

Annual Report

2021



Advocating
Human Rights
in South Asia



Message from the board

2021 was a special year for Arisa 2021: we celebrated our 40th birthday with a number of online events and a reception where the founder and former director of Arisa was officially honoured. It was also another challenging year for Arisa and her partners due to the Covid pandemic. Still, the team managed to implement the major part of its planned activities. On top of that, the partners in India, with support of Arisa and her constituency, provided Covid emergency relief to those in need.

The annual report looks at the work of Arisa in 2021 from different perspectives: stories from South Asia, case examples, an overview of partners, the year in numbers and the year in months. Something for everyone! We hope you enjoy reading this report as much as we did.

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Timeline 2021

JANUARY A special year and a great milestone: in 2021, **Arisa celebrated its 40th anniversary!** What started in 1980 as the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) changed in 2019 into Arisa: an international NGO that, in 2021, still **supports and fights for human rights** in South Asia.

MARCH Creating awareness of human rights and workers' rights is at the core of what Arisa does. We take care that social issues are not overlooked in discussions on recycling and circularity. They are important to address. Our (joint) research and its follow-up is of great value in the long term – both to us and many stakeholders. A good example is the report '**Textile Recycling Unravelling**', published in 2020, which continued to attract interest from stakeholders in 2021.

In March, we participated in discussions with other researchers, held a presentation during a textile recycling workshop, and **shared our knowledge on social issues** in textile recycling in India with multiple stakeholders.

2021

FEBRUARY Caste discrimination is a prevalent and pressing issue in the garment sector in India. It is often overlooked or ignored. We, therefore, **organised a webinar about caste discrimination in the garment sector**, together with the Rights Education and Development Centre (READ), International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), and Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI).

APRIL This month, Arisa and suppliers of Dutch garment brands in Tamil Nadu (India) took steps to **improve workers' rights**. The first worker's committees were created and trained in the **Factory Support Programme**. This training programme is part of the collective project of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile (AGT) and coordinated by Arisa. The local NGO SAVE is responsible for implementing the training programme. Eight Dutch garment companies participate in this programme. Prénatal was one of the first companies to start the training at its suppliers.



Timeline 2021 (continuation)

MAY The garment and textile supply chain is highly fragmented. It may seem for international brands as if their products are created under fair circumstances because the working conditions and labour standards at factories are regularly inspected. However, many social issues remain unnoticed in audits. Spinning mills further up the supply chain receive even less attention. **The report ‘Spinning around worker’s rights’ (published in collaboration with SOMO) shines a light on this underlit part of the supply chain.** Millions of people are working in forced labour conditions. We discussed this report with many stakeholders and companies to set the wheels into motion to improve this part of the garment supply chain.

JULY India cultivates approximately 41% of the world’s cotton. The Indian cottonseed production still has serious issues, as we concluded in our report called “Seeds of Oppression” which we published together with our partner CLRA. The cottonseed industry in India has discriminatory systems in place that are concrete examples of bonded labour. Migrant agricultural workers are also at the receiving end of violence of various kinds, in addition to the abject violation of their workers’ rights and entitlements.

Seeds of Oppression is a **call for action** to all stakeholders involved. It has created awareness about the position of workers at the start of the textile supply chain: cottonseed production.

JUNE 2021 was the year in which we worked on **strengthening due diligence mechanisms**. These mechanisms are essential to strengthen workers’ rights and for businesses to comply with labour laws. Through webinars and stakeholder dialogues, we facilitated conversations and knowledge on how to better support workers at using due diligence mechanisms in international supply chains in South Asia.

AUGUST Arisa, together with Manjari and ARAVALI in Rajasthan (India), has been working on a **child labour-free zone** and **improving working conditions** in the **natural stone industry** in Budhpura for several years. In August, for the first time, a dialogue took place between TruStone members, their Indian suppliers, and the local partners of Arisa on abuses in the sandstone sector.

We openly discussed different issues, such as the lack of registration of workers, wages, health and safety, a lack of drinking water, and access to remedy and redress. **The stakeholder dialogue sessions** have improved the trust between parties involved and provided insight into issues in the supply chain and their possible solutions. Arisa and the local partners will continue to organise these dialogue sessions to contribute to our collective long-term goal of creating a more sustainable and responsible natural stone sector.



Timeline 2021 (continuation)

SEPTEMBER Discrimination based on caste and gender is prevalent in all sectors in South Asia. The natural stone sector is not an exception. **Arisa raises its voice for the voiceless:** we advocate for marginalised groups in South Asian supply chains. In September 2021, in collaboration with the TruStone secretariat, **Arisa organised a webinar** on discrimination in the natural stone sector.

During the webinar, representatives from our Indian partners READ and ARAVALI **presented examples of discrimination in the natural stone sector** and the daily life of Dalits in Indian society. We talked about what international companies can do to recognise and address discrimination in the workplace.

NOVEMBER The Arisa team expanded with a **new staff member!** In November, Jelmer Mulder joined our team. As Programme Officer Business & Human Rights, he will focus on the dialogue with companies and advocates for the human rights of workers throughout the supply chain.

OCTOBER In October, we celebrated Arisa's **40th anniversary**. We hosted an online event with two lectures and a party during which we celebrated past achievements and looked forward to future challenges. During this celebration, our former **director Gerard Oonk was honoured** for all his work by the mayor of Utrecht. He received **the Royal decoration Knight in the order of Orange-Nassau** on behalf of the King of the Netherlands.

DECEMBER In December, we thank our constituency. In these challenging times, you stepped up to support people in need. In 2021 we asked for your financial contributions to support our Indian partners with their emergency activities for workers and their families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. We also want to **thank you for sharing your stories and memories** about the India Committee of the Netherlands and Arisa. Your contributions continue to inspire us.

2022

Reflections on 2021

The year 2021 presented many challenges. South Asia was heavily affected by the second wave of Covid-19 infections in March 2021. It caused a health care system crisis with shortages of hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and other medical supplies. Many millions of people were infected, and hundreds of thousands died. Local partners of Arisa suffered illness and loss of colleagues, relatives, and other loved ones. The dire situation in South Asia caused by the pandemic made a deep impression on us all.

Covid relief and on-the-ground support for communities

Some of our and our partners' activities in the South Asian countries suffered delay due to the pandemic. Others could not take place because of travel restrictions and lockdowns. In India, many of our partners assisted in providing Covid relief to people in the intervention areas. We organised a fundraising call to support our partners' Covid emergency relief activities. We raised over €25.000, which our partners in India used for vaccination campaigns among garment workers, distribution of relief materials, and food support to families that were excluded from government schemes.

Local organisations also worked hard during the pandemic to keep children connected to education in some way. During most of 2021, schools were closed in India. The school closures caused a learning disadvantage and disability for many children. It increased the number of

children involved in child labour and child marriages. Multiple local organisations that Arisa collaborates with provided support in communities through local remedial centres, worksheets on specific subjects, and other activities.

The global travel restrictions made it impossible for Arisa to travel to India in 2021. As a result, our communication was limited to zoom calls, e-mail, and other digital communication methods. Everyone tried their best to keep the conversation and collaboration going as good as possible. However, we did miss the personal contact. This challenging situation made it hard to gain more detailed insights into the situation on the ground, which constitutes the foundation of our work.

Shrinking civil space: a challenge for the years to come

2021 also presented challenges concerning the shrinking space for civil society organisations and human rights defenders

in India and worldwide. The 2020 revisions of the Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA) make it very difficult for civil society organisations in India to access foreign funding. In 2021, most NGOs had to renew their FCRA registration, but until the end of the year, the majority had still not received a decision on their renewal. Their registration is continuously extended by three months which makes long-term commitments difficult. It is a worrying development that we keep a close eye on. Throughout the year, Arisa continued to raise this issue with the Dutch government and the Dutch embassy in India.

The Government of India also continued to act against International NGOs. In previous years, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Compassion International, and Open Society Foundation were scrutinized: they were forced to close their offices in India. This year, the Government of India placed several foreign donor agencies based in the US, Europe, and Australia on a Prior Reference Category list. It restricts them to fund Indian civil society organisations. This action was taken under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and specifically targets international organisations working on environmental and social issues, such as modern slavery.

The developments concerning shrinking civil space in India for Indian civil society organisations and foreign NGOs also influence Arisa. We face the dilemma of addressing these issues publicly in the Netherlands, with the risk of retaliation by the Indian government. For Arisa, the safety of local organisations is leading to our decisions on this topic. Their opinion is fundamental for our strategy. We are in constant dialogue with local NGOs and trade unions about these issues and support them where possible.

In 2022 Arisa will continue its work to defend human rights in global supply chains in South Asia in cooperation with our network partners.

Stories from South Asia

KARUPPUSAMY – Rights Education and Development Centre (READ)

"I am the founder of READ, an organisation that addresses Dalit rights and worker rights in the textile sector in Tamil Nadu, India. We operate at the community level, industry level, and governmental level. READ has a longstanding collaboration with Arisa, which started when Arisa was still called the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN). We collaborate on research, Dalits rights campaigning and workers' issues, networking and advocacy at the European level, and caste-based supply chain issues.

I belong to the Dalit community myself. In 2021, I had the opportunity to stay in the Netherlands for three months through the Shelter City Programme. I met different people, was exposed to a different

environment, and had the opportunity and time for reflection and training. The multitude of perspectives that the Netherlands provided inspired me, motivated me and gave me fresh ideas on how to improve some processes in India.

"The multitude of perspectives that the Netherlands provided inspired me, motivated me and gave me fresh ideas on how to improve some processes in India."

Arisa invited me to participate in meetings, connected me with other NGOs, and invited me to talk to several garment brands and share my knowledge and experience with them. I also joined Arisa's board meeting and shared my experience. Visiting the Netherlands strengthened our relationship and partnership. We now have a better understanding of each other. The visit also expanded my own and READ's network. For example, I am still in touch with the people I met from Clean Clothes Campaign, as we work in the same industry on the same issues. In Germany, I got introduced to the people from FEMNET: they now support READ with a small grant.

During my stay, I also followed a storytelling course. I learned how to tell a story effectively and how we can share real stories about the field we are in to support the people and communities. I spent a lot of time thinking about how to take READ's advocacy and media forward and how we can take our research to the next level. After my return to India, I organised a similar training at READ. We now have staff that works on communication and storytelling for our organisation. In this way, we are able to incorporate the learnings from my travels in Europe!"



DAVULURI – Glocal Research

"I have collaborated with Arisa since the early 2000s. Arisa did - and does - a lot of research-based work in the seed sector. Glocal Research carried out about 90 percent of that research. The collaboration with Arisa has provided an opportunity to help spread our work to different stakeholders in Western communities and has helped our work to reach a big audience.

"Arisa has supported the dissemination of our work to these companies and organisations."

There are many international actors and companies active in the seed sector. Arisa has supported the dissemination of our work to these companies and organisations - particularly to other NGOs. A lot of research in and around the seed sector was contributed or initiated by Arisa. In Europe, Arisa helped bring more awareness and NGO

partners and connected Glocal to institutions in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States.

"Arisa initiates the dialogue with the management to handle the situation and establish cooperation and collaboration."

The topics we work on are primarily associated with human rights issues such as forced labour. Working on these issues prompts some challenges, both locally and internationally. An example of a confronting situation internationally is when the parties affected by a report challenge its contents. Our joint report called "The Dark Sites of Granite" notably received a lot of attention and made an impact in the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany. There was also push-back from the companies named in the report. They sent legal notices to Glocal Research. Arisa then supported us to build a proper case and get the situation back in control.

There are also local challenges, such as with the local companies. When we carry out research and publish reports, we frequently experience issues with local management. Arisa initiates the dialogue with the management to handle the situation and establish cooperation and collaboration.

The involvement of Arisa goes beyond just publishing a report. They also support us afterward with discussions and dialogues with stakeholders. Arisa plays an important role in local collaborations too. More recently, they also became involved in project implementation. An example of this is the WISH project that kicked off in 2021. Arisa's role focuses on linking international partners, building collaborations, and facilitating the dialogue."

RUKMINI – Garment Labour Union

"I am the President of the Garment Labour Union (GLU) in Bangalore, India. The workforce in the garment industry consists mainly of women. A big challenge is to organise them: raising awareness amongst women workers and developing women leadership. Another challenge is to reach out to more factories. When workers take leadership, they face suspension, dismissal, harassment, and union-busting. In the relationship with Arisa, we get the moral support we need to face all these challenges in our work.

Before the pandemic, the Arisa team supported us in handling specific cases of human rights violations. They have been supportive and, for example, prepared

letters with legal notes and took responsibility for communicating with the brands. We are very happy to work together with Arisa. The Arisa team always discusses with us before any actions regarding a case are taken. We expect to continue to work together in the future.

"When workers take leadership, they face suspension, dismissal, harassment, and union-busting."

We do not have enough skills to write letters to reach out to brands and their management ourselves. This is where Arisa can contribute a lot, now and in the future. Another thing Arisa could help us with in the future is financial support. There are new regulations in place that affect NGOs in India concerning receiving foreign funds for union activities. We are in a financial crisis which presents difficulties with organising training and other activities to raise awareness among workers. We hope opportunities will arise to access new funds for our work."



The year in numbers

10

PROJECTS



4 Projects focused on garment and textile



4 Projects focused on natural stone



1 Project focused on vegetable seeds

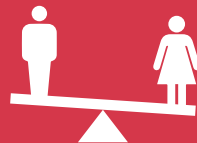


1 Project focused on leather

IN ALL PROJECTS
ARISA GIVES
ATTENTION TO:



Dalit rights and caste-based discrimination



Gender discrimination and gender-based violence



Child labour and forced labour



4,863
Subscribers

OUR
40TH
ANNIVERSARY

3

REPORTS:



Leather products from India



Spinning Around Workers' Rights



Seeds of Oppression

WHERE WE
WORKED
IN 2021



COLLABORATED
with **36** organisations and businesses



PARTY
of **2** sector agreements on garment and natural stone

COLLABORATED
with **9** South Asian project partners

MEMBER
Member of **6** alliances and networks: Work: No Child's Business (WNCB), Stop Child Labour (SCL), Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), Together for Decent Leather, RBC (MVO) Platform, Human Rights Coalition (BMO)

Activities and achievements per sector



1. NATURAL STONE



2. GARMENT AND TEXTILE



3. LEATHER



4. SEED PRODUCTION



1. NATURAL STONE

Case example: Raising awareness in Italy

Arisa has been working to improve the situation of natural stone workers for many years. While some awareness on the social issues in the natural stone supply chain has been created in the Netherlands and Belgium, we know that more leverage is needed to realise real change and impact. We therefore look for opportunities to start the dialogue with important stakeholders in other European countries. Based on a mapping conducted together with The Good Lobby, Italy is an important country in the natural stone business in Europe. From Italy, major international buyers supply the Dutch and Belgium market. However, there is still limited to no attention or knowledge about labour and human rights risks in their supply chain. Therefore, in September 2021, Arisa travelled with the TruStone secretariat to one of the biggest natural stone fairs in the world: Marmomac in Verona, Italy.

The most important reasons why companies visit the fair are networking, marketing and accessing new opportunities (mainly) based on quality and price. Human rights due diligence is not part of the fair's agenda. During the fair we managed to have several short one-on-one conversations with key companies, and we were invited to give a presentation during the meeting of EUROROC: the European Federation of natural stone companies. Furthermore, we met a delegation from the Dutch embassies in Rome and Milan. Following the fair, Arisa, The Good Lobby and the TruStone secretariat organised a webinar in December 2021 with the participation of around 80 Italian stakeholders. Speakers on behalf of the European Parliament and the Italian government stressed the importance of human rights due diligence, considering the upcoming EU legislation on this topic too. The Good Lobby has started a campaign in Italy to raise awareness on responsible business conduct among 100 Italian stakeholders: companies, sector associations, government, NGOs and trade unions. Summarising, we can say that we have sown seeds in Italy, and we will be giving this follow-up in the coming year.

More about the natural stone sector in 2021

A MORE SUSTAINABLE NATURAL STONE SECTOR IN TWO REGIONS IN INDIA

Arisa collaborates since 2020 with natural stone companies Michel Oprey & Beisterveld Natuursteen (MO-B) (the Netherlands), Stone (Belgium) and Jetstone (the Netherlands). The project involves selected natural stone suppliers (quarries and factories) in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. Important aspects of this project are the following: capacity-building with regards to health and safety risks and other labour rights violations, creating awareness amongst workers about their rights, taking measures to eliminate caste and gender discrimination, and assessing the internal policies and buying practises of the three buying companies in relation to the identified risks. In 2021, a risk assessment was conducted to identify the main issues in the supply chain.

ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE GRANITE SECTOR IN ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

Arisa has collaborated since 2017 with natural stone company Arte (the Netherlands) and MV Foundation (India) in a joint project that aims to eradicate child labour and improve working conditions in Ballikuruva (Andhra Pradesh, India), where Arte sources granite. In 2021, the second wave of Covid hit India hard, and families in the project area received aid. When schools finally opened again, out-of-school children were identified in a successful effort to bring them back to school. During the pandemic, the number of child marriages increased. MV Foundation managed to stop some of the intended child marriages by convincing parents to wait until their daughters are 18 years old before marrying them off.

We took the first steps to address the working conditions of migrant labourers working in the granite quarries and factories in the project area. For this, we met with the contractors who deploy the labourers and interviewed the migrant workers to understand their working and living arrangements.

TRUSTONE INITIATIVE

Besides our European work in 2021, Arisa worked on other activities within the TruStone Initiative. TruStone member companies source their natural stone from multiple countries where human rights risks are present. Zimbabwe is an important country because of its black granite. Arisa commissioned an independent risk analysis in Zimbabwe that was published in October 2021. We shared the outcome of this assessment with TruStone members in an online meeting. Furthermore, Arisa had conversations with the Dutch Embassy in Harare about their possible role in the follow-up to the report.

Arisa also provided input to several guidelines produced in 2021: on a living wage, public communication, mapping supply chains, and the legal aspects of due diligence. Besides this, Arisa wrote an article on the TruStone initiative for a German publication on fair trade and fair procurement.



2. GARMENT AND TEXTILE

Case example – Report: Spinning around workers' rights

Forced labour in the spinning industry in Tamil Nadu, India, poses a major risk. That is the conclusion of our research into working and living conditions at 29 spinning mills, carried out in collaboration with SOMO and Mondiaal FNV and published in May 2021 in the report 'Spinning around workers' rights'. A total of 725 workers were interviewed for this research. 'Spinning around workers' rights' uses the 11 ILO forced labour indicators as a normative and analytical framework. The report offers insight into recruitment and working and living conditions.

All actors that are part of a supply chain have the responsibility to respect human rights throughout their supply chains too. With 'Spinning around workers' rights', Arisa and SOMO primarily target western brands and retailers. These actors contribute to the continued existence of labour exploitation in global garment supply chains through their business and purchasing practices. Most brands and retailers, as well as multi stakeholder initiatives and corporate improvement initiatives, fail to take responsibility for human rights and labour rights issues in lower tiers of the supply chain. In 2021, many brands and retailers still have not mapped their supply chains up to the level of spinning mills. They do not monitor and work on improvement at spinning mills in their supply chain concerning human rights and labour rights issues. We found that engagement by many brands and retailers with local civil society stakeholders is limited.

Part of the research conducted for 'Spinning around workers' rights' was an extensive review procedure with the companies mentioned in the report and with relevant multi-stakeholder initiatives, certification initiatives, and business initiatives. It has led to insightful conversations with those companies and improvement initiatives. The research outcomes were and are also used in advocacy efforts to enhance supply chain transparency in upstream supply chains.

The report received extensive media attention in the Netherlands and abroad. The media coverage contributed to greater exposure of our research and recommendations at political, governmental, and corporate levels. Members of the Dutch parliament asked questions about the issues presented in the report. The research results were also presented in a dedicated webinar with 120 participants (mainly representatives of international garment brands). As a result of the broad reach of 'Spinning around workers' rights', we continued the dialogue on addressing forced labour in the Tamil Nadu spinning industry with companies, MSIs, and certification schemes. Arisa will continue these dialogues in the coming year.

More about the garment and textile sector in 2021

FACTORY SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The collective project called 'Factory Support Programme: continuous improvement of labour conditions in Tamil Nadu, India' (FSP) aims to improve working conditions by addressing social issues. The Factory Support Programme, coordinated by Arisa, organises training for the top management, middle management, and factory workers. In 2021, the eight participating companies nominated their suppliers for the in-factory training programme.

The Covid-19 pandemic hit India extremely hard, which forced us to put the in-factory training on hold between March and August 2021. The programme restarted in September. During the pandemic, Arisa regularly shared updates with brands and companies on the COVID-19 situation in Tamil Nadu.

According to the management of one of the factories that completed the training, the Factory Support Programme resulted, amongst others, in a decrease in worker absenteeism and improved productivity.

Besides suppliers, participating companies also actively participated in the Factory Support Programme. They worked on supply chain mapping and improved their systems to manage supply chain data. The participating companies were closely engaged with their suppliers, stressing the importance of workers being free to file complaints. A company must address and follow up on any complaints filed by workers in their supply chain. The dialogue with suppliers is a continuous effort.

Several other supply chain responsibility initiatives are active in The Tamil Nadu region. We actively sought alignment with the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (PST) and Freedom Fund (including the Tamil Nadu Alliance). In the summer of 2021, the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile, most of its affiliated companies that source from Tamil Nadu, trade associations, and NGOs sent a support letter for the wage negotiations to the newly formed Minimum Wages Committee in Tamil Nadu.

DUTCH AGREEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE GARMENTS AND TEXTILE (AGT)

2021 was the last year of the Dutch Agreement of Sustainable Garments and Textile (AGT) - an agreement in which Arisa participated since its start in 2016. In its 5.5 years of existence, the agreement built a foundation of trust between participants and promoted more transparency in the supply chains of member brands. The AGT made progress in addressing human rights violations, environmental issues, and animal welfare issues in supply chains in the garment and textile sector. However, its impact on the ground, in production countries, was limited.

In 2021, Arisa focused on specific issues put on the agenda by the AGT and discussed them with member brands. Meaningful stakeholder engagement in all stages of the due diligence process was an important topic of our discussions. Furthermore, Arisa was actively involved in activities on access to remedy through grievance mechanisms.

Negotiations for a new sector agreement started in 2021. Arisa participated in the preparations but decided not to participate in the negotiations themselves. Our main reason was that the Dutch government announced that it would not participate in any new International RBC agreements. Arisa believes that government participation is essential: the government must contribute to International RBC through its public procurement policy, due diligence legislation, trade agreements, investment regimes, and diplomatic relations. With its presence, the government gives weight to the message that companies should implement due diligence and abide by the OECD guidelines and United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).

Arisa remains committed to structural improvements in the garments and textile supply chains and continues to fully endorse the targets set by the AGT: to ensure that workers' rights are respected and protected in the production countries, to improve workers' safety, and to prevent environmental pollution and animal suffering. A new agreement should contribute to all this with renewed ambition. When the final version of a new agreement is proposed, Arisa will reassess its position and decide on possible future participation.



3. LEATHER

Case example: Trend report – a mapping of the Indian Leather industry

South Asia is an important production hub of leather products catering to the international market. India particularly holds a prominent position in the global leather industry. Since 2020, Arisa has participated in the Together for Decent Leather programme with partners from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. As part of this programme, Arisa published a mapping report called 'Leather products from India' to provide insight into the leather industry in India. The report, published in May 2021, established a more concrete overview of this complicated industry, its main products, and its place in the international market.

The leather industry and the leather goods supply chain are heavily fragmented. Often, several processes of leather production and leather product fabrication take place in multiple countries. The supply chain comprises many production steps and involves many different actors. From farmers to slaughterhouses to leather tanners; from producers of leather components to producers of leather goods; and from buying agents to brands and retailers. This leads to a supply chain that is not transparent. The lack of supply chain transparency makes it highly challenging for consumers, and civil society actors, to determine the origin of the leather used in products.

For our mapping report, we researched import and export databases and Indian leather industry websites, on which we found information on trade and production trends. A list of key exporters and key international buyers of leather products is also included in the report. However, clear information about the number of factories, tanneries, or other types of working units that are part of the leather industry in India was harder to

retrieve. Much of this is still unknown, with many unregistered working units present in the unorganised sector of the industry. This also reflects the limited information on the sector's workforce, with numbers of workers being rough estimations since a substantial group of leather workers is not officially employed.

The 'Leather products from India' report zooms in on the industry from a market, production, and trade perspective. It does not zoom in on working conditions. Its goal is to get a better idea of how the industry in India is structured and organised and what links with the international market exist. It shows which countries are important trading partners of India concerning the leather sector, the major international companies that source from India, and what type of leather products are exported to these destinations. Other activities of the Together for Decent Leather programme address the labour conditions of workers in the leather sector in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan.

More about the leather sector in 2021

TOGETHER FOR DECENT LEATHER

In 2021, Arisa started working on a thematic paper for the programme related to caste-based and religious-based discrimination in the leather sector in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The topics - caste-based and religious-based discrimination - were included in the three field studies. Conversations took place with several stakeholders for more information. The paper will be published in 2022.



4. SEED PRODUCTION

Case example: Report - Seeds of Oppression

Bonded labour happens when a person does not have a choice but to work so they can pay off a debt held by their employer, according to the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 of India, which defines bonded labour as ‘a system of *‘forced or partly forced labour ... under which a debtor accepts an advance’ of some kind, for a pledge of labour.*’ This arrangement compels an individual to work until the debt is paid.

In July of 2021, Arisa published a report called ‘Seeds of Oppression’ that explains the practices of wage-sharecropping in the cottonseed industry in Gujarat, India. The report, based on research done by Indian NGO Center for Labour Research and Action (CLRA), shows that the system of wage sharecropping is an example of bonded labour. Workers in his system continue to work under a burden of debt in a bonded situation. According to Seeds of Oppression, the migrant agricultural workers are also at the receiving end of violence of various kinds: physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, abuse based on caste and tribal background, and even economic abuse, in addition to the abject violation of their rights and entitlements as workers.

‘Seeds of Oppression’ is meant to be a call to action. Since cotton is the second most used material in textiles (after polyester), the issues mentioned in the report needed, and still need, the attention of the seed industry and its stakeholders as well as all players involved in other parts of the textile supply chain. Just like a ball of yarn, the textile supply chain is long and complex. The manufacturing of garment and textile products starts with cottonseed production.

After the publication of ‘Seeds of Oppression’, we discussed our findings with stakeholders in the Netherlands and Europe. It became clear that the issue of bonded labour in cottonseed production is an unknown phenomenon for these stakeholders. Garment and textile companies often do not know where the cotton that is used in their products comes from, let alone that they are aware under which circumstances the cottonseeds in the cotton they use are produced. The report calls for more transparency throughout the cotton value chain so all actors can take responsibility.



More about seed production in 2021

ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR AND WAGE IMPROVEMENT IN VEGETABLE SEED PRODUCTION

Various industry reports from Fair Labor Association (FLA) and Arisa indicate that the agriculture sector in India faces several critical and systemic issues related to human and labour rights. Current wages in the agriculture sector are often lower than the region's statutory minimum wage, and although the number of children involved in child labour has been reduced in the past few years, it remains an ongoing challenge within the agricultural sector. In 2021, Arisa joined hands with vegetable seed companies BASF and Syngenta in a multistakeholder collaboration called Wage Improvements in Seed Hybrids (WISH). WISH will address child labour issues and strive for minimum wage compliance in the vegetable seed sector in India.

In this project, Arisa will use its expertise, knowledge, and network to address labour rights violations in the vegetable seed sector. Due to COVID-19, the problems that motivate this project have become even more urgent: the number of children working has increased in the last two years, as schools were closed, and families lost income. In the first phase of project WISH, we will research whether and where payments are still below minimum wages and if child labour and the violation of other labour rights occur. This data will be independently collected by the India-based organizations Glocal Research and MV Foundation. They will use the data to advise modes of action to address these challenges. In the second phase, WISH will implement strategies that address the root causes of minimum wage gaps and child labour regulations in the vegetable seeds sector.

More about Arisa

Who we are

Arisa is an independent non-governmental organisation that has been working to defend human rights in South Asia, especially India, since 1980. We are a human rights organisation with longstanding partnerships and relations with organisations in India and other South Asian countries, based on a common vision, trust, and equality. This makes us a valuable partner in alliances, multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI's), and other collaborations.



What we do

Arisa focuses on defending the human rights of vulnerable groups operating in international supply chains in South Asia. We do this through research, critical dialogue and advocacy with companies and governments, and social projects to improve working conditions and labour rights.

We primarily focus on the garment and textile sector, the leather sector, the natural stone sector, and the vegetable seed and cottonseed sector. Although we address human rights violations of all South Asian workers in international supply chains in our work, our focus lies on the most vulnerable groups in society. Children, female workers, migrant workers, workers who are disadvantaged and discriminated against based on caste and background, tribal communities, and religious minorities are at the centre of the work we do.

We have established close relations with local partners through which we gain on-the-ground information. That information is instrumental in enabling us to advocate for responsible supply chains with companies in the Netherlands and in the European Union (EU), according to international standards on business and human rights. To attain our objectives, we collaborate in many coalitions with organisations in the Netherlands and other European countries.



The change we want to see

Arisa aims to improve the lives of the many people in South Asia working in international supply chains. Every working person in South Asia should enjoy decent labour conditions with respect for human rights and labour rights. Child labour needs to be combatted and prevented. Every child in South Asia has the right to be a child and to go to school.

Financial summary

Arisa receives funding for different projects and programmes, mostly in cooperation with other partners, both in the Netherlands and in South Asia. Furthermore, there is a group of long-term supporting individuals that contributes to our work. During the second wave of Covid-19 that heavily affected India, we asked for additional gifts to support workers and their families who suffered because of the Covid-19 lockdown. Over € 25.000 was raised from private donors and transferred to four different partners.

Statement of expenditure and income

The income of Arisa in 2021 came from government funding, a grant from the European Commission, gifts and donations and other sources. The total income was € 637.483, whereas total 2021 expenditure amounted to € 632.564. Consequently, a positive balance of € 4.919 remained which has been added to the reserves.

To increase the impact of our activities a sustainable financial strategy is important. Although Arisa's income is almost entirely based on project funding, the aim is to receive multiple-year funding from different donors. In 2021, most of the funding originated from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for various projects. Furthermore, Arisa raised a relatively large amount of € 29.840 from gifts and donations, partly due to the donation campaign related to the Covid pandemic. For the coming years, Arisa aims to also approach private donors for our work.

	Realisation 2021	Budget 2021
	€	€
Government subsidies	588.051	661.285
Grant European Commission	9.177	25.000
Gifts and donations	29.840	5.000
Interest and investments	1.411	0
Other income	9.004	5.000
Total income	637.483	696.285
Personnel costs	519.899	538.499
Activity costs	48.241	85.000
Office expenses and general costs	64.424	69.000
Total expenditure	632.564	692.499
Addition to organisations' assets	4.919	3.786

Collaborations & partners



