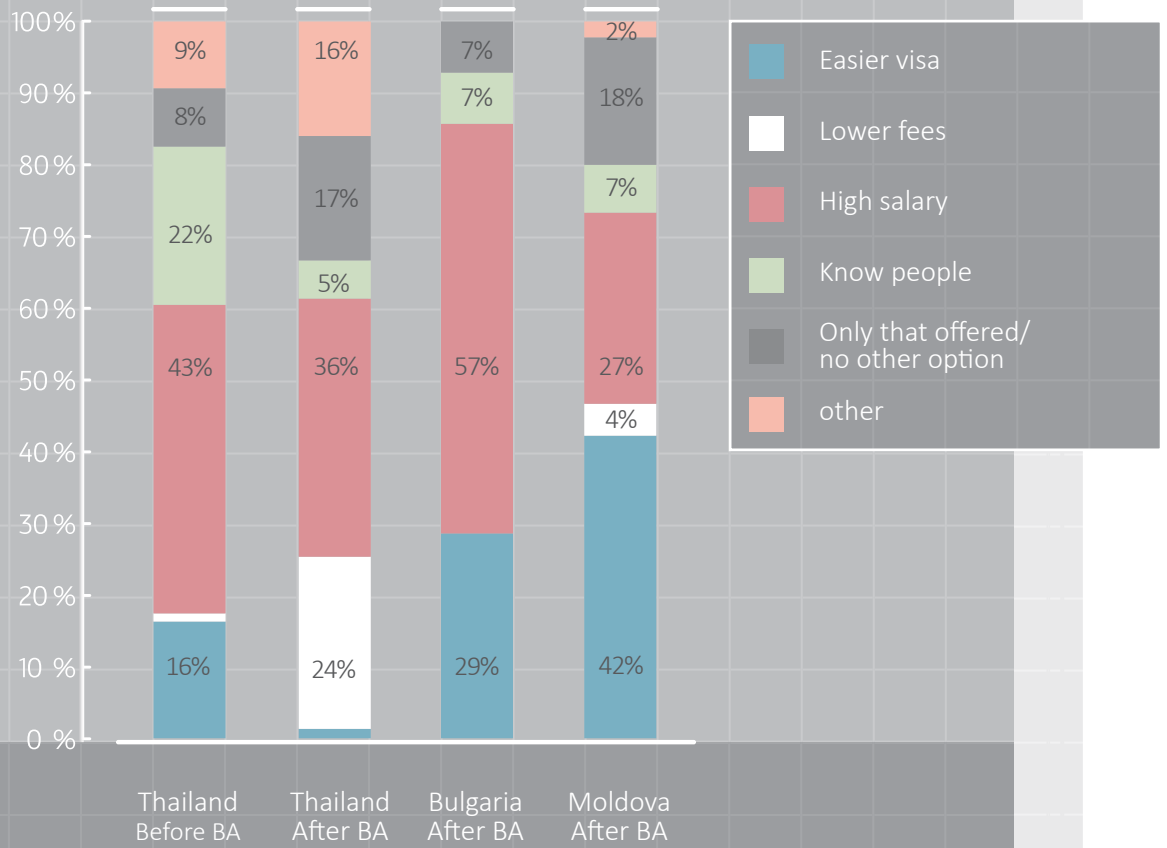
Figure 2 displays the reasons migrants gave for choosing Israel over other countries as their destination. The data reveal that although in both periods Thais' decisions

to choose Israel were based on economic considerations (higher salaries), 24 percent of migrants arriving since the BA indicate the lower fees for recruitment as the main reason for selecting Israel. This finding suggests both the success of the new arrangement in reducing recruitment fees and the attractiveness of Israel as a destination country in which recruitment procedures are transparent and affordable. Like the Thai migrants, Moldovan and even more notably Bulgarian workers choose to come to Israel because the salaries are high (27 and 57 percent respectively). Another important consideration to choose Israel as a destination was the ease of obtaining a work visa: 29 percent and 42 percent for Bulgarians and Moldovans respectively. Interestingly, 17 percent of Thai and Moldovan migrant workers arriving since the BA report choosing Israel because no other options were available<sup>8</sup>.



8. In the case of Thai workers the category “Other” covered reasons such as interest in agriculture work, no waiting time, and absence of language requirements.

Figure 2- Reasons for Choosing Israel as a Destination





### Forms of Recruitment

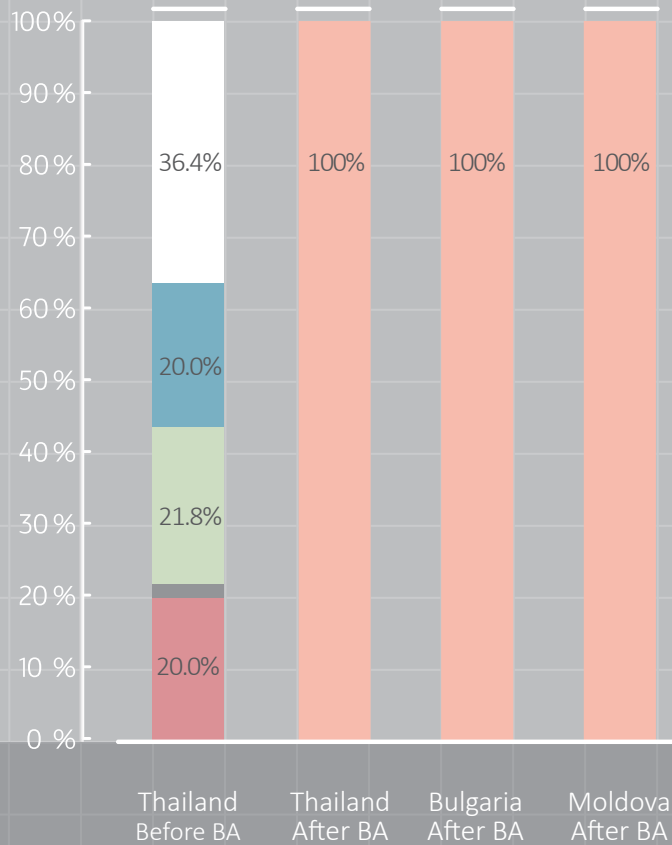
Data in Figure 3 clearly reveal the drastic change in the forms of recruitment of Thai workers after the implementation of the BA. Prior to implementation, immigrants were recruited through private recruitment agencies or sub-agents - in Israel and in Thailand- that were in charge of selecting the immigrants and charging recruitment fees (20 percent). In addition, employers (20 percent) and social networks (36.4 percent) were actively involved in the recruitment, directing prospective migrants to specific agencies. These forms of recruitment perpetuated the existing migration industry in both countries (for an extensive analysis of labor recruiting practices in Israel see Rajiman and Kushnirovich, 2012).

However, since the implementation of the BA, all Thai migrants arriving in Israel coordinate their departure through IOM and regional branches of the Thai Ministry of Labor. This new form of state involvement and control has drastically annulled the role of private agencies and their associated brokers - in Thailand and in Israel - in the recruitment process. Likewise, Bulgarian and Moldovan construction workers were recruited through government ministries, but representatives of the Israeli Builders Association participate in the professional examination stage of prospective migrants. They conduct the tests, and based on professional criteria decide whether the candidate has the required skills. The entire selection process is supervised by PIBA and CIMI and their local partners<sup>9</sup>.



9. Interview with Hanna Zohar, Section Coordinator of Construction Workers at the Workers' Hotline. November, 2013. See also Protocol 42, Knesset Special Committee for the Examination of the Problem of Foreign Workers, June 17, 2014, pp. 7-8.

Figure 3- Forms of Recruitment



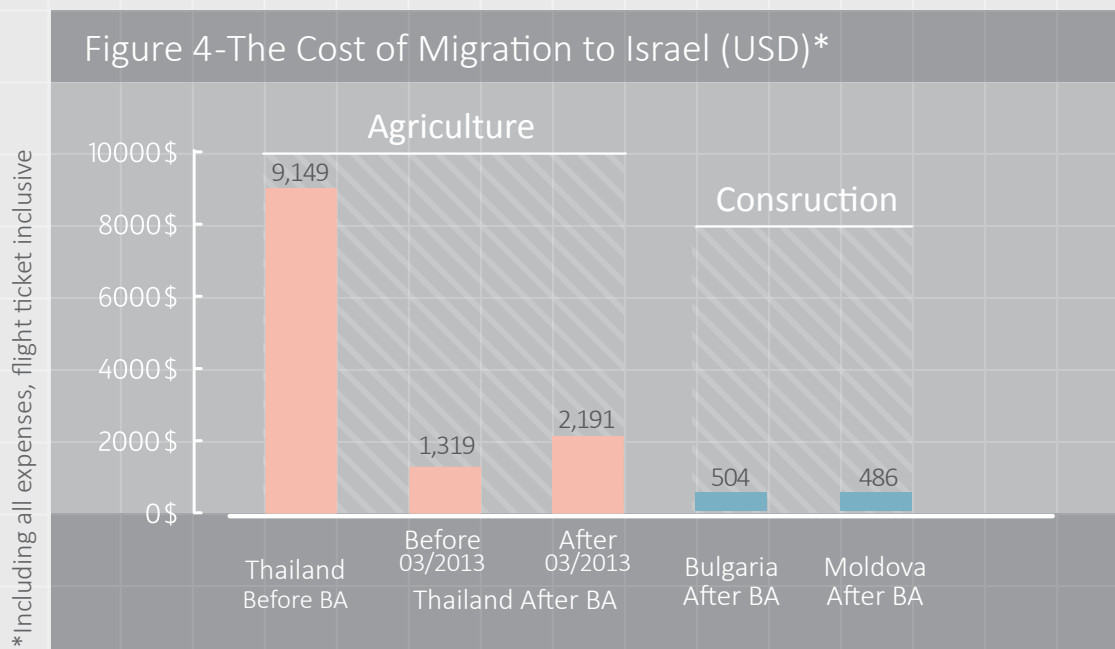
- Sub-agent of private recruiting agency in country of origin
- Sub-agent of private recruitment agency in Israel
- Independently applied to private recruiting agency Know people
- Employer through co-ethnic migrants in Israel
- Migrant's networks directing to a private recruiting agency
- Independently applied to government ministry

### The Cost of Migration

Figure 4 shows the sums of money paid by Thai migrants to obtain permits to work in Israel before and after the BA, and the sums paid by Bulgarian and Moldovan migrants after the implementation of the respective BAs. Before implementation of the BA with Thailand, the recruiting agencies' fees were exorbitant: slightly over \$9,000, as shown in a previous report (Raijman and Kushnirovich, 2012).

However, after the implementation of the BA the "cost of migration" - the total expenses (in US dollars) - fell steeply to an average of \$1,300 for those arriving before March 2013 and about \$2,200 for those arriving after March 2013, when an additional

payment of NIS 2,724 (approximately \$780) to the local manpower agencies in Israel was approved<sup>10</sup>. In the construction sector Bulgarian and Moldovan workers do not pay any recruitment fees but need only cover expenses associated with issuing airline tickets, medical examinations, preparation and translation of documents, and the like. So the cost of migration is quite low, \$500 on average - as compared with the sum paid by Chinese workers arriving through private recruitment: \$22,000 (see Raijman and Kushnirovich 2012). The gap in the "before" and "after" payments made by the migrant workers is a clear indicator of the impact of the new system of recruitment on fees paid by migrants.

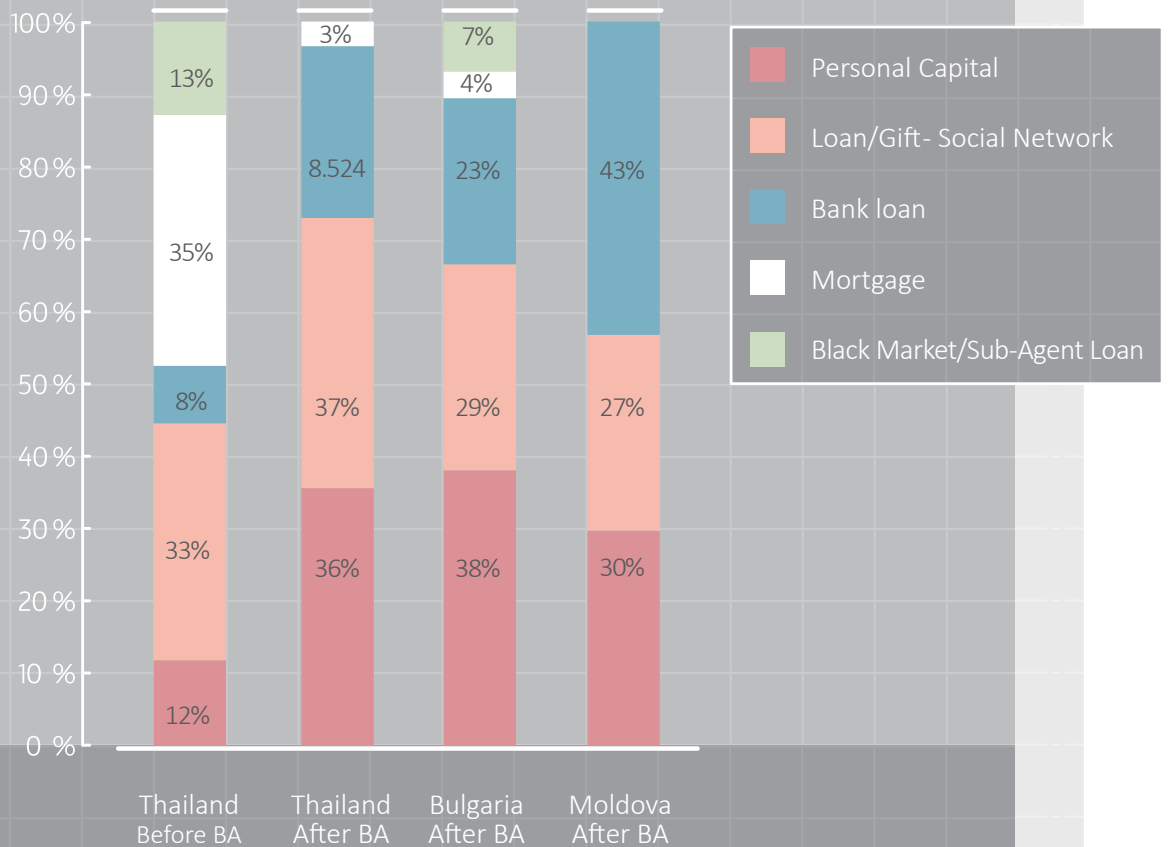


10. See Employment Service Regulations (Payments from Labor Seekers to Mediators), 2006. [www.nevo.co.il/Law\\_Word/law01/999\\_625](http://www.nevo.co.il/Law_Word/law01/999_625). Doc. Accessed June 11, 2014.

### Financing the Costs of Migration

The dramatic reduction of fees has a strong impact on the forms of financing and on the time needed to repay the debt. The data in Figure 5 show the relative share of each funding source constituting the total amount paid in order to work in Israel. Before the BA Thai migrants mostly depended on loans from relatives, friends or from banks (often by mortgaging their homes or land), or turned to the black market. Only a small percentage of Thais had personal savings at their disposal (12 percent). This is not surprising given the huge amounts of money they had to invest to go to work in Israel.

Figure 5- Sources of Funding



But since the BA, with the drastic reduction of fees, more immigrants have been able to finance their journey through personal savings (36 percent) or loans from social networks (mainly family but also friends) (37 percent) which are usually interest-free. The percentage of Thai workers who had to



mortgage their property has decreased from 35 percent to 3 percent, and the percentage of workers applying for a bank loan has risen from 8 percent to 24 percent. These numbers suggest that the reduction in fees allows Thais to apply for a bank loan without needing to put up their property as collateral. Finally, whereas before the BA 13 percent of respondents turned to the black market, this source has not been needed since the agreement's implementation.

Bulgarian and Moldovan workers funded the trip through three main sources: personal savings (38 and 30 percent respectively), loans provided by social networks (29 and 27 percent respectively) and through bank loans (23 and 43 percent respectively).

### Time to Repay the Debt

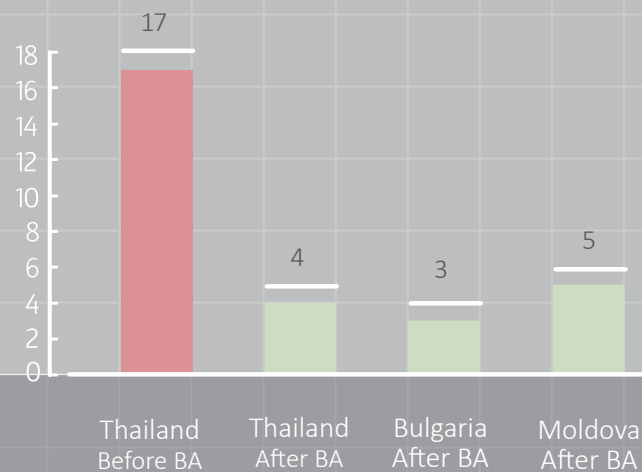
One important concern is the time it takes migrant workers to repay their debts. Figure 6 indicates the dramatic decrease in the average repayment period: from 17 months before the BA to 4 months after it. Stated otherwise, before the BA one-third of the average five-year stay in Israel was devoted to repaying the cost of the fees; now only a few months are needed. This issue is important, among other reasons because migrants in debt are afraid of losing their jobs and therefore tend not to report rights violations and cases of fraud. Among construction workers, Bulgarians and Moldovans managed to repay their debt in 3 and 5 months respectively.

In sum, implementation of the BA has had a strong impact on both the worker recruitment process and the sums migrant workers pay to reach Israel. Before the BA, private agencies were in charge of the recruitment of foreign workers for agriculture and construction, and illegally charged exorbitant fees from prospective migrants. The State of Israel had given these private agencies a central role by creating the very conditions which made them “essential,” that is, by making them the only organizations authorized to recruit labor migrants. Since the implementation of the BA with Thailand, Bulgaria and Moldova, the entire process has been monitored through

its various stages by national ministries (Ministry of Labor in Thailand, Bulgaria and Moldova) and international agencies (IOM in Thailand), and the fees have been greatly reduced, lowering the debts migrants incur to finance their move. This new situation allows to workers to feel free to move among employers, complain in case of rights violations, or even return to their countries of origin before the end of the contract<sup>11</sup>.

Bilateral agreements also have the potential to serve as effective frameworks for migrant workers’ rights. Next we examine the employment and living conditions of Thai, Bulgarian and Moldovan migrant workers in Israel.

Figure 6- Time to Repay the Debt (in months)



11. According to CIMI’s data, from July 2013 to August 2015, 384 Thai workers have applied for a refund of some of the money they have paid upon arrival, as they were returning home before the contract expired. Of these, 311 actually received a refund. The remaining claims are either pending or rejected.

## 2. EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

We survey the employment and living conditions of Thai, Bulgarian and Moldovan migrant workers in Israel, and identify irregularities and abuses of their rights. Our analysis covers; (1) contract violations, (2) monthly wages, (3) mean working hours and days off, (4) overtime pay, (5) health insurance and payment for sick leave, (6) living conditions, and (7) work with hazardous substances and other dangerous working conditions. According to Israeli law, migrant workers in Israel are entitled to the same working conditions as Israeli employees. In addition, employers must provide every foreign employee with a written employment contract in a language s/he understands, private health insurance, and proper housing. Furthermore, BAs contain specific provisions to enhance protection of the migrant workers, for example, through pre-departure orientation, distribution of migrant rights booklets, and the establishment of a hotline in the language of the migrant workers in both Israel and the sending country.

### Contract Violations

In Figure 7 we set out the percentage of migrants reporting that the contract they signed before arrival matched the conditions they encountered just after arrival at their first workplace. As the data reveal, contract violation is a common phenomenon.

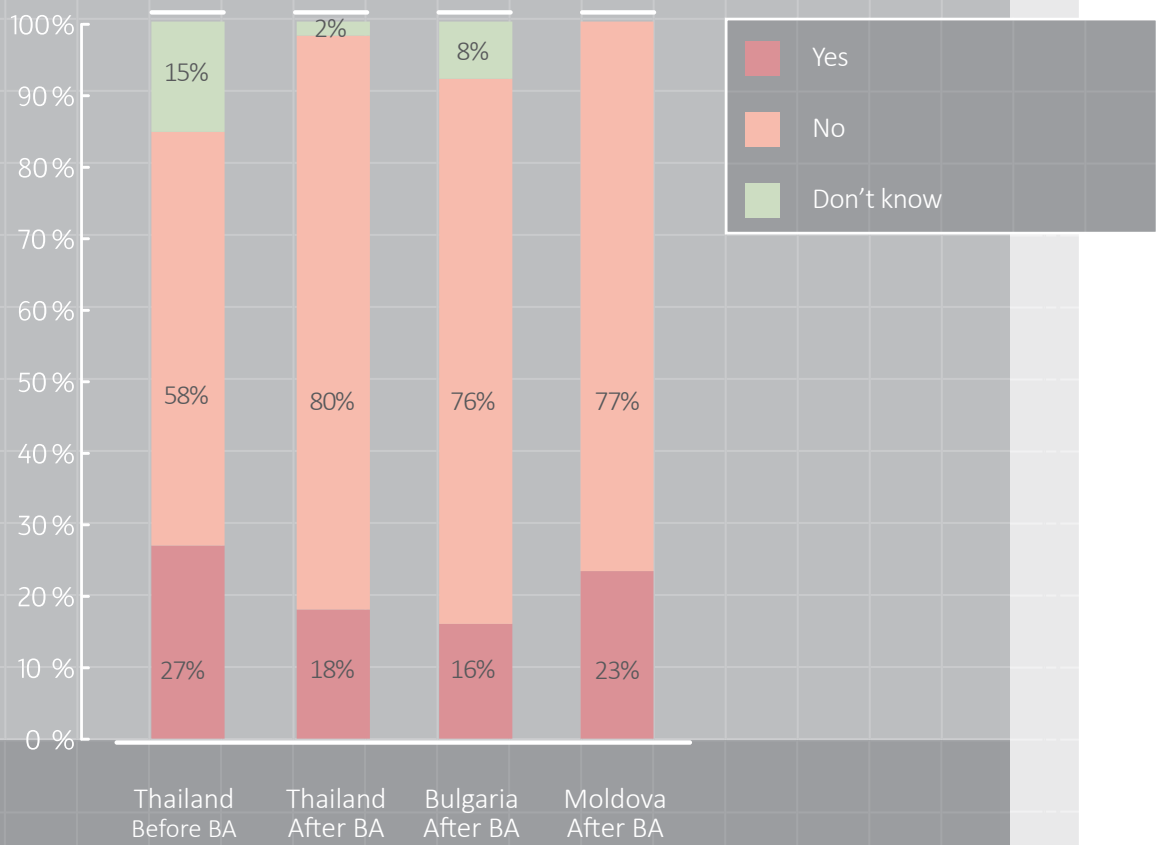
About 80 percent of Thai, Bulgarian and Moldovan migrants who arrived after the implementation of the BA reported that the contract they had signed did not match the working and living conditions encountered upon arrival.

Migrant workers can change their employer and in this way have an opportunity to improve their working conditions. All the following analyses relate to the wages and employment conditions in the worker's current workplace at the time of survey.





Figure 7- Did the Contract Match Labor Conditions in the First Workplace?

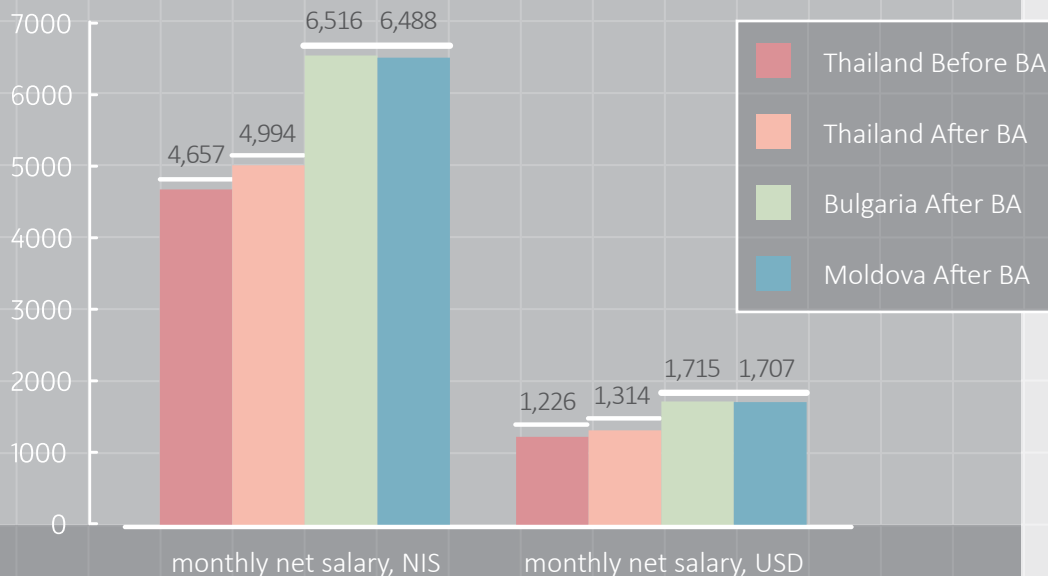


## Wages

Like their Israeli counterparts, foreign workers employed full-time in Israel are entitled to wages not below the monthly minimum wage<sup>12</sup>. Figure 8 presents average net monthly wages (in NIS and US dollars) of Thai migrant workers in agriculture before and after the implementation of the BA, and of Bulgarian and Moldovan migrant workers in construction after the implementation of the BA. First, the data indicate that employers in both employment sectors pay

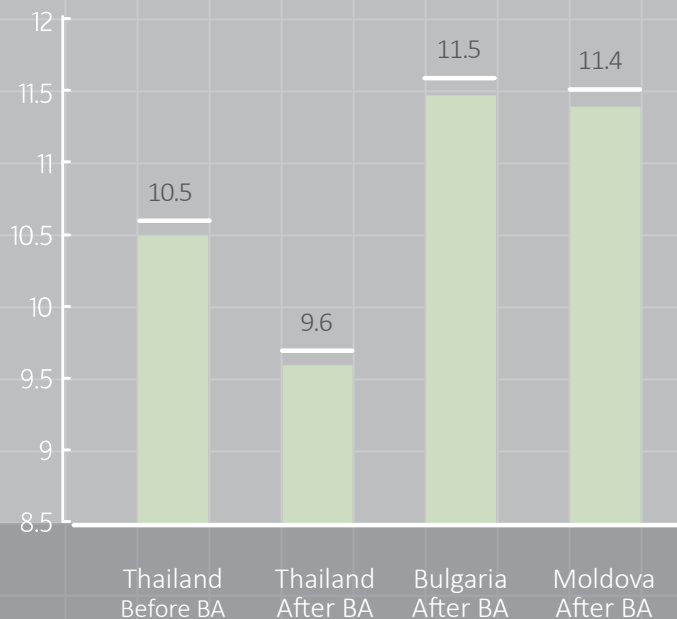
migrant workers a minimum monthly wage as required by Israeli law. Second, the data show that since the BA the net monthly wage of Thai workers in the agriculture sector has increased by 7 percent. Third, the wages of Bulgarian and Moldovan workers are notably higher, reflecting the higher-level salaries paid in Israel's construction sector. The higher salary level in this sector can be explained by the existence of collective agreements, which impose more stringent requirements on employers (e.g. a higher minimum wage).

Figure 8- Average Net Monthly Wages, in NIS and USD



12. In the period of the study, gross monthly minimum wage stipulated by Israeli law rose, as did the exchange rate of the New Israel Shekel. Therefore, the monthly minimum wage in \$USD has remained on the same level, equaling approximately \$1,100-1400 depending on employment sector. Keeping in mind that for foreign workers legally required income tax and national insurance deductions constitute about 10 percent of this sum, and the employer may deduct up to 25 percent of the salary for health insurance, suitable housing, and debts owed to him or her, the net monthly wage will not be less than \$800-1000.

Figure 9- Average Daily Net Working Hours



### Working Hours

Figure 9 shows that the net number of daily working hours of Thai workers has slightly decreased (from 10.5 - before the BA - to 9.6 hours a day - after the BA). Working hours in the construction sector are longer, about 11.5 hours a day.

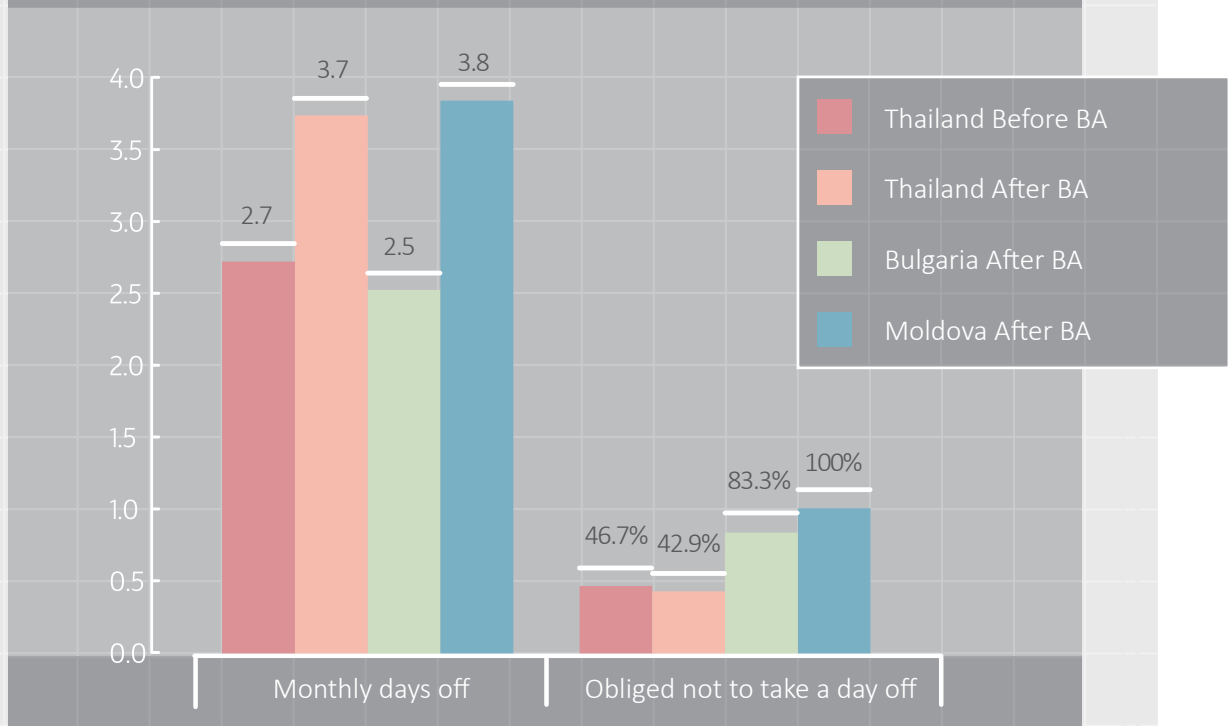
### Days Off

Data in Figure 10 show that since the BA Thai workers in agriculture have reported a relatively higher number of days off per month:

3.7 days as compared with 2.7 days before the BA. In the construction sector Bulgarian workers report an average number of 2.5 days off, and Moldovan workers 3.8 days off.

55 percent of Bulgarian workers did not take a day off during the week before the interview; of these, 83 percent were obliged to forgo their day off. A significantly smaller percentage of Moldovan workers (7 percent) did not take a day off during the week before the interview, but all of them (100 percent) were obliged to forgo it.

Figure 10- Number of Days off per Month



### Overtime Pay

According to Israeli law, a standard full-time job is no more than 9 hours per day. For each additional hour of work employees are entitled to payment at increased hourly rates. Figure 11 shows payment for overtime: only half of Thai and Bulgarian workers and only 11 percent of Moldovan workers reported receiving extra pay for overtime. In the agriculture sector, even since the BA, 18 percent of the workers have

been paid only the regular hourly wage, and 14 percent do not know if they are paid for overtime at all. Thus, implementation of the BA with Thailand has not led to significant improvement in this field. In construction, the situation is significantly worse, especially for Moldovan workers: 43 percent of them have received no overtime pay at all, and 36 percent are paid only the regular hourly wage. Only 11 percent of Moldovan workers reported receiving extra overtime pay.

Figure 11- Overtime pay

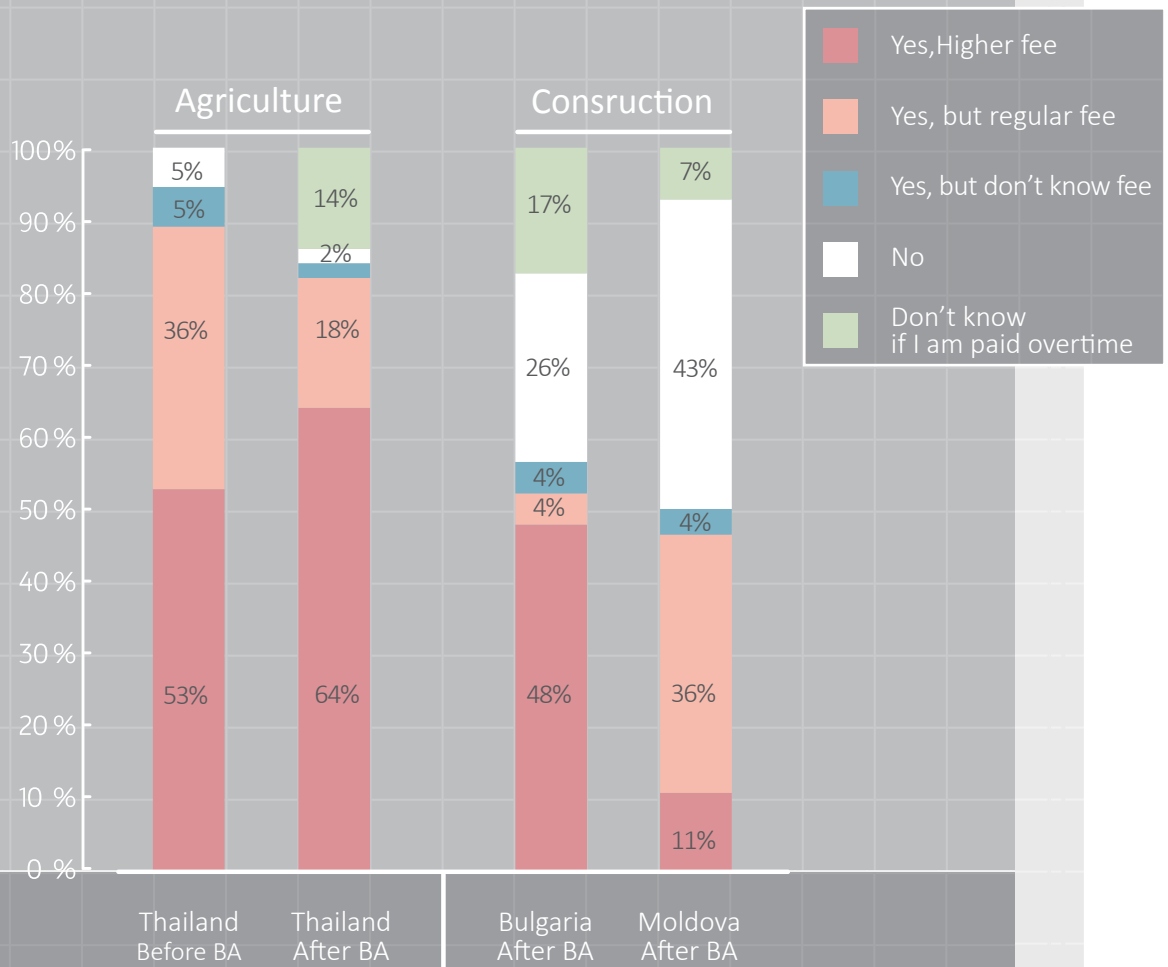
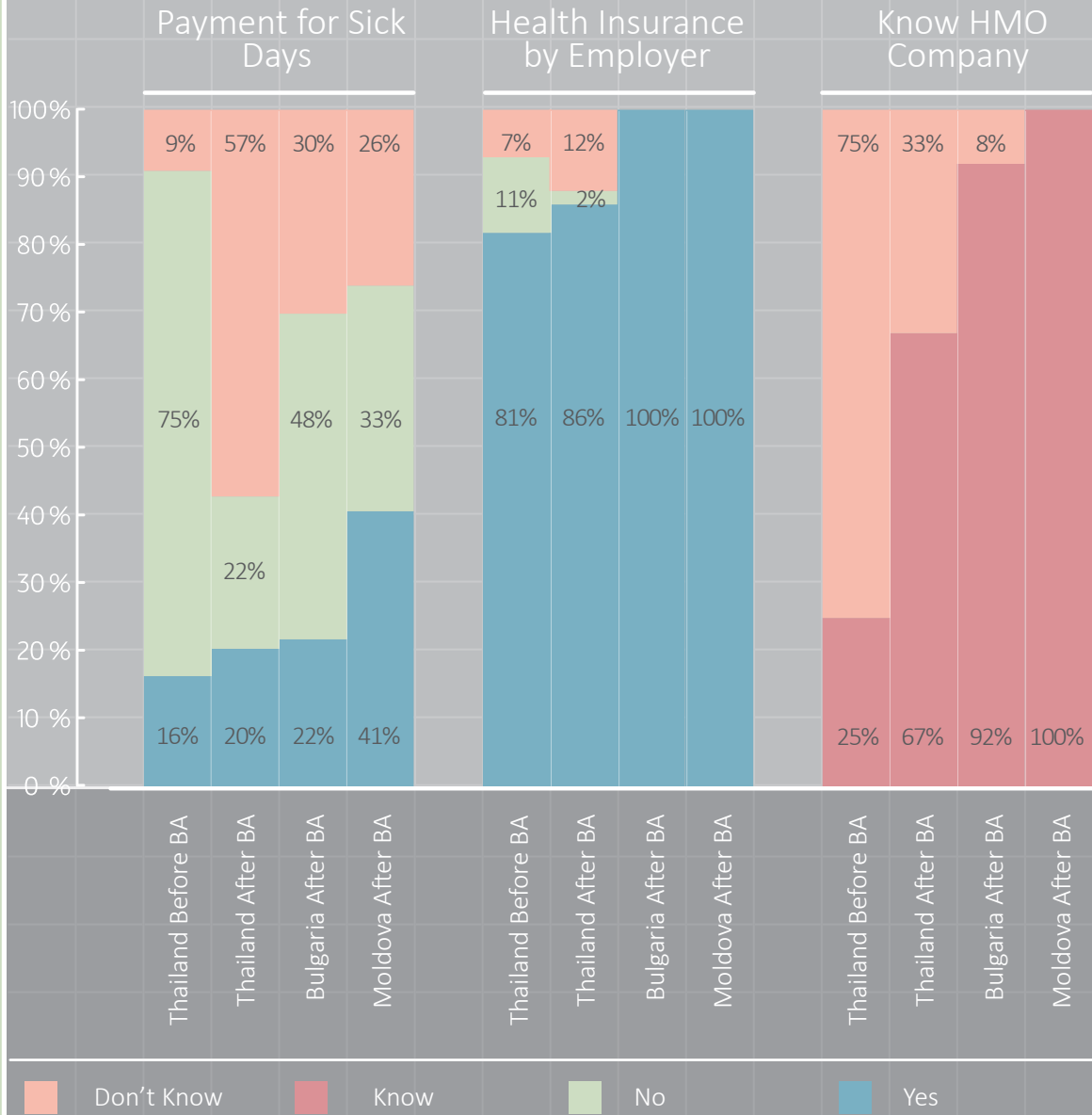


Figure 12- Health Insurance and Paid Sick Leave



### Health Insurance and Payment for Sick Leave

Since foreign workers are not entitled to public health insurance their employers are obliged to provide them with private medical insurance throughout the employment period. Workers are also entitled to payment for sick leave according to the duration of their employment. Figure 12 presents data on health insurance and payment for sick leave in the agriculture and construction sectors.

The data reveal that no improvement has taken place in payment for sick leave since implementation of the BA in the agriculture sector: only 20 percent of Thai workers reported receiving such payment since the BA, as against 16 percent before it. Concomitantly, lack of awareness has increased: before the BA only 9 percent of Thai workers did not know if they were paid

for sick leave; since the BA the figure has risen to 57 percent. This rather high percentage could be explained by the shorter length of stay in the country and not being sick in this period. About half (48%) of Bulgarian workers and a third (33%) of Moldovan workers employed in construction reported not being paid for sick leave, and 30-26% were uncertain whether they receive such payment.

Figure 12 also reveals that health coverage is universal in the construction sector and almost all workers reported knowing the name of the HMO Company. In the agriculture sector, 12 percent of Thai workers arriving since the BA still do not know if their employer has provided them with health insurance. About two-thirds (67 percent) of Thai workers who have health insurance report not knowing the name of the HMO.





Figure 13- Living Conditions of Migrant Workers



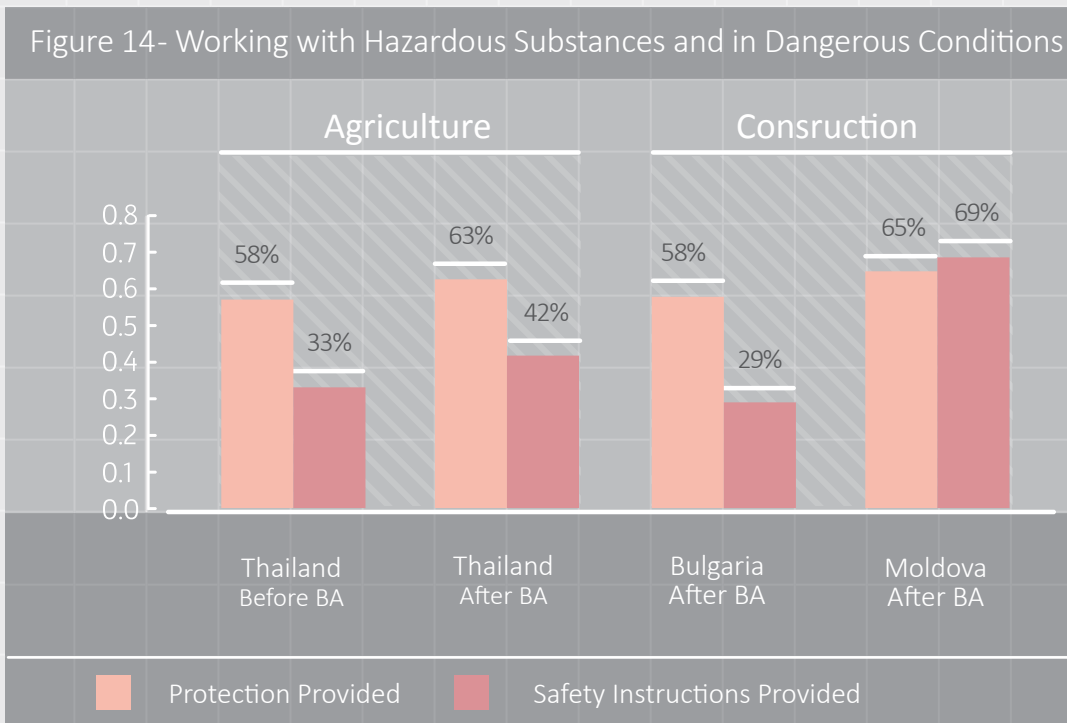
### Living Conditions

Figure 13 reveals a slight improvement in the living conditions of Thai workers after the implementation of the bilateral agreement. Employers still do not provide about a third of them with a closet, electric heating, air conditioner/electric fan or washing machine. Similarly, serious problems with the provision of mandatory home appliances were found in the construction sector where the employer provided only 4 percent of Bulgarian workers and 23 percent of Moldovan workers with an air conditioner and/or electric fan, and only a quarter with electric heating (25 percent of Bulgarian workers and 27 percent of

Moldovan workers); the lowest percentage of workers (4 and 10 percent respectively) were provided with a washing machine. Most of those whom the employer did not provide with home appliances (in contravention of the law) bought them themselves at their own expense.

### Dangerous working conditions

Figure 14 contains data on migrants' self-reports regarding safety conditions at work. Only 58 percent of Bulgarians employed in construction were provided with protection against working dangerous conditions and only 29 percent received safety instructions



when working with hazardous substances or in dangerous conditions. Among Moldovan workers, the situation was better but still inadequate: 65 percent were provided with protection and 69 percent received safety instructions regarding working with dangerous conditions.

In agriculture, circumstances have slightly improved since implementation of the BA: the percentage of Thai workers reporting that employers provide protection when working with hazardous substances has risen from 58 to 63 percent, and the percentage of Thai workers reporting having received safety

instructions has risen from 33 percent to 42 percent. Overall these findings suggest that despite the improvement a relatively high percentage of migrant workers in agriculture and construction are still endangered by unsafe working conditions, and are hence vulnerable to future health problems.

Table 3 summarizes differences in recruitment and employment conditions of Thai migrant workers in Israel's agriculture sector before and after implementation of the BA. Table 4 shows recruitment and employment conditions in the construction sector after the BA.



Table 3: Summary of Changes in Recruitment and Employment Conditions of Thai Migrant Workers after Implementation of the BA with Thailand

Dimensions	Before BA	After BA	Difference between before and after
Recruitment Fees	9,149\$ (average)	1,734\$ (average)	Dramatic decrease
Forms of Recruitment	Private recruiting agencies	Government agencies and IOM	From private actors to state and international actors
Monthly Wage	4,657 NIS	4,994 NIS	Wage has increased by 7%; in the same period average wage in the general Israeli agriculture sector has risen by 10%
Daily Work Hours	10.5	9.6	Slight decrease
Days Off per Month	2.7	3.7	Improved; but 43 percent of workers were obliged not to take days off
Overtime pay	53% reported increased payment	64% reported increased payment	Improvement; still, 18% were not paid at all, and 14% did not know if paid
Sick leave Payment	16% received payment, 9% did not know	20% received payment, 57% did not know	No improvement; awareness decreased
Know the Name of Their Health Medical Organization	25%	67%	Significant improvement
Living Conditions	About half not provided with closet, electric heating, air conditioner/ electric fan and washing machine.	About a third not provided with closet, electric heating, air conditioner/electric fan and washing machine.	Slight improvement
Protection Provided in Case of Dangerous Conditions	58% were provided with protection	63 % were provided with protection	Slight improvement
Safety Instruction	33 % received instructions	42% received instructions	Improvement

Table 4: Summary of Recruitment and Employment Conditions of Migrant Workers after Implementation of BA in Construction Sector

Dimensions	Bulgaria (after BA, 2013)	Moldova (after BA, 2014)	Conclusion
Recruitment Fees	504\$ (average)	486\$ (average)	About 500\$, only travel expenses
Forms of Recruitment	Government agencies	Government agencies	State and international actors
Monthly Wage	6,516 NIS	6,488 NIS	Although average wage in construction sector was 1.5% higher in 2014 than in 2013; Moldovan workers were paid slightly lower wage than Bulgarian workers
Daily Work Hours	11.5	11.4	Long working hours
Days Off per Month	2.5. 83.3% of those who did not take a day off were obliged not to do so	3.8. 100% of those who did not take a day off were obliged not to do so	More days off for Moldovan workers; those who did not take days off were obliged not to do so
Overtime pay	48% reported receiving extra pay	11% reported receiving extra pay	Moldovan workers are worse off than Bulgarian workers
Sick Leave Payment	22% received pay, 30% did not know	41% received pay, 26% did not know	Situation is better among Moldovan workers, but is still insufficient
Know name of Health Insurance Organization	92%	100%	High awareness
Living Conditions	Only 4% provided with air conditioner/ electric fan and washing machine, only 25% with electric heating	Only 23% provided with air conditioner/electric fan, 10% with washing machine, and 27% with electric heating	Inadequate provision of home appliances
Protection Provided in Case of Dangerous Work Conditions	58% provided with protection	65% provided with protection	Slight improvement in 2014, but still insufficient protection
Safety Instruction	29% received instructions	69% received instructions	Improvement in 2014

## Conclusions

The picture that emerges from our analysis is that the implementation of bilateral agreements had an impact on the forms of recruitment of migrant workers in agriculture and construction. The entire process is now coordinated through government ministries, recruitment fees have fallen steeply (Thailand) or are annulled (Bulgaria and Moldova). This major change is a clear indicator of the impact of the bilateral agreements in dismantling the previous “migration industry” in agriculture and construction. The successful experience of bilateral agreements in the agriculture and construction sectors in lowering the cost of migration suggests the need to implement the same type of arrangements in the caregiving sector, in which migrant workers must still pay exorbitant fees to go to work in Israel.

The impact of the bilateral agreements on migrant workers’ employment conditions is less evident. In the agriculture sector, work hours have slightly decreased, number of monthly days off has increased, and workers’ knowledge of their HMO (Health Medical Organization) and safety in the workplace have improved since implementation of the BA. However, there has been no improvement in payment for sick leave, and about a third of the workers are not provided by the employer with closet, electric heating, air conditioner/electric fan or washing machine.

In the construction sector, implementation of BA led to greater knowledge about the Health Medical Organization. However, violations still exist with regard to overtime pay and provision of home appliances. A comparison of workers from Moldova and from Bulgaria (BA with Moldova was implemented later than that with Bulgaria) shows an improvement in most issues (number of days off, payment for sick leave, health insurance awareness, living conditions, protection and safety in the workplace). However, some issues such as wages and overtime pay have not improved, but have even worsened.

Overall, despite some improvement of the working and living conditions since implementation of the BAs, serious violations of migrants’ rights still exist in the construction and in the agricultural sector alike. These severe violations suggest that enforcement of labor laws is far from what it should be, despite enhanced awareness of rights and greater accessibility of complaint mechanisms. Combating irregularities and violations ultimately depends on regulations and their enforcement. While the laws and regulations in Israel are fairly well developed, a more profound and thorough enforcement of laws protecting migrants’ rights is needed.





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