

# Mondiaal.

Magazine about Mondiaal FNV's work in 2017

On the road to clean clothes

## The prewash is running

*'Safety courses are  
a success story for  
shipbreaking in Alang'*

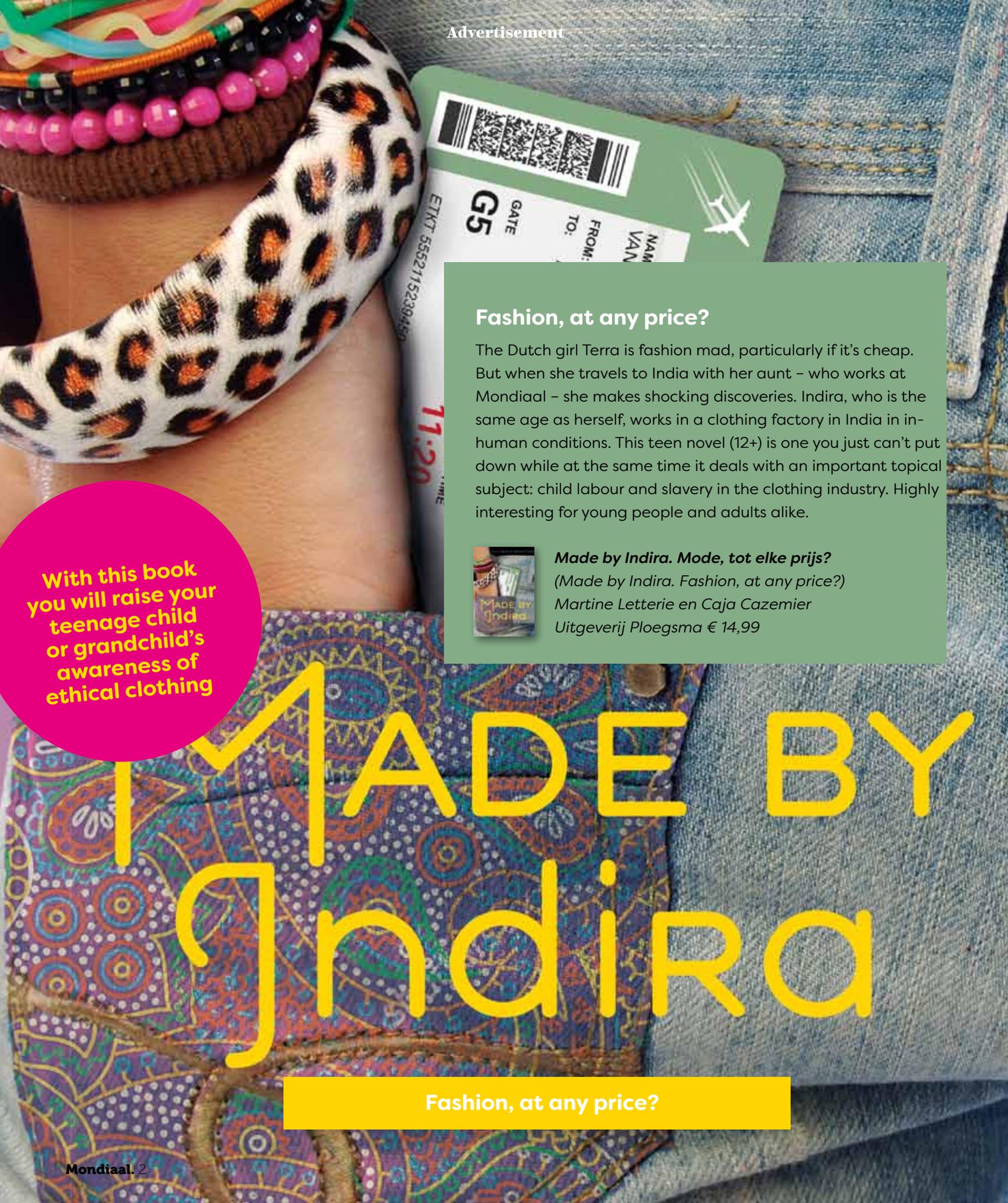
- Vidyadhar Rane -

*'Injustice  
infuriates  
me'*

FNV-president  
Han Busker

Social dialogue:  
**INDISPENSABLE**  
*(but what is it actually?)*

Mondiaal **FNV**



## Fashion, at any price?

The Dutch girl Terra is fashion mad, particularly if it's cheap. But when she travels to India with her aunt – who works at Mondiaal – she makes shocking discoveries. Indira, who is the same age as herself, works in a clothing factory in India in in-human conditions. This teen novel (12+) is one you just can't put down while at the same time it deals with an important topical subject: child labour and slavery in the clothing industry. Highly interesting for young people and adults alike.



**Made by Indira. Mode, tot elke prijs?**

*(Made by Indira. Fashion, at any price?)*

Martine Letterie en Caja Cazemier

Uitgeverij Ploegsma € 14,99

With this book  
you will raise your  
teenage child  
or grandchild's  
awareness of  
ethical clothing

# MADE BY Indira

Fashion, at any price?

# On palm oil, clothing and dialogue

Maybe you already knew that Mondiaal FNV is now meddling in your diet as well. No, we don't take part in the 'to-gluten or-not-to-gluten' debate. What we're concerned about is the palm oil that's used in your margarine, in peanut butter, chocolate, baby food, biscuits and so on and so forth.

Palm oil is one of the most extensively used oils in the world. You are no doubt aware that in order to make way for palm oil plantations, tropical rainforests are being cut down, primeval forests irretrievably destroyed and orangutans losing their habitat. Luckily, there are organisations and companies working on diminishing this onslaught on the environment. Will that dismiss the concerns? Unfortunately not, because a further factor is that the working conditions on the plantations are pitiful: the wages are low, the pressure is high and there is a lack of protective equipment. To cap it all, the workers have no way of standing up for their rights either. And that's something Mondiaal FNV is doing something about. We support organisations that help workers to stand up for their rights, for example by setting up a trade union. We also conduct international campaigns and lobby to increase the pressure on employers for the employees to be paid a fair wage for their hard work so that we, for our part, can feel assured that we're buying fair products. In this annual report you'll see impressive photos taken by photographer Chris de Bode, who visited a palm oil plantation on our behalf.

As of this year, we have been focusing largely on a number of international production chains. Besides palm oil, these are cocoa, fruit and vegetables, the construction sector, the ship demolition sector and clothing. These are chains with a link to Dutch consumers and Dutch companies. The connecting thread is the deplorable working conditions within these chains and the difficulty for workers to do something about this without any help.

The greater the international pressure and collaboration, the more likelihood there is of results. You see this, for example, in the clothing sector, where clothing brands are increasingly taking part in initiatives to make the clothing chain fairer. Mondiaal FNV is working with Fair Wear Foundation

and CNV International and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Strategic Partnership for clothing chain innovation. We are developing new methods to help workers strengthen their position and stimulate companies to pay a living wage, increase safety and enter into dialogue with employees so that ultimately the makers of our clothes will have better jobs and a better life.

The word has already been mentioned: dialogue. Without social dialogue between employees, employers and the government, there will be no substantial improvement. However, dialogue does not happen all by itself. In this magazine, there is a clearly written item by Catelene Passchier about the importance of social dialogue. Good examples illustrating how Mondiaal FNV is helping to strengthen the social dialogue around the world are the projects that we are conducting in collaboration with DECP, the 'Mondiaal' of VNO-NCW.

Internally, too, we have experienced change. For fifteen years now, Dian van Unen was at the head of Mondiaal FNV - in a most inspiring manner - but at the beginning of 2018 she handed over the baton. Fortunately, she continues to be closely involved with us. It is a privilege for me to follow in her footsteps.

We have also taken the opportunity to redesign the format of the annual report. It is now a magazine - a glossy, in fact - which, in a highly congenial manner, acquaints you with the developments and results of our work.

***Karen Brouwer***



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Foto: Martin de Bouter



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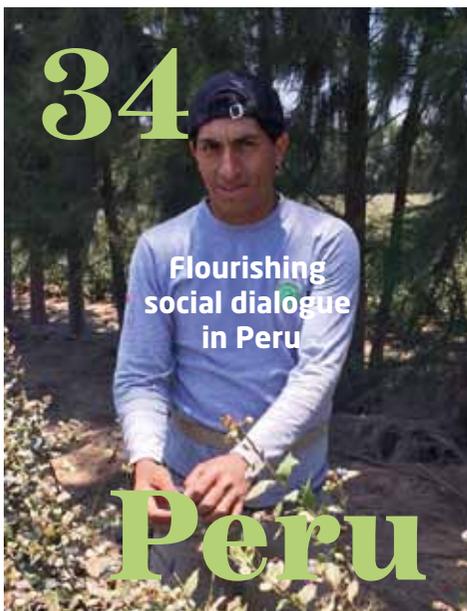
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# Textile has only got cheaper still...

*even after Rana Plaza*

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It is still far from easy to find a pair of trousers, a dress or a blouse that's guaranteed free of child labour and made in good working conditions. In other words 'clean' clothes. Nonetheless, a number of initiatives are in progress aimed at cleaning up the textile chain.

The prewash is running ...

The Bengalese textile worker Pakhi Begum (35) scours the racks of jeans in the H&M store in Amsterdam's Kalverstraat. She looks at a label. She nods: "Yes, this is a pair I could easily have made." Pakhi is proud that the trousers she makes, far away in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, are on sale here. She takes pride in her work. The conditions in which she has to do this, however, are less agreeable. Every day, 1,100 to 1,200 pairs of trousers leave Pakhi's sewing machine. You can only meet this target by working flat out at a gruelling pace. Her wage: 50 euros a month, for a 48-hour working work. That is not enough to keep her head above water. Pakhi: "My son lives with my parents way out in the country. I simply don't earn enough to be able to have him here. I see him twice a year. That hurts." And the future is anything but rosy. "When I'm 40 or 42, I won't be able to keep up the pace any longer and I'll get the sack ..."

Pakhi was visiting the Netherlands at the invitation of Mondiaal FNV. Her visit was intended to make people aware that the clothes hanging on the racks in in the Dutch shops directly link us to their makers in countries like Bangladesh, India or Morocco. The 'chain approach' is what that's called. In 2016, a large number of clothing brands and trade organisations together with the trade unions and civil society organisations signed the so-called *Textile covenant*. Under this agreement the companies promised that within 3 to 5 years, 'substantial steps' forward will have been taken in making the textile production chain 'more social'. The secretariat of the covenant is based in the Socio Economic Council, the epicentre of the Dutch social dialogue.

#### WHO PRODUCES WHAT AND WHERE?

In 2017, the covenant achieved a high point: all the affiliated 'brands' had to disclose in which countries and factories they have their clothes made. The result was a list of over 2,500 factories in 50 countries where clothes for the Dutch market are made. If the rights of the workers are violated in one of these factories then we know that in any case there is a link with the Netherlands.



Textile workers in a factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo: Catrien Ariëns.

### What we are doing – *Ethiopia*

Mondiaal supports local unions that fight for the improvement of labour rights and conditions in the textile industry. This industry is still young in Ethiopia but clothing brands are increasingly discovering the country. The labour force is even cheaper than in other production countries, like Bangladesh. The entire sector is being built up there and it is therefore important to build up the working rights and conditions correspondingly.

What happens is that the secretariat contacts the company in the hopes that measures will be taken. Jef Wintermans, the coordinator of the covenant on behalf of the parties, explains the procedure: "The Fair Wear Foundation recently came across a case in Myanmar where a textile factory refused to admit a union. From the list we could see that this factory supplies to WE fashion. We took this up with WE and they went to the factory to get answers. The result was that the union in question was accepted and that activists who had demonstrated on behalf of that union were reinstated."

A good result, but this process has a downside too. A major shortcoming is that it is not made clear which specific brand has its products

made in which specific factory. "It is an 'aggregated list,'" acknowledges Wintermans. "Although the secretariat knows who produces what and where, we are not allowed to disclose this to the public or to the other partners in the covenant." All the locations have been lumped together as it were. "Many companies still find complete transparency a problem. They are afraid that by doing so they will put their competitive position at risk."

Transparency is key to cleaning up the chain. "Only if we know who produces what and where, are we able to appeal to companies to take responsibility," says Jacob Plat, who represents the FNV in the textile covenant. Plat hopes that in 2018, companies will be fully open about where they have their clothes made: it's high time the full story is told.

#### NUDIE UNDERWEAR

Jacob Plat was asked whether he dares go so far as to give advice as to where they can buy their clothes with a clear conscience.

Plat: "Yes, most certainly. For example at Claudia Sträter. This company is well on its way to improving the production and is actively participating in the textile covenant. What is more, the store personnel are generally well informed about the production of clothing and are able to provide good advice."

*Do you shop there yourself?*

Plat: "No I don't, Claudia Sträter sells women's clothes."

*Just a joke! And what about gentlemen's stores?*

"Mammut is a good brand for outdoor clothing. Nudie Jeans are good, and Jack Wolfskin is too." When we check, we see that Claudia Sträter is in the category 'Good' according to the Fair Wear Foundation's *Brand Performance Check*. Mammut has a higher score and is rated a 'Leader' by Fair Wear, as is Nudie Jeans, which has occupied a leading position for four years in a row.

Consumers who want to know more, are able to inspect the Performance Check on the Fair



Rokiya (44) has worked as a textile worker for thirty years. "Nowadays we have to wait a whole year for our money." Photo Roderick Polak.

### What we are doing Indonesia

Both the federation *Buruh Lintas Pabrik*, a small federation with many women members in the textile industry, and the NGO *Perempuan Mahardhika* ('Free Women') are fighting against violence - particularly sexual violence - against women in the workplace. With support from *Mondiaal*, the organisations organise female workers, they have developed a zero sexual harassment policy for companies in the KBN Cakung industrial zone in Jakarta and are fighting for a change in mentality on the part of the government.

Wear Foundation website, under the affiliated companies. For example, take a look at Nudie Jeans. There you'll see that this Swedish company gets its clothes primarily from so-called 'low risk countries', meaning countries where the risk of exploitation is less and where employment conditions are set out during collective bargaining agreements between employees and employers. We are then referring for example to Portugal or Italy. But Nudie Jeans also has clothes made in India. On the Nudie website - *the naked truth about denim!* - we see that the Nudie underwear is made in the Armstrong Knitting Mills in Tirupur in South India. Now there's transparency for you. The FWF regularly monitors the working conditions there. Nudie Jeans has itself placed a summary of the results of the checks on its website, where the company acknowledges for example that although the wages in the factory are at or above the minimum wage, they are not yet at the level of a living wage. To improve this,

Transparency is the key to cleaning up the chain. Only when we know who produces what and where will we be able to appeal to companies to take responsibility

Nudie pays extra, but in order to truly get the workers' wages up, other buyers of Armstrong Knitting - Nudie only buys 2% of their production - must also take responsibility.

#### **BREAKTHROUGH YEAR**

The textile covenant has taken a big step forwards, says Ruben Korevaar, policy advisor at Mondiaal FNV. If 'clean clothes' is the aspiration, then maybe you can call the covenant part of the prewash. Korevaar hopes that 2018 will be a breakthrough year, when companies will become more transparent about where they produce, and do much more to take responsibility. This will only be possible if they are serious about their *Due Diligence* in their production chain. This term, which is constantly on the lips of anyone who is professionally involved in production chains, roughly means that companies should meticulously examine all the facets of the production process, from raw material to end product. This is a highly comprehensive

process. How things are done in one's own company, that much we do know, but what are the conditions like in the suppliers' companies? What are the working conditions like in the factories where the clothes are made? And what about in the companies behind these? Aren't children being put to work in the small sweatshops riveting jeans buttons? And what do you do if local legislation allows less trade union freedom than we consider decent? These are all questions that sometimes challenge even well-intentioned companies.

Enthusiasm, then, about the textile covenant, but Korevaar also knows that signing a covenant in the Netherlands is not enough, which is why Mondiaal FNV is working to strengthen the unions in the production countries. Together with the Fair Wear Foundation, CNV International and with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mondiaal FNV has entered into a 'strategic partnership' to develop



Shourav (9) works in return for three meals a day. Photo Roderick Polak

## **What we are doing**

### *Myanmar*

Mondiaal supports local labour organisations in conducting research into the labour market, working conditions, negotiations between employers and employees, sexual violence against women and the informal economy surrounding the clothing industry in Myanmar. This is the first phase of a programme that should ultimately lead to strong unions, well equipped to fight for better labour rights and conditions for workers in the clothing industry.



At work in the forgotten district of Keraniganj in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo: Roderick Polak.

models that show that a sustainable textile chain is indeed possible. Mondiaal FNV ensures that local workers in countries like Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Myanmar are adequately informed and have been organised so that they are able to stand up for their rights. This happens at factory level and also at sectoral level in negotiations with the government. "Unions are especially important in organising workers and thus negotiating better working conditions," says Korevaar. Unions also have a role in lobbying for better legislation. International attention is most important, emphasises Korevaar. Through international support, which the large fashion brands sometimes also join in with, unions achieve more in their own country. "In Indonesia, local unions have, for example, been able to secure a Freedom of Association Protocol, enabling them to enter factories much more easily in order to organise workers or to check for compliance with regulations." Both local governments and factory owners realise that their conduct is being closely observed.

Korevaar does, however, warn against over-hastiness in cleaning up the textile industry. The margins at the bottom of the textile chain are exceedingly small. Improvements in factory safety can easily be at the expense of wage

bargaining. Korevaar: "After 'Rana Plaza', local manufacturers made investments to put their factories in order: wider staircases, new electric installations, the meter box in a separate area, etc. This has cost them a lot of money and means that they have little scope left for the simplest of the workers' demands: a higher wage. There is also the risk that meeting safety requirements will mean that Bangladesh will become more expensive and that the

Through international support, unions achieve more in their own country

international fashion brands will go to cheaper countries. The local factories depend on what the fashion brands pay them. There too, we can play a role: in the tendering for clothing brands. Labour costs are still bottom of the list. The prices of textile have only got lower still, even after Rana Plaza."

### # This doesn't feel comfortable



What exactly is the situation in the clothing industry? How sustainable is my T-shirt or dress? If I buy an expensive make of trousers, does that mean things are better in terms of the working conditions under which my trousers have been made? How much profit do the brands make and what do the makers actually earn? A lot of question to which Mondiaal FNV provides an honest answer every week, with tips on how you can contribute to a more sustainable clothing industry. In September 2017, the awareness campaign "Het zit me niet lekker" (This doesn't feel comfortable) was launched on Facebook and appears to be meeting a

need. Not only were there enthusiastic reactions, but after publication about the campaign in the FNV's general newsletter, 10,000 people clicked through to [www.hetzitmenietlekker.nl](http://www.hetzitmenietlekker.nl). The campaign did not go unnoticed outside the FNV either; reactions came from all kinds of organisations and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The campaign will have a follow-up in the autumn of 2018 with a sustainable clothing happening in Amsterdam. And in the meantime, awareness has been raised about the situation in the clothing industry and sustainable clothing!

# Terra goes to India

Our book *Made by Indira*, is about the Dutch girl Terra. Terra is taken by her aunt Willemijn to South India to find out more about the abuses in the clothing industry. It is no coincidence that her aunt works for Mondiaal FNV. We needed to devise a pretext for how Terra finds herself in South India. Via a TV programme? Has she won an award? No, it's Aunt Willemijn.

Our research soon took us to Mondiaal FNV. Wilma Roos of Mondiaal FNV put us in touch with SAVE, an Indian organisation that combats child labour. The journey Terra goes on is broadly based on the journey that we went on to India ourselves to see with our own eyes what is amiss in the clothing industry in Tamil Nadu. The culture shock, the poverty, the smells and colours, Terra's emotions as she hears the stories of the girls who work in the spinning mills; we experienced all of these ourselves.

Indira, the second leading character in *Made by Indira*, is inspired by the dozens of girls we spoke to during our journey through Tamil Nadu. Girls who were working in factories and spinning mills under terrible conditions, at an age when children in the Netherlands are still at school. Some of them had already started work when they were only eleven. One girl told us: "Every day, when I set foot in the factory, I feel as if I'm setting foot in a prison."

We heard shocking stories: including about a girl who had died in the factory. Many others lost a finger or became injured in some other way while at work. But what made the most profound impression on us was the hopelessness. One of the questions that we had asked all the girls was whether they had dreams for the future, and without exception they said that for them there was nothing left to dream for.

Mondiaal FNV and SAVE are working hard to change that. We hope that with our book we will be able to make a small contribution to this.

*Caja Cazemier & Martine Letterie*



# Added benefits!



## Dream cruises

*luxuriate on the scenic  
ship-dismantling beaches*

The tropical coasts of India and Pakistan provide fabulous surroundings for an unforgettable cruise. Your fine cruise ship sails right up the captivating coral beach. And while you're enjoying an all-inclusive drink, the exotic local population burns off and removes every tiny chip of iron from the ship with their romantic cutting torches. They do that preferably without protective clothing and barefoot as well. An impressive sight. Return flight business class included.

*FNV gives safety training courses to workers at the shipbreaking yards and supports trade union organisations at the shipyards in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.*



## SHIVA SHAMPOO

*from the former rain forest*

Our shampoo not only needs to foam up well, but it has to be profitable too, which is why we proceed as follows. Step 1. We go to Indonesia, 2. Chase the population out of the rain forest, 3. Burn down the rain forest, 4. Plant oil palms, 5. Take cheap migrants there, 6. Pay them the minimum, 7. Ban trade unions, 8. Not pay overtime, 9. Have children work as well, 10. Sack workers who are assertive.

*In Indonesia, Mondiaal FNV supports palm oil workers' unions. In 2017, the union SBPKS GSBI managed to exact promises of better working conditions from the oil palm giant Sinar Mas.*



## Super skinny jeans

**What do mean, Bangladesh? We don't get our textile from Bangladesh any more. That's SO 2016. We buy our skinny jeans in Myanmar and Ethiopia: just as skinny as the makers' wages!**

*Mondiaal FNV supports the textile unions and is a participant in the textile covenant. We also answer the most frequently asked questions about the garment industry and give tips about what you can do at: [www.hetzitmenietlekker.nl](http://www.hetzitmenietlekker.nl)*



**For the Nigerian Emmanuel Chinedu Jackson (38) and nine of his colleagues, 2017 is the year when they were finally given a permanent contract by Sterling Global Oil Services after years of being contract workers.**

‘Since 2006 I had been working for Sterling Global Oil Services as a contracting party via subcontractors. Our working conditions resembled slavery. We were at the plant for 24 hours a day and slept in the office in-between times. We had to ask permission to pay visits to our family on Sundays every so often. Getting married or entering into a permanent relationship was impossible. Our salary was fixed for 6 years at 23,000 naira (approximately 50 euros) a month, overtime was not paid out, there were no medical provisions and it was strictly forbidden to talk to the expats. In 2010, NUPENG (Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers) began its fight to unionise the workers. By 2012 we had all become members of the union and a number of minor improvements were implemented, such as an 8-hour working day and paid overtime. That made it possible for me to enter into a relationship; meanwhile, we are now married and have 4 children. And in 2017, I and 9 colleagues were finally given a permanent contract by Sterling Global Oil Services. I received a letter of appointment, my salary rose to 77,000 naira (175 euros), and my family and I now have medical insurance.’

*Mondiaal FNV supports a project by the international sector union IndustriALL in which two Nigerian trade unions for oil and gas workers combat precarious work.*



## Waste

**Masses of premium-brand articles at giveaway prices. When the lorries are being unloaded you need to act fast: plastic, clothing, shoes, metal, offal. You name it, it's there. The golden opportunity for snap deciders!**

*Mondiaal FNV supports the Indian organisation SEWA, which strengthens the position of waste pickers in India. This includes 2,500 women who recycle the residual products from scrapped ships.*

### Tip!

## Responsible gravestone

**Beautiful, practical and hygienic, a stone worktop. If you feel pangs of conscience because it turns out to have been made with the use of child labour or forced labour then you can always turn it into a gravestone!**

*FNV is a participant in the Responsible Stone Programme. Goal: a quality mark for responsible natural stone. And Mondiaal FNV supports the trade union organisation and the combatting of child labour in the stone quarries in India*

**Han Busker, President of Mondiaal FNV:**

“Standing up against injustice should be in the FNV DNA”

*“Injustice infuriates me,” says Han Busker, President of both the FNV and Mondiaal FNV. Community involvement is something that had been ingrained in him since he was a child. Busker can quite imagine that one day Dutch workers will go on strike to put an end to child labour, for example. “It is vital that the commitment to international solidarity should not be limited to Mondiaal FNV.”*



At mealtimes, not only potatoes, but also the trials and tribulations of the world were on the menu in the family that FNV and Mondiaal FNV President Han Busker (1960) grew up in. Poverty, suppression, war: these were topics for discussion over dinner. This was by no means normal in the world of military professionals that he grew up in. "My father was an officer and I have always found his way of moving around in those circles quite extraordinary," says Busker. "His colleagues talked less about these kinds of problems than my father did. He was also a union member, because he wanted to do more than merely act the boss over his men."

Respect and fair sharing were core values. "In my parents' case, these went back to their church background. In my case, this was less the motivation, but I was brought up with the idea that we are not alone in the world, that we care about those who have less than we do and we are not jealous of people who are better off."

Nevertheless, this did not immediately lead to a great feeling of social awareness in Busker. He spent much of his youth in Soesterberg, near the air base. The village was largely inhabited by soldiers. In those surroundings, the rebellion of the sixties and seventies passed the young Han Busker by unnoticed. He spent his time mainly on sport and mischief. But sometimes his roots came out. For example, in 1974 he became actively involved in a fundraising campaign in aid of the famine in the Sahel, which was being held by the Protestant denominational secondary school in Zeist where he was a pupil. And then when, shortly after the campaign, the baker's cart was parked in the school playground at break time, and he saw fellow pupils chucking away their bread, one and one quickly made two and he confronted them: "Guys, don't you know what's going on in the rest of the world!"

These were the first signals of his strong feeling for justice, which was to become the guiding term in his life. "Injustice infuriates me". Likewise if injustice is done to him too. "At that time, I lived on the outskirts of the village. One day, the school introduced the rule that children from outside the village were allowed to cycle to school, but that the rest had to walk. The street where I lived was exactly on the boundary. However, I lived just on the wrong side of the street and so had to walk. I found that so unfair." And so the 11-year-old Han went to the headmaster. "I made my discontent known in

quite sharp tones and in the end I was allowed to cycle to school."

Surprisingly enough he didn't become really socially committed until the early eighties, when he started working for the military police. "Don't get me wrong, I believed - and still do! - the military police to be a fine organisation, but I regularly held different opinions on social themes from my colleagues. I absolutely didn't belong to the radical left but in that community I did have the reputation of being a leftist."

A case in point is Schiphol, where Busker had to deal with the expulsion of asylum seekers. "What went through my mind was what was wrong with wanting the best for your family?" The expulsion was sometimes accompanied by violence. "I saw people fighting for their lives. They clearly had so much to lose if there were deported." The military police received negative publicity because of the practice of taping troublesome asylum seekers' mouths shut, with one fatality. In Busker's words: "These are difficult issues and there were other military police colleagues who had a problem with this as well. I will never hide behind 'orders are orders'. I have never done things blindly. And so I soon became involved in consultation and employee participation. I was a member of the union from day one - I'd got that from my upbringing - but I now began to be actively involved."

*Your task as police officer is to maintain the established order isn't it. That can easily clash with your own ideals of in fact changing the world.*

"That is an awareness that you have to develop. In the eighties I was deployed with the riot squad during the squatters' riots. I was conscious of the fact that the squatters were fighting for their ideals. Obviously I felt it was important to support my colleagues but I was never the one to cast the first blow. At that time I was a youngster from a village where housing shortage wasn't an issue. I knew very little about the problems besetting the big city. That didn't come till later."

After the interview, Busker bumped into a fellow union official in the corridor of the FNV building. Said Busker, jokingly: "I ran into him once in Amsterdam: him as a squatter and me as a riot squad officer with a baton."

“  
*Injustice  
infuriates  
me*  
”



Han Busker demonstrates for the release of the South Korean trade union leader Han Sang-gyun. Photo: Rebke Klokke

“

*I am absolutely convinced that you can't be a trade union without an international component.*

”

*How did your career as a trade unionist begin?*

“After I'd worked with the police in Amsterdam for a while, the military police was asked to carry out police duties at Schiphol. It was chaotic: the work was badly organised, the rosters didn't tally, the working hours were impossible. We then organised a meeting with the union, where they said: go to The Hague and see if you can put things right. Two years later, the military police union asked whether I would like to come and work for them.”

*Were you as a union official actively engaged in international trade union work?*

“I didn't come across it much at the time. I did later on when I was president of the police union. There was particular focus on collaboration with South Africa, where for a number of years our police union had been supporting their union in putting their house in order. It's OK to grumble about the police in the Netherlands and where there are excesses then, very rightly, these are addressed, but if you compare this with the rest of the world, then I'm proud of our own police. And of course South Africa, with Apartheid, started off from the worst situation imaginable.”

Since its beginnings, the trade union struggle has also been an international struggle. It seems as if something of this has been lost. Could we do more about that? “Within the FNV, the Mondiaal contingency concerns itself specifically with international solidarity. Its passion and drive is a fine thing to see. It is essential, however, that the commitment to international solidarity is not confined to Mondiaal FNV. It is our task to keep involving others. That ought really to happen as a matter of course. We should wish not only to make a financial contribution but really get to work on it. The international work is part and parcel of the trade union. I am absolutely convinced that you can't be a trade union without an international component.

*It sometimes seems that the more we globalise, the more people turn inwards.*

“Absolutely true! The world has become too big for people, people are opting out. It is a task of the trade unions to show the bigger picture. As in the case of the retail chain Action, for example. We have to reveal how

it's possible for the products in the Action stores to be so cheap. This happens over the backs of our colleagues abroad and the employment conditions of our staff in the Netherlands too."

*We haven't heard you say a lot about this kind of thing in public. What are your international aspirations?*

"For me, the international component is self-evident, which is why I may have spoken less explicitly about it. I also feel that Mondiaal is not a topic of discussion within the FNV. And sometimes it is referred to more explicitly. The Offensive that we are now engaging in is all about the race to the bottom. About the fundamental causes of abuses in society. Then you can't avoid looking at retail chains where things happen that are just not OK, such as the working conditions in the clothing industry in Asia. In other words our current agenda does include a firm, international component."

*In the coming years can we expect the FNV to actually hold protest actions for an international theme: striking against child labour?*

"Anything is possible. We are now fighting to combat child poverty in the Netherlands, but this of course bears no comparison with what is happening on a global scale. Children are being exploited so that we are able to live our lives of luxury. Our actions against TTIP centred around that theme. Standing up against injustice should be in the FNV DNA. We have the convenience and others the pain - that mustn't happen. For instance, I was at the IndustriALL conference on shipbreaking - the dismantling of our ships on the beaches of countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and China (see page 18, RED), where our colleagues' working conditions are atrocious. That gives us the motivation to support international work with everything we've got. Maybe I'm a bit of a visionary, but it's just such a huge injustice that's going on there."

*The FNV is active in the textile covenant (see page 4, RED). This raises the question: where does the FNV president buy his clothes?*

Busker examines the lining of his jacket. We are not disappointed: a brand that has its house reasonably well in order. "I'll be giving this greater attention. I know that I'm not without sin."



**Berihu Measho's high point of 2017 was in October when he manned a Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Union CETU stand at the ASFW fashion fair in Addis Ababa.**

"It was the first time that I had attended a large, international happening of this kind. It was tremendous to see the modern-day clothes that are being manufactured all over the world. My colleagues and I seized the opportunity to supply information about our work to manufacturers, salespersons and buyers of textile and garments. We apprised employees of their right to organise and conduct collective bargaining with their employers. We informed them about ILO conventions, provisions under the Constitution and other relevant labour agreements. By reaching new potential trade union members in this way, we hoped we would be able to bring our aim of unionising thousands of workers in the textile and garment industry a step closer. Our intention is to take part in meetings of this kind more often. To be even better able to present ourselves, we're busy preparing leaflets and even a documentary about our work. Next time, we want to take on the organisation of part of the conference programme ourselves. All in all, I found the fair a fantastic, impressive and unforgettable time."

*Mondiaal FNV supports the strengthening of the Ethiopian Trade Union CETU in conducting an effective social dialogue.*

# Projects worldwide

In 2017 Mondiaal FNV had 138 on-going projects. This magazine includes examples of the projects and this map highlights a number of these.

## Ghana TUCP

### More capacity and social dialogue in the cocoa sector

The Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU), the most important union in Ghana's cocoa sector, wants to recruit more members as well as to increase their knowledge on corporate social responsibility in the cocoa industry. The ICU, together with the farmers, also intends to raise questions of concern with the employers and government on the problems faced by the cocoa farmers

## Colombia TUCP

### Sustainable economic development via social dialogue and the oil palm production chain

Supporting the Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS). The ENS works to improve social dialogue and supports trade union leaders in achieving this. In addition, ENS helps trade unions reduce occupational risks in the palm oil value chain.

## Peru FNV Solidarity fund

### Supporting domestic workers in Lima, Peru

Domestic workers in Peru work in harsh conditions, isolated in their employers' private households. Although Sintrahol is a small trade union for domestic workers, the women leaders are extremely strong and have achieved a firm position in the unions and in the political community. This solidarity project is in support of Sintrahol in organising more domestic workers and improving their labour rights.

## Turkey

### FNV Solidarity projects / Industry Sector

#### Strengthening the Turkish trade union

Exchange project between active members of the FNV industrial sector and the Turkish trade union Tekgida-Is, a union for workers in tobacco, beverages & food (totalling approximately 28,700 members) with the aim of strengthening the capacity of this trade union.

## Nicaragua, Mali, Uganda,

### Zimbabwe AOb-fund

#### Combating child labour

Strengthening local unions in tackling child labour; for example by creating and strengthening child labour-free zones.

**Ethiopia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan**  
**STRPART**

**Chain approach to abuses in the textile industry**

In these eight countries we are working to improve labour rights and conditions and to combat violence on women in the textile industry (see also page 6). We do this via a 'Strategic Partnership for Garment Supply Chain Transformation' in conjunction with the Fair Wear Foundation, CNV International and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Qatar, Thailand, Malaysia**  
**Better working and living conditions for labour migrants in the Middle East and South-East Asia**

Support for a project to protect migrant workers from India, Bangladesh and Nepal from exploitation and modern slavery in the countries where they end up working (particularly in the Middle East (Qatar) and South-East Asia). The international trade union BWI and the local unions do their utmost to prepare the migrant workers for safe migration. In the countries of destination, BWI is engaged in efforts to organise the migrants and lobby the government for better working and living conditions.

**India, Bangladesh, Pakistan** **TUCP**  
**Organising workers in the shipbreaking industry in South Asia**

Mondiaal FNV supports IndustriALL in organising unions in the shipbreaking yards in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Active members are trained in working safely and healthily, trade union organisation, and workers' rights. IndustriALL also stimulates social dialogue with employers and government.

**Indonesia** **TUCP**  
**Strengthening and development of palm oil unions in North Sumatra, Riau, Jambi and East Kalimantan**

This is one of the three projects in Indonesia aimed at improving the working conditions of workers on palm oil plantations. Indonesia is the largest palm oil producer in the world. The working conditions on these oil palm plantations are extremely poor. Mondiaal FNV supports the organisation OPPUK in organising and training workers on palm oil plantations and improving their labour rights, also targeting government and employers. OPPUK is working closely with the independent trade union SERBUNDO.

**Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Ethiopia** **TUCP**

**Better work in internationally financed construction projects in East Africa**

The economic growth in East Africa is generating large construction projects, such as harbours in Kenya and Tanzania, new road networks, etc. Many of the construction companies, particularly the Chinese ones, have little regard for safety and good working conditions.

In the construction projects, funded by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and governments, the fundamental labour norms are often not respected, whereas according to their own guidelines they should be. The global building union BWI aims to improve this by mobilisation and organisation.



**A number of projects by fund in 2017\***



*\*on a basis of disbursements.*

# Safety training saves lives





Quite openly, they sail up the beaches in countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan: the freighters that the world of prosperity is done with. At risk to their own lives, workers who dismantle them earn a paltry wage. Via IndustriALL, FNV union official Joop van Oord gives training courses to the local trade union on how to limit the risks.

‘We hold the cutting torch to the base of the ship and suddenly “boom!” there is an explosion. My colleague and I were blown away. I escaped with a fright, but he was left disabled and I was given the blame.’ This is one of the many shocking stories that Joop van Oord heard during the training courses that he and Ruud Van den Bergh gave in Mumbai, India. Van Oord goes on to say: ‘We analysed the accident and discovered that it’s standard practice to burn the residue that remains behind in the holds of the maritime wrecks. The men make a hole in the base of hold number 1, light the residue and then do the same to hold 2. By the time they arrive at hold 3, it’s got so warm there that the liquid has started to evaporate and gases have formed. As soon as the cutting torch has penetrated the base, there is an explosion that potentially causes injury or worse. We advised on the need for good ventilation and to check first for gasification before applying the gas burner.’



Joop van Oord



Vidyadhar Rane

### WITHOUT ANY EXPERTISE

Van Oord first heard about the appalling situation on the beaches of countries like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan when he attended a talk by Mondiaal FNV for union officials in 2008. He saw the images of workers who worked long hours in the burning sun and for little money, without any expertise or protection from toxic substances, dismantling 'our' ships. Since 2011, he has given training courses practically every year to personnel of the local union ASSRGWA in India, who then pass on the information to the workers in the workplace.

'It's often about simple things, for which expertise is certainly needed. Take for example the unicode: a colour code that indicates what particular piping is used for. They didn't know about this colour code. They are very intelligent people, but they often come from the poor rural areas of India to the city to earn money and before that they worked predominantly in agriculture. Obviously you are then not aware of the significance of such a colour code. And nobody tells them that. A huge number of accidents happen because of that.'

### DUST EXPLOSIONS

Van Oord is of the opinion that the training courses have also contributed to the doubling of the number of members of ASSRGWA from 9,000 in 2011 to 18,000 now. 'ASSRGWA has developed its own training programmes, based on the knowledge that we provided. The union has also been responsible for seeing to it that as well as drinking water, better facilities are increasingly being provided at the yards. This has shown what the organisation is able to do for workers. For workers and for the government, the trade union is now an organisation to be reckoned with.'

Last year, Van Oord itemised the wishes of ASSRGWA. 'For example, there turned out to be a need for more information on dust explosions, asbestos and the prevention of hearing damage.' Van Oord hopes to include all these subjects in a new series of training courses in 2018.

### A success story

'100 percent of the shipbreakers in Alang now wear safety clothing such as a helmet, gloves, glasses and safety shoes,' says Vidyadhar Rane, trade union representative of the Indian union ASSRGWA. 'As a result of the training courses, everyone now knows how to use them and why.' Since 2003, Rane has worked together with Mondiaal FNV and IndustriAll on improving working conditions at the yards. He calls the safety project a 'success story'.

'The training courses on safety and health have reduced the number of accidents in Alang to a minimum,' says Rane. He illustrates his remark with a painful example: 'In the safety training courses the workers learn that they should not work in enclosed spaces. If there is no proper exit, they shouldn't do the work and should point this out to the supervisor. Last month, two workers died who were new to the yard. They hadn't yet followed any training courses and were not aware of the huge risks they were running by working in an enclosed space.'

Despite the progress achieved, Rane vehemently hopes that the project will continue: 'There are significant changes in progress in the sector, including in shipbuilding, and we have to keep our training courses and trainers up-to-date. Furthermore, I hope we will be able to share our good experiences with Bangladesh and Pakistan, where the situation in the yards is far worse.'

# Informal workers save for their pensions

81,000 participants



Deborah Freeman

**Whether you save a penny a month or a dollar, it all adds up, says Ghanaian Deborah Freeman. She is General Secretary of UNIWA, the union for informal workers that has set up a private pension scheme for its members. "Saving leads to independence."**

"We need to make our own arrangements for our pension because we don't have an employer to do that for us." It's not the spokesperson of FNV ZPP speaking, but Deborah Freeman, General Secretary of UNIWA, the trade union for informal workers in Ghana. "Many of us worry about what happens to us in our old age: you work till you're old and then ... there's nothing. We, as a union, wanted to do something about this."

### **In one fell swoop**

On 31 May 2017 they managed it: in one fell swoop, all 81,000 UNIWA members had been registered in the private pension scheme founded by the union. "Because everything we earned is paid out cash in hand, we have to provide our own efficient savings system," says Freeman. "That can only be done via a pension scheme but that needs to be one that is specifically tailored to the wishes of informal workers."

This enables participants to determine for themselves how long they want to go on working for and also the amount they deposit. "Depending on what you earn, one month you can maybe save 10 Ghanaian cedi (approximately 2 euros, ed.) and the next month just 2 cedi," explains Freeman. "But even 2 cedi makes a difference, I would say. Saving definitely helps. It leads to independence."

What is more, half the money that's deposited can be withdrawn in the form of a loan for the saver as soon it has been there for longer than six months. "Without interest!" says Freeman enthusiastically. "Just imagine! More money, means more trade. At present, loans are prohibitively expensive."

### **Collect the money**

How do you actually organise all that - 81,000 participants all depositing what they can spare every month? "The vast majority of our members save via the mobile phone, by way of which the amount is immediately credited to and registered on the pension account," Freeman explains. "In the case of informal workers who don't have a phone, or only use it to phone with, our field workers visit them to collect the money. They enter the amount in the system on the spot, so that no-one needs to be afraid that anyone will walk off with his or her money."

Because of course when the scheme was launched, questions were asked about the risks involved. Said Freeman: "with the support of Mondiaal FNV, we organised courses during which we explained how it worked and that it's definitely better to save money jointly than to do it on one's own."

The greatest challenge now facing UNIWA is, in Freeman's opinion, to ensure that everyone makes a deposit every month. "If we see that people are not saving, we phone them and remind them that setting something aside every month works the best. But some people have nothing to save. Although we as union can't really change that, we offer these people self-employment training courses. There are many things that people can do to earn more money. And so to be able to save."

# Short messages

## At school, not at work

With the help of local partner organisations, more than 20,000 children have stopped work and gone back to school during the course of the last three years. The 'Out of Work into School' programme implemented by Stop Child Labour also ensured that they were able to stay there too. In addition, in India, Turkey, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali and Nicaragua a total of 87 child labour-free zones have been created and 137 schools and their teachers are involved in activities to make schools better and more attractive for all children. In the child labour-free zones, 92 percent of all children now attend school. That is 20 percent more than at the start of 'Out of Work into School' in May 2014. The programme was rounded off in April 2017. Mondiaal FNV is part of Stop Child Labour and by way of projects in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Nicaragua and India has contributed to the results of 'Out of Work into School'.

## Women at the top in African unions

"African unions are male bastions where 'dinosaurs' call the shots." Until recently, this assertion was certainly true but there has been a visible shift. Since 2013, the global union federation IndustriALL has been conducting a project in ten African countries to focus more attention on 'gender'. Mondiaal FNV was one of the financiers of this programme. The goal was to achieve a percentage of at least 25 percent women on the union boards. And this was achieved too! On average, the union managers taking part in this project now consist of 38 percent women! In a number of cases, women are elected president, so as, for example, in the union for the energy sector in Zimbabwe. Tendai Makanza, the coordinator of the project, says with self-assurance: "A greater proportion of women, including in managerial positions, results in stronger unions and a better future for women, and for men too."

## Peace has not yet brought safety

Fantastic, of course, that after 50 years, peace has been signed in Colombia, but for the position of trade unions this has made little difference. Things may even have become more dangerous. The guerrilla movement FARC has laid down its arms, but their place has sometimes been taken by other shady groups. Another risk is that little has been done to integrate the FARC fighters in the 'regular' Colombian community. Their position presents a ticking time bomb.

All in all, Colombia is still one of the most dangerous countries in the world for trade union activists. On 1 July, for example, Alberto Román Acosta González, president of a local union of agricultural workers (SINTRAINAGRO), was shot dead while he was watching his son play football.

According to the government agency Defensoría del Pueblo, between January 2016 and March 2017 as many as 156 human rights activists were murdered.

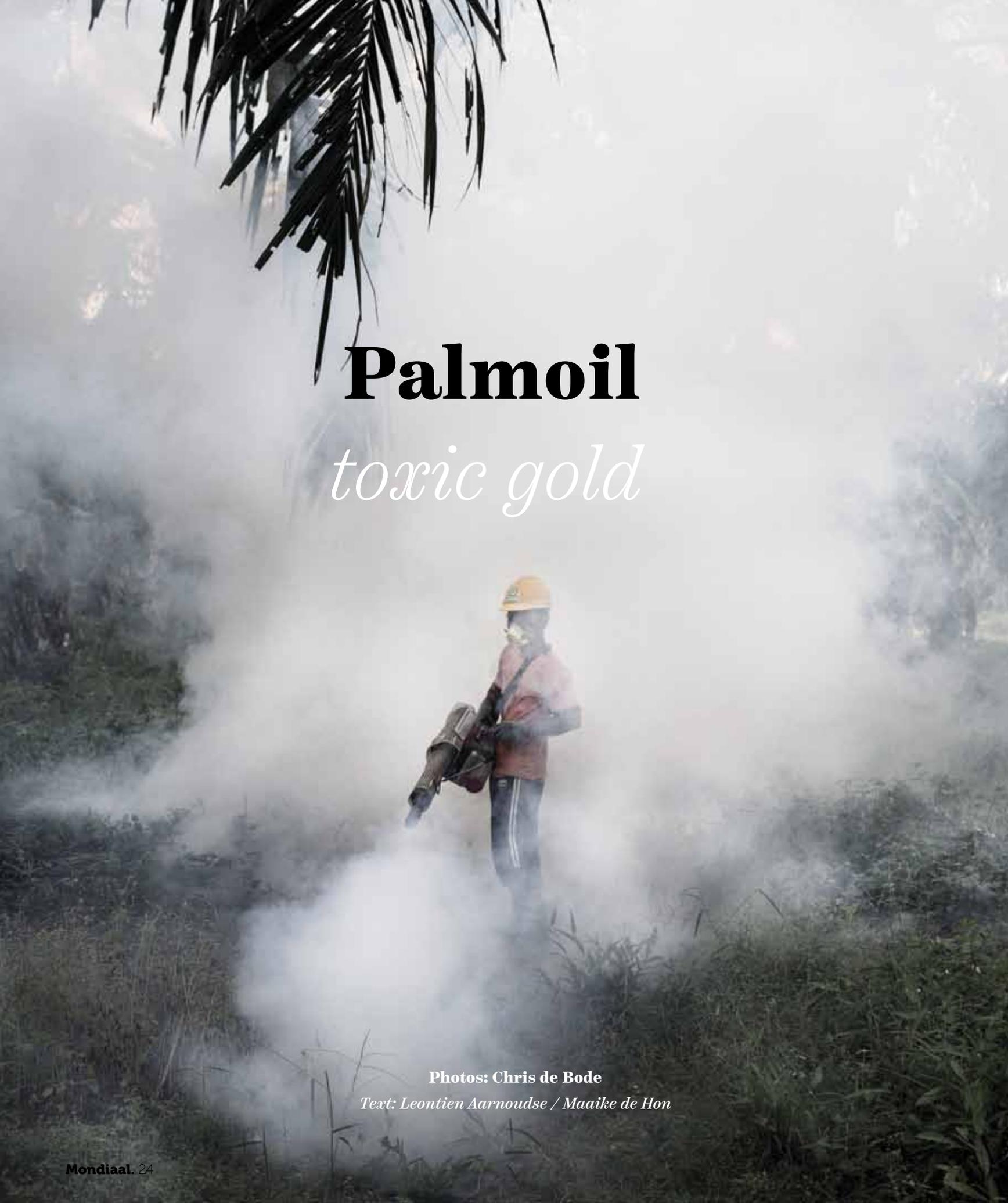


Workers at a clothing factory in Bangladesh. Photo: Catrien Ariëns.

## Textile sector continues to take its toll

**After the disaster with Rana Plaza in 2013 with 1,134 deaths, abuses in the textile sector continue to command attention. A few of the messages in 2017.**

- ! A repeat 'Rana Plaza' was just able to be prevented at the beginning of April after the lowest storey of a textile factory collapsed. The factory owner wanted the workers in the fourteen storeys above (!) to return to work a couple of days later, but the local trade union put a stop to this. By virtue of the accord that the unions entered into with the European clothing brands, the factory owner was instructed to repair the structure of the building before work could be resumed.
- ! On Monday 3 July an exploding boiler in a textile factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, killed 11 workers. Fifty others were injured. The factory had just been inspected for fire safety under the terms of the accord with the clothing brands. However, the accord did not cover boiler inspections.
- ! On Tuesday 3 October the Indian textile worker N. Kalaiyarasi died. The 14-year-old Kalaiyarasi had been taken to hospital the Saturday before where it emerged that she was suffering from pneumonia. Despite this, on that fatal day she went to work at Dindigul Cotton Textile Mills to avoid forfeiting a bonus that had been promised by the spinning mill.
- ! At the end of 2017, an (undisclosed) clothing brand reached a settlement with the union. The clothing brand had failed to improve the safety in a number of factories, despite this being a requirement specified in the safety accord. The company promised to pay 2 million dollars to improve the safety situation in factories. In addition, the company promised to pay 300,000 dollars to the union, which will enable them to further support the interests of textile workers

A person wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, blue pants with a white stripe, and a yellow hard hat is standing in a field of tall grass. They are holding a backpack sprayer and spraying a thick mist of white liquid. The background is a dense forest of palm trees and other tropical vegetation. The overall atmosphere is hazy and misty.

# Palmoil

*toxic gold*

**Photos: Chris de Bode**

*Text: Leontien Aarnoudse / Maaike de Hon*

**Bread, pizza, biscuits, baby food, soap, shampoo: over half of all the food in the supermarket contains palm oil. A lucrative business by all accounts, but photographer Chris de Bode saw that on Sumatra very little of this gets through to the workers**

'In the low season, I don't reach my target,' says Dedi Susanto (29). He works on the Milano Sei Daun oil palm plantation in the Labuhanbatu district (North Sumatra) and has to harvest at least 900 kilos of oil palm fruit a day. If Dedi fails to meet this target, then he builds up a debt to his employer. 'I can set the debt straight again in the high season, as I harvest more fruit then.'

The work is strenuous and dangerous. Dedi cuts down the bunches (hanging up to 15 metres high) with the dodo, a long pole with a sickle attached to its end. 'One time I was tired and wasn't paying proper attention. And then a heavy palm branch fell on my head', Dedi tells us. 'Fortunately I was wearing a helmet at the time.' The result of the unachievable targets is that the children often have to work there as well.

The women weeded or sprayed pesticides around the palm trees. The pesticides used on many of the plantations are classified as 'extremely hazardous' by the World Health Organisation. These, together with deforestation, make the palm oil industry a disaster for the environment.

On the plantations, the women in particular often have no fixed contract and so are not entitled to health insurance benefits or pension. Anyone wanting to become unionised, needs to stand his or her ground, was the experience of 'Tia' (39), who does not dare to give her real name for fear of reprisals. She works at the Abdi Budi Mulia plantation in North Sumatra and was a member of the independent trade union Serbundo (see box), but suffered intimidation: The company management said I had to write a letter cancelling my union membership, otherwise I would lose my job,' she tells us. Tia is now a member of a so-called yellow union, where the employer says what's what.

In short, palm oil leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

*"It's terribly hot in this outfit", says Sunarsih (35). Up here, it's usually the women who spray the pesticides around the palm trees, while the men get the bunches down from the trees.*





"I find the work extremely strenuous", says Irfandi Nasution (28). Day in day out at the palm oil plantation Milano Sei Daun in North Sumatra, he tosses tens of tonnes of oil palm fruit onto the trucks. A bunch weighs some 25 kilos on average.



#### **Serbundo achieves success**

In 2017, the independent union Serbundo, a partner of Mondiaal FNV, was successful in securing an improvement in the working conditions on the Milano Sei Daun plantation on Sumatra. The plantation is owned by palm oil giant Wilmar. Serbundo demanded and received recognition as trade union by Milano's management and started a collective bargaining process. Furthermore, the management is responding better to complaints from employees, and female workers have now become eligible for a permanent contract. The wages have also been raised. Serbundo is satisfied with these improvements, but still considers the targets for the workers who harvest the palm oil fruit to be still too high.



Tia (39, not her real name) will only agree to being in the photo if she is unrecognisable, because she is afraid of her employer. "I was forced to cancel my union membership. Otherwise I would lose my job."



Dedi Susanto (29) with his wife Cynthia (28) and his daughters Zafira (8) and Putri (just over one and a half) in the wooden house on the Milano Sei Daun plantation in North-Sumatra where they live.

# Behind the scenes

## Poldering in Arusha



From 30 May to 1 June some 30 trade unionists from 7 different countries came together at the invitation of Mondiaal in Arusha (Tanzania) to exchange experiences on social dialogue. Although former Mondiaal president Leo Hartveld opens the meeting with the qualification that social dialogue does not solve class war, he emphasises that 'poldering' offers opportunities for effective negotiation on social issues (see also the essay by Catelene Passchier on page 32). Mondiaal FNV supports the trade unions in Colombia, Peru, Indonesia, Nepal, Ghana and the East African Community in getting social dialogue started. There is no blueprint for successful social dialogue, that much is clear. Every country has to find its own 'polder model'. They shared their experiences in Arusha. How do you deal with a government that you don't trust; how do you involve the informal sector in your consultations and how do you ensure that women and young people are also represented? Interesting questions that sometimes produce surprising answers, like in Peru where employees and employers have joined forces and bypass the government, unreliable as it is. Samuel Machacuay, FNV consultant in Peru, has the following to say about this cooperation: 'We don't have to agree, but we understand each other.'

Already planning  
for demolition  
while still in the  
building phase



**2,300,000** euro

During the course of his almost 25 years as FNV official, Henk Korthof has 'secured' 2.3 million euro for Mondiaal FNV by exhaustively negotiating the 1998 international solidarity scheme at every collective bargaining agreement. In his farewell interview, Korthof, who retired on 1 September, once again underlined its importance: 'International solidarity needs to be prominently reinstated on the agenda of the FNV's policy on employment conditions.'

Here we see an unusual table of people. On 30 October, Rikjan van Zalingen, Sustainability Manager at ING, is presenting the 'Responsible Ship Recycling Standards' drawn up by the banks (ABN AMRO, ING and NIBC) to representatives of shipbreaking unions from India and Pakistan, the FNV and the banks. Already at the time loans are granted, the standards impose requirements on the shipbuilding industry, which are intended to make demolition safer. Vidyadhar Vasudeo Rane of the Indian trade union goes one step further: 'Levy taxes on every new ship and use that for safe recycling at the end.' The meeting was one of the many that IndustriALL organised last year to make shipbreaking safer and cleaner.



## Armenian roses



How does an auction actually work? - someone from the brand new flower union in Armenia asked the FNV during an international congress. The largest rose grower in their country claimed that he commanded a large share of the European rose market and that he sold all his roses to the auction in Aalsmeer. And this was how Endre Tanczos, a member of the agricultural Workgroup International Affairs and Solidarity of the FNV, came to be in Moldavia at the regional meeting of the trade unions from the Central Asia region mid-November. "The first thing I had to do was to clear up a misunderstanding: the auction doesn't sell roses, but only trades them. Besides this, the roses go from Armenia to the Netherlands but not actually to the auction. They are probably traded by brokers." The main question from the flower union was what the employer was likely to earn from the roses and which requirements they could stipulate regarding the wages and the working conditions. "They were shocked by a calculation I made to illustrate this, in which the grower was left with 10 cents per rose after deduction of expenses. 'How are you able to make any profit?' they wondered. I explained that this is certainly possible if you grow large enough quantities." Tanczos hopes that his visit will be the beginning of longer-term support of the young flower union in Armenia.

**Janepher Nassali, general secretary of the Ugandan flower union UHISPAWU, looks back with great pride at the first successful salary negotiations by the union.**

"On 24 July 2017 we signed our first salary agreement since the establishment of the union in 2006. Thanks to the new bargaining tactics, which we learned in December 2016 from Mondiaal FNV in Amsterdam, we managed to secure a wage rise of 12 percent a year for three successive years from the cut flower growers! At our initiative, the bargaining process started off in February. In the first instance there was considerable resistance on the part of the employers, who wanted to continue dealing with the matters informally. We were in a state of deadlock three times over and each time we turned to the Ministry of Employment for mediation. One of the issues was that the employers were insisting on having

a clause included to the effect that only the lowest paid workers were allowed to join the union. This is against the Ugandan constitution and I am proud that I refused to budge. At the end of March the Ministry sent a letter confirming that every worker has the right to join a trade union. It was then that I knew that we were going to succeed. I am extremely satisfied with the result."

*Mondiaal FNV supports the strengthening of the Ugandan union UHISPAWU.*

# The young have the future, **but no contract**

Fragments from the rap in which Atta de Tolk summarised the debate 'The young have the future (but no contract)', which Mondiaal FNV organised jointly with Young & United.

...

There are young people that are forced to go and flex  
Forced to go and flex? That means bein' forced to go and stress  
Contracts seem out of reach 'cause they raise the bar to excess  
Makin' them the victim of an unhealthy process  
They'll fall down a ravine if we go on bein' careless  
Is that the same in the Far East and the Far Wes?  
Is it logical it's us doin' the dirty work more or less?

...

You represent the community  
For a successful result one step is key  
Step the game up, chime in with me  
Maybe a new beginning is what we'll see

Locally, nationally, worldwide, globally  
Feel and be part of the story

...

Not gold diggers but goal diggers online in search of miracles and dreaming  
Just ambitious youngsters who don't want to be starving  
Who think about the future and are caring  
While the bosses play hide-and-seek and say 'nothing doing'

...

Is flexy the new sexy?  
Or for bosses, is it the deludin' that's trendy?  
Freedom we want, but job certainty too  
And yet not be too tied, so we're torn in two

Safety and certainty versus autonomy  
50% with no fixed contract is the reality

Meanwhile for some Chinese a dog's life is where they're at  
And frustration makes them eat their own hat

*direct viral* - struck a chord did this video  
tons of Chinese youngsters now sayin': we can no longer go with this flow

...

And now those with a higher education: from huge stress levels sufferin'  
Re-educate employers on how they should be behavin'  
How often d'we hear of a well-paid internship?  
Maybe the future's yours, but for now you're semi-slaves sufferin' hardship

How sure are we of a career, let alone your dream position?  
No money no honey, your love life is at cessation  
No money to get married, cupid's arrow suffers retardation

...

It's time we admit things don't always add up  
*Get up, stand up*, those are the words of BOB

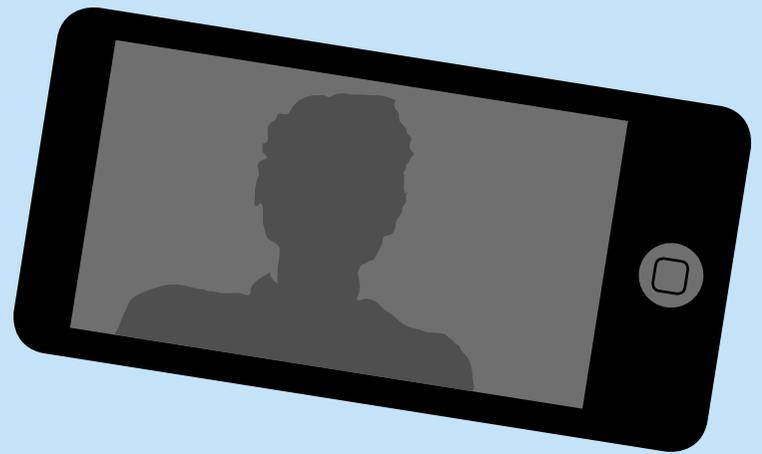
Yes, there are people who stand up for their rights  
They're from clubs like Young & United  
Wake up, it's there within our sights  
If we, Mondiaal, unite - then we'll have super powers and win our fights

Atta de Tolk

@Attadetolk on Twitter  
facebook.com/atta.detolk.1

## Debate series

The young people's debate was one of the 6 sessions in the series 'Work Nowadays: Flexible or precarious?', which Mondiaal organised in collaboration with debating centre De Balie. The kick-off to the series was provided by Paul Mason, Economics Editor with Channel 4 News and author of 'PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future'. Other sessions included 'The invisible worker' (how do we achieve a production chain that is also fair for cocoa farmers in Ghana and seamstresses in Bangladesh?) and gender inequality in the labour market.



**The photo of Esmail Abdi should have been here, but the president of the Iranian teachers' union is now in prison.**

Esmail Abdi is the president of the Iranian teachers' union. In 2016 he was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment for involvement in a peaceful trade union campaign for the rights of teachers in Iran. After going on a hunger strike, Abdi was released on bail on 25 June 2017. Unfortunately, his release didn't last long and Abdi is now once again in custody in the notorious Evin prison in Teheran, suffering very harsh conditions. He is not allowed contact with anyone, including his family or his lawyer.

Because no contact with Abdi is possible, we asked his friend Shapor Ehsanirad – also a union member – to take a look back on 2017. "Abdi was extremely ill when, after 37 days of hunger strike in June 2017, he was released from jail. He wasn't the person he used to be. He was very emotional and couldn't even bear the sound of his children playing. On 27 July 2017, without any warning, secret agents burst into Abdi's house and arrested him once again. Abdi's wife and children were left behind, in dismay, after this new, shocking event."

*Mondiaal FNV publishes information on Abdi's case and promotes letter campaigns for his release*

Foto: Netwerk Amsterdamse Helden

# Social dialogue: *not a secure asset*

Social dialogue. It's something everyone seems in favour of, and that just about everywhere they want to have. For the trade unions it's a 'must have' when it's all about sustainable development. In Mondiaal's work, too, it plays a central role. But... er ... what is it actually? And does everyone in fact want the same thing? In this article, Catelene Passchier goes back to the source: what does the International Labour Organisation ILO say about social dialogue? And what does that mean for our everyday work?

*Catelene Passchier*

The ILO, which was founded in 1919, has from its very beginnings had a distinctive administrative structure, unique in the UN, where governments, employers' and employees' organisations make their decisions jointly and on an equal footing. Ever since, a number of important conventions have been adopted in the ILO that now lie at the heart of international employment law, such as Convention 87 on freedom of association of trade unions and Convention 98 on the right to collective bargaining. One of the lesser known agreements is Convention 144 adopted in 1976 on promoting tripartite consultation. An entire system of monitoring and enforcement has been set up to promote proper implementation of these conventions in actual practice. This demonstrates that for the ILO, the opportunity for people to organise and to defend their interests collectively is an essential condition for social justice and progress.

## **Peace in the labour market**

The main goal of social dialogue is, according to the ILO, 'promoting consensus-building and democratic involvement of the main stakeholders in the world of work'. It has the potential to contribute to resolving important economic and social issues, good economic governance, peace in the labour market and social stability, as well as economic progress. The ILO defines 'social

dialogue' as: all forms of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. It covers tripartite forms (including governments) or bipartite forms (employers and trade unions only), at every conceivable level (from company to international level). But for the ILO it is also essential that the dialogue be meaningful and take place in good faith, meaning that governments or employers cannot simply take the easy way out by way of a round of talks without giving unions any real influence.... The ILO definition does however show that the term 'social dialogue' does not correspond one to one with collective bargaining. For the trade unions, the right to collective bargaining, and by extension the possibility of making binding agreements with employers, is an essential component of social dialogue.

## **Strong and independent**

The ILO defines four enabling conditions for a fruitful dialogue. In the first place, unions and employers' organisations must be strong and independent and have technical capacity and access to information. Secondly, political will and commitment on the part of all the parties is necessary. The third condition is respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and

## Background

collective bargaining. And finally, there must be an appropriate framework, such as support from the government by passing appropriate legislation, facilitating consultative structures as well as monitoring and enforcement of legislation.

### Excluded

The experience of the unions supported by Mondiaal FNV is that these conditions are very rarely complied with. In Peru, the government does everything in its power to frustrate the incipient dialogue between employees and employers; in Indonesia, employers and government prefer to strike a bargain among themselves and exclude the unions; in Nepal, employers want to restrict the dialogue to company level; and in Colombia, in the words of a local union leader, “there is simply a lack of any kind of culture of dialogue”. Governments speak fine words about social dialogue, but often mean a kind of no-obligation consultation between the government and some employers and employees, while the government itself does not have its legislation in order. Similarly, employers in those countries have a tendency to bypass ‘awkward trade unions’ (sometimes with the excuse that they are not ‘recognised’) and will only ‘consult with’ non-organised employees in their company, without their being able to develop sufficient countervailing power to say ‘no’ to something. Or else they create so-called ‘yellow unions’, who do exactly what the employer wants.

### Dangerous activity

*In the Strategic Partnership for Garment Supply Chain Transformation* – which was drawn up in 2016 between the FNV, the Fair Wear Foundation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CNV – the promotion of social dialogue in the textile sector is one of the three central goals. During the course of the implementation of these goals in practice, our colleagues encounter all kinds of obstacles: what should be done if in a given region there aren’t any unions or only one very weak one? What if that union organises few or no women and shows no interest in the informal economy? What if the management of a company is willing to establish some kind of works council but without allowing access by the relevant unions? What if the employees in the company are in favour, because it sounds ‘safer’ than becoming organised in a union, which is a dangerous activity in that country? What if the employer would rather enter into talks with local NGOs?

Of course one might say: we won’t go along with that, because then we would be legitimising the circumvention of fundamental trade union rights, and rewarding poor behaviour. On the other hand, we as trade unions not only stand for certain values and beliefs, but we also want to help make sure people’s everyday lives are improved in actual practice. Results count just as much as integrity of belief. If one still aims to promote a mature social dialogue in these kinds of circumstances, it is important that investment be made in the quality and strengthening of the local unions, and their accessibility by women and migrants. It is also a good thing to seek connections with other local actors, such as NGOs, in order to jointly develop innovative ways of reaching employees, linking up with local unions and making clear agreements as to which duties and powers should lie with trade unions (such as collective bargaining) and which are more suited to NGOs.

### Fantastic polder model

Incidentally, the debate on social dialogue not only takes place in far-flung parts. In the Netherlands, too, questions are bandied about as to whether unions are ‘actually representative enough and appropriate to this day and age’, and whether there are any employers who would rather negotiate with employee representatives than with a trade union. So in our work outside the Netherlands let’s not get too much on our high horse about our marvellous Polder Model (consensus without conflict).

And in Geneva, there has for years been an ongoing dispute at the ILO between employees and employers on the question as to whether the right to strike is one of the fundamental rights or not. For the Committee of Experts of the ILO, which gives a ruling on the application of the Conventions, it is clear: these fundamental rights cannot exist without the right to strike. Because – putting it in my own words – the right to withhold your labour is the right to say ‘no’, and thereby the opposite of slavery and forced labour. But employers go to great lengths to deny this logic, and to bring the consultations in the ILO to a standstill if the outcome doesn’t suit them.

A fine thing, this social dialogue, but definitely not a secure asset.

“  
*The right to strike is the opposite of slavery and forced labour*  
”



*Catelene Passchier, chair of the workers’ group in the ILO and special adviser to the president of the FNV*



## Unions and employers transcend the differences

**Despite an obstructive government, social dialogue in Peru, where unions and employers' organisations are doing their utmost to transcend the differences, is nonetheless flourishing. "By negotiating from the position of the opponent it immediately became clear why these types of negotiations so often failed in the past."**

The conditions in Peru for any kind of social dialogue are far from ideal. Politically, things are in a mess: investigations are in progress into all four of the past presidents of Peru regarding corruption. It is an understatement to say that in this situation the government is not open to dialogue with employers and employees. In March 2017 the trade union federation CGTP had no option but to withdraw from the National Labour Council, a kind of Peruvian SER (Economic and Social Council).

Because of government failure to respond, employers and employees have formed a bipartite dialogue. In 2014, employers' organisation SNI and the CGTP concluded the so-called 'Amsterdam Accord', in which they affirm their willingness to solve things together as far as possible. There were already

*"The union can now do business with blueberry producer Camposol"*

positive developments in the agricultural export sector, where a dialogue had been established with the largest company Camposol. One of the points of discussion at the 'dialogue table', set up by the company together with the union,

was a joint approach in order to improve the position of women in the company.

### **MATCHMAKER**

In 2017, SNI and CGTP focused primarily on the broadening of the dialogue into four sectors: nutrition, construction, textiles and telecommunication. In 2014, FNV was the 'matchmaker' between the Peruvian trade union and the employers, and the support from the Netherlands continues to be important. In the words of the Peruvian union expert Samuel Machacuay: "The FNV has shown that social dialogue can be combined with a strong trade union and good bargaining results." Since then, the involvement of the FNV has not diminished.

Social dialogue in Peru has also recently started receiving support from the Dutch employers. In 2017, representatives of SNI and CGTP were among those to

receive supplementary training from DECP, the counterpart of Mondiaal FNV at VNO-NCW on collective bargaining on employment conditions. Machacuay told us: "For example the fact that in the role play the trade unionists were given the role of the employer and vice versa was highly illuminating. By carrying out the bargaining processes from the position of the opponent it at once became much clearer why this kind of bargaining so often failed in the past."

### **NEW COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

In the telecom sector, the emerging social dialogue has already delivered concrete results. In the company Telefónica, a new collective agreement was recently concluded, after years of controversy. Perhaps most importantly is the fact that the company is willing to talk with the union on the anticipated job losses. In addition, effective agreements were made on productivity and wages.



# South Korean Han Sang-gyun receives the **2017 Trade Union Award**

**While the Olympian sportsmen and women were busy preparing for the Olympic winter games in Pyeongchang, Han Sang-gyun, President of the South Korean trade union KTCU, was declared winner of the Trade Union Award. Unfortunately he was unable to celebrate his victory: Han is in jail.**

“The rest of the world is focusing its attention on the mounting nuclear threat from North Korea, but the population of South Korea is concerned above all about the increasing inequality in society. Employees are working harder and for longer hours, yet are becoming increasingly poorer;” according to Han Sang-gyun, President of the South Korean union KTCU, in his speech of thanks for having won the Febe Elizabeth Velasquez 2017 Trade Union Award.

## **A HIGH PRICE**

During the presentation of the Trade Union Award on 10 May, Han’s speech was read aloud by Ryu Mikyung, Director of international affairs of the KCTU. Han himself is serving a 3-year prison sentence for allegedly causing ‘obstruction’ during a large demonstration on 14 November 2015 in the Korean capital Seoul. The KCTU played a leading role in the demonstration, which was broken up with use of extreme violence.

Han had previously been in jail on account of his union activities. During the award ceremony, FNV President Han Busker said he had been deeply moved by the fact that Han Sang-gyun was for the second time paying such a high price for his fight to improve the rights of workers in South Korea.

## **ENEMY OF THE STATE**

“Capitalism has destroyed true democracy in my country and eroded the workers’ standard of living,” says Han. “It now represents a more dangerous and more alarming form of dictatorship than the military dictatorship in our past. In the present political climate we are regarded as the enemy of the state.”

In his tiny cell, Han at first felt embarrassed when he was told that he had won the Trade Union award. “But when I realised that it would not be awarded to me as an individual, but to the KCTU and our fight, I considered it an honour to be presented with this award.”

## **QUAKED WITH FEAR**

The two-yearly award, which was presented for the first time 25 years ago, was named after the Salvadoran trade union leader Febe Elizabeth Velásquez, who had to pay for her trade union activities with death. The award is intended as an encouragement to continue in the fight, and that is exactly how Han understood it: “I have to be honest, every now and then I feel uncertain about the future of our union and like every normal person I quaked with fear when I was confronted with violence and brutality, but at these kinds of moments I draw strength from the knowledge that trade unions all around the world, including the FNV, are giving us real support and solidarity.”

*Shajeda Begum (32) is a waste picker at a dump site in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Marco Groenewoud (45) is a refuse collector in Lelystad, the Netherlands. Mondiaal. put the same questions to each of them. What does their work and life look like and what do they actually know about each other?*

“  
Everything is  
a challenge  
”

OVER  
THERE

Shajeda Begum is married and has 4 children (a son aged 16, and three daughters aged 10, 7 and 1). Her mother-in-law lives with them.

**What exactly do you do?** “I work at the Mutuail dump site: I go in search of valuable things that I can sell on to local buyers.”

**What does your day look like?** “I get up at three o’ clock in the morning to cook a meal for the family. An hour later I catch the bus to the dump site; a single journey costs 10 taka (about 10 euro cents, ed.). I begin work at five o’clock and at eight o’clock I eat the breakfast/lunch I prepared at home. That’s one of the two meals I have a day. Then I work until two o’ clock and drink some water that we are allowed to have in the dump site office.

At three o’ clock in the afternoon I catch the bus back and on the way do the shopping for the evening meal. After I have had a wash, I clear up the house, prepare the meal and am then free to spend some time with the children. After six o’clock I have time to have a chat with the neighbours and with the children, or to watch TV. At nine o’ clock the whole family has a meal together and after I’ve done the washing up and cleared up the kitchen, I go to bed at about ten o’ clock.”

**What do you like about your work?**

“To be honest: nothing. The work is filthy and strenuous. Not only that, it’s dangerous too. Our hands and feet get cut, we breathe in smoke when the waste begins to smoulder and lots of times the big excavators don’t spot us standing there. Every day I collect three bagfuls of 1 cubic metre of waste. Six days a week. This earns me around 4 to 5,000 taka a month (40 to 50 euros).”

**What needs to be improved?** “I would love to have a different kind of job, for example as a self-employed seamstress. As long as that’s not so, we just have to try and protect ourselves better. The union once gave us boots, a jacket and a mask, but most people have had those stolen. The schooling we are given via the union does work. We have learned to give more careful thought to our work and to the position we find ourselves in as women. For example, because we confronted the municipal waste service as a group, we are now allowed to use their drinking tap.”

**Where does the waste that you collect get taken?** “I collect plastic (13 to 15 taka a kilo), metal (3 taka a kilo), old shoes (12 taka a kilo) and cattle bones (4 taka a kilo). Roughly once a month I sell the goods to a buyer who sells them on to a dealer, who in turn sells them on to the factories. The bones are used to make combs, buttons and plastic plates. The shoes go into a machine too but I’ve no idea what they’re used for.”

**What do you know about the work your colleague in the Netherlands does?** “I’ve no idea.”

Marco Groenewoud has been married for 16 years and has 2 children (a daughter of 13 and a son of 8).

**What exactly do you do?** "I'm a driver on a 'side-loader', as we call it. Nowadays, a refuse lorry is half a robot: you drive it alongside the wheellie bin and you use the joystick to make it pick up the bins and empty them. This means we no longer have to stand around in the stench and breathe in the dust. We work in pairs: when my partner is driving, I walk ahead putting the bins in position and halfway through the day we change over."

**What does your day look like?** "At half past seven we drive to the neighbourhood where we have to be and start emptying the bins. We carry on till half past nine. Then we drive back to the office, change over the container, which is then generally full, and have a mug of coffee and a roll. After a quarter of an hour we set off again. At about twelve o'clock, the container is full again and we take a half an hour lunch break. In the afternoon we drive on till about three and then we give the lorry a good wash and grease. I'm lucky because I have the same lorry and the same colleague every time; that works best."

**What do you like about your work?** "The fact that I'm out in the open air and am in contact with other people. Our team leader said a while back: 'the neighbourhood is your office; you're the one who has to manage it.' I thought to myself: what on earth's he going on about! But what he meant was that from now on it was up to us to solve problems in our neighbourhood. It used always to be the office that dealt with the complaints, but now we do it ourselves face-to-face. That gives people a much greater appreciation of what we do and it makes the work more enjoyable."

**What needs to be improved?** "I've no complaints about the employer: HVC is a very social company. And within the sector, too, things are going fine again, the collective bargaining demands have been met reasonably well. What could be improved on, however, is for them to look more at the human aspect and look less at the financial side. HVC has been through a reorganisation, with redundancies. Now that things are going better, you see a huge influx of people again and there are now even more staff than there were before. And then that makes me wonder: couldn't things have been done differently?"

**Where does the waste that you collect get taken?** "We have four waste flows: organic waste, paper, plastic and general waste. The general waste goes to the incinerator and is converted into electric power. The paper goes to a processing plant, where it is converted into new paper, and the organic waste is turned into compost and biogas. The plastic goes to Rotterdam to a plant that filters out the different kinds and reuses as much as possible. Nowadays, waste is not waste any longer but a raw material."

**What do you know about the work your colleague in Bangladesh does?** "I imagine they work very long hours, are exposed to hazardous substances, and earn very little. When they hear what I earn, € 2,180 net a month for 36 hours, then they'll die of shock, I imagine. It would be good if things were better organised there too. If I've got a good life here, why can't they have as well?"

“  
We solve problems  
in our neighbourhood  
ourselves  
”

OVER  
HERE

# Background

## About Mondiaal FNV's work

Mondiaal FNV is a foundation affiliated to the largest employees' organisations in the Netherlands, the FNV. Mondiaal FNV helps employees and trade unions, particularly in developing countries, to campaign for real jobs and better working conditions. We do this by giving direct support in the form of a financial contribution to specific projects and by means of support for research, lobbying and campaigns. Mondiaal FNV also gives colleagues in developing countries a voice in the Netherlands by providing educational information, organising actions and lobbying in The Hague.

### Mondiaal FNV supports employees and unions in:

- **Improving terms and conditions of employment in the:**
  - Agricultural chain (palm oil, cocoa and fruit/vegetables);
  - Shipping and ship demolition chain;
  - Construction chain;
  - Clothing production chain.
- **Improving the social dialogue at national and regional level.**

## Strengthening employees and unions

Our current programme was launched in 2017 and will run up to 2020. This programme focuses on:

- Improving social dialogue at national and regional level
- Improving terms and conditions of employment in a number of production chains

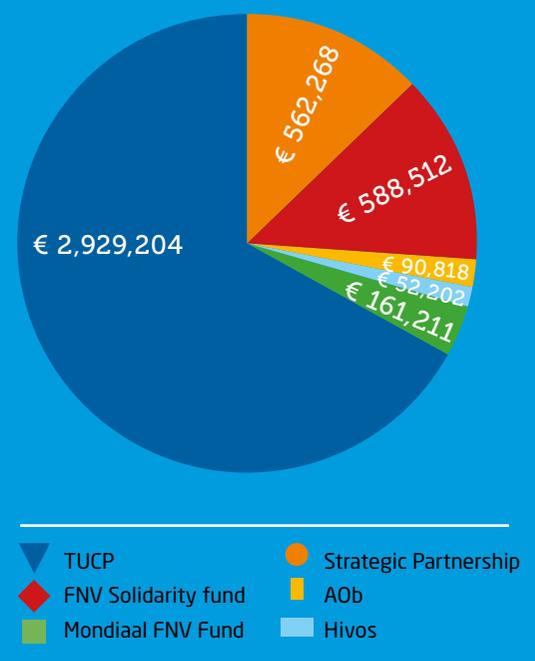
Trade unions are indispensable in achieving an equitable distribution of income and wealth, but to do this they need to be able to operate effectively and freely. In many countries this is unfortunately not the case: trade union rights are not respected and employees are put under pressure to not stand up for their rights. Social dialogue between employees and employers is the basis for improving labour rights. Our programme is aimed at helping to create or improve social dialogue by helping unions to become a strong social partner and by working together with employers' organisations and government.

As the economy becomes more and more a world economy, employees are more often becoming part of the global production chains spread across a large number of countries and sectors. In these chains, employees are largely invisible because traditional industrial relations are disappearing. Mondiaal FNV therefore supports unions and employees in four global production chains in improving their skills and creating real jobs and defending the fundamental rights of employees.

## Funding for support to trade unions

Mondiaal FNV supports 150 to 200 projects annually. The funding for this comes primarily from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the framework of the Trade Union Co-Financing Programme VMP and the Strategic Partnership for Garment Supply Chain Transformation. In addition, projects are funded from the FNV Solidarity Fund (0.7% of the FNV membership dues go to this fund). Mondiaal FNV also receives donations from members and non-members and contributions pursuant to collective bargaining agreements. Together these contributions go to make up the Mondiaal FNV Fund. Finally, in 2017 we received and spent a contribution from Hivos for activities to combat child labour.

### In 2017 projects were funded from:





Mondiaal FNV-official Sandra Juarez Masana manning Mondiaal FNV's stand during the True Jobs Day organised by FNV, 1 May 2017. Photo: Frans Dekker

## *Vision of* **MONDIAAL FNV**

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A world which protects and respects worker & human rights and provides remedy in case of violations, by means of effective social dialogue between social partners and/or states and institutions, securing a more just and equal distribution of wealth and income.

## *Mission of* **MONDIAAL FNV**

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Mondiaal FNV contributes to economic growth which is of benefit to everyone and which leads to a more equal distribution of income & wealth. Mondiaal FNV achieves this by enabling democratic, representative and independent trade unions and labour related organisations to promote decent work and livelihood security for all workers.

## *About this publication*

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Bank account number  
FNV Solidarity Fund  
IBAN: NL87INGB 0000 136000

Publisher: Stichting FNV Pers  
Production: Mondiaal FNV  
Editor: Marjan Brunner

Texts: Roeland Muskens and Maaïke de Hon, Wereld in Woorden  
Final editor: Astrid van Unen, U-producties  
Photos: cover: Catrien Ariëns, interior: Catrien Ariëns, Chris de Bode, Martin de Bouter, Frans Dekker, Liesbeth Dinnissen, Rebke Klokke, Ruben Korevaar, Co de Kruijf, Netwerk Amsterdamse Helden, Kay Nietfeld (HH), Mario van de Luijtgarden, Roderick Polak.  
Back cover: cartoon by Maarten Wolterink.  
Design: Roelant Meijer, Tegenwind Grafisch Ontwerp  
Print: True Colours, printed on 100% recycled paper with EU-eco label  
Translation: Veronica Verkaik-Drew

Available  
soon



*The unique photo book 'Change!' acquaints you with projects that are supported by Mondiaal FNV. It also introduces you to the people involved in these projects: the workers, their families, the trade union people, the employers. How they achieve change - meaning: improvement in working conditions, in health and safety and no child labour.*

*The book is available for € 29.50  
There is a discount for Mondiaal  
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only 15 euros.*

*If you'd like to order the book,  
please send an email to:  
[mondiaal@fnv.nl](mailto:mondiaal@fnv.nl)*

— Maarten —



\* Dangerous activity!

\*\*I heard that you do trade union work so I thought I'd come along and give you the last rites!