



India: country of contrasts

In July 2019 Iris travelled to Mumbai, India. She visited the producer of our bags as well as the printer who personalizes them for our customers. Three days full of impressions in a country full of contrasts, which showed once again what buying certified cotton here means to people over there.

“It was wonderful to see how the company has grown and what the working conditions are like”, says Iris, who was warmly welcomed by Mr. Malkani and his employees. “There are now 95 people working in production - 20 more than when we visited this producer in 2016. In the meantime, modern technologies have opened up new production possibilities, for example the use of recycled materials. We’ll look into that further in the near future.”



“When it comes to the working environment, this atelier probably is one of the best in India. One of the ladies in the office used to work for GOTS and knows all the ins and outs of the standard. It’s cool and clean, working hours and wages are fair and people are treated well. This pays off: you can tell from the employees’ faces that they feel comfortable.”

“What I’ll remember most from the visit to our GOTS certified printer is the precision during the entire process. Every bag is carefully put into place and fixed securely before screen printing starts. There are machines to print large quantities, but for smaller orders they still use a long table with separate screens. Beautiful to see.”



Life is not all roses for everyone in India, of course. Even though it’s one of the fastest growing economies in the world, the standard of living shows large disparity.

“Poverty in Mumbai really shocked me again”, says Iris. “A disabled man laid down on a square by his family to beg, who everybody walked straight past. Children living in the streets with nothing but a T-shirt to wear... What will be their future?”





Creating a middle class is considered an important way to help more people in India improve their lives. “I’d love to make a greater contribution to this and investigate how we can do so in close cooperation with our producer”, Iris concludes. “Even if it’s only small-scale in a country with over a billion inhabitants.”

A positive example is one of the employees: Ruchita (24). She showed Iris around in her neighbourhood, a fishing village with a closed community that you wouldn’t usually be able to visit. Her father works as a fisherman, but she wanted a different future. So she broke with tradition, studied accountancy and is now happy to work at the financial department. That’s how things can change in one generation!

