



Arisa Newsletter 16, September 2021

Support for the Indian partners of Arisa

In the spring of this year, India was badly hit by a second corona wave. Therefore, in May 2021, at the start of the pandemic last year, Arisa launched a donation campaign for Indian partners assisting workers and families affected by the pandemic. A total of €13,326 has been donated. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this action!

Our partners told us there were not enough hospital beds and protective equipment. Small garment factories closed, and workers lost their jobs and returned to their home state. There was a need for food, protective equipment, including mouth caps, and disinfectants.

The organisations MV Foundation in Andhra Pradesh, SAVE in Tamil Nadu, READ in Tamil Nadu, and an NGO active in South India all received €3,000 to assist workers and their families in various ways.

MV Foundation (MVF) has reached 132 single women and orphans in the state of Bihar. MVF mainly supported this group to ensure that they actually received the rations and other aid measures provided by the government. MVF has also aided migrant families returning to their home state. Lastly, MVF has provided information about Covid and the importance of vaccinations in the communities.



The NGO SAVE has provided psychological and practical support, including the provision of food to 338 workers affected by the pandemic in Tamil Nadu.

READ, another NGO from Tamil Nadu, reached out to 100 Dalit families and 100 families of garment workers with Covid-related support. The mostly female Dalit workers who work in the clothing industry in Tamil Nadu face double discrimination, because of their caste and their gender. The unemployment caused by Covid is rendering these issues more difficult than before. READ has been able to alleviate the situation somewhat with the donated money.

The remaining funds will go to the Garment Labour Union, a Bangalore-based women-led union that advocates for female textile workers in the region.

Trend papers Together for Decent Leather

Since April 2020, Arisa has been participating in the Together for Decent Leather project, with the aim of improving the working conditions of leather workers in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. As part of this project, three trend papers have been published that outline the trends in production and trade for the three respective countries. The documents provide information on the main leather products produced in the three countries, as well as the main export markets for leather and leather products from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, including the main international buyers. The largest manufacturers and exporters by country can also be found in the papers. The three trend papers can be found here:

- [Leather products from Bangladesh](#)
- [Leather products from India](#)
- [Leather products from Pakistan](#)

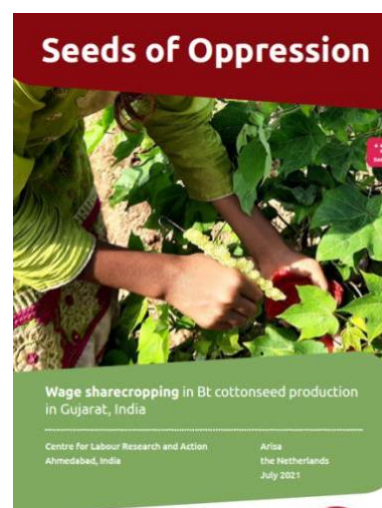


Follow-up report Seeds of Oppression

Arisa's and CLRA's [Seeds of Oppression](#) report, released in late July 2021, provides a good overview of the slavery-like conditions under which many workers on Indian cottonseed farms are forced to work. The abuses described in this report, such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, structural underpayment and appalling working conditions, are still a daily reality for workers in 2021.

The report was well received in India. India Express wrote the article '[Bhag-kheti in BT cottonseed farms of Gujarat comparable to bonded labour](#)': "The reports observe that practice of wage share-cropping or bhag-kheti unique to Gujarat entails a family that receives a cash advance for agreeing to perform manual labour on a landholding, usually for 10-12 months for a fraction of the agricultural yield."

The Indian news website Counterview devoted two articles to the report: '[Debt bondage, forced labour, sexual abuse in Gujarat's Bt cottonseed farms: Dutch study](#)'. A quote from the article: "14 bhagiya workers and their families, (...) suggest that 9 out of the 14 surveyed families ended up "with a debt as opposed to an income at the end of a season."



A day later, this article was published on Counterview: ['Bonded labor a thing or past? Gujarat rural workers are now more aware: Ex-official'](#). The interviewed government official in the field of labour in Gujarat stated that the situation wasn't that bad, especially with regard to the forced labour aspects. The report sparked a discussion about forced labour in Gujarat, India.

Other stakeholders also showed interest in the report and discussions were held with them, such as the fashion and textile industry association, the organic cotton accelerator and one of the major seed companies. Arisa was quoted in an article for the seeds newsletter of FNV Mondiaal. "With follow-up research, we want to clarify where the Dutch link is in these practices, which companies can be directly linked to it."

Dialogue sessions natural stone

The [TruStone initiative](#) is the covenant between Dutch and Belgian natural stone producers, governments, NGOs and trade unions, which aims to realise a more sustainable and responsible natural stone sector. Arisa is an active member of TruStone. In 2020, within this framework, representatives of companies and the government paid a work visit to the Indian states of Telangana and Rajasthan. The purpose of the visit was to initiate a dialogue with local stakeholders: owners/managers of production sites, employee representatives, trade unions, NGOs and local authorities. At the time, the work visit had to be terminated prematurely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but three dialogue sessions have still taken place online in recent weeks. This dialogue builds trust between the various parties, insight into the problems that exist in the chain and possible solutions.

On September 9, 2021, Arisa, together with the Trustone secretariat, organised a webinar on the role discrimination plays in the natural stone sector for Trustone members. A total of 30 people participated in the webinar. The programme director of the Indian organisation Aravali and one of the members of the 'Sustainability Forum on Natural Stone (SFNS) of Rajasthan' presented his guide to recognising and dealing with discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, ethnicity, or background in the workplace.



The NGO READ from Tamil Nadu shared their experiences in particular in the field of caste discrimination: how to see it and how to address and prevent it. We talked about the daily reality for Dalits and what companies can do about it.

The interest and questions from the participants made this webinar an interesting session and it became clear that discrimination is often not visible yet present and that it is very important to discuss it at all levels.

October 4 lecture in honour of Arisa's 40th anniversary

This year Arisa is celebrating her 40th anniversary! During this year we have already shared quite a few interesting stories from the past 40 years (see [timeline](#) and also below). On October 4, two lectures (online) will commemorate this milestone. Gerard Oonk, the former director of Arisa, the then National India Working Group (LIW), will look back on the history of Arisa. Namit Agrawal, Asia Policy Officer at the World Benchmarking Alliance, is an expert on India's human rights and business framework. He will speak about challenges for Arisa in the future. Arisa director Sandra Claassen will facilitate the meeting. If you intend to participate in this webinar, please register your attendance [via this link](#).

National India Working Group: 2000s – 2005

LIW campaigns in more detail

In mid-2000, in the run-up to the European Football Championship and in the context of child labour and poor working conditions in the Indian football industry, LIW published the report *The Dark Side of Football: Child and adult labour in India's football industry and the role of FIFA* (2000).

At least 10,000 children in the state of Punjab were found to stitch up soccer balls, while their parents earned less than half the legal minimum wage. World football association FIFA received special attention. Producers who did business with FIFA would have to contractually pay the minimum wage, not allow children to work, and they should allow unions.

[Read more](#)



Retrospect by Sofie Ovaa, program manager Stop Child Labour and Work: No Child's Business

After our call for stories about 40 years of Arisa, we received several contributions. In the future we will share these with you via the special webpage and the newsletter. In this newsletter a contribution is made by Sofie Ovaa, from the Stop Child Labour coalition and WNCB.

Since 2003, Hivos has worked intensively with LIW in the Stop Child Labour – School is the best workplace - coalition. That coalition was established with various European organisations within the Alliance2015 network and a number of Dutch organisations including the Algemene Onderwijsbond and FNV Mondiaal. The goal of Stop Child Labour - School is the best workplace – is in the name, i.e. the elimination of child labour linked to the right to education. The main source of inspiration was the Indian MV Foundation, an organisation that has been involved for years in the fight against child labour from an area-oriented approach. They looked at the rights of all children, without making exceptions for certain forms of work and certain groups of children. Every child has the right to protection from exploitation and access to education. In areas with a lot of child labour, MV Foundation introduced the standard 'no child should work, all children should be able to go to school'. Through awareness and mobilisation of all those involved - parents, teachers, village elders, local authorities, employers and children themselves - a movement was started to realise the rights of children.



[Read more](#)

Support the work of the Arisa Foundation!

The Arisa Foundation is financially supported by institutional donors and a large group of individuals who are committed to Arisa's work.

We value the financial support of those who appreciate our work, as this indicates that there are many people who also consider the goals we are committed to important.

Any donation to Arisa – no matter how big or small – is very welcome!

Deposit your contribution into bank account NL 81 TRIO 037 931 3200 attn. Arisa Foundation in Utrecht, stating “donation”.

Follow Arisa on social media

Arisa has an [Instagram account](#)! On Instagram, Arisa mainly wants to showcase images about our work. We really appreciate it if you follow us. Under the name Arisa Foundation we share reports about human rights violations in South Asia, especially in relation to the production chains of clothing and textiles, natural stone and seeds. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

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