



## Arisa Newsletter 9, July 2020

### Less child labour in cottonseed and vegetable seed production

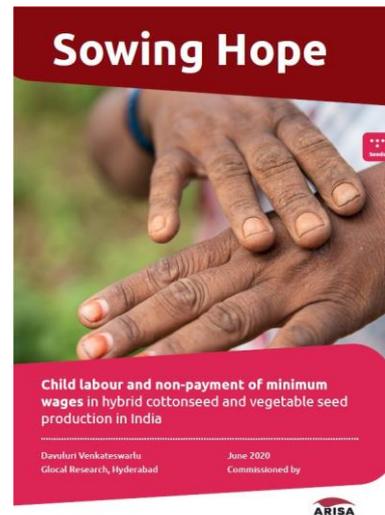
In view of the World Day Against Child Labour, June 12, Arisa published the report *“Sowing Hope”*. The report shows that important steps have been taken to combat child labour in cottonseed and vegetable seed production in India over the past five years.

The survey took place on farms in six Indian states producing seeds for international and some large Indian companies. Child labour has declined, particularly in areas where substantial interventions have taken place. Nevertheless, child labour continues to exist, especially during cross-pollination.

In addition to child labour, the study also examined the payment of minimum wages. Here, the situation has worsened over the past five years. The gap between prevailing wages and minimum wages has increased in some regions. Particularly women are still paid below the minimum wage rates and are also discriminated against because they are given other – less paid – tasks than men.

In the report, Arisa calls on the seed companies, Dutch seed association Plantum and the Dutch government to take steps to tackle the abuses by cooperating more closely and looking critically at their procurement policies and prices.

Download the report: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/SowingHope.pdf>.



### Textile recycling not necessarily sustainable and responsible

The recycling of materials and the drive to achieve a circular economy are currently high on the agenda. The new report by Arisa and textile collector and social entrepreneur Sympany, *“Textile Recycling Unravelled”*, shows that the textile recycling chain is complex and involves risks on child labour and poor working conditions. The report focuses on the city of Panipat in North India, where a substantial part of the economy depends on the recycling of imported used textiles, including from The Netherlands. Sympany and Arisa call on involved businesses to take their responsibility and to address the risks in the textile recycling chain.

Download the report: <https://arisa.nl/wp-content/uploads/TextileRecyclingUnravelled.pdf>.

Dutch magazine *Trouw* also highlighted the report on 26 June 2020: <https://www.trouw.nl/economie/kinderarbeid-bij-recycling-van-nederlandse-kleding-in-india~bea33355/> [in Dutch].



## Working conditions in the sandstone industry in Rajasthan still worrying

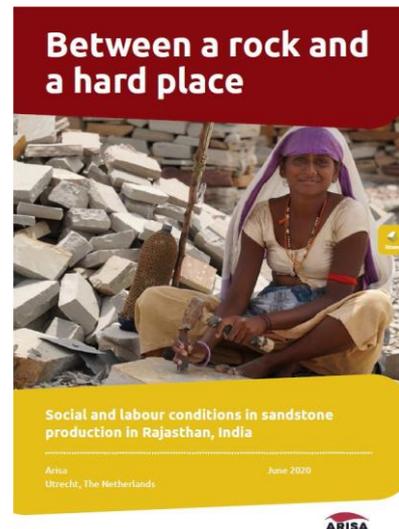
Indian sandstone decorates numerous driveways, streets and village squares in The Netherlands and the rest of the world. In 2005 Arisa (then India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN)) released the report *"Budhpura 'Ground Zero'- Sandstone quarrying in India"*. That report presented a very worrying picture: child labour, forced labour, no minimum wages, caste discrimination and discrimination against women were the order of the day.

In 2017, Arisa launched a study to review the situation in the sandstone sector. This recently published report, *"Between a rock and a hard place"*, shows that progress has been made compared to the 2005 report. Child labour has been greatly reduced in the quarries, but it is still common, especially in the cobblestone making in home yards. In addition to child labour, the study also looked at paying minimum wages. The situation here is a lot less positive. Many workers are paid on piece rate. This makes their income dependent on the number of pieces they have produced, making it almost impossible to achieve the legal minimum income. A logical consequence for a family is that they put their children to work in the cobblestone industry to help provide for their living.

The report also shows that silicosis, an incurable lung disease, is a major problem which receives far too little attention.

The report has been shared in draft form with 112 companies from five European countries. The report concludes with recommendations for companies to address the aforementioned issues.

Download the report: <https://arisa.nl/rapport-200626/?lang=en>.



## New project in the leather sector in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

In April, Arisa started a new project focused on the leather sector. The project is led by SOMO and implemented in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in collaboration with local partners. NGOs INKOTA from Germany and Südwind from Austria are also participating. The three-year project focuses on improving working conditions in tanneries and in making finished products, such as stitching shoes. Arisa will mainly be involved in the activities for India, but will also be engaged in the overarching theme of "discrimination based on caste / religion" in all three countries. Due to the corona crisis, many leather workers in these countries are left without work and income. One of the first activities of the project will be mapping their situation.

## TruStone and the Child Labour Free Zone approach in the sandstone sector

The Netherlands and Flanders joined forces in 2019 and set up the multi-stakeholder initiative TruStone, in which governments, companies, NGOs and trade unions all support a responsible procurement policy for natural stone from areas with a risk of violation of human and labour rights. Supply chain transparency is the common thread through the activities.



Arisa's 2005 report, cited above, revealed unethical practices and human rights abuses in the production of Indian cobbles. This was the starting signal for various initiatives by governments, NGOs and a number of committed companies.

Read more about the contribution of Arisa partners ARAVALI and Manjari in a translation of an article of the Belgian magazine for the natural stone sector, *Polycaro* on the website of *No Child Left Behind*: <http://nochildleftbehind.co.uk/2020/07/indian-sandstones-alter-ego-polycaro-visits-india/#more-1036>.

## Alarming relaxation of Indian labour laws

To boost the economy and attract more investments during the crisis caused by the coronavirus, a number of Indian states relaxed their labour laws in early May. For example, in a number of states, including Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, labour laws are suspended for up to three years. Laws related to industrial disputes, occupational safety, health and working conditions of workers, trade unions, contract labourers and migrant workers. This allows employers to hire and fire employees more easily, and the number of working hours can be changed from 8 hours a day to 12 hours. These are just a few examples. These changes are also a violation of ILO conventions such as the right to freedom of association. Trade unions and NGOs condemn the law reforms and organise protests.



The *International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)* also highlights the impact of the law reforms on Dalits and other vulnerable workers, and relies on companies to be vigilant towards their suppliers in India to ensure that the workers' rights are not violated, without the possibility of appeal to the judge: <https://idsn.org/call-to-action-to-respond-to-the-suspension-of-fundamental-labour-rights-in-india/>.

**Arisa organised a webinar with Mondiaal FNV on 30 June about the worrisome developments regarding suspension and relaxation of labour laws in India , with Indian speakers and Dutch stakeholders who responded. We will continue to draw attention to these developments in the coming period and call on Dutch organisations, companies and the government to support the protests of trade unions and NGOs.**

*LabourStart* has posted an online petition calling on the Indian government to withdraw these changes in labour laws, to strengthen the labour inspectorate and to provide social security to everyone: [https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=4378](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=4378).

## Webinars *Work: No Child's Business*

*Work: No Child's Business (WNCB)* is an alliance of Stop Child Labour (including Arisa), UNICEF Netherlands and Save the Children Netherlands, and is supported by the 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.

On the World Day Against Child Labour, June 12, WNCB organised a webinar for companies, governments and other stakeholders: "*How to combat child labour in the supply chain*". During this webinar awareness on child labour, the root



causes and possible solutions was discussed. Experiences of partners from Jordan, Uganda and India were shared about the impact of COVID-19 on child labour. A video report from the webinar: <https://wncb.org/webinar-how-to-combat-child-labour-in-the-supply-chain/>.

On 24 June another webinar was organised by the working group *Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBP)* of the WNCB programme. During this webinar an expert on the Principles from Save the Children India explained how partners of the WNCB programme can use the *Principles* (see: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/childrens-rights-and-business-principles-crbp>) in their lobby with companies. Concrete examples were given on how companies in their business could integrate children's rights. This webinar was the first of a series on the Children's Rights and Business Principles. More information about CRBP can be found here: <https://wncb.org/work-with-us/private-sector/childrens-rights-and-business-principles/>.

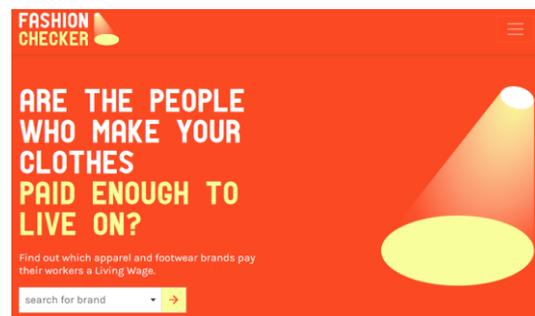
### ***Fashionchecker* of Clean Clothes Campaign: Garment brands are not paying a living wage**

The *Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC)* launches a new website that provides insight into the low wages in the garment industry: [fashionchecker.org](https://fashionchecker.org). Even before the corona crisis broke out, it was already known that garment workers (more than 80% are women) earn too little to make a living. The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare inequalities in the garment sector as brands cancel orders and impose unilateral discounts on suppliers, forcing workers into destitution. The crisis has shattered the carefully crafted illusions of sustainable and ethical fashion consumption built by brands in recent years. The new website gives activists and consumers an insight into which clothing brand has their goods made in which factories, and whether those brands are transparent about the wages paid there.

CCC collected data from 108 clothing brands in Europe and the US. When brands refused to cooperate in the investigation, this is also stated on the website. In addition, CCC conducted research among 490 factory workers in China, India, Indonesia, Croatia and Ukraine.

More information on the website of *Clean Clothes Campaign*:

<https://cleanclothes.org/news/2020/fashion-checker>



### **Garment workers speaking during READ's webinar in Tamil Nadu**

On June 25, Arisa partner READ, together with women workers collective EDWF and Asia Floor Wage (AFW), organised the webinar "*Workers' Voice*" on the poor working conditions in the textile supply chain, before and after the lockdown in India. Among the speakers were five garment workers. Some factories have reopened their gates, but the situation for workers has not improved. No measures are taken to prevent the spread of the virus such as soap and protective clothing or the possibility to keep distance. Daily working hours have increased compared to before the lockdown, and wages are too low. There is also little help from the government: too little financial support, and too few - sometimes tainted - food rations. Employers do not arrange transport to and from work, which means that employees have to walk for hours. The organisers of the webinar demand the government and companies to bring solutions to the problems of the employees.

#### **The story of Selvi:**

Selvi has been working in a spinning mill in Kamaraj Nagar, Tamil Nadu for more than 1½ years. She experienced the practice of forced labour and low wages already before the corona pandemic. She was paid INR 250 (EUR 2.95) per day instead of the promised INR 450. And no payment for compulsory overtime. There was no support from the company during the lockdown. The spinning mill is now open again, the wages are less ... After a complaint to the supervisor, she was told that she would have to find another job if she wanted a higher salary. So she went on to tacitly accept the low wages, because she needs the money. She has no way to make her voice heard against the company. While soap and disinfectants were still present at the start of the lockdown, this is no longer the case. The problems are major and need to be addressed.

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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