



Arisa Newsletter 17, November 2021

Celebrating Arisa's 40th anniversary

This year Arisa celebrates its 40th anniversary. During this year, we have paid attention to this in our newsletter. Early October we actually celebrated it with an online event and a small party.

On October 4, almost 70 people from the Netherlands, India and elsewhere listened to two online lectures and watched a short photo presentation of 40 years ICN/Arisa. Gerard Oonk, former director of the India Committee of the Netherlands and active in the organisation for more than 35 years, looked back on the activities, discussions and strategic choices made over the years. He also briefly outlined some of the challenges Arisa faces today. In the second lecture, Namit Agarwal of the *World Benchmarking Alliance* briefly reflected on the developments in India over the past 40 years and the challenges for the future. Both lectures can be read [here](#).



On October 6, we organised a reception in Utrecht for about 50 (former) employees, board members, volunteers and other people closely involved with ICN/Arisa and together we raised a glass to this milestone. During this event, former director Gerard Oonk was appointed [Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau](#) by Sharon Dijksma, Mayor of the city of Utrecht. The award was a recognition of "Gerard's pioneering work in combating child labour, fighting exploitation of labourers in South Asia and advocating for the rights Dalits in India", according to Mayor Dijksma. A nice token of appreciation for Gerard's great dedication over the past decades!



Arisa will not participate in negotiations for a new agreement on garments and textile

With the current Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile (AGT) expiring at the end of 2021, a new agreement is being worked on. Arisa is convinced that with some improvements this new covenant, can lead to further impact for workers, the environment and animal welfare in the garments and textile supply chain. Nevertheless, Arisa has decided not to participate in the negotiations for this new covenant. The reason for this is that the Dutch government recently announced that [it would not participate in new covenants](#). Arisa considers government participation essential: the government should contribute to IRBC covenants with its own procurement policy, legislation, trade promotion,

investment regimes and diplomatic relations, and with its presence give weight to the message that companies should apply *due diligence*.

For Arisa, government participation is indispensable and without that participation, Arisa chooses to use its scarce resources and staff for other activities that contribute to more sustainable supply chains. We do, however, provide the negotiators with ten advices that are crucial for tackling abuses in the chain. The full statement can be read [here](#).

Visit to natural stone fair in Verona, Italy

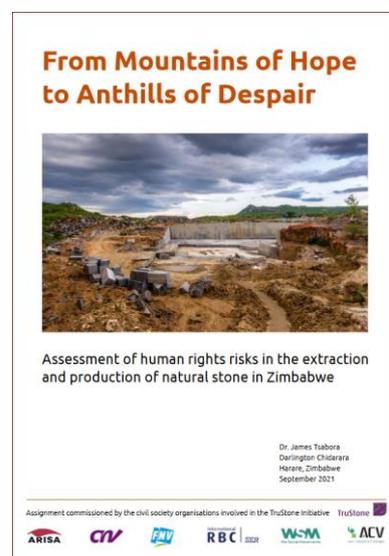
In the last week of September, the annual natural stone fair *Marmo+Mac*, one of the largest trade fairs in this sector worldwide, took place in Verona, Italy. Arisa staff members Gine Zwart and Lizette Vosman were present to talk to Italian companies about corporate responsibility and human rights risks in the natural stone sector. Many Dutch and Flemish companies that are members of the TruStone sector agreement import their natural stone through Italian suppliers. TruStone asks its member companies to map their supply chain all the way to the quarry. Not all Italian suppliers are willing to provide information on their supply chain.



It became clear that responsible purchasing practices were not on the agenda during the *Marmo+Mac* fair. The focus was mainly on quality, price and colour of the natural stone. The secretariat of the TruStone Initiative was also present and together with Arisa gave a presentation during a meeting of EUROROC, the sector association of European and non-European federations of natural stone companies. In December an online event will be organised as a follow-up to this fair with representatives of the Italian government, importers and sector organisations.

Risk assessment of natural stone sector Zimbabwe

Over the past few months, Arisa, together with CNV and FNV, has commissioned and supervised research on the human rights risks in the natural stone mining in Zimbabwe, in the context of the TruStone initiative. Zimbabwe is best known for its black granite exported to Europe. Corruption, unlawful land expropriation as well as contract labour are some of the findings of the researchers. The research report "[From Mountains of Hope to Anthills of Despair](#)" has just been completed and the findings have been discussed with a number of TruStone members who source natural stone from Zimbabwe. Ideas to tackle some of the risks mentioned will be discussed within TruStone, as well as with the Dutch embassy in Zimbabwe.



Webinar on garment industry in Delhi for local trade unions and NGOs

On September 28, Arisa and the Indian organisation *ASK India* hosted a webinar for 16 local trade unions and NGOs from the National Capital Region (NCR) around Delhi. NCR is one of the largest garment production areas in India. In the [Work: No Child's Business](#) (WNCB) programme, in which Arisa participates as part of the [Stop Child Labour Coalition](#), child labour in the garment industry in NCR is being addressed. With the webinar, Arisa and ASK India wanted to inform trade unions and NGOs about the local and international context of the garment industry in NCR, and to provide them with tools to raise human rights violations at an international level. Next to a brief outline of the garment industry in NCR and its key issues, a number of international guidelines in the field of business and human rights were discussed, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Furthermore,

information was shared on various multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs), such as the *Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile* (AGT) in the Netherlands and the *Partnership for Sustainable Textiles* in Germany, with specific attention to existing grievance mechanisms providing specific examples. Through the webinar we have contributed to strengthening civil society in relation to a more responsible garment industry in NCR.

40 years ICN/Arisa

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our organisation. We look back in the newsletter, but also on a special page on our website. For an overview of the history of ICN/Arisa, visit <https://arisa.nl/40jaarliw-arisa/>



India Committee of the Netherlands: the years 2005–2010

In the period 2005 – 2010 we built on previous activities. The work of the ICN became increasingly intertwined: the activities aimed at combating child labour linked up with the lobby for corporate social responsibility. Discrimination against casteless also became more and more visible on the work floor, as well as in international production chains.

Especially with activities against child labour and for better working conditions in the garment sector, ICN reached the national and international press during these years!

[Read more...](#)

Reflection of Coen Kompier, Senior Specialist International Labour Standards at ILO, on his cooperation with ICN

Following our call for stories about 40 years of Arisa/ICN, we received several reactions. In this newsletter the contribution by Coen Kompier, Senior Specialist International Labour Standards, ILO.

In 2007 a lower court in India dropped a bomb on the Dutch textile world. Employees of the India Committee of the Netherlands and the Clean Clothes Campaign were found guilty of defamation and cybercrime, punishable by arrest and an extradition warrant. Any further accusation in word and writing, especially on the internet, against an Indian supplier to G-Star was now out of the question. In short, ICN and associates were being gagged. Although still safe in the Netherlands, fear among them was such that they no longer dared crossing any border.



The court ruling turned the fight for better compliance of labour rights in Indian textile factories completely upside down. Not the guilty were prosecuted, but their accusers.

[Read more...](#)

The Corona Chronicles: a new publication of the Together for Decent Leather project

The paper [The Corona Chronicles](#) provides insight in the negative consequences of the Covid-pandemic on the lives of leather workers in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. A context of cancelled orders and closed tanneries and factories due to the various lockdown measures has had a devastating effect on the living conditions of the workers, who sometimes were without an income for months. The paper presents six testimonies of workers from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan and includes recommendations for businesses and governments.



Corona chronicles
The impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on leather workers in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India
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Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc around the world since late 2019, and the end is not yet in sight. We have seen a high number of fatalities and patients, overwhelmed public health institutions, as well as economic setbacks. Among the global sectors that were hit hard by the pandemic, the garment and footwear manufacturing industries took severe blows. In this short paper, we highlight the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on a particular sub-sector of the global garment and footwear industry: the leather-based garment, footwear and accessories industry.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the industry, particularly on workers. We want to bring to light the dramatic consequences of the crisis on leather workers in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India by portraying six workers. They speak about their experiences during the first lockdowns in 2020 and how the pandemic has affected them in terms of employment, livelihoods, rights, and how they fear for the future.

Combating child labour in the sandstone sector in Rajasthan

Since 2015, the UK-based natural stone company London Stone has been working with Arisa and the organisation Manjari in Budhpura, Rajasthan, to improve working conditions in the sandstone quarries and to combat child labour by taking children out of work and into school. An article about London Stone's participation in the project appeared in the October issue of the English magazine *Pro Landscaper*, calling on other companies to join and make more impact. In the article, the company's managing director, Steven Walley, describes that due to the COVID-19 situation, schools have been closed for over 18 months now and as a result many children who first went to school have gone back to work. The article also pays attention to the problem of responsible procurement certificates, that are only based on a snapshot and do not guarantee that human rights are respected. The full article can be read [here](#) and on the website of the [No Child Left Behind](#) project.



Child labour increased during pandemic

An [article](#) recently appeared in the Indian press about the increase in child labour in the garment industry in Tamil Nadu. Adolescent girls in particular have travelled to Tiruppur from various parts of India over the past year to work in garment factories and spinning mills. Many of them went to school before, but ended up sitting at home during the lockdown. The article indicates that the pandemic has caused a 20-year setback in the fight against child labour.



Support Arisa's work!

Arisa is financially supported by institutional donors and a large group of individuals who are committed to our work. We value the financial support of those who appreciate our work and any donation to Arisa – no matter how big or small – is very welcome! Deposit your contribution into bank account NL 81 TRIO 037 931 3200 attn. Arisa Foundation in Utrecht, stating “donation”. BIC-code is TRIONL2U.

Follow Arisa on social media

Arisa has an Instagram account! On Instagram, Arisa mainly wants to showcase images about our work. We really appreciate it if you follow us. Under the name Arisa Foundation we share reports about human rights violations in South Asia, especially in relation to the production chains of garments and textiles, natural stone, leather and seeds. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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