



Arisa Newsletter: Highlights 2020

At the start of the new year, we would like to look back to 2020. It was a turbulent year, dominated worldwide by the corona crisis and its consequences. The pandemic has also had far-reaching consequences for Arisa and our partners in South Asia: the lockdown in India left millions of migrant workers trapped far from home with no income. In the beginning they depended on the support of our partners and other organisations for their basic needs. All these organisations have worked very hard to ensure that people had food and could claim support from the government. In addition, schools were closed and many children had no access to any form of education. An increase in child labour and child marriage was noted. Also on these themes, our partners are committed to prevent this as much as possible: for example, support programmes were set up immediately to help children with their daily school work. Despite the strict measures, our partners kept in touch with and supported the communities they work with: parents, teachers and local leaders.

Arisa's work also continued: we tried to support local partners as much as possible with financial resources and with our activities in the Netherlands and Europe. We published various reports and tools for companies. We discussed with companies in the garment, natural stone and seed sectors about their responsibility for the workers in their chains. We lobbied the government for more far-reaching measures in the field of international corporate social responsibility, together with other Dutch organisations. We embarked on several new programmes and established initial contacts for cooperation with partners in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Looking back, we can conclude that good results have been achieved. As Arisa, we will continue to work in 2021 to defend human rights in the production chains of garments, natural stone, leather and seeds.

We thank all donors and cooperation partners for their contribution to our work!

The Arisa team: Diewertje, Gine, Hans, Lizette, Margeeth, Susanne and Sandra.

Tools for companies in the field of child and forced labour

In February 2020, the programme [Remedies towards a better workplace](#) in Tamil Nadu ended in which Arisa worked together with four garment companies, Fair Labor Association, SAVE and READ to improve the working conditions of garment workers. The emphasis was on the themes of child labour and forced labour.



During the project, various documents were developed for companies to tackle these problems in their chain. Arisa has, among other things, worked on a list of [concrete recommendations](#) for companies to enter into a dialogue with their suppliers and to make these themes negotiable.

In addition to the programme in India, activities were also carried out in Bangladesh. In total, more than 3,500 workers and nearly 2,000 children were reached through workshops and training courses. Read more about the results achieved and lessons learned [here](#).

Support to Indian partners after the lockdown in India

After the lockdown was announced in India at the end of March due to the corona pandemic, millions of (migrant) workers, especially in the natural stone and textile sector, were trapped without any income, housing or food supply. On March 31, Arisa issued a call for donations for its Indian partners (including SAVE, Manjari and READ) for their support to those workers. In total, an amount of over EUR 16,000 has been raised. This enabled partners in their regions to ensure, among other things, the provision of basic food supplies to the most vulnerable migrants and their families.



In addition to this acute assistance, our partners and we ourselves have regularly paid attention to the problems of those (migrant) workers, in particular the situation of Indian children during the Covid-19 crisis, and made calls for corporate responsibility in this time of crisis.

Start project *Together for decent leather* in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

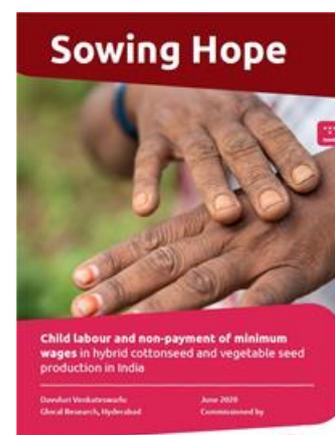
In April, a new project was started that focuses on improving working conditions in tanneries and in making end products, such as stitching shoes. The project is coordinated by SOMO and carried out by eight organisations, including Arisa. Arisa will investigate the international supply chain from India, as well as the overarching theme of "discrimination based on caste and religion", looking at all three countries. Due to the corona crisis, many leather workers in these countries are without work and income. A paper on the impact of the corona crisis on leather workers will be published in the first quarter of 2021.



Report *Sowing Hope*

In early June Arisa published the report [Sowing Hope](#). This report shows that in the cotton and vegetable seed production in India, important steps have been taken over the past five years to combat child labour. However, the situation has deteriorated with regard to the payment of minimum wages. Women in particular are still paid below the minimum wage.

In response to the report, Arisa has continued the dialogue with international vegetable seed companies and branch organisation Plantum. We expect this to lead to new initiatives in 2021 to further reduce child labour and tackle the problem of wages.



Report *Textile recycling unravelled*

At the end of June, the report [Textile recycling unravelled](#) was published in collaboration with textile collector and social entrepreneur Sympany. This report shows that the textile recycling chain is complex and involves risks of child labour and poor working conditions.

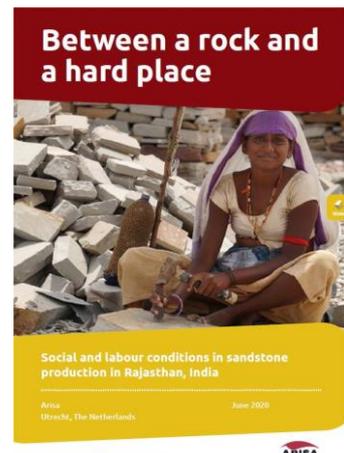
Textile recycling is a part of the textile chain that is still receiving little attention. With the publication of this report, Arisa and Sympany bring the identified risks to the attention of textile and garment companies. Arisa has entered into a dialogue with some relevant companies and organisations about addressing these risks. We expect to develop further activities in the field of textile recycling in 2021.



Report *Between a rock and a hard place*

This [Arisa report](#) - also released in June - shows that there are still worrisome working conditions in the sandstone industry in Rajasthan. Compared to 2005, child labour in the quarries has decreased significantly, but it still occurs, especially in the cutting of cobblestones by home workers. The report also shows that silicosis, an incurable lung disease caused by inhaling large amounts of crystalline silica dust, is a major problem which receives far too little attention.

With this report, Arisa approached a large number of natural stone companies in the EU, to enter into discussions about the aforementioned problems. In a number of Dutch municipalities, in response to the report, municipal council questions have been asked about the use and procurement of natural stone.



Lobby for due diligence legislation for companies

Arisa, together with the CSR Platform in the Netherlands, has been advocating for years for mandatory legislation for companies when it comes to corporate social responsibility. This led to further results in 2020. In June, four Dutch political parties (ChristenUnie, PvdA, SP and GroenLinks) presented the initiative policy document [Tegen slavernij en uitbuiting](#) ("Against slavery and exploitation"; in Dutch) for legislation that will commit companies to adhere to the OECD guidelines for corporate social responsibility. This legislation must oblige companies to investigate their chains for (risks of) human rights violations and environmental damage and to draw up an action plan to prevent and deal with actual violations and risks thereof. Arisa continues to campaign for this through the [Initiative for Sustainable and Responsible Business Conduct \(IDVO\)](#).



Start *Factory Support programme* in Tamil Nadu

As a follow-up to the aforementioned *Remedies towards a better workplace* programme, Arisa started a new [Factory Support programme](#) in September 2020. In this project Arisa, the Social and Economic Council (SER), trade union Mondiaal FNV and local NGO SAVE work together with seven garment companies affiliated to the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile and their suppliers to improve business processes and address working conditions in the chain, especially in Tamil Nadu, India. The emphasis is on implementing a worker committee training program in 75 factories and 35 hostels.



Workshop Arisa on TruStone Initiative at German conference on socially responsible procurement of natural stone

On invitation of civil society organisations Weltwirtschaft, Ökologie & Entwicklung (WEED) and Werkstatt Ökonomie, Arisa and the municipality of Amsterdam organised a workshop on the [TruStone Initiative](#) in September during a two-day conference in Stuttgart for German public procurement agencies. The workshop was intended to raise awareness around TruStone and the importance of the role of public procurers. When procuring natural stone, they have the opportunity to ask questions about the origin of the natural stone and the risks associated with its extraction. In Germany, often only audit reports are requested while in the Netherlands the importance of a dialogue between purchaser and company is considered important. The workshop and conference raised the interest in TruStone and put a possible collaboration higher on the agenda of the German government as well as relevant German organisations, involved in public procurement.



Complaint Arisa against company C&A

In May 2020, Arisa filed a complaint with the Complaints and Disputes Committee of the Dutch [Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile \(AGT\)](#) against C&A Netherlands, member of the AGT, for serious human rights violations at one of its suppliers in Tamil Nadu, India. Arisa was forced to do so after trying unsuccessfully to reach a desired solution with C&A about these violations since October 2019.

A hearing was held in September 2020, followed by the ruling in December, which became public on January 7, 2021. Arisa has been proved right on a number of points, but unfortunately the substantive parts of the complaint have been declared unfounded. The ruling, much to Arisa's disappointment, has not led to a solution for the abuses. In [her response](#), Arisa presented a number of recommendations for further improving the complaints mechanism of the AGT.

Follow Arisa on social media

Arisa is active on social media. Under the name 'Arisa Foundation' we share messages about human rights violations in South Asia, especially in relation to the global supply chains of garment and textile, natural stone and seed production. Follow us on *Twitter* (<https://twitter.com/arisafoundation/>) and *LinkedIn* (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/arisafoundation/>)!

January 19, 2021

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