



Arisa Newsletter 7, April 2020

Migrant workers in India need your support

On March 31, Arisa sent out a donation appeal for her Indian partners who support (migrant) workers, especially in the natural stone and clothing sector. Due to the lockdown announced on March 24, these workers are stuck without any income or food supplies in places where they previously worked in international value chains that produce for the European market.

A few days later, Arisa transferred **more than 8600 Euro** to three partners who now provide basic food services to the most vulnerable migrants and their families in the regions where they are active: SAVE and READ in Tamil Nadu and Manjari in Rajasthan. Below in brief how SAVE, Manjari and READ have been using this financial support. Although this emergency aid provides relief in the very short term, longer term support will also be needed.



On behalf of our partners, we would like to thank everyone – individuals and companies – who made a contribution. Our campaign is still ongoing, so 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>.

SAVE, Manjari and READ serving migrant workers

On April 2, Arisa partners SAVE and READ in Tamil Nadu and Manjari in Rajasthan each received a first contribution of 1750 Euro from the donation campaign set up by Arisa.

SAVE supports the migrant workers who are trapped since March 24 by the lockdown in India. The announcement by Prime Minister Modi came unexpectedly for many, preventing them from traveling back to their hometowns and villages, particularly in Odisha, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.



The closure of the garment factories has a major impact on the livelihood of the workers and their families who are forced to remain in their shelters in the migrant settlements, without food. Their employers have not paid wages to the workers despite government regulations. A number of workers had booked a train journey back home, but lost that money because train traffic has come to a halt.

The second and third weeks of the lockdown will be difficult for this group of workers as social security is lacking and the government distribution does not reach them, among other things because they are not registered.

SAVE supports these migrant workers with food packages. The food items SAVE provides consist of 5 kg of wheat flour, 5 kg of rice, 2 kg of lentils, 2 kg of soy and 1 liter of oil for a family of 4 members, worth € 20,-. With the first transferred amount, about 360 people can be supported for two weeks with these basic food provisions. For the purchase of vegetables and herbs, SAVE will try to obtain additional support. Fortunately, Arisa will be able to make a second transfer on April 7.

With the financial support from the Netherlands, Arisa partner **Manjari** was able to provide immediate help to families of sandstone workers in the three districts of Karauli, Bilwara and Bundi in Rajasthan. This assistance consisted of providing dry food rations, soap and disinfectants to a total of 225 families to last them for a period of about 10 days. In addition, Manjari has set up a community kitchen and offers counselling, information and support in obtaining government support for the most vulnerable families in this natural stone area. Manjari has also started producing face masks in the village of Budhpura, so that the community can be better protected against the corona virus. Many residents have lung diseases because of years of working in the mines and cutting sandstone.

READ has provided food packages to at least 100 families of migrant workers in Erode district. READ is also putting pressure on the local government to support this group of workers by government programs.

Responsible business in times of crisis

In this time of crisis it is all the more important that companies continue to pay attention to corporate social responsibility, not only in view of the current situation, but also looking ahead to the future. There have been ongoing reports of cancellations to the suppliers of orders from major companies. The consequences of this are passed on to the workers. Stories of non-payment of workers' wages are widespread. More than ever, responsible procurement practices are needed, and measures need to be taken to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on suppliers and their workers, with a view to long-term survival of key supply chain partnerships. This could include the non-cancellation of orders that are already in production; flexible handling of delivery times; financial assistance to suppliers in problems, and so on.



Various appeals and also guidelines have now been issued on corporate responsibility during this corona era. A selection:

- “Guidelines for ‘Better’ Purchasing Practices Amidst the Coronavirus Crisis and Recovery”: <https://betterbuying.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Better-Buying-Special-Report-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Brands-and-Retailers.pdf> (*Better Buying Institute*, April 2, 2020)
- “Verantwoord ondernemen in crisistijd”: <https://modint.nl/2020/03/19/verantwoord-ondernemen-in-crisistijd/> (*Modint*) [in Dutch only]
- “How garment brands can ease the impact of Covid-19 across the supply chain”: <https://www.fairwear.org/covid-19-dossier/fair-wear-staff-share-covid-19-guidance/how-garment-brands-can-ease-the-impact-of-covid-19-across-the-supply-chain/> (*Fair Wear*)
- “Vulnerable workers in supply chains need urgent protection to survive impact of Covid-19”: <https://idsn.org/vulnerable-workers-in-supply-chains-need-urgent-protection-to-survive-impact-of-covid-19/> (*IDSN*, April 3, 2020) – focusing on Dalits and other marginalised groups

Letter Arisa and civil society organisations to members of TruStone Initiative

In response to the corona crisis, Arisa, together with the other civil society organisations participating in the TruStone Initiative, made an appeal to all members of the Initiative to engage in dialogue with suppliers. Based on solidarity, but also with a view to the vitality of the production in the longer term. In the TruStone Initiative, the Dutch and Flemish natural stone sector, together with their governments, NGOs and unions, have made agreements for a more responsible production and purchase of natural stone.



Due to the measures in India, but also in other countries, many workers are suddenly deprived of income. The organisations call on governments and companies to guarantee the safety of workers and to provide an adequate income guarantee during this period. Not only for their own employees, but especially for the workers in the chain at suppliers in high-risk countries.

Read the full letter [in Dutch] here: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/BriefAanLedenTruStone-Initiatief.pdf> .

Action social institutions for food supply to families in Panipat

Since the lockdown, many migrant day workers have left for other states looking for ways to meet their daily needs in the next 21 days. The lockdown was intended to prevent people from traveling and thus prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the migration that has come about does the opposite.



This happens also in Panipat. There, *Humana People to People India (HPPI)* and other social institutions try to persuade people not to migrate because of hunger.

Just a day after the lockdown, a WhatsApp group was formed for social institutions and their volunteers in the region to share information about the situation in Panipat.

In the meantime, the institutions have, with each other's help, provided food for 650 families in Panipat for 20 days, while they at the same time informed the people about the precautions regarding the coronavirus. It came as a great surprise to the people that the institutions cared about them during this disaster. They were told not to flee and to stay safely at home and thus stop the spread of the virus.

Aid organisations want solidarity with developing countries during the corona crisis

More than 50 aid and human rights organisations, including Arisa, Hivos, Oxfam Novib, Save the Children and Terres des Hommes, want the Dutch government to include aid to developing countries in its package of emergency measures for the new corona virus. The organisations are concerned about “the lack of international coordination and solidarity,” they write in a joint statement.



"Most of the developing countries are currently only at the beginning of the epidemic and do not have a high-quality health care system, good drinking water systems or a stable food supply," said the organisations. They advocate a cross-border approach to the corona pandemic.

Developing countries' health systems will quickly collapse under pressure if no additional support is provided. The food supply is also in danger in the long term.

The organisations also warn against deterioration of human rights in poor countries.

Read more about this [in Dutch] on the website of *Hivos* (March 30, 2020):

<https://www.hivos.nl/de-coronacrisis-vraag-om-nationale-en-internationale-solidariteit/>.

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/arisa-foundation/>)!

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

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