



## Arisa Newsletter 8, May 2020

### Hardships for migrant workers continue

The problems for migrant workers in India are growing as the lockdown continues. Migrant labourers in urban areas are most affected. They would like to return to their native region, but are now without money, without (the promised) government support, without suitable means of transport and without food. Read more about their situation in an article written by Venkat Reddy from our Indian partner *MV Foundation*:

<https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/Sufferings-of-Migrant-Labourers-in-India-.pdf>.



This article shows that support for migrant workers is still needed. Since the first call for donations, Arisa has been able to transfer more than € 12,000 to her Indian partners. They support (migrant) workers in their districts who, since the lockdown, are often without income and therefore without money for living. **SAVE** in Tamil Nadu has distributed food packages to thousands of people working at one of the 200 garment factories (see photo). **READ** in Tamil Nadu has also provided food to hundreds of migrant families, and has put pressure on the local government to support this group. **Manjari** in Rajasthan distributed food rations and face masks among sandstone workers and their families. In addition, all organisations provide information to the communities in their regions.



As the problems for the (migrant) workers are still far from solved, our campaign is still ongoing, so it is still possible to make a donation 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!

### The situation of Indian children during the COVID-19 pandemic

Children who were at home with their families before the lockdown currently still live in a somewhat protected environment. Another story is the fate of children who have left home and have been trafficked as child labourers, working in the natural stone industry, the garment industry or in agriculture. They have been abandoned by their employers after the lockdown because child labour is illegal. They now have to fend for themselves. In a number

of cases they walk home, with hungry stomachs and blistered feet, sometimes with fatalities. Many children have no choice but to be left uncared and unwanted in their dwellings. Girls are especially vulnerable because of the widespread gender discrimination. The government has pledged to take steps to alleviate the suffering of migrant workers, but has yet to make any announcements regarding children.

Children's rights activist and Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi has proposed amnesty during three months for people who employ children to prevent the aforementioned problems: <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/coronavirus-india-rescue-child-workers-trapped-in-covid-19-lockdown-urges-kailash-satyarthi-2219261> (NDTV, April 27, 2020). This proposal has received much criticism from children's rights organisations in India: [https://thewire.in/rights/kailash-satyarthi-should-know-theres-no-place-for-dilemmas-when-it-comes-to-child-labour?mc\\_cid=899a88705c&mc\\_eid=3d93920468](https://thewire.in/rights/kailash-satyarthi-should-know-theres-no-place-for-dilemmas-when-it-comes-to-child-labour?mc_cid=899a88705c&mc_eid=3d93920468) (*The Wire*, April 29, 2020).

Venkat Reddy of *MV Foundation* writes about the need to closely monitor children's rights during this crisis. Read his report on the *Work: No Child's Business* website: <https://wncb.org/what-we-do/covid-19/update-from-india/>.

### **HPPI assistance to corona victims in Panipat**

*Humana People to People India (HPPI)* in Panipat supported in recent weeks around 700 families who fell victim to the corona epidemic and the lockdown announced on March 24.

HPPI was not only active in providing basic food packages to needy families, but also disseminated information about the security measures to be taken, also through a special WhatsApp group for volunteers.

Teachers at bridge schools [schools preparing for informal education] have contacted parents and children about combating the virus, and have also distributed food and face masks to the children.

Because face masks are scarce but also mandatory, bridge schools have started producing masks so that children and family members can get them for free.



### **Relief activities in Ballikurava, Andhra Pradesh, against the backdrop of COVID-19**

*MV Foundation (MVF)* has been working in the catchment area of stone quarries of Ballikurava, Andhra Pradesh, for nearly two years with the primary objective of creating a Child Labour Free Zone there, together with Dutch natural stone processing company Arte and Arisa Foundation. This initiative mainly targets children of workers employed in more than 26 stone quarries in the area. Migrants from Bihar and Orissa accounted for a majority of these workers.



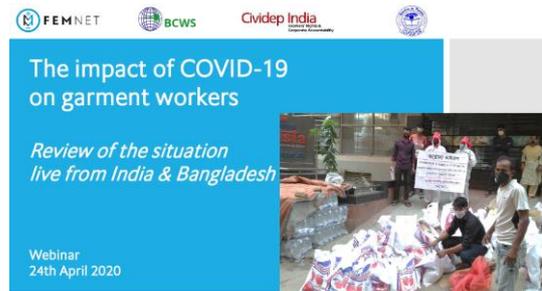
**M VENKATARANGAIYA  
FOUNDATION**

Due to the limitations of the lockdown on quarry activities, these workers are left without work and income. Mobilisers [community workers, the link between the MVF program and the local community] of MVF continue to communicate with the workers and assist them by setting up common kitchens in collaboration with the local government and supplying them with grains, legumes, sanitary kits and face masks.

More about these activities in a report by *MV Foundation*: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/Relief-Activities-in-Ballikurava-mandal-.pdf>.

## Webinar "The Impact of COVID-19 On Garment Workers"

On April 24, *FEMNET* (a German NGO defending women's rights in the garment industry) organised a webinar on the impact of the corona epidemic on garment workers in India and Bangladesh. The webinar was attended by more than 200 people. Participants in the webinar included representatives from *SAVE* and *Cividep* who reported on the current situation in India. The discussion focused mainly on what can help the labourers and which responsibility (German) companies should take for this.



A presentation of this webinar, as well as links to information and documents about the current situation, can be found on the *FEMNET* website: <https://www.femnet.de/webinar-the-impact-of-corona-on-workers-2020>. The registration of the webinar can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/msl9jFrlyVQ> (*YouTube*, 93 min.).

## Seven years after Rana Plaza, Bangladeshi garment workers are still in danger

On April 24th, it was seven years ago that the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh collapsed, killing around 1,134 people and injuring over 2,000 others. The building housed five garment factories supplying global clothing brands. Seven years later, unsafe working conditions and fatalities continue to characterise the global apparel industry. Substantial progress was made after the disaster by the legally binding *Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety*. The Accord covers over 1600 factories which have remediated 91% of all safety defects found during the programme's regular inspections. This progress appears to be undone as the accord will soon be replaced by a national *Ready-Made Garments Sustainability Council*, which, according to labour rights organisations, lacks safeguards for the protection of workers.



The response of brands and retailers to the Covid-19 pandemic further endangers the lives of garment workers in global supply chains: Bangladesh was severely affected by order cancellations and deferred payments. More than two million, mostly female garment workers, have lost their jobs or have been fired, many without pay or compensation.

Read more about the situation in Bangladesh on the website of *Clean Clothes Campaign* (April 24, 2020): <https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/remembering-the-rana-plaza-workers-by-continuing-the-fight-for-workers-rights-during-the-pandemic>.

## Brands and retailers need to step up now to protect garment workers

As a member of the *Clean Clothes Campaign* network Arisa supports the following statement:

The COVID-19 pandemic is exposing the grossly unequal power relations that define global garment supply chains, with workers paying the price. Today the many organisations behind the world-wide *Clean Clothes Campaign* network are calling for action from brands and retailers — as well as governments and other stakeholders — that aims to mitigate the

impact of this crisis on those already most exploited in supply chains and to build towards a future in which workers have access to living wages and a social safety net.

Read the full text of the statement on the website of *Clean Clothes Campaign*:

<https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/brands-and-retailers-need-to-step-up-now-to-protect-garment-workers>.

The full list of demands is available on:

<https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/covid-19-short-term-demands-in-defense-of-garment-workers-in-global-supply-chains>.



### **Government should only support sustainable and socially equitable companies**

Companies affected by the corona crisis can turn to the government of the Netherlands for state support. That support is part of an emergency package for the economy the Dutch government presented in March, along with other measures that must give some air to companies to withstand the coronavirus outbreak. The government is about to borrow billions of euros from future generations to protect companies against bankruptcy. Both to sustainable and non-sustainable companies. According to some, this offers an exceptional opportunity to make the economy more sustainable and to improve our children's safety and prosperity. For this reason, government handouts should be reserved for companies that report annually on their contribution to making their primary production process more sustainable. For companies that have contributed in recent years by paying taxes, companies that demonstrate social justice, and companies whose products and services contribute to a sustainable future. Arisa fully supports this appeal.



More information (in Dutch) in the daily newspaper *De Volkskrant* (April 25, 2020): <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/bedrijven-die-het-alleen-gaat-om-geld-verdiennen-hebben-geen-bestaansrecht~bf5a48bc/>.

### **Position paper Comprehensive National Due Diligence Legislation**

According to the *MVO Platform*, due diligence legislation in the Netherlands is required to prevent and minimise the negative impact of companies on people and environment in international value chains. This due diligence legislation must be introduced in addition to existing CSR policies, which until now have mainly been voluntary and based on self-regulation.



Comprehensive due diligence legislation must have a number of characteristics to be effective and to really contribute to preventing and reducing negative impacts on people and environment in production countries. The *MVO*

*Platform*, together with experts from production countries, business, science and civil society, has searched for the best way to shape legislation that has an impact in production countries, has no disproportional administrative burdens and fits into the current Dutch legal system.

More information can be found (in Dutch) on the website of *MVO Platform* (7-5-2020): <https://www.mvoplatform.nl/visiestuk-brede-nationale-due-diligence-wetgeving/>; download here also the vision statement of *MVO Platform* and the questions and answers about the proposed legislation.

### **New website *Work: No Child's Business***

The *Work: No Child's Business* (WNCB) program started on July 1, 2019. It is an alliance of Stop Child Labour (including Arisa), UNICEF Netherlands and Save the Children. The program is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

WNCB aims to achieve that children and youth are free from child labour and enjoy their rights to quality education and (future) decent work. The Alliance works in six countries: Cote d'Ivoire, India, Jordan, Mali, Uganda and Vietnam, in five sectors with a high incidence of child labour: garment, textiles and footwear, gold and mining, natural stones, cocoa and the informal sector including domestic and agricultural work. The Alliance joins forces with communities, schools, governments, civil society organisations, trade unions and private actors, bringing sustainable solutions for children and their families.



WNCB has recently launched a new website. Please visit <https://www.wncb.org>.

### **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 our own activities.

### **Arisa Foundation**

Korte Elisabethstraat 11  
3511 JG Utrecht  
The Netherlands

T: + 31 (0)30 – 232 1340  
E: [info@arisa.nl](mailto:info@arisa.nl)  
W: <https://arisa.nl>