



Arisa Newsletter 11, November 2020

Indian government hinders functioning of NGOs through amendment FCRA law

In India, the FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) law has been amended. This law regulates how NGOs in India may receive money from abroad. Arisa's cooperation partners comply with this law, but the September 2020 amendments require a lot of extra efforts.

A summary of the changes can be found here: <https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/India-FCRA-Amendment-Statement-20202-ENG.pdf>.



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Michelle Bachelet

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has expressed her grave concerns about the new adjustment and the consequences for civil society in India: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/10/1075792>.

In September, Amnesty International was forced to cease its activities in India because the Indian government had frozen bank accounts. Amnesty International is currently investigating how to continue the important human rights work in India: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/09/amnesty-international-india-halts-its-work-on-upholding-human-rights-in-india-due-to-reprisal-from-government-of-india/>.

Arisa also expressed her concerns among other things about the consequences for programs financed with the Dutch development cooperation budget to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok. We have asked the Minister to discuss this issue with his colleagues in the EU and in India. In his answer, Minister Blok stated that the subject has his attention.

New project with garment companies and civil society organisations started in Tamil Nadu, India

Arisa is coordinating a new three-year project, *Factory support program: continuous improvement of labor conditions in Tamil Nadu, India*, launched on September 1, 2020. Seven garment companies that signed the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile will work together with their suppliers, SER (Social Economic Council), Mondiaal FNV, the local Indian NGO SAVE and Arisa to address risks in their supply chain. In Tamil Nadu, SAVE will start a major training program for management and



workers, with a special focus on discrimination and gender, child labour, forced labour, freedom of association, living wages and safety and health in the workplace.

More information about this project: <https://www.imvoconvenanten.nl/en/garments-textile/news/sociale-themas-india>.

Project “Together for Decent Leather” launched

The program *Together for Decent Leather* kicked off on 10 November. This program is implemented by a Eurasian consortium, consisting of: SOMO and Arisa (Netherlands), Bangladesh Labour Foundation (BLF), Cividep India, INKOTA (Germany), NOW Communities (Pakistan) and Südwind (Austria). The participants want to improve the working conditions in the leather supply chain. The aim is to promote compliance with international labour standards and corporate social responsibility in supply chains of leather garments, shoes and accessories in production centers in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.



During the online kick-off of the program, Cividep, NOW Communities and BLF presented key facts and figures about the leather industry in their country. They discussed their efforts to curb labour rights violations, and the impact the COVID-19 crisis has had on workers and their families in the three countries. The European organisations presented plans for lobbying of governments and companies.

Read more about the program on the website: <https://togetherfordecentleather.org/>.

Developments in the natural stone sector in Rajasthan

On behalf of the TruStone Initiative, an interim report has been drawn up on the sustainability of the natural stone supply chain. The report provides a large number of recommendations on how contracting authorities can contribute to improvements for people and environmental conditions in supply chains. An appendix to the report is devoted to an independent risk analysis conducted in two regions in India, in collaboration with Arisa. This analysis shows which risks buyers of natural stone could face. The analysis has been discussed with companies, governments and local stakeholders with the aim of collectively working on improvements.



More information about the report can be found here:

<https://www.imvoconvenanten.nl/en/trustone/news/overheid-heeft-sleutelrol>.

On October 30, Arisa and Indian partners joined a workshop on a more sustainable and ethical sandstone sector in Rajasthan, as part of the *India & Sustainability Standards Conference* (<https://sustainabilitystandards.in/Conference%20Programme%201.pdf>).

Participants at the conference agreed, among other things, on the need to involve all key stakeholders, including workers, in tackling abuses in the sector and - emphasized by each speaker - the importance of collaboration. A report of the conference and workshop will be available shortly at: <https://www.sustainabilitystandards.in/sessions/>.

The *American Bar Association Center for Human Rights* conducted a study of the sandstone industry in Rajasthan. This revealed human rights violations in the US supply chain, such as forced labour, child labour, low wages and occupational health and safety hazards. The

report *Tainted Stones: Bonded Labor and Child Labor in the India-U.S. Sandstone Supply Chain* (Aug 2020) releases a comprehensive list of recommendations for Indian and US governments and companies, civil society organisations and trade unions to address these human rights violations. The report can be found at:

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/human_rights/reports/tainted-stones--bonded-labor-and-child-labor-in-the-india-u-s--s/.

In response to this report, the US Department of Labor has placed sandstone on the so-called *Sweat & Toil* list:

https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/2019_Sweat_And_Toil_Magazine.pdf.

Dutch municipality of Alkmaar wants to join the TruStone Initiative

In the Alkmaar city council, questions were asked by ChristianUnion and GreenLeft party representatives about the procurement of natural stone for the renovation of one of the streets in 2015. "The origin of the tiles is dubious, the working conditions under which the natural stone is extracted are often miserable", the Dutch daily *Noordhollands Dagblad* wrote in an article on October 11, 2020. This article also reports that the municipality of Alkmaar intends to join the TruStone Initiative. Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven, Goes, Leusden, Nijmegen and a number of Flemish municipalities have already joined the initiative before.



First India newsletter of the *Work: No Child's Business* program

Work: No Child's Business India recently released its first newsletter. WNCB is a program started in July 2019 that aims to work in six countries to end all forms of child labour by 2025. WNCB is an alliance of Stop Child Labour (including Arisa), UNICEF and Save the Children and works with local organisations in India, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Mali, Uganda and Vietnam. Together with communities, schools, governments, social organisations, trade unions and companies, sustainable solutions are being developed for children and their families. More information about the initiative can be found at <https://www.wncb.org>.

In the first India newsletter, attention is paid to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and the possible impact of the Indian *New Education Policy* (2020) on child labour.

You can download the newsletter here: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/WNCB-NationalNewsletter-Vol1.pdf>.



The large impact of COVID-19 on the working population in India

In our previous newsletter, we drew your attention to a video compilation of a webinar that Arisa and Mondiaal FNV organised on June 30th about the worrying developments regarding the relaxed labour legislation in India. These relaxations are designed to address the effects of the corona pandemic on the Indian economy. We discussed the consequences of this with invited guests from the business community,



government, politics, civil society and Indian experts. Various videos with contributions from NGOs, trade unions, policymakers and the business community have now been published on the website of *Mondiaal FNV*: <https://www.fnv.nl/mondiaal-fnv/nieuws-mondiaal-fnv/nieuws-nieuws/de-grote-impact-van-covid-19-werkenden-india>.

New report Clean Clothes Campaign on exploitation in the garment industry

The *Clean Clothes Campaign* recently released a new report that focuses on the less attractive sides of the garment industry: the problem of excessively low wages for garment workers. According to the report *Out of the shadows. A spotlight on exploitation in the fashion industry*, transparency can be a solution to this problem. This conclusion follows from recent field research among 490 garment workers in a number of low-wage countries (China, India, Indonesia, Ukraine and Croatia) together with simultaneous research among 108 clothing brands and retailers in fourteen rich countries. The field research shows that garment workers are forced to navigate excessive overtime, complicated payment systems and fulfil quotas, in order to earn pitiful wages.



You can read more about the report on the website of the Clean Clothes Campaign: <https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/out-of-the-shadows>. You can also download the report here.

As the problems for the (migrant) workers are still far from solved, our campaign to raise money for our Indian partners continues and it is still possible to make a donation to account number **NL81 TRIO 0379 313 200** (BIC code: TRIONL2U) in the name of Arisa Foundation, stating “Donation partners Arisa”. For more information, visit <https://arisa.nl/oproep-200331/?lang=en>.

On behalf of our partners, we would like to thank everyone – individuals and companies – who already made a contribution!

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/>)!

With this newsletter, Arisa wants to keep you specifically informed about her own activities.

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