



רשות האוכלוסין וההגירה  
Population and Immigration  
Authority



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# 2017

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## Data

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



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## Background

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The aim of the bilateral agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers<sup>1</sup> 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 2010, the Israeli government signed a bilateral (inter-governmental) agreement with the government of Thailand, implemented as part of the Thailand-Israel Cooperation project (TIC) with the aim of preventing the collection of illegal recruitment fees from foreign workers in the agricultural sector. The agreement's terms came into effect in 2012. Later, similar agreements were signed with the governments of Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, the Ukraine, and China in the construction sector. In 2015, agreements to implement a pilot project in the caregiving sector were signed with the governments of Nepal and Sri Lanka. In addition, beginning in 2010, seasonal agricultural workers from Sri Lanka arrived in Israel as part of a bilateral agreement.<sup>2</sup> To this day, about 37,000 male and female workers have arrived in Israel as part of these agreements, and 28,000 of them were still in Israel at the end of 2017. The bilateral agreements are currently under review and development, prior to the drafting of additional agreements for the future.

As part of the bilateral agreements, 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 in July 2012, providing a resource to workers in their native languages. This hotline is operated by CIMI; calls to the hotline are registered as inquiries or complaints and transferred to PIBA. PIBA then refers the inquiry or complaint to the relevant unit(s) in the authorized government ministries. The call data is compiled by a computerized system that directs the calls to their appropriate destinations; this system also allows for the systematic collection of call 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.<sup>3</sup>

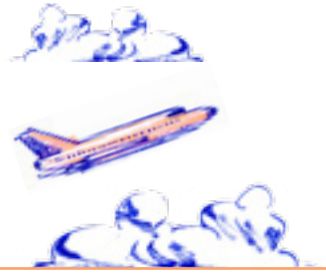
CIMI, a non-profit organization founded by JDC-Israel, operates in collaboration with PIBA, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations in the workers' countries of origin. The organization assists in advertising the possibility of arriving to work in Israel as part of the bilateral agreement, sorting the suitable workers, and coordinating their trips 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 seasonal work in many crops in 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 seasonal worker in the following year.
  3. The data in the different parts of the booklet is accurate as of 31.12.2017.

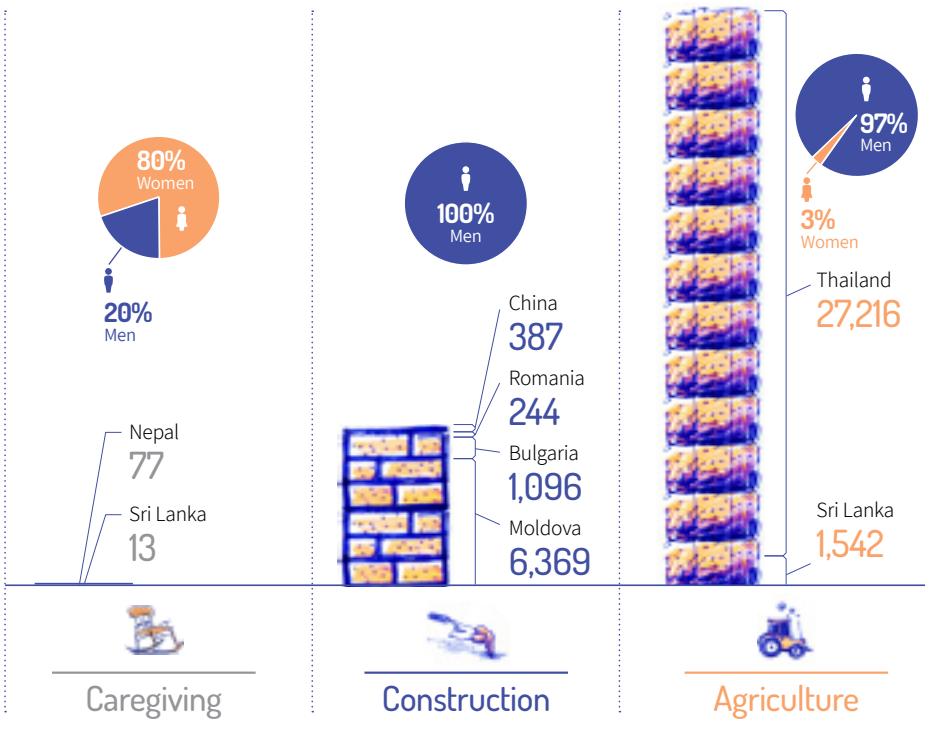
The bilateral agreements have significantly reduced the collection of illegal recruitment funds, and, as a result, the cost of arriving in Israel has dropped from tens of thousands of dollars to several hundred dollars paid legally. As part of the agreements,

a sum of nearly \$191,345,130

has already been saved in the agriculture and caregiving sectors alone.<sup>4</sup>



## Foreign Workers Arriving as Part of the Bilateral Agreements: Sectors and Countries of Origin<sup>5</sup>



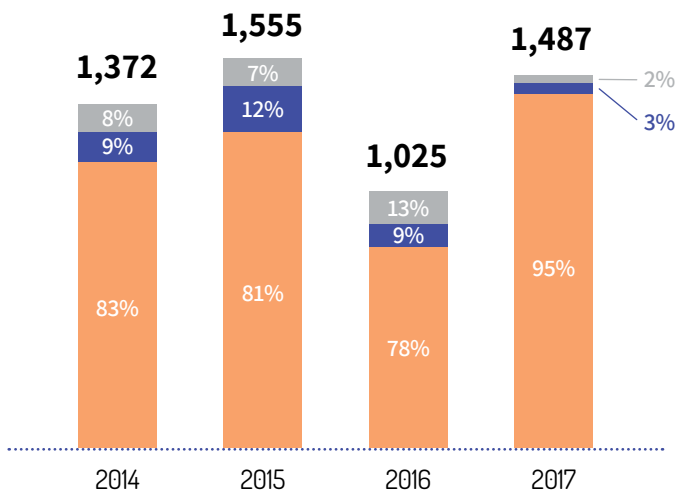
4. For regulations on the sums that can be legally collected from foreign workers for services by a recruitment agency in the agriculture and caregiving sectors, see the website of the Israeli Employment Service, [https://www.nevo.co.il/law\\_html/law01/500\\_818.htm](https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law01/500_818.htm).

5. The data regarding the number of workers arriving as part of the agreements is cumulative.

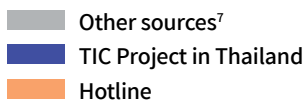
## 4 Inquiries and Complaints<sup>6</sup> Received by the Hotline



In the past 4 years, **5,439** inquiries or complaints were recorded by the hotline, made by **2,932** workers.



### Source of Complaints



6. The Hotline receives inquiries on various subjects. Some of the inquiries are complaints that are referred to other parties and handled by them. See p. 8.

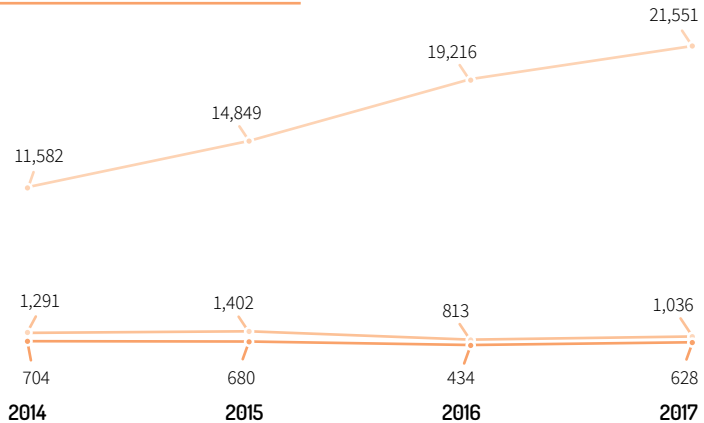
7. Other sources include: the Thai embassy in Israel, the La Strada organization (Moldova), the Moldovan Employment Bureau, the Romanian Labor Ministry.

## Distribution According to Sector



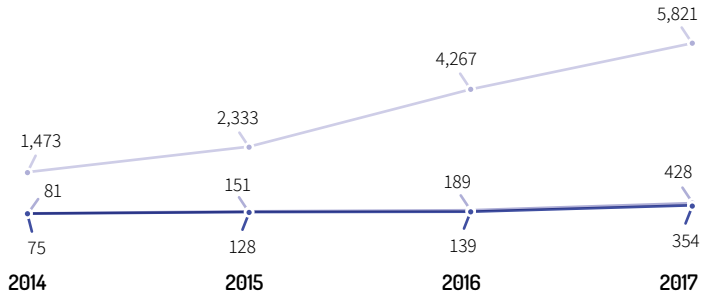
### Agricultural sector<sup>8</sup>

- ▬ Number of workers in Israel
- ▬ Number of inquiries
- ▬ Number of workers calling the hotline



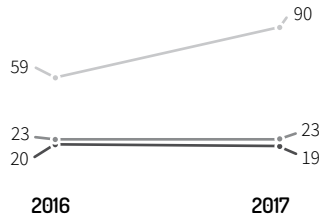
### Construction Sector

- ▬ Number of workers in Israel
- ▬ Number of inquiries
- ▬ Number of workers calling the hotline



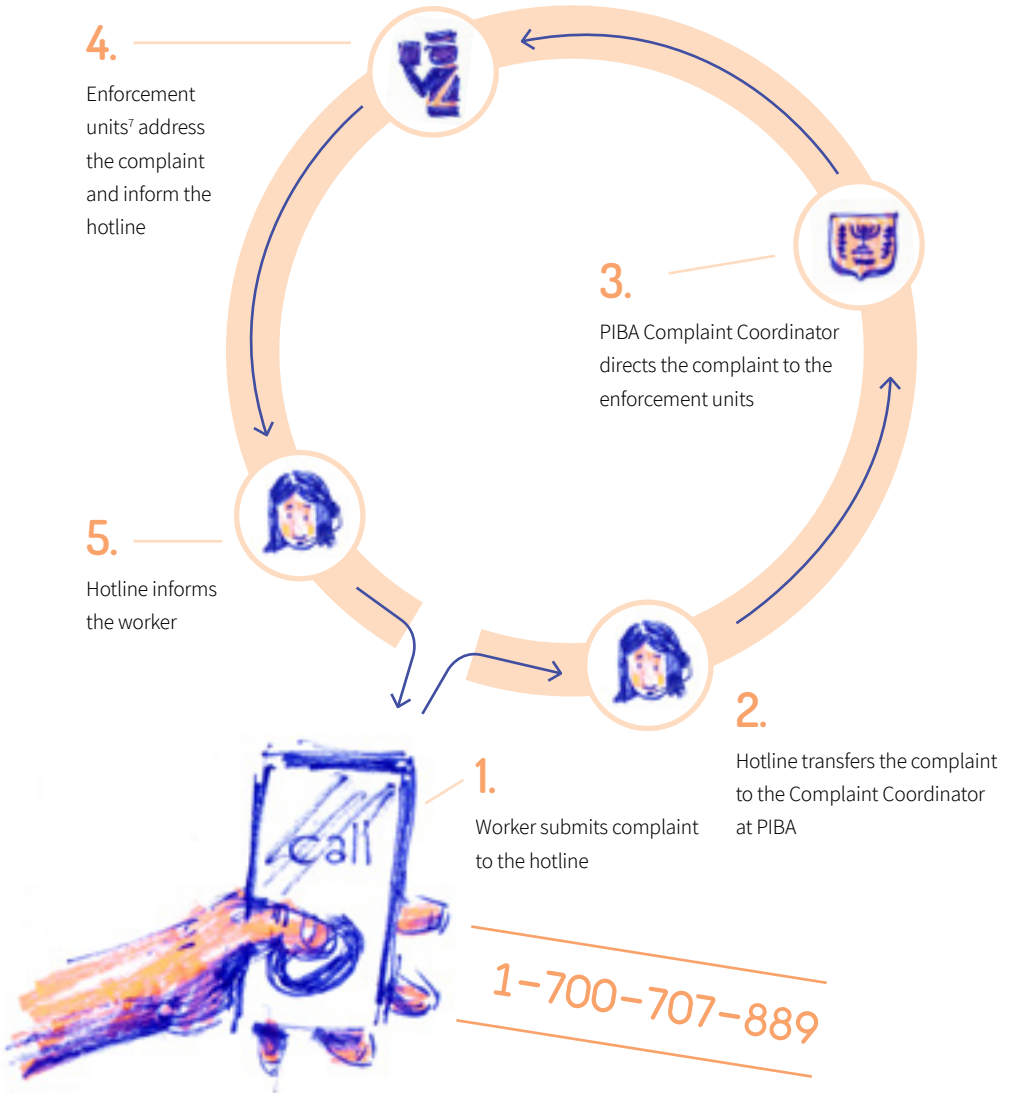
### Caregiving Sector

- ▬ Number of workers in Israel
- ▬ Number of inquiries
- ▬ Number of workers calling the hotline



8. As of today, the number of workers in the agricultural sector arriving to work in Israel as part of a bilateral agreement is much higher than the number of workers arriving as part of the agreements in the construction and caregiving fields. Accordingly, workers from this sector are the source for the great majority of inquiries to the hotline.

# Complaint Handling Procedure



9. 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 Enforcement Unit:



**“Today we arrived in Israel, and when we reached our living quarters, we saw a dusty, neglected caravan, without blankets or pillows and without kitchen utensils. These are not adequate living conditions. We really need help before the weekend so we have a place to live.”**



The hotline transferred the call to the PIBA complaint coordinator, marking it as urgent.



The coordinator transferred the case for urgent handling by the PIBA Enforcement Unit.



The PIBA Enforcement Unit contacted the employer immediately and ordered him to prepare the living quarters for the workers and provide them with the necessary equipment.



The hotline translator spoke with the worker the same evening, and he confirmed that “the employer brought us pillows and blankets, and now he’s working on cleaning and arranging the place and the kitchen utensils.” The worker was also given a telephone number he could call on the weekend if anything urgent came up. After the weekend the hotline translator contacted the worker again, and he reported that “the living conditions problem was solved and everything is fine now.”

## Example of complaint handling procedure by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services:



**“My employer didn’t pay my February wages.”**

The hotline transferred the case to the PIBA coordinator.



The PIBA coordinator transferred the complaint to the Inquiries and Complaints Department at the Ministry of Labor and Welfare, and from there it was transferred for handling by the Administrative Enforcement Branch.



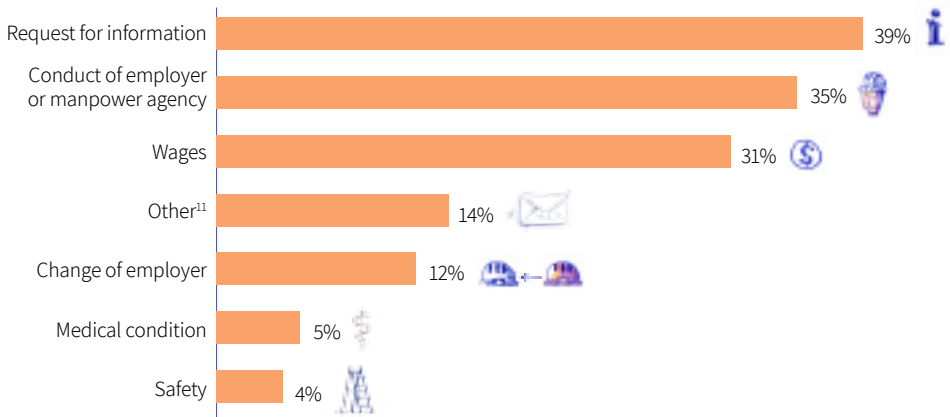
The Administrative Enforcement Branch opened an investigation, which found that the employer had not paid the worker a minimum wage. Following the investigation procedure, the employer was issued a notice requiring him to pay a fine. In addition the employer was issued two administrative warnings regarding non-provision of a wage slip and holding back wages. The Inquiries and Complaints Department at the Ministry of Labor informed the hotline.



The hotline contacted the worker and informed him of the developments. He was also provided with information on how to submit a lawsuit in a civil court demanding the sums the employer owes him.

# 8 Issues of Inquiries and Complaints<sup>10</sup>

Number of times an issue appeared out of total inquiries and complaints



10. The percentage represents the number of times the subject appeared out of the total number of inquiries and complaints.

11. Other issues include: unemployed worker, no visa, harassment of worker, drugs, violent behavior of coworkers.

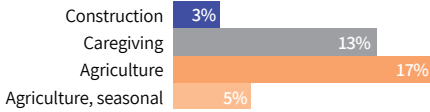


# Characteristics of Complaint Subjects by Sector

Common complaint subjects in each employment sector, out of total complaints in each sector



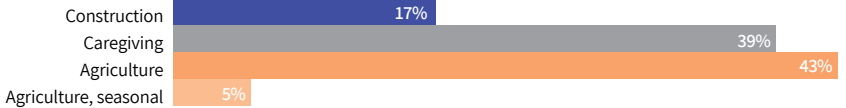
**Change of Employer**



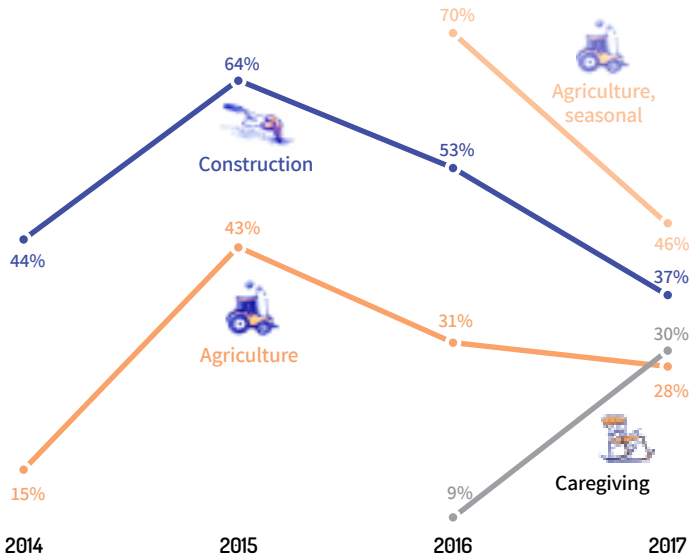
**Wages**



**Manpower agency/  
privat agency and employer  
conduct**



Complaints regarding wages as a percentage of total yearly complaints, by sector



# 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. For the most part, the hotline assists in providing information, PIBA handles employer/manpower agency conduct and changing employers, and the Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services handles complaints regarding wages<sup>12</sup> and work safety.

Out of the **1,487** inquiries and complaints submitted to the hotline in the past year,



**685**

complaints required a response from the hotline

out of which

**680**

were addressed and closed.



**381**

complaints were transferred to PIBA

out of which

**346**

were addressed and closed by the responsible bodies at PIBA.<sup>13</sup> Out of the complaints transferred to the Enforcement Unit, violations were found in 8 complaints, and no violations were found in 63 complaints.



**335**

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

out of which

288 were transferred to the Regulation and Enforcement Administration, including: 127 complaints which are currently being investigated and handled by the Regulation and Enforcement Administration; in 15 complaints, monetary fines were imposed on employers; in 29 complaints, the investigation has been completed and decisions are about to be made; 22 complaints were closed without findings; 49 complaints were closed due to an existing procedure ongoing against the employer; and 47 complaints were closed for other reasons. The other 47 complaints were transferred to the Safety Administration.



**86**

complaints were closed for other reasons.<sup>14</sup>

12. In the case of complaints regarding wages, the Regulation and Enforcement Administration at the Ministry of Labor cannot return sums of money owed to the worker, but can only issue an administrative or criminal sanction to the employer after completing an investigation into the case. Therefore, regardless of whether the handling of the case with the employer has ended or is ongoing, in order to receive legal aid and compensation the worker must, in parallel, submit a lawsuit through a civil court.
13. The responsible bodies are: PIBA hotline coordinators, the Enforcement Unit, the Administrative Enforcement Branch, and the Payments Branch.
14. Other reasons include: the worker rescinded the complaint, the complaint lacks details, the worker is uncooperative, the complaint was already received through other channels.



The Population and  
Immigration Authority  
[www.piba.org.il](http://www.piba.org.il)

The Center for International  
Migration and Integration  
[www.cimi.org.il](http://www.cimi.org.il)