



Expert meeting

“Towards decent work in the Indian textile and garment industry and the role of the Netherlands”

3 December 2013, 16.30-18.00 h, The Hague

With participation of three Indian labour rights NGOs, a representative of Dutch garment trade association RND/VGT and a member of Parliament of the ChristenUnie

The India Committee of the Netherlands, Clean Clothes Campaign, FNV Mondiaal and SOMO invite you for an expert meeting “Towards decent work in the Indian textile and garment industry and the role of the Netherlands”.

Three guests from South India will speak about their work and share their perspective on measures that can be taken to curb Sumangali and other labour rights abuses in the Indian garment sector, with a focus on supply chain responsibility of Dutch buying companies:

- **Ms. Viaykula Mary from [Save](#)** works on rescuing and rehabilitating child labourers and supporting women workers in the textile industry. Ms. Mary leads the Labour Resource Center (LRC) that promotes labour standards and the rights of workers. Together with READ, Save is involved in monitoring of integrated manufacturers in the Tirupur region.
- **[READ](#), represented by Ms. Maheswari Murugan**, is an organisation established by Dalits, to promote their rights. Dalits, or so-called ‘untouchables’, are the lowest group in the Indian caste hierarchy and therefore face a discrimination and exploitation. The majority of Sumangali workers has a Dalit background. Maheshwari has herself worked three years in a spinning mill.
- **Anita Cheria is involved in the work of both [CIVIDEP](#) and [Munnade](#)**, in Bangalore, India. Cividep is a labour rights NGO, that does research on labour conditions in the electronics, garments, mining and banking sectors and has set up workers’ rights initiatives in these and other sectors. Munnade is a union representing more than 900 female workers, from 15 garment factories.

The three Indian labour rights defenders will explore how actions of the garment industry and the Dutch government can make a difference for workers in the Indian garment industry, in a panel debate with:

- **Jeroen van Dijke representing VGT (Vereniging Groothandel Textiel**, the industry organisation of chain stores). VGT has, in cooperation with Modint and Inretail, presented the Action Plan Dutch Textile and Clothing Industry, that aims to create a more sustainable garment industry.
- **Mr. Joël Voordewind, Member of Parliament for the ChristenUnie**. Mr. Joël Voordewind is one of the co-signers of a motion in Dutch parliament calling for supply chain transparency in the textile and garment industry. Furthermore he has been awarded the Fair Politician of the Year award in

2012 for his successful efforts against child labour in textile and other sectors and improving labour conditions worldwide. Participation of Mr. Voordewind is subject to the parliamentary agenda.

Together and in interaction with the audience, they will explore what the Dutch government and Dutch garment companies can do to strengthen work already done on the ground. Discussion is facilitated by **Natasja van den Berg**, author of 'Praktisch Idealisme'(Practical Idealism).

Background

The Indian textile and garment industry is a major sourcing area for Dutch companies. The far from decent employment, labour and living conditions that workers in this industry are facing are therefore of direct concern to Dutch buying companies and the Dutch government.

[ICN](#), [CCC](#), [FNV Mondiaal](#) and [SOMO](#) have a long standing involvement in improving labour conditions in the garment industry in India, with a focus in recent years on 'Sumangali' and related forms of exploitation. Sumangali is a labour scheme used in the South Indian textile and garment industry, where young girls are lured into garment factories and spinning mills with the promise of money for their dowry so they can become a happily married wife (Sumangali). In practice the scheme amounts to a form of bonded labour.

When ICN and SOMO published "Maid in India" on labour violations under the Sumangali scheme in April 2012, the Dutch parliament passed a motion calling for full supply chain transparency in the garment sector and for banning child labour and all other forms of exploitation. In response, the industry presented the 'Action Plan Dutch Textile and Clothing Industry', that includes Sumangali as an issue to act on. The Dutch government has raised this issue with the Indian government.

When: 3 December 2013, 16.30-18.00 hrs.

Coffee and registration from 16.00. Drinks afterwards.

Where: [Johanneszaal, Oude Molstraat 37, Den Haag](#)

Registration: Please confirm your participation with Ms Brit van Duin: b.van.duin@indianet.nl