



HOTLINE FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

Annual Report 2007

I. Introduction	03
II. Refugees and Asylum Seekers	
1. Background	04
2. Humanitarian Assistance	05
3. Sons of Darfur	06
4. Eritrean Asylum Seekers	07
III. Trafficking in Persons	
A. Trafficking in Persons	
1. Internal Trafficking	08
2. External Trafficking	09
B. Sex Trafficking of Foreign Women	
1. Health	10
2. Sex Advertising	11
3. Legal Justice System	12
4. Trafficking Cases	12
C. Labor Trafficking	
1. Trafficking Cases	14
2. Enforcement of Legislation Prohibiting Labor Trafficking	15
3. Integration of Migrants and Trafficking Departments	16
4. Forced Labor	17
IV. Migrant Workers	
1. Background	18
2. The Binding Policy	18
3. Children of Migrant Workers- An Update	20
V. Education and Events	
1. Lecture Program	21
2. Trafficking Education and Research	23
3. Media	24
VI. Unaccompanied Minors	
1. Cases and Accomplishments	25
2. A Case Study	26
VII. Choosing Freedom	
1. International Conference	27
2. Courses and Special Events	28
VIII. In Conclusion	
A. Volunteer and Staff Development	29
B. About Us	30
C. Financial Information	31

I. Introduction

Dear Friends,

It is my great honor and pleasure to write this introduction to the Hotline for Migrant Worker's 2007 annual activities report.

The past year was especially challenging as, in addition to our regular activities, we were confronted with a fairly new issue: the arrival of thousands of asylum seekers into Israel. In a short time frame, we needed to adapt ourselves to meet the urgent needs of this new and traumatized population – hundreds of whom were detained. Meanwhile, massive swings in governmental policy further complicated our efforts. For example, after tremendous advocacy on our part and others, temporary residency status was granted to some 600 refugees from Darfur while simultaneously 80 children (including a newborn) and their mothers were incarcerated in freezing tents in the Negev without access to proper sanitary and educational facilities.

It gives me great pride to mention that we recruited some 75 new volunteers and provided crucial organizational support for newly founded and managed refugee self-help organizations such as the Sons of Darfur. I also think it's worth mentioning that the Hotline for Migrant Workers' wonderful work was acknowledged by the Sderot Conference for Society (November 2007) in which we obtained a prestigious award for positively impacting Israeli society. This is another indication that, as Israel turns 60, activities which used to be perceived as controversial are now viewed as important contributions in the shaping of a better Israel.

As always, we could not have reached these achievements without the close work and cooperation of traditional partners such as Kav LaOved, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, The Refugee Right Legal Clinic at TAU, Physicians for Human Rights, Amnesty International, Isha l'Isha- Haifa Feminist Center and Messila. We are also grateful for new and increased cooperation with organizations such as ASSAF and the African Refugees Development Center. These partnerships prove that by working together, we can achieve the impossible.

As I conclude, I want to note our wonderful staff and volunteers who continue to energetically and optimistically promote human rights in Israel. I especially want to thank our Executive Director, Shevy Korzen, for her tireless dedication to the organization and exceptionally high management standards. A recent financial audit performed by the Israeli Authority overseeing non-profit organizations recognized her responsible use of our budget and provided our management with a strong vote of confidence.

Last, but surely not least, I am grateful to our donors and members who enable us to achieve our mutual goal of creating a better Israel.

Myriam Darmoni Sharvit, Chairwoman



II. Refugees and Asylum Seekers



1. Background

Each year, despite meticulous planning, one issue tends to dominate all others. Undoubtedly, 2007 was characterized by refugees and asylum seekers.

As protection for refugees in Egypt deteriorated some 5,500 refugees from Africa entered Israel during the calendar year. However, the country was unprepared for their arrival; lack of consistent policy left refugees alternatively imprisoned, released to the streets and returned to detention. The burden of caring for thousands of new arrivals, to a large degree, fell on NGOs and private individuals. Together with our partners, we were at the forefront of these efforts.

We assisted detained and released refugees, worked closely with newly founded refugee self-help organizations and developed innovative solutions to meet critical humanitarian needs. While this situation on the ground demanded concerted action, we stayed true to our mission of social change. Staff met with decision-makers to impact policy, built coalitions with partners, developed and presented position papers, filed critical legal petitions and worked intensively with the media, academia and the public to harness their support for refugees - both practical and otherwise.

2. Humanitarian Assistance

For **detained refugees**, our staff and volunteers conducted the following activities:

- We visited Ketziot prison 12 times. During January and July visits, we distributed donated clothing (from concerned citizens), 400 socks, 650 pairs of underwear and 100 blankets (funded by the American Jewish Committee) and 510 phone cards (most of which were funded by the Israel Religious Action Center). During each visit, group meetings were held.
- We visited Ramon and Nafha prisons three times.
- We conducted weekly visits to Maasiyahu prison where about 50% of the detainees are asylum seekers.
- We answered over 1,000 calls to our telephone hotline from asylum seekers.
- We represented 600 asylum seekers in requests for release from detention, writing 182 letters on their behalf.
- Together with the Refugee Rights Clinic, we released 97 refugees to alternative detention sites including kibbutzim (3), moshavim (7) and hotel chains (2).
- We submitted requests for release of 18 families detained at Ketziot, three of which were approved by the end of 2007.

For refugees **released** by the prison authorities and the army, we:

- We found job placements and housing for 523 and facilitated placement in jobs and housing for hundreds more.
- We identified and met with kibbutzim, moshavim and hotels, to convince them to accept refugee families. During the initial stage of this endeavor, we placed 20 families directly on appropriate sites. Later on, these sites absorbed families in consultation with us but without our direct assistance. Where relevant, we facilitated the release of husbands from detention.
- We found emergency accommodations for 34 released refugees including 11 men, two single women, eight mothers and 13 children. We subsequently identified permanent living arrangements for them. Beginning in late May, we assisted other voluntary groups, most notably Assaf, in finding solutions for released refugees.





3. Sons of Darfur

The year 2007 saw the emergence of new refugee self-help groups. Prominent among them is the *Sons of Darfur* organization. *Sons of Darfur* was founded by a core group of some of the first 50 Darfurian refugees to enter Israel. Upon official founding of the group in August 2007, *Sons of Darfur* asked to use our office space to conduct their activities and we were happy to assist them."



The group primarily aids Darfurian refugees; they aim to develop a communal identity for those in Israel while providing social, health, educational and cultural programming and services. In addition to grassroots activism and assistance, representatives act as liaisons with the government and the Israeli public to advance the cause of the organization and the Darfurian people in general. *Sons of Darfur* hopes to help individual members achieve self-sufficiency and economic independence while promoting joint action to advance their status as a group.



In January 2008, due to advocacy by *Sons of Darfur*, other groups and the international community, the government started to grant 600 Darfurian refugees in Israel temporary residency status. We hope this represents a beginning point in the long road to healthy integration into Israel.

In addition to hosting the group, *Hotline* staff works directly with members providing advice and guidance on functioning as a non-profit organization, fundraising, legal help, developing and maintaining contacts with the media, and assistance in volunteer recruitment and management.

One of *Sons of Darfur's* clients is the Mohamed family- consisting of a father, mother and three children. After a traumatic four years in Egypt and a harrowing journey into Israel, the family entered Israel in the summer of 2007, primarily seeking a future for their children. However, their arrival was rough; they were re-located some seven times culminating in a four month stay in detention. Upon release in January 2008, *Sons of Darfur* helped the Mohamed family establish residency in Tel Aviv. Initially hosted by another family, with consultation from the *Hotline for Migrant Workers*, the organization found an apartment for

them and a donor for first months' rent. Currently *Sons of Darfur* is helping to register their children for school, thus fulfilling their dream of securing an education for their children. The family is slated to receive temporary residency status.

4. Eritrean Asylum Seekers

In 1993, following 30 years of civil war with Ethiopian, Eritrean became an independent State. Since that time, Eritrea has been engaged in a succession of conflicts with its neighbors. Due to this constant state of unrest, and a small population base, the government instituted a policy of mandatory army conscription for all men aged 18-45, which is prolonged indefinitely.

Despite the danger to themselves and their families, many choose to defect and flee the country. Those that manage to reach Egypt, like many other Africans, suffer from grinding poverty, harassment and discrimination on racial and religious grounds.

In mid-2007, Eritrean asylum seekers began to enter Israel; by the end of 2007, some 2,000 were in the country. To date, Israel had not deported them because they face life danger if returned to Eritrea. In September, with no oversight provided and under restrictive conditions, the government released 200 to alternative custody in agricultural settlements. This policy resulted in numerous human rights violations. A typical situation, documented by one of our volunteers, follows:

After spending two months in prison, A. was released to a moshav near Beit Shean. He and others were told this would be a two month placement and they would earn 18-20NIS an hour (about minimum wage). However, upon arrival they were informed that the actual wage was 13NIS an hour. From this meager sum, they were forced to pay for six months of health insurance, food and similar deductions. Upon inquiring why they were not earning what they had been promised, their employer informed them that this was the going rate for Eritrean nationals.

A. and three others worked 10-15 hours a day, six days a week, in swelteringly hot greenhouses. The four asylum seekers slept in a shipping container with no air conditioning, no ventilation, insufficient furniture and no facilities. They shared one toilet, two showers, two gas burners and a small refrigerator with 20 Thai workers. Needless to say, they were dependent on the good will of the Thais to access these facilities.

Completely disconnected from the outside world, in December, with the expiry of their protection papers and no end to this situation in sight, they fled to Tel Aviv.

Our Crisis Intervention Center, together with students participating in the Refugee Rights Legal Clinic, assisted 283 Eritrean clients in late 2007, all with similar stories. On the 7th of January 2008, the first 100 Eritrean nationals received open work permits. We hope this policy will continue.

III. Trafficking in Persons



A. Trafficking of Israeli Women for Prostitution

In recent years, due to rising public awareness, sustained efforts by NGOs and - most significantly - US government pressure, the trafficking of foreign women for prostitution into Israel has decreased. However, client demand has not waned. This gap is increasingly being filled by Israeli women. Economic difficulties have also made Israeli women, and particularly new immigrants, vulnerable to being trafficked abroad.

Internal Trafficking:

In 2007, we began to investigate the situation of internally trafficked women and Israeli prostitution by working closely with a sexually transmitted diseases clinic in south Tel Aviv. We were specifically seeking to define the nature of prostitution while identifying survivors.

While sex trafficking has largely moved underground, Israeli women working the streets have become increasingly visible. They represent the weakest social strata in Israel; new immigrants, sexually exploited and others with no social safety network.

Many are homeless drug addicts and they operate in extremely unhealthy and unsafe conditions. In late 2007, four prostitutes were found dead in south Tel Aviv. No shelter or half-way house exists for these women. They are so severely disempowered that providing any form of assistance is very challenging.

To bring attention to this situation, we sent two letters to people in government outlining the problem and requesting government - sponsored aid for such women.

External Trafficking:

In October 2006, we began to see advertisements seeking Israeli women for work abroad. Located in 'help wanted' sections of various publications, they sought "liberal" women for "discrete work" at a "huge salary." During the period October 2006 - July 2007 we found 11 such advertisements. We conducted nine telephone conversations regarding work in eight locations including Ireland, London, Athens, Singapore, Manchester and Croatia. Many advertisements are in the Russian language press leading us to believe that new immigrants are being targeted. We submitted transcriptions of conversations indicating trafficking, plus two more advertisements, to the police for investigation.

In late May, due to our activism, a female trafficker bringing women to Ireland was arrested. The case is currently in court. We know of nine women trafficked through this ring however believe the total numbers to be higher as in each telephone conversation the 'agents' informed us that other women had already traveled. The police have notified us that they are investigating three additional cases.

Quotes by a Trafficker in a Conversation with One of Our Volunteers:

"Fine, OK. So... uh...good... um... have you worked in that before?"

"Listen, it depends on how you look. Do you understand? If you look good... What is good? You don't have to be a beauty queen or anything like that but you need to have a decent body- skinny. You understand what I'm saying. Or a big chest or something like that."

"Yes, you return the flight money once you get there. Listen, if you don't have a way to pay for the flight, so no problem, I will pay for your flight here in Israel and once you are there you can refund me the money."

"If it is legal? Listen, if there's a law? I'll tell you what...ah...legal, legal, legal... I don't think so but it doesn't bother them as long as you tell them you are independent... If, G-d forbid, something were to happen, but it didn't happen, isn't happening and won't happen, you just say something like that you are independent. Understand?"

B. Sex Trafficking of Foreign Women

1. Health

Currently, women residing in the shelter receive healthcare for on-going and basic healthcare needs, but not for severe illnesses such as cancer, AIDS or hepatitis. Trafficked women outside of the shelter are not provided with any healthcare. This is a serious problem for many women including Olga and Victoria.

Olga, 39 years old, was trafficked to Israel in 1999. About a month after arrival, Olga was 'purchased' for \$10,000 and sent to work at an escort service in Tel Aviv. She refused to cooperate and two months later jumped out of the third story window and fled. Olga subsequently found a job in child care for 1.5 years. In 2001, she met an Israeli partner. Around this time, she began to feel ill and was diagnosed with cancer of the vagina. With the financial help of friends, and the assistance of Physicians for Human Rights, Olga found a doctor willing to conduct the necessary surgery. However, follow-up treatments, including chemotherapy, continue to challenge her meager resources. Since 2005, we have been assisting her both with the process of regulating her legal status and in obtaining healthcare from the State.



Victoria, 31 years old from Ukraine, was trafficked into Israel in 2004. She was initially placed in a brothel in Tel Aviv and then was transferred to a 'discrete apartment' in Bat Yam. Together with another woman, in May 2005, they managed to flee and were arrested the following July. Victoria spent some time at the shelter and later lived with a boyfriend. Although she felt sick, an accurate diagnosis - Hepatitis and AIDS - required several rounds of testing. As Victoria began to understand the severity of her situation and her pain increased, she turned to drugs. We began assisting her in October, and worked tirelessly to find her free drug rehabilitation and treatment for AIDS.

On June 26th, together with Physicians for Human Rights and the Israel AIDS Task Force, we filed a high court petition on behalf of Olga and Victoria. Consequently, the State has agreed to fund tests for Hepatitis. In addition, we:

- Wrote two letters to a government forum regarding healthcare and brought the issue up at an inter-ministerial committee meeting.
- Submitted permanent residency requests on behalf of the two women we are representing in this petition and on behalf of two others.

2. Sex Advertising

Current legislation limits publication of sex advertisements for reasons of public morality. While not overtly illegal, distribution is only permitted to those who explicitly request them, such advertisements must be clearly marked as sex advertisements and they must be placed in publications designed specifically for this purpose. Traffickers take advantage of the loopholes in this law to publicize their services.

We believe that it is impossible to separate the publication and distribution of sex advertisements with trafficking itself and that all stages of the trafficking cycle should be criminalized. We have invested significant efforts in promoting enforcement of this law while proposing more stringent legislation as follows:

- We submitted five complaints to the police on behalf of people who received sex advertisements they did not explicitly request.
- We filed three complaints against local papers for violating the conditions of this law.
- We presented a policy paper on sex advertisements to the Parliamentary Committee on Trafficking.
- We formulated two legislative amendments regarding this issue; the first outlaws sex advertisements in their entirety while the second outlaws 'virtual' or internet-based brothels. These amendments were introduced in 2008.

Our efforts are starting to bear fruit. In late 2007, we learned that the police intend to start enforcing laws prohibiting certain kinds of publications. Furthermore, a recent court ruling was handed down whereby a person was tried and convicted of pimping for running a virtual brothel.

3. Legal Justice System

Although much progress has been made in combating certain aspects of trafficking, we continue to struggle with the legal justice system. Some challenges we face include:

Women's Rights as Crime Victims are Not Being Honored: According to Israeli law, crime victims are entitled to certain rights throughout their legal proceedings. These include regular updates on hearings and their outcomes, the right to present a written statement to the court regarding the personal impact of the crime, the right for legal redress, the right to know the status and location of the offender (parole, in prison, etc...) and the right to sue in civil court. Often, these rights are not honored. Furthermore, trafficked persons and other crime victims face difficulties accessing information about their court cases.

Poor Treatment by the Courts: Punishments for traffickers are reduced and many cases end in plea bargains. In 2007, sex trafficking indictments ranged from three months imprisonment to six years, with an average of 2.8 years. This reflects a small decline from 2006. Legal redress was awarded to eight victims in six cases and ranged from 5,000 NIS to 50,000 NIS.

In 2007, we initiated a number of activities aimed at improving women's treatment by the legal justice system including:

- We instituted a 'Court Watch' program. Some 30 volunteers participated in a short training and then attended 18 court hearings. They observed and documented in great detail, the way in which the sides presented their cases.
- We published a Hebrew report reviewing court rulings and redress awarded in 2006. It was sent to about 500 people, including all MP's, judges, academics and people who work in the State Prosecutors office. The report was also presented to the Parliamentary Committee on Trafficking in early May in the presence of the Minister of Justice.
- A law student made phone calls to receive regular updates on cases in progress. He learned of impending plea bargains and situations where women were unlikely to receive legal redress. We subsequently discovered that the Ministry of Justice is planning on initiating a system whereby each person can access information on their cases via the internet. We will follow this development closely and advocate for translation of this system into English, Russian and other relevant languages in 2008.

4. Trafficking Cases

In 2007, we assisted 51 new trafficking survivors including 28 who were trafficked for prostitution and 23 trafficked for labor. We continued to assist a similar number of people who had turned to us previously for aid. Some common forms of assistance, itemized according to the number of times such assistance was provided, included:

- Legal Status in Israel: 28
- Legal Processes: 27
- Information and Para-Legal Assistance: 26
- Transfer to the Shelter: 10

In one of our cases, in April, we uncovered the trafficking of Chinese women for prostitution. A Chinese-speaking volunteer encountered a Chinese national in prison who told us her story:

After being promised legal employment in Israel as a caregiver and cleaner, and wages of \$5,000 a month, she was flown to Egypt. From there, she and 10 other Chinese citizens were smuggled into Israel. On this side of the border she was transferred to a Chinese couple holding other Chinese women in their apartment. The couple's 'business venture' involved taking the women to various building and agricultural sites around Israel where they were required to 'service' Thai and Chinese workers at the rate of 150NIS a client. This fee was divided equally between the women and the traffickers.

The woman whom we encountered in detention refused to be involved with this scam and ran away within a week or two after arriving in Israel. Soon thereafter, she was detained for lack of legal status. Before being deported, she gave us and the police some critical information about the traffickers including their license plate number, the areas, days and times they would go shopping and the nature of their activities. Using the license plate number, the police tracked down the traffickers' car and followed them for two months, observing their activities.

In late May, the police raided the apartment and found four Chinese women held there. The survivors were brought to the shelter for trafficked women and the traffickers were arrested. After a lengthy struggle, we managed to obtain year-long visas for the victims. The case has since closed with the two traffickers each receiving a year in prison.





C. Labor Trafficking

1. Trafficking Cases

In 2007, our knowledge and expertise regarding labor trafficking continued to develop as we took on increasing numbers of cases. Most of our clients were women from Sri Lanka, India and Nepal who don't speak English or Hebrew. They were brought to Israel to work as domestics or care givers. Despite paying thousands of dollars for the right to work in Israel, the survivors were generally not issued legal work permits leaving them vulnerable to deportation soon upon arrival. Some managed to reach us prior to arrest while we met others in detention centers. The story of two clients is below:

In 2001, two sisters, S. and D., were recruited for work. They were required to pay \$2,500 each (with their parents' house used as collateral) and in return were promised legal employment in the Palestinian territories for \$200 a month.

Both were brought through Amman, Jordan, into the Palestinian territories. Separately, they worked for a number of employers in Ramallah, Nazareth and Jerusalem, being bought and sold each time. Both were expected to work between 14-20 hours a day cooking, cleaning and taking care of children. Neither had control of their passports or were able to select their employers and both faced severe limitations on their movement and extreme isolation. One sister earned \$150 a month during most of this period, while the second wasn't paid at all. Some of the employers were physically abusive.

After over two years of such conditions, through their mother, they were put in touch with someone from their home country in Israel who facilitated their escape from these abusive situations. He helped them rent a room in Jerusalem, however it was difficult for them to find consistent and high paying work. Generally speaking, they worked about eight hours a day for 100NIS, for 2.5 years, with the exception of three months where they found a high paying employer.

On March 6th, 2007, we found them in detention and took their cases. We worked to transfer

them to the shelter, delay their deportation date and obtain visas for them. Due to our intervention, the two were transferred to the Maagan shelter for victims of trafficking and were awarded rehabilitative visas. The case against their traffickers has since been closed; we have submitted an appeal regarding this decision.

2. Enforcement of Legislation Prohibiting Labor Trafficking

In October 2006, the Israeli government passed comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation which outlaws labor and other forms of trafficking (sex trafficking was already illegal), forced labor and slavery. The legislation further stipulates funding for rehabilitation and other rights for victims.

Despite passage of this legislation, very little has been done to enforce it. According to the government, four charge sheets have been issued, one related to slavery, and an additional three regarding forced labor. However, none have been issued for labor trafficking.

Victim identification by the authorities is poor to non-existent. Rather, survivors of labor trafficking continue to be regarded as illegal immigrants – they are arrested and placed in detention facilities in preparation for deportation.

In 2007, one of our primary goals was to promote implementation of this legislation. We worked in two ways to ensure this happened:

- We identified survivors and provided them with direct assistance.
- We worked with government to implement new policies and practices.

Direct Assistance: In mid-2007, we trained volunteers to identify survivors of labor trafficking in detention. Each volunteer was also provided with an information card listing tips for survivor identification, and the volunteers' contact information.

When we encountered survivors, we provided them with information and assistance in filing requests for rehabilitative visas and facilitating their transfer to the shelter for trafficked persons. We also submitted six complaints to the Immigration Authority regarding labor trafficking. These activities not only gave survivors access to important humanitarian aid but also trained various authorities regarding the existence of this group and their needs.

Policy and Practice: Together with Kav LaOved, we are working with the government to develop policy and promote enforcement of this legislation. We attended all of the meetings of an inter-ministerial committee tasked with developing a national anti-trafficking plan. A draft national plan was presented in late August and many of its recommendations reflect our input. Some emphases include:

- The need for a structured identification process at critical junctures in interactions with the authorities;
- The importance of comprehensive healthcare for all victims;

- Promotion of a safe return home;
- Establishment of a shelter for survivors of labor trafficking.

We are also working with the public and initiated many media items on labor trafficking.

We have been instrumental in changing the face of sex trafficking in Israel over the last several years; foreign women trafficked for prostitution now have access to a shelter, medical care, State-provision of legal representation, work and stay visas and more. Ultimately, our aim is to achieve these same rights and more for survivors of labor trafficking.

3. Integration of Migrants and Trafficking Departments

The Hotline for Migrant Workers is the only organization in Israel which provides direct assistance to survivors of sex trafficking **and** migrant workers. Our accumulated knowledge in the realm of trafficking, and in the unique needs of migrant workers leaves us well placed to assist survivors of labor trafficking. Implementing these activities in practice required development of new procedures and modes of cooperation between staff.

In 2007, our staff established and refined procedures of case referral in such a way to maximize the expertise of both departments. Currently, the Trafficking department handles cases of all trafficked persons, including those trafficked for labor. When we file legal petitions on behalf of trafficked labor migrants, trafficking staff consult with the Migrant Workers department.

Joint activities facilitating this integration took place in 2007:

- Staff from both departments ran a nine hour volunteer training course on labor trafficking for hotline volunteers from the community who visit detention.
- A short training for volunteers on our telephone hotline took place to assist them in identification of trafficked persons from among their clients and gave them strategies for provision of on-going assistance.

4. Forced Labor

The passage of legislation outlawing labor trafficking, slavery and forced labor has had a significant impact on the work of volunteers with our Crisis Intervention Center. Whereas in past years all cases were handled in accordance to regulations governing undocumented migrant workers, volunteers are now required to make difficult determinations regarding cases which might be relevant under this legislation. Although our staff and volunteers have undergone training with other NGOs on the legal issues and case identification, actual cases require on-going consultation between various staff members.



While few of our clients suffer from forced labor, telephone hotline volunteers do encounter cases of slavery and trafficking. One of our national service volunteers, Shai Oxenberg, shared how she views the difference between slavery and trafficking. Regarding slavery, Oxenberg looks for the following signs:

- Consistency with the legal definition being "a condition under which the powers generally exercised towards property are exercised over a person."
- Humiliating or violent treatment towards the person including yelling, hitting and use of threats.
- Inhumane living conditions.
- Work which seems endless and usually consists of 12-14 hour work days.
- Shame or reluctance in talking about work conditions, a sense that the victim is somehow at fault for the situation.
- Little or no pay.
- While any individual factor does not indicate slavery, a combination of factors points to relevant cases.

Trafficking cases reflect many or all of the same work conditions while also including deception regarding the job or work conditions in Israel and transfer to Israel in such a way that the person is not assured of legal status upon arrival.

IV. Migrant Workers



*With our help,
Patricia, the child
of migrant workers,
receives her Israeli
identity card*

1. Background

Our activities on behalf of migrant workers in 2007 represented a continuation and expansion of developments in previous years. We were disappointed at the slow pace regarding new systems of employment for migrant workers and believe that proposed systems do not completely eliminate the binding of migrant workers to their employers. Many of our activities were focused on advocating for changes to these new systems to ensure that they achieve their stated goals.

In part due to pressure from us and others, the work of the Immigration Authority has undergone a subtle change recently. While their main focus remains the arrest and deportation of undocumented workers, they are increasingly investigating violations against migrant workers. We have assisted by submitting and following up on relevant complaints.

2. The Binding Policy

Government policy has mandated that in order for a migrant worker to maintain legal status, they must work for the specific employer written in their passport. This dependency on employers for legal status leaves them vulnerable to numerous rights violations. Poor treatment and high debt lead many to leave their legal employers and work on the free market. In fact, this policy is the primary reason for the high number of migrant workers who

do not have legal status.

After four years, on the eve of Passover (March 30th) 2006, the Israeli High Court instructed the government to cancel the policy of binding of workers to their employers. Terming it 'modern-day slavery,' the judges instructed the government to create new procedures whereby the employee's legal status is not connected to a state of employment.

Unfortunately, this process is moving much slower than anticipated. Below you will find an update of developments in each of the major migrant labor sectors.

Construction: In May 2005, a new system for employing construction workers was unveiled. Instead of binding migrants to their employers, they are essentially bound to manpower agencies.

In 2006-2007, in the context of a project conducted jointly with Kav LaOved and funded by the EU, we implemented a number of initiatives aimed at examining this system and improving its protections for workers. We found that while work conditions have improved and salaries have increased, so have agents' fees charged in source countries for the privilege of working in Israel.

Care giving: In May 2007, the government presented a new, yet to be implemented, system for caregivers. Currently, there is no limit to the number of caregivers who can be brought into Israel to work. Manpower agencies take advantage of this; they recruit new workers who pay high fees for work permits with no relationship to market demand. Because there are more caregivers in Israel than employers for them, many lack legal status and are vulnerable to conditions of trafficking and/or deportation. Not surprisingly, in 2007, we witnessed a 10% increase in caregivers in our office.



Agriculture: After years of negotiations, in July 2007, the government signed a bi-lateral agreement with Thailand whereby the International Organization of Migration will be responsible for facilitating the employment of Thai workers in Israel. We view this as a very positive development, which will reduce cases of forced labor and we hope to see its implementation soon.

3. Children of Migrant Workers - An Update

In response to a legal petition filed together with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, and an intensive public campaign, in June 2006 the government developed new and expanded criteria for awarding children of migrant workers legal status. In mid-2006 some 800 families (many with our assistance), submitted applications to the Ministry of Interior. Their cases were reviewed in late 2006 and early 2007.

In June 2007, the Ministry of Interior announced it had received and reviewed 827 applications for permanent residency status for children of migrant workers. Of those, some 620 applications were approved. Others were denied while some are still being examined. We assisted some of those who received negative answers in filing appeals, special requests and legal petitions, while providing general support and information for all families. The story of one family we are assisting follows:

Oran, 10 years old, was born to a Polish mother and Turkish father in Israel. Because his parents were not married at the time of his birth, Oran's father, Tarkan, is not registered on Oran's birth certificate. Several years ago, his mother began displaying signs of instability and illness. During this period Oran enjoyed the support of his father, both materially and otherwise.

Oran's mother finally succumbed to illness in 2006. To date, Tarkan has managed to evade deportation because, with our help, he was able to convince the Ministry of Interior that he is Oran's sole caregiver. The Ministry would like him to return to Turkey voluntarily however, he would be forced to leave Oran behind because he is unable to obtain a Turkish passport for Oran. Although Oran falls into the criteria for status and classmates similar to him have been issued Israeli identity cards, his application was rejected due to lack of proof of paternity. The death of Oran's mother made it hard for him to prove that he is eligible for status according to established criteria. Due to a technicality, Oran does not hold legal status in any country. Many of our clients face similar difficulties.

V. Education and Events

1. Lecture Program

Idan Halili, now 21 years old, first began working with the Hotline at the age of 16. A native of Kibbutz Mishmar HaEmek in Israel's north, she was always drawn to issues relating to marginalized women. When a youth leadership program required her to volunteer, she considered how to apply this interest into her volunteerism. After reading an article about sex trafficking in which we were mentioned, Halili decided to pursue this topic more intensively and approached us.

Through discussions with our staff, she decided to focus her efforts on public education. Halili recruited four female classmates and together they embarked on a process of self-education which included reading, attending conferences and consultation with our staff.

The outcome was an educational program that, initially, consisted of lecturing to peers at their own, and a nearby high school. Following graduation, Halili continued giving presentations in schools in her free time.

Involvement in the issue of sex trafficking has, in many ways, shaped Halili's views of the world and self-identification as a woman. She became more interested in feminist issues and began to define herself as a feminist. As a logical extension of this, Halili set a precedent by requesting and receiving an exemption from the army. She based her request for exemption on the grounds that the army is not consistent with feminist values. Instead of conventional military service, in January 2006, Halili joined our staff as a national service volunteer for 2.5 years.

While Halili's contributions to the Hotline have been numerous, her legacy will be in the realm of education. She managed a wide-scale lecture program from start to finish including recruitment of volunteers, planning and management of two volunteer training courses, curriculum development and marketing.

After years of experience and feedback, Halili feels confident that the current program represents the most effective to date. *"One of the main messages I hope to convey is of personal responsibility,"* said Halili. *"Often there is a tendency to blame the victim. Furthermore, those who visit prostitutes either don't think about its impact or don't want to. I want the Israeli public to be aware of their role in these violations of women, as well as their potential for creating a more humane, empathic and equitable society."*

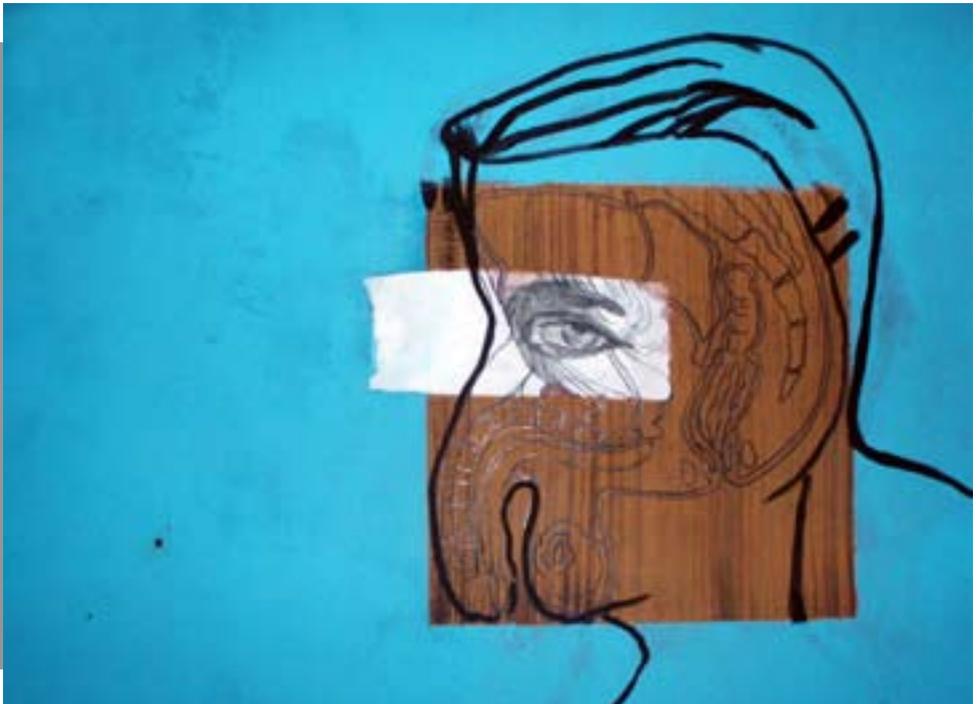
Halili feels compelled by education because she senses that change can happen on a wider



basis. She said, *"Doing this work helps me feel I have some influence. I especially get a lot of satisfaction when I see that the topic is relevant for participants. When I change the attitudes of young men who visit prostitutes or women who assume the victim is to blame, that is very powerful."*

Halili believes the Hotline offers a unique environment from which to do this kind of work. She said *"The Hotline is one of the few places where it is possible to conduct really effective education programs because we are connected to the field, theory and government policy. We have more credibility and know the topic more intimately. In that sense, we can help others learn from our experience."* She added, *"During my time at the Hotline I have learned how to work with people, particularly women in distress. It has also been instrumental in shaping my ideology; I see the Israeli man in a completely different light. I believe that living in a chauvinistic society not only is bad for women, but has a negative impact on men. Their need to prove their manliness is part of what drives client demand and has other, negative social impacts."*

After many years of dedicated service, Halili will leave us in May 2008 to plan her future.



2. Trafficking Education and Research

As policy and practice continue to improve in the realm of sex trafficking, we are increasingly focusing our efforts on public education and promoting relevant academic research. The year 2007 reflected these emphases; we published four reports, opened a Global Migration and Trafficking in Persons Resource Center, participated in an art exhibit on clients of purchased sex and held a short academic conference.

Reports: Our staff, with support from the EU, devoted significant efforts to report publication in 2007. Reports included:

- Verdicts in trafficking-related cases, released in May.
- "Deported and Dispossessed," a report on economic enforcement of trafficking, in May.
- "Paper Pimps," a report on sex advertisements, in June.
- "The Legalization of Prostitution," on regulating prostitution, in September.
- "Another Shipment from Tashkent," a report on the Israeli trafficker, in December.

All were published in Hebrew and, with the exception of the verdicts report, in English as well. They were sent to decision-makers, judges, the media, academics, local and international NGOs and local and international NGOs and more. All together, the reports were featured at four Parliamentary committee meetings and generated nearly 30 media items.

Perhaps the most exciting outcome of the reports was when a judge referenced our report on the trafficker when handing down a sentence. This trafficker was given a higher than average punishment - six years in prison with each survivor awarded 25,000NIS.

Resource Center: On the 14th of June we held a festive opening of the Trafficking in Persons and Global Migration Resource Center. Over 50 people attended including organization members, volunteers and staff. Significantly, over 10 different embassies were represented as well as foundation and Jewish federation representatives. The event featured refreshments and three presentations. The first center of its kind in Israel, guests are invited to peruse hundreds of legal and newspaper articles, court rulings and the many books we have collected over the years.

Furthermore, the Resource Center will host a number of educational events for the public. The first took place on December 12th, with the screening of the film "Deported" followed by a conversation with the director.

Other: In August, the Jerusalem-based Barbur Gallery held an exhibition on clients of purchased sex. We helped to run an educational course for participating artists. In December we planned an academic conference at Hebrew University. It consisted of two panel discussions. The first took a broad look at trafficking over the ages with a focus on demand for foreigners while the second focused specifically on the demand for purchased sex.



3. Media

One of the Hotline for Migrant Worker's most important strategies for bringing about social change is working to both educate the public and shape public opinion. We do this in two primary ways - through initiation of media items and planning of public events. Our Media and Public Events Coordinator, Romm Lewkowitz is crucial to these efforts.

Lewkowitz first came to us in 2004-2005 as a volunteer with the Crisis Intervention Center where he provided direct assistance to migrant workers. Lewkowitz continued to volunteer intermittently before being hired as Israeli Media and Public Events Coordinator in May 2005.

Lewkowitz characterized his work as *"raising the visibility of groups who are normally out of the public eye. If our ultimate goal is to create a diverse and multi-cultural society, the first step is to raise awareness of other groups living in Israel. Usually migrant workers and refugees are characterized as threatening or problematic, not as human beings. Presenting a human face and personality helps their cause."*

Lewkowitz explains that when the Hotline first started to work with refugees, he had to modify how we worked with the media as they did not understand their situation. Reporting on the events wasn't sufficient due to widespread ignorance about the issue.

Consequently, *"We didn't wait for events to happen, we initiated events of our own, our work became not just reactive but proactive."* Lewkowitz explained the rationale for this transition as such: *"If we wait for actual news it will always be negative and reactive. The discourse will focus on fears of 'polluting' the country with foreigners instead of highlighting the cultural contribution refugees can give to Israeli society."*

Lewkowitz's activities in 2007 reflected these views; together with our partner organizations, and most notably the CARD coalition, he planned seven major events and rallies. One noteworthy event, conducted with Eytan Schwartz of CARD, was a trip to Yad Vashem for Darfurian refugees.

Events brought many volunteers and supporters to our organization and generated significant media attention. In 2007 alone, Lewkowitz, together with the Public Policy and Foreign Media Coordinator, generated 331 media items on refugees, including 129 published in the international media. We believe these efforts were instrumental in the eventual government decision to award some 600 Darfurian refugees with temporary residency status.

VI. Unaccompanied Minors



1. Cases and Accomplishments

Much progress was made regarding unaccompanied minors in 2007. Advocacy in previous years began to reap results. In addition to achieving somewhat better detention conditions for the youth, legal cases (many of which were filed with ACRI) brought about changes in policy. Some highlights of our legal petitions are below:

Test of Age: It is in the State's interest to hold minors in wings designed for adults for a number of reasons: it is cheaper, adults are easier to deport and because the State has fewer responsibilities towards adults than children. In light of the fact that most lack paperwork definitively establishing their age, they are required to be tested.

For that purpose, the government chose a test of age which, according to specialists, is unhealthy, unreliable and inappropriate for the African youth being tested. We were involved in three cases representing two minors on this issue. As a result, both were ultimately released and a government decision to discontinue use of the previous test of age was enforced. In mid-2007, the government approved a new, more reliable test of age.

State-Provision of Legal Representation for Minors: In late 2006, we filed a legal petition requesting that the State develop alternatives to detention, in collaboration with social welfare authorities. As a result of this case, the State began to develop procedures for handling the cases of unaccompanied minors. This process has continued into 2008.

Furthermore, following another petition by us, in February 2007, the judge cited flaws in

detention proceedings and ruled that the public defender should provide legal representation for all such minors. Consequently the Legal Aid department of the Ministry of Justice began representing detained minors, and today each detained unaccompanied minor receives State-sponsored representation. Throughout 2007, we provided advice and consultation to lawyers in the Legal Aid Department on how to handle such cases.

2. A Case Study

Over the last three years, we have been working intensely with various waves of unaccompanied minors arriving in Israel. Significantly, during the years 2005-2006, some 50 Guinean minors were smuggled into Israel by a trafficking ring run by Guinean nationals. The teen and adult Guinean nationals were deceived: they paid large sums of money but were never issued the promised legal status. Instead, they were beaten, starved and forced to work for no wages or for wages substantially lower than minimum wage. Many of the trafficked minors were orphans exploited by various adults. The story of one such minor follows.

B's Story:

B was orphaned when his mother died in childbirth – his father had passed away a few months prior. His uncle took control of the parents' property and turned him into a slave. His lot in life consisted of beatings and whippings until he bled, forced labor and deprivation of sleep, food or human kindness. B attempted to run away several times, but was recaptured each time and subjected to severe corporal punishment.

As he grew older, his uncle offered him a "deal;" he claimed that a friend could take Barry to Israel, (which was "like Canada") where he supposedly could get a visa. Initially he would be required to work to pay off a sum of \$2,500 for his journey. He was required to hand over 75% of his earnings to a 'benefactor' working in collusion with the uncle. Following return of this debt, he would be free to finish his education and keep his earnings.

B was transported to Cairo, and from there, handed over to Bedouin smugglers in the Sinai who brought him to the border with Israel. He was held as a hostage by the smugglers for eight months because his uncle's friend, his 'benefactor' in Israel, owed them money for the journey. During this period, he lived in deplorable conditions, was underfed and threatened with violence. When the smugglers realized they were never going to see the money, they allowed him to cross the border threatening him with bodily harm if he did not return the money.

In Israel, he lived on the streets of Tel Aviv for three months, foraging for food in trash cans. After a brief period of work as a cleaner at a night club, he was arrested and detained by the Immigration Authority.

We met him in prison and succeeded in releasing him six months later. With the assistance of concerned citizens, he was transferred to Tel Aviv to study at a special high school.

His trafficker/benefactor has since been tried and imprisoned in Israel, and then deported to Guinea. Meanwhile B's uncle and the trafficker phone him regularly issuing threats to his life if he does not pay them the thousands of dollars he allegedly owes them for their "services."

VII. Choosing Freedom



1. International Conference

In the context of *Choosing Freedom*, we planned and implemented an international conference on combating trafficking in women. Funded by the US State Department, it took place on March 21st and 22nd at Tel Aviv University. About 100 people attended including several distinguished international guests:

- From the UK: Ms. Denise Marshall, Executive Director of The Poppy Project, London
- From the US: Ms. Norma Hotaling, Executive Director of SAGE Project, San Francisco
- From the US: Mr. Andy Yu, Special Agent assigned to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Headquarters, Office of Investigations, Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit.
- The conference was opened by United States Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones. Other notable guests included government officials representing six different Ministries, 10 local NGOs, five embassies, the International Organization of Migration and representatives of NGOs in four source countries.

The conference program was varied, enabling guests to share information in areas of expertise while providing a wide range of thought-provoking topics for participants.

Some topics included overviews of the situations in other countries, the role of the client, government and NGO relationships, victim identification, rehabilitation and repatriation. Simultaneous Hebrew/English translation made the sessions accessible for everyone. Six working groups allowed for in-depth examination of relevant topics while keynote addresses created common starting points for participants.

2. Courses and Special Events

In late November 2007, the project opened a course at the Maagan shelter. Intended for the single mothers living there, the course focused on assisting them in parenting their children and dealing with day to day challenges which arise. The course met a total of 12 times. Each weekly meeting was three hours in duration and attended by approximately 5-6 women.

Main topics of discussion included:

- How to listen and create empathy among the children.
- Understanding oneself and others, and perspective taking.
- Creating an open and caring atmosphere in the group and a warm family-like atmosphere for the children.
- How to accept one's self and child unconditionally.
- The difference between flattery and encouragement.
- Establishing healthy boundaries and limits.

The course consisted of activities and discussions and provided an opportunity for participants to bring their everyday experiences to the group for examination and feedback. It was led by Gila Petrov, a trained facilitator experienced in working with parents and children, drug addicts, violence prevention, defining professional interests and more.

Participant feedback included the following:

"The whole week I wait for the meeting. Here we can share and people listen to you. I always leave in a better mood than before the meeting. I have begun to understand what happens around me and within myself better."

"Life is more interesting, every day I learn something new about myself. Last week, for example, I learned not to take to heart things that aren't connected to me. In the meantime, it is very hard but at least I'm aware of what I feel and why I do things. I want to continue to study - maybe get private counseling."

"I learned that even if I can't change reality I can look for and find positive things in the current situation. Because of this, I feel I have more control over situations, they are in my hands. I am happier. I try not to label my daughter as much, and give her more freedom to choose. As for me, work has improved; it is easier for me now because I am better at ignoring negative things and seeing the range of possibilities."

VII. In Conclusion

A. Volunteer and Staff Development

Organizationally, we continued to develop in 2007. Some highlights:

- Staff underwent a process of supervision whereby they met with a trained facilitator about once a month.
- Monthly staff meetings were held.
- Telephone hotline volunteers met monthly for continuing education meetings while nine meetings were held with a facilitator early in the year.
- Uri Sadeh attended an Interpol conference in Lyon, France in May and Adi Willinger attended an OSCE conference in Kiev in June.

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- **Adv. Adi Willinger**, Field Coordinator- Trafficking in Women



Volunteers:

Idan Halili

Shai Oxenberg

Eyal Goldstein

And approximately 150 other dedicated locals

B. About Us

The Hotline for Migrant Workers (HMW), established in 1998, is a non-partisan, not for profit organization, dedicated to (a) promoting the rights of undocumented migrant workers and refugees and (b) eliminating trafficking in women in Israel. We aim to build a more just, equitable and democratic society where the human rights of all those residing within its borders are paramount civic and political values.

We see as vital eliminating exploitation of women and violence against them, the proper treatment of non-Jews amongst us and supporting the broad enforcement of laws, policies and procedures that promote equality and justice, as part of the humanistic and universal values that Judaism teaches and on which Israel was founded.

To support our work:

In Israel:

Checks may be sent to The Hotline for Migrant Workers, 75 Nahalat Binyamin St., Tel Aviv, 65165. Amutah #58033309-4.

Donations may be made on-line at the following site: <https://www.litrom.com/hotline>

In North America:

U.S. tax deductible contributions of at least \$100 may be made via the New Israel Fund.

Contributions should be marked as donor-advised to The Hotline for Migrant Workers and sent to The New Israel Fund, P.O. Box 91588, Washington DC 20090-1588.

U.S. tax deductible contributions of at least \$25 may be sent (and must be payable) to P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc., 317 Madison Avenue, Suite 607, New York, NY, 10017 with a recommendation that it be used for us.

Donations may also be made on-line at the following site: <http://www.hotline.org.il/english/assist.htm>

In the U.K.

Donations may be made to The New Israel Fund of Great Britain, 25-26 Enford Street, London W1H 1DW England. They are registered charity #1060081.

To Contact Us:

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C. Financial Information

We are grateful to our generous friends, partners and sponsors, who make our work possible:

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