



Arisa Newsletter 5, December 2019

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Arisa is active on social media. Under the name 'Arisa Foundation' we share messages about human rights 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/arisa-foundation/>)!

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

New staff members

We have welcomed two new staff members this year.

Susanne Tempel has been active as a volunteer for a year, but started as programme officer on September 1, 2019, particularly in the clothing sector. In addition to her career in music, Susanne also studied Cultural Anthropology and Development Studies. She did research in India and so she came in contact with Arisa. She is responsible for our activities in the field of residual textiles in Panipat and clothing around Delhi for our new *Work: No Child's Business* program.

We received further reinforcement in mid-November 2019. Gine Zwart came to Arisa after 22 years working for Oxfam Novib as a senior programme officer. She brings many years of work experience: locally in various African countries and in the field of business and human rights. In recent years, Gine coordinated the international network of the Fair Finance Guide. Within Arisa, Gine will deal with lobbying and advocacy, research and a part of our work on natural stone.

We are very happy with this expansion of our staff!

Kick-off event TruStone Initiative

The kick-off event of the TruStone Initiative took place on November at Arte, a natural stone company in Helmond. A long period of negotiations preceded the implementation of the covenant. A large number of the Flemish and Dutch companies that signed the Initiative as well as contracting services such as the municipalities of Amsterdam and The Hague were present at this start-up meeting. Varun Sharma from ARAVALI in Rajasthan, one of



Arisa's partners, addressed the audience through a video message and emphasized the importance of the Initiative for the workers and children in and around the quarries.

During the meeting, Pieter van der Gaag, chairman of the Initiative, interviewed the companies Arte and Stoneasy with which Arisa cooperates, about their activities to tackle risks such as child labour in their supply chains. A number of topics were then discussed in various groups. About how a company can gain insight into all chain partners from quarry to factory in the Netherlands, about how you can identify risks that you may encounter in your chain, such as child labour and poor working conditions. Or about transparency and business sensitivity of the points system used for procurements. The affiliated companies and procurement services within the natural stone sector in the Netherlands and Flanders will have to map their supply chain in the next coming months and provide insight into the first link in the chain (like wholesalers, commercial agents and sometimes factories). Hopefully more companies and contracting authorities will join the Initiative in the months ahead.

Arisa has an important role to play in sharing knowledge and network with the participating parties. Together with the Belgian We Social Movements (WSM), Arisa is the only NGO participating in this Initiative.

Arisa seeks constructive dialogue with seed companies

Arisa has been active in the Indian seed sector for a long time. We announced that child labour is occurred in the cotton seeds harvest. Arisa has also been active in vegetable seeds since the beginning of 2000. "The Netherlands is the global market leader in vegetable reproduction materials with an annual turnover of 2.5 billion euros. So there is a clear seed sector in which seed breeders and seed producers are active," according to program officer Lizette Vosman in the *3e Nieuwsbrief Zaden* of Dutch trade Union FNV. "We regularly raised the issue of abuses such as child labour and non-payment of minimum wages with them, as well as with politicians. In India we have had periodic research done among the countless small farmers who produce seeds for these Dutch seed companies. One of the reports is *Soiled Seeds* from 2015, which describes many abuses. The FNV used these results to address the seed sector on this issues and to start activities in both the Netherlands and India herself."



A number of bottlenecks at the seed companies concerned is the lack of measures after the discovery of child labour and transparency about the risks in their chain. Furthermore, few companies were aware of the fact that employees in their chain were paid below the minimum wage. This was followed by discussions between Arisa, FNV and other NGOs and the companies that are united in trade association Plantum.

Read the full article in *3e Nieuwsbrief Zaden* (Dec 3, 2019) of FNV (in Dutch): https://solidariteitsprojectenfnn.nl/assets/uploads/documents/India-zaden/Nieuwsbrief_3_december_2019_v.4.pdf, from page 5.

The report *Soiled Seeds* (2015) can be downloaded here: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/SoiledSeeds.pdf>.

At the beginning of 2020, Arisa will present a new research report on the seed sector in India.

Report on addressing wage improvement in the seed sector in India

A new report from Fair labor Association (FLA) details the lessons learned from a pilot project by Syngenta, one of the largest seed companies in the World, in partnership with FLA. Syngenta has raised wages in two regions in India. The report *Seeds of Change* shows that while a company alone can make significant progress in improving wages in its supply chain, sustainable growth requires all companies in the sector to tackle the wage problem together. In 2018, Arisa already made the link between child labour and the statutory minimum wage violations. She then called on companies in the seed sector to raise wages. This call to multinational seed companies to provide the workers in the chain with a viable income that takes them out of poverty remains valid!



Read more on the report *Seeds of Change* (FLA, Dec 2019):
<https://www.fairlabor.org/report/seeds-change-pilot-project-address-wage-improvement-indias-seed-sector>.

Exchange visit to Panipat for local NCR/Delhi partners of the *Work: No Child's Business* programme

On November 26th, the NCR/Delhi partners of the *Work: No Child's Business (WNCB)* programme visited Panipat for increasing knowledge on the area based approach in tackling child labour. In Panipat, about 90 km north of Delhi, *Humana People to People India (HPPI)* started a project in the beginning of 2018 focusing on eliminating child labour, implementing a *Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ)* approach. This project is having positive results, and the local HPPI team has gained quite some experience on how to tackle child labour while including all stakeholders in a certain area, and to integrate children into formal education through appropriate bridge schooling. The goal of the visit was to exchange this knowledge and experience with the NCR/Delhi partners, to increase the quality and impact of the activities planned for the WNCB programme.



One particular moment was of great interest for the partners, which was the meeting with part of the *Child Rights Protection Force (CRPF)*. This group of people exists of about 100 community volunteers, including women- and youth-groups, is actively involved with the project in Panipat. On a daily basis, they are committed to make sure that parents send their children to school and that no children are working in the factories, to convince factory owners to join the CLFZ programme, and to lobby with local government officials.

All parties regarded the exchange as a positive and valuable visit, and the WNCB NCR/Delhi partners would like to explore future opportunities for trainings by the HPPI team in Panipat.

New study points to risks for migrant workers in quarries Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh

According to a study by the *National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)*, interstate migrants in the quarries of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are living and working under poor conditions, without adequate security and therefore with increased health risks.



Poor living and working conditions, combined with a lack of nutritious food, increase the risk of various respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, bronchitis and asthma, and malaria and anemia for women and children in particular.

Safety standards are not met at the workplace. Workers do not receive personal protective equipment such as helmets, goggles, boots, breathing masks, gloves or protective clothing, or medical care, except during labour inspections.

Child labour occurred in both states to a considerable extent in many quarries. According to the study, children were seen working with their bare hands.

The study also examined the poor implementation of the *Interstate Migrant Workmen Act 1979*, which should regulate all kinds of matters concerning interstate migrants.

More information about this study in an article in *Down to Earth* (Nov 28, 2019): <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/mining/crushing-job-study-points-out-risks-for-migrant-workers-at-stone-quarries-67459>.

The study was published in the *National Journal of Labor and Industrial Law*: <http://lawjournals.stmjournals.in/index.php/jlil/article/view/109/236>.

Fatal fire again reveals widespread insecurity in Indian factories

On December 8, over 40 people died in a factory fire in Delhi, India. The manifestly unsafe factory highlights the urgent need for enforcement of fire and building safety regulations and credible safety monitoring in India. While initial compensation measures have already been announced, more is needed to ensure adequate fair and full compensation to the affected workers and their families.



According to media reports, the fire broke out in the early morning on Sunday, in a factory in a narrow residential area of Delhi in a building that housed manufacturing units for multiple products including garments. Many of the factory's workers, for a large part migrants but also five minor child laborers (some not older than 13!), slept in the factory when the fire started.

Read more about this disaster on the website of Clean Clothes Campaign: <https://cleanclothes.org/news/2019/fatal-indian-factory-fire-sheds-light-on-pervasive-workplace-violations>.

See also the article on *orfonline.org* that draws more attention to child labour in Delhi: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/delhi-fire-tragedy-a-window-into-delhis-mounting-child-labour-problem-58652/> (Dec 10, 2019).

Support the work of Arisa Foundation!

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Transfer your donation to bank account NL 81 TRIO 037 931 3200 of Arisa Foundation in Utrecht, with specification "Donation". BIC-code is TRIONL2U.

We wish all our donors and all who have followed our work with interest a prosperous 2020! We hope to continue informing everyone in the coming year about our commitment to human rights in South Asia!