



# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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## Prologue

In front of you is the annual report of the Meiling Foundation concerning the year 2019.

In 2019, 33 children came home compared to 34 children in 2018. There appears to be a stabilization in the number of homecomings. During the last year, 19 children came from China to The Netherlands (2018: 18 children), 0 children from Surinam (2018: 0 children) and 14 children from Taiwan (2018: 16 children).

Since 2012 there is a decrease of the number of adopted children that has been admitted to a Dutch family. Also, in 2019, there is a nationwide decrease. In 2019, a total of 145 children arrived in The Netherlands compared to 156 children in 2018, 210 in 2017, 214 in 2016, 304 children in 2015, 354 children in 2014, 401 children in 2013 and 488 children in 2012. A decrease of 11 children compared to the previous year. Compared to 2012, the number has decreased with 70%. In the years from 2014 up to and including 2016, we as Meiling mediated annually in approximately 45 adoptions. Since 2017 this number is between 32 - 35 adoptions per year.

Because of the continuous nationwide decrease in the number of adoptions the question remains up to date (countrywide and political) if there are too many adoption agencies operating internationally. This question can be approached from a number of angles, such as based on reliability, quality, finances and continuity. Because of the way the Meiling Foundation is organized, we are able to offer the quality of service that is needed and is to be expected. Quality and reliability are vital to us throughout the whole adoption process. Regardless of the number of (realized) adoptions, we are able to guarantee this level of quality and reliability. Taking into account our financial situation and control of costs, we are looking forward to the future with full confidence. Of course we will closely follow the developments concerning this matter.

In 2020, the Meiling Foundation was unfortunately hit hard by the situation regarding COVID-19. The China channel came to a complete standstill in 2020 by order of the Chinese government. Unfortunately, in 2020, no children came to the Netherlands despite the fact that several parents and children have been successfully matched. The Taiwan channel is partly affected, so only 7 children came to the Netherlands in 2020. Since the income and the costs of the foundation are largely determined by traveling to China and Taiwan, both are decreasing sharply in 2020. Because of this, the result effect for the foundation is still manageable. Given the good financial situation of the foundation we see no risks with regard to the continuity for the coming years.

In the coming year we will continue to make every effort in the interest of the child, the parents and our organization to make adoptions possible. A good match between child and parent irrevocably remains our main focus!

Driebruggen, 31 August 2020

On behalf of the Meiling Foundation Board,



Chairman of the Board Meiling Foundation

## **POLICY AND APPROACH**

### **MEILING MISSION STATEMENT**

The Meiling Foundation's (hereafter: Meiling) goal is to support children living in other countries who are in need. Meiling acts as an intermediary for international adoption for children who lack the opportunity to grow up in a family if they stay in their countries of birth, and by supporting projects for children who live in a children's home in their native countries.

For Meiling, the interest of the child is the central concern. For some children in need, international adoption is the last possibility for the children to have a chance for a good future. These are the children Meiling focuses on in its task as an intermediary for adoption. During the mediation, parents are sought for children and not the other way around. Adoption is the last resource.

Often, adopted children have a history of bad life experiences. Meiling believes that an adoption of excellent quality is crucial for a child to be able to deal with these experiences and to have the opportunity to grow up to be a valuable member of the Dutch society. With this in mind, Meiling mediates as careful as possible, using unpaid professionals (volunteers) who have experience as adoptive parents and who have the professional qualities necessary to perform their tasks within the adoption mediation.

With the interest of the child in mind, Meiling puts extra effort into helping children for whom finding parents is difficult. As a result, Meiling intermediates both for healthy children and for children with medical issues coming to The Netherlands. This medical report can vary a lot, for example: premature birth and operable disabilities (such as a cleft lip or clubfeet) or permanent disabilities (such as deformed hands, asthma, intestine problems).

Meiling also does not forget about the children living in the countries that it mediates in who do not qualify for an international adoption. In these cases, Meiling carries out project aid aimed at supporting children where life does not come easy, by supporting projects in which facilities in children's homes are being improved, supporting children who have the opportunity to be raised in a foster family, or enabling children to follow education or to receive medical surgeries, which will make the lives of the children easier.

### **INTERNAL ORGANIZATION**

The area in which Meiling works consists of three core activities, namely:

- activities aimed at mediating the adoption of children from abroad,
- activities aimed at giving project aid to benefit children in the sending countries,
- activities for the benefactors of the foundation.

These activities are possible, thanks to a large group of about 90 volunteers, whom Meiling is very proud of. They perform their divergent tasks in their spare time in a professional manner and they make these activities possible. Teams of volunteers organize their own work as much as possible, and in doing so they are Meiling's outer face to many people.

## **INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

One of Meilings core activities is mediating for adoption. Meiling is licensed to do this based on a permit by the Ministry of Justice. This license was prolonged in 2020 with 5 more years until 1 October 2025. In 2019, Meiling mediated adoptions of children coming from China and Taiwan.

### **THE NATURE OF MEILINGS MEDIATING ACTIVITIES**

In its mediating activities, Meiling works for children in the sending countries who require help and for whom an international adoption represents the only chance to grow up in a family situation. For these children, Meiling tries to find (suitable) adoptive parents. Meiling does this in close cooperation with the adoption-authorities in the sending countries, the contacts appointed by these authorities, and the homes in which the children live. In terms of these authorities, Meilings task is to screen prospective adoptive parents who sign up with Meiling, to check if they meet the requirements of the channels Meiling is working for and to support these prospective adoptive parents in making their written request for permission to adopt. A further task of Meiling is to act as a liaison in the formal adoption procedures in the sending countries, with the central authorities in The Netherlands and the sending countries.

The country contact persons do whatever is necessary to find a good and fitting home for every child coming to The Netherlands through the mediation of Meiling. Especially, so-called special needs children receive special attention. These are adoptive children who need special care, due mainly to physical or social circumstances. Generally speaking, finding a suitable home for these children is more difficult than for other children. During the past years, the international adoption scene in which Meiling is involved, shows an increase in special need adoptions. Meiling sees this as a token of trust of the sending countries, that Meiling is allowed to mediate in the adoption of these children who need extra care and attention.

### **DEVELOPMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS**

Due to the decrease of the national number of completed adoptions in the last couple of years, and the expectation that this number will not show any substantial increase in the coming years, the question arises what consequences this trend has or should have in the (near) future for the adoption chain.

After the Dutch adoption agencies presented their advisory report 'The adoption chain in 2020' to state secretary Teeven of the ministry of Security and Justice in 2014, the ministry of Security and Justice instructed an external consultant agency during the course of 2015 to conduct an exploratory research for possible scenarios concerning the establishment of a future-proof system on international adoption.

In 2016, the final report of the external consultant agency on the sustainability of the (current) adoption chain for the future was presented. In November 2016, the RSJ (Council for Criminal Justice Application and Youth Protection) presented its report 'Reflection on Inter-country Adoption' based on the report from the external consultant agency. Its advice, short but concise, adoption has to stop. In response to the advice of the RSJ, the State Secretary for Security and Justice issued its policy advice at the end of January 2017 that stopping adoption is not (yet) the order. As a follow-up, a hearing was held 24 May 2017 in which the RSJ explained its advice and various interested parties in the adoption chain were heard, including the adoption agencies.

The Intercountry Adoption Investigation Committee was established in 2019. The research focuses on possible abuses in adoptions in which the Dutch government played a role.

## INFORMATION LINE

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In most cases the first contact prospective adoptive parents have with Meiling is via Meiling's information line. The information line was originally set up as a telephone information line for questions about the various aspects related to an adoption. The items one could think about are applicable laws and regulations concerning adoption, requirements of the sending countries in which Meiling works, waiting lists and many other matters related to adoption.

The email info line (info@meiling.nl) was available all through 2019. Apart from that, a lot of prospective adoptive parents used the general phone number (06-13155727) of the foundation to get in touch and/or receive information.

## INTAKE

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When prospective adoptive parents choose Meiling to mediate their adoption, a Central Intake is planned in most cases. For this, a check-list is used and sent to the prospective adoptive parents, along with the letter of confirmation. Based on the information returned through the checklist and the home study report, a first assessment of suitability for mediation is made by the Intake team. It appears to be more and more often that couples are impossible to mediate during the intake meeting due to conditions by the sending countries that could easily be checked (for example the number of years a couple has to be married, in the case of Taiwan). In case no obstructions turn up from the data on the checklist, prospective adoptive parents receive an invitation for an intake meeting. If it turns out that the parents are mediable, based on the intake meeting, they are put on a list for an SN-intake. This SN-intake usually takes place within two months after receiving a copy of the adoption permit and the home study report drawn up by the Child Protection Board.

The primary goal of the intake and the SN-intake is to ensure that Meiling is able to mediate for the prospective adoptive parents. The children for whom Meiling mediates all have a socially burdened background or a medical file. Parents must have clearance for this in their home study report. Also, other criteria are important: the requirements of the sending country the parents choose for, the specifics of the request for mediation by the parents, the conditions Meiling operates under, and the possible limitations set by the parents' adoption permit. Sometimes it is not possible to reach a conclusion in just one single intake meeting. In these cases, a follow-up meeting is planned. Meiling reserves the right to call in external experts to perform on an advisement level. In case of a request for mediation for a second or a next child, a SN-intake meeting is arranged as well.

When Meiling concludes that mediation is possible, a mediation agreement is signed. In this agreement the mutual obligations are recorded and Meiling commits to do everything within its power to reach a successful completion of the mediation.

It may occur Meiling judges mediation is impossible. This is always based on both the interests of the adoptive child and the prospective adoptive parents' wish to raise a family. As indicated, the interest of the child is Meiling's primary consideration. These decisions are always difficult to make, both for the prospective adoptive parents and for Meiling as the mediating organization. To guarantee the thoroughness of these decisions, the more difficult requests for mediation are examined in a team meeting and proposed to the board for a final decision.

## INTAKE STATISTICS 2019:

In 2019 we received 40 requests for mediation (2018: 67). Eventually, 17 couples withdrew from the procedure this year (2018: 16). These 17 reports were sent back to the Ministry of Justice for reasons of pregnancy, divorce, too long waiting times or other reasons (2018: 16). In 2019, no reports were forwarded to another mediating organization (2018: -).

In 2019, Meiling had a central waiting list for Taiwan. In a couple of cases, families were not able to directly continue after the special need intake interview to the country intake. The central waiting list was cancelled at the end of 2019. In case the number of requests should increase again, it can be possible that the central waiting list could be re-established. Then, the file of the prospective adoptive parents waits here until it can be reviewed by the correct Taiwan-channel.

In terms of the waiting period for different countries, each individual case of mediation strongly depends on the parents' situation and the procedures in the sending countries. Should the parents have a large list in which they are very open minded towards various special needs, the waiting period could be considerably shorter.

Number of couples on the central waiting list as of 31 December 2019:

- Taiwan: none
- China: none



## MEDIATION

From the SN-intake, the file of the prospective adoptive parents is forwarded to the Meiling country teams. The country teams arrange a country specific intake. This involves informing the parents about the requirements and the procedures and paperwork of the sending country. After the country intake, the prospective adoptive parents complete the set of documents needed for the adoption procedure in the sending country and the legalization of any official documents. Adoptive parents call this the 'The Hague tour', because of the number of official bodies situated in The Hague (the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Justice Hall, and the sending country's embassy) that have to be visited. If necessary, the final set of documents may be translated by Meiling volunteers after completion, before being sent to the authorities in the sending country with an accompanying letter.

Next, the parents' request for adoption is matched with the children available for international adoption. How matching occurs may vary from country to country. In Taiwan social workers working for the children's homes choose three couples they consider suitable for a certain child. The biological mother makes the final decision from the three couples. For China and Taiwan, the matching for special needs children is done in The Netherlands. When the matching is completed, the volunteer working for Meiling reports the joyful news of the proposal of an adoptive child. After the adoptive parent(s) have accepted this, the adoption procedure in the sending country continues. The procedure differs per country. In the case of an adoption from China, only an administrative procedure is required, but in Taiwan, a procedure at a court of justice is required. During this procedure, which sometimes may take quite a long time, the judge actually approves the adoption.

In Taiwan, both the adoptive parents and the biological mother if possible have to be present at the court hearing.

For both countries: China and Taiwan, the prospective adoptive parents are required to travel to their child's country of birth at the end of the procedure. They have to fulfil formal demands that are part of the adoption procedure in the country of origin. The transfer of the child to the adoptive parents occurs there as well.

### Ending of the Surinam channel

During the last couple of years, Meiling, in collaboration with the Surinamese government, has done its utmost to activate the Surinam channel. It seemed the time was right to actively support adoptions from Surinam again. The requests from prospective adoptive parents as well as the information from Surinam seemed to support this.

In May 2019, we unfortunately had to conclude that the established cooperation with Surinam did not lead to successful adoptions. Meiling only received a few child files in the past three years. These are showed incomplete or unsuitable for regulations in the Netherlands and / or parents on the waiting list. Based on that we closed the waiting list for Surinam earlier in 2018 and we did no longer proactive mediate for this channel. We had to conclude that despite all the efforts of those involved, it does not lead to the desired adoptions. Both the number and the quality of the files are insufficient. We also see no development in the increase of files from Surinam, which may be possible to match. Because of this, we cannot actively mediate this adoption channel. It does not do justice to the contacts and expectations of our environment in Surinam and in the Netherlands. Moreover, we cannot continue and guarantee the required quality of the procedure. We have officially notified the Ministry of Justice and Security of the closure of this country channel.

As long as necessary, we still assist with the post-placement obligations that the families have with the CA in Surinam, Bufaz and with possible roots questions.

## ADOPTION PROGRAMS ASIA CHINA

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### TEAM COMPOSITION

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The table below shows the composition of the China team as per 31 December 2019.

Function	Number of volunteers
Coordination	1
Administration	1
Organization of trips + contact Chinese guide	2
Support parents	2
Finances	1
Translations and telephone contact CCCWA	1
Matching	4
Special Needs Intake	4
Medical assessor	3
Social/emotional assessor	2
Post-placement reports	1
Translators Dutch - English	2

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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In 2019, 19 children (2018: 18 children) were adopted from China, of whom 15 boys (2018: 17 boys) and 4 girls (2018: 1 girl). This number remained stable compared to the previous year. We still see a small group of children for whom intercountry adoption is the best option. The procedure regarding the matching of special need children from China is unaltered. We see medically complicated and combined special need child files, which can sometimes be matched with Dutch families. But also the files of slightly older children (4-7 years) with special needs that are negotiable for Dutch families. For every child we request one (or more) updates to make the child file as complete as possible.

The average period of waiting for parents who want to adopt a child with a special need from China through Meiling, is between 0 and 24 months. This has remained the same as in 2018.

Family files are critically checked by CCCWA. The central waiting list and the China waiting list are coordinated at the office. The central intake assesses the first inflow of family reports.

Both the special need intake as well as the medical and social/emotional evaluation of the children's files are managed by a number of volunteers with a medical and / or pedagogical background. Four persons are available to match from the CCCWA shared list. If necessary, inquiries about specific medical problems can be made with a rehabilitation specialist, but also within the network of our 'own' doctors and educationists.

In close contact with our country contact persons, the families create a family file for China. They guide the families through all authorities and the required legalisations in the Netherlands. During the waiting period for a proposal, they are the first point of contact and they inform the families about a posing or a proposal. The family report is translated into English. The English translations are made by volunteers within the foundation and checked by the contact person CCCWA. This person also supports the China-team in Chinese translations and in contacts, by e-mail and telephone, with the children's homes and CCCWA.

## TRIPS TO CHINA

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China is an adoption channel for which both parents, or at least one of them, are obliged to travel to China. The adoptive parents travel to China to complete the official Chinese adoption procedure. Two volunteers organize all trips (tickets, guides NL / Chinese) to China including a travel review prior to the trip. They also have contact with our central guide in China. During a trip, they are on top of things together with the present tour guide in China. And they send the required information after the journey to the aftercare team.

In 2019, a total of nine trips to China were organized during which a total number of 19 children came to the Netherlands. The trips show in the following table.

Trip	Number of children	Accompanied by	To province of	Date of arrival
1.	2	Dutch and Chinese	Jiangsu and Guangxi	2 February 2019
2.	3	Dutch and Chinese	Tianjin, Shanxi and Liaoning	16 March 2019
3.	2	Dutch and Chinese	Henan and Guangdong	13 April 2019
4.	3	Dutch and Chinese	Shanghai, Shanxi and Guangdong	1 June 2019
5.	3	Dutch and Chinese	Ningxia, Anhui and Beijing	29 June 2019
6.	2	Dutch and Chinese	Guangdong	27 July 2019
7.	1	Dutch and Chinese	Jiangxi	14 September 2019
8.	1	Chinese	Liaoning	16 November 2019
9.	2	Dutch and Chinese	Sichuan and Shanxi	14 December 2019

## SUPPORT IN CHINA

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The Central Authority in Beijing, the CCCWA, which handles all requests from anywhere in the world, appoints children from all provinces in China. In 2008, the CCCWA changed to a digitalized system for special needs adoptions, to which Meiling is also connected. All special needs files of children and family files are entered and processed digitally.

Since 2010, Meiling uses a shared list system, allowing Meiling to do the matching it selves using the digital system. In September 2010, CCCWA started its so-called 'special focus' program, as a result of which children that have been on the shared list for more than 2 months, obtain more matching possibilities regarding the period a family has to hand over its China file.

When traveling to China, the adoptive parents are accompanied by our contact person in China, his son or one of his assistants. For over 24 years now, since 1995, this fixed guide has been assisting parents in the Chinese adoption procedures and the travels to China. Also, a Dutch travelling companion will join during almost every trip. There is a group of seven experienced volunteers who regularly support families during the adoption procedures in China.

In 2018, employees of the China matching team visited the Ministry of Justice and Security. In August 2019, a delegation from CCCWA and the Ministry of Civil Affairs came to visit the Netherlands. Meiling has directed most of their stay and we have talked to them about our collaboration.

#### ADOPTIONS FROM CHINA PER YEAR

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Until and including 2019, a total of 1408 children have come from China to the Netherlands. For the last couple of years, this number varies between 15-20 adoptions per year.

Of the children adopted in 2019, all children were 'special need' children; children with a medical disability or background. The age of the 19 children at the moment of their homecoming was as follows:

Age	Number of children
< 1 year	0
1 - 2 years	2
2 - 4 years	9
4 - 5 years	2
5 - 7 years	6

#### RATIO BOYS/GIRLS

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At the moment, mostly boys come from China to the Netherlands. In 2019, 15 boys (2018: 17 boys) and 4 girls (2018: 1 girl) were adopted.

#### SPECIAL NEED

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The CCCWA has authorized the Meiling foundation to find parents for children with medical problems, the so-called 'special needs' children. In 2019, 19 special need adoptions were realized.

'Special need'	Number of children
Cleft lip	4
Anus atresia	3
Development backlog	4
Eye disability	1
Heart disability	1
Ear disability	1
Gender dysphoria	2
G6DP	2
Blood disability	1

#### FOLLOW-UP REPORTS

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Since 2011, CCCWA requires families to send six post-placement reports for each adopted child. Since January 2015 the periodic schedule of delivering is like this:

Report	When
One	Six months after arrival
Two	One year after arrival
Three	Two years after arrival
Four	Three years after arrival
Five	Four years after arrival
Six	Five years after arrival

A volunteer coordinates the post-placement reports from the Meiling office. These post-placements reports are converted by our translators into a, partially standardized, English version and afterwards translated in the Chinese language by a department of CCCWA: BLAS. These translation costs are recharged to the families. Since 2017, the reports and pictures are entered in the online CCCWA system which gives the opportunity to children's homes through the whole of China to be able to see the reports and pictures of 'their' adoptive children until five years after the adoption.

## TAIWAN

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### TEAM COMPOSITION

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The Taiwan team is managed by a member of the Board, whereas two country coordinators are responsibility for the daily routine. The team composition is organised like this:

Function	Number of volunteers
Country coordinator	2
Special need intake	2
Country contact person	5
Follow-up	4
Follow-up social worker	2
Roots, subdivided in roots questions and -travel	4
Finances	1

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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The last couple of years, the Taiwanese government invested a lot in local adoptions. This results in children with more severe special needs and burdened backgrounds who are eligible for adoption abroad. In 2019, Meiling collaborated with three organizations: CSS, Cathwel and CWLF. Next to this, exploratory conversations have taken place with three new contacts: Chung Yi, Garden of Hope and the St. Lucy center.

#### CHRISTIAN SALVATION SERVICE (CSS)

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With regard to the Christian Salvation Service (CSS) in 2019, the following facts are worth mentioning:

- In 2019, 8 children came to the Netherlands (2018: 6).

#### CATHOLIC WELFARE (CATHWEL)

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In relation to Catholic Welfare (Cathwel) in 2019, the following facts can be mentioned:

- In 2019, 6 children came to the Netherlands (2018: 10).
- In the future, parents have to be willing to accept a broader range of Special Needs, as well as combinations.
- For Cathwel, there was a central waiting list in 2019.

#### CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE FOUNDATION (CWLF)

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The Child Welfare League Foundation (CWLF) is a relatively small channel in Taiwan.

- In 2019 no children arrived (2018: -).

#### ARRIVAL OF CHILDREN FROM TAIWAN PER YEAR

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Until and including 2019, a total of 1047 children have come from Taiwan to the Netherlands. The first child ever for whom Meiling mediated, came from Taiwan.

The last 10 years, the number of adoptions from Taiwan has gradually decreased. This is partly due to the growing prosperity in Taiwan. These last couple of years, the number of adoptions seems to stabilize at just under 20 per year.

The age of the 14 children who arrived in 2019 (16 in 2018) is shown in the statistic below:

Age	Number of children
< 1 year	5
1 - 2 years	0
2 - 4 years	3
4 - 7 years	6

Compared to previous years, it is clear that the average age on arrival is rising.

#### RATIO BOYS/GIRLS

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In 2019, 6 boys (2018: 10) and 8 girls (2018: 6) have been proposed.

#### SPECIAL ADOPTEES

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All the children adopted from Taiwan have a medical and/or social report.

The following medical conditions / social situations have been identified in 2019:

'Special need'
(A serious form of) prematurity
Background in drugs/alcohol
Backlog in physical motor skills
Backlog in linguistic development
(Serious) heart disability
Thalassamia
Hepatitis B/C
A child of which one or more members of the birth family, suffer from the following background: - An intellectual disorder - Psychiatric disorder

#### PROJECT AID

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Meiling has made money available for projects in Taiwan. More information is to be found in the paragraph 'Project Aid'.

## ADOPTION PROGRAMS IN SOUTH-AMERICA SURINAM

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### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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The Surinam channel is a small channel with just a couple of adoptions per year. However, in the course of the years, a strong bond developed between the Meiling Foundation and Surinam.

As of 2016, no more adoptions have been established from Surinam. On the basis of this, the board took the decision in 2019 to stop mediation for adoptions from Surinam. In total, the Meiling Foundation mediated for 155 children who came to the Netherlands from Surinam.

### CENTRAL MATCHING UNIT (CMU)

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In order to guarantee the quality, correctness and completeness of the adoption matching, the CMU started in January 2010. The task of the CMU is to determine whether the proposed match between child and parent is correct and fully substantiated by the available underlying written information.

The composition of the CMU has remained unchanged in 2019. All OOM meetings in 2019 were visited by one of the CMU members in turns. To have mutual contact, we as CMU members work with a Whats-app group where we do not mention names of people. The content of matches is only communicated through the Meiling mail. In 2019, the CMU received its own separate secure storage space within the Meiling server, the documents here can only be read by a CMU member or someone with whom a CMU member shares the document. The basic principle is not to store files with private information from adoptive parents on computers of CMU members.

In 2019, 32 proposals were checked by the CMU (2018: 40, 2017: 30, 2016: 45, 2015: 48, 2014: 36), 15 from China, 17 from Taiwan. Spread almost evenly over the quarters. All files were complete. Of the 32 reviews, 30 were agreed immediately.

The CMU did not meet during 2019.

Within the quality framework of Meiling, the period during which the CMU has to judge a proposed match is set for 7 days at the most. In 2019, this was realized for all proposals. During 2019, the course was as follows:

- same day: 2 proposals;
- within 2 days: 16 proposals;
- within 3 days: 9 proposals;
- within 4 days: 3 proposals;
- within 5 days: 0 proposal;
- within 6 days: 1 proposal.

#### AFTERCARE

In 2019, a number of things have changed within the team. A new volunteer has started. We expect to be able to pick up the plans to organize a parent café again in 2020.

There is good cooperation with the volunteers who conduct the interviews with the follow-up team about arrivals from Taiwan. If necessary, we take over interviews from each other.

The most common questions actually remain the same: sleeping problems, jealous behaviour of the oldest child, dividing of attention and control behaviour. Every contact is registered and the interviews are held on the basis of a standard questionnaire. The results of the interviews are recorded in a report and archived as such.

This year a few questions have been received by email from parents of adolescents and young adults with problems. These people were called and redirected if necessary.

#### CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER LICENSE HOLDERS

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Various contact moments with the other permit holders took place in 2019. We know how to find each other in common cases. Together, we continue to closely monitor developments in the field of adoption.

## ROOTS

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The subject "Roots" remains to receive a lot of attention. This is to be expected as the number of young adults who have been adopted through Meiling, grows and keeps growing. Meiling distinguishes between 'cultural trips', the main goal of which is to get acquainted with a country, and the actual 'roots trips', which focuses primarily on contact with birth parents, foster parents, and/or the children's home a child has lived in. A cultural trip can be made by parents with young children. For an actual roots trip the children generally have to be older. While the cultural trip is for enjoyment, a roots trip involves a much more serious element.

### ROOTS QUESTIONS AND TRIPS CHINA

In 2019, only a few times assistance was given concerning a roots trip to China. Just like in previous years, most people seem to be able to organize their own trip using the Internet, or by getting in touch with specialized travel agencies. The contribution from Meiling usually is to send the 'travel-kit', and giving information about the possibilities and impossibilities when organising a roots trip to China.

### ROOTS QUESTIONS AND TRIPS INDIA

From Roots India we keep two basic documents up-to-date, which we send in response to roots and travel questions from children adopted from India and/or their parents:

1. Background information roots trips India, with relevant addresses and other things of official authorities on site, and
2. Information India travels, with especially tourist information and links towards travelling agencies.

We inform the India-children/parents about the availability of these documents through the Meiling Mailing, but we also have a 'private' group on Facebook for India-children of 18 years and older. This group has 41 members (December 2019) with amongst them 4 contact persons from India. The document about the India travels is enclosed on this Facebook page. Pictures have also been placed of children's homes, project aid and other relevant items. India-children can post messages and/or pictures themselves and find back other India-children.

Our experience is that via Facebook the threshold for children is low to ask questions. In terms of content, we have to tell adoptive children that it is very difficult to find biological parents.

In 2019, there were 11 contact situations with India children and / or parents who, among other things, asked questions about roots (travel). In 4 cases, only the digital adoption file was made available, whether or not in combination with the document with background information about traveling to India. As far as we know, 1 of these adoptees also travelled to India. We also know that a second India child travelled to India with family, who had already requested papers. We heard back from both cases how their travels went. This helps us to keep our information up to date. We also received feedback from 2 other India children and parents who travelled in 2018. In some cases, the trips have led to additional questions, which we have redirected to the relevant organizations in India. Furthermore, 4 other types of questions were submitted to us, for which we started the conversation with the person concerned and / or our foreign contacts.

From the Roots India team, contacts are maintained with Mission to the Nations (MttN) in Kakinada and Christ Faith Home for Children, in Chennai. Both organizations want to be helpful in case of possible roots travel.

Finally, we maintain contacts with former employees of the Malaysian Social Services (MSS). But this organization no longer exists, so active support with roots questions is not possible from this organization.

#### ROOTS QUESTIONS AND TRIPS TAIWAN

In 2019, 19 families travelled to Taiwan with in total 31 Taiwanese children.

This year, there have been less trips than in 2018, but we had a lot of information requests and trips that were cancelled due to no contact with the biological family. There is a good relationship with both Cathwel and CSS. Both organizations make great efforts to receive visiting families and offer them every assistance to find as much information as possible regarding biological parents.

In 2019, it was possible for all traveling families who applied for it to obtain information and to make a visit to the children's home. It has not always been possible to meet, where desired, with the biological family. CSS requires a minimum age of 14 years to visit the nursery and to actively search for the birth family.

In 2019, Cathwel organized a roots finding for youngsters from 18 to 25 years old. In 2019, 7 young people travelled to Taiwan from the Netherlands. They stay in the Jonah House and are guided by employees. In this way, the participants become acquainted with the country of birth, the culture and the children's home. They also do volunteer work in the children's home and also make a short tour through Taiwan.

Cathwel informed Meiling that they intend to organize another roots-finding trip in 2020. The Roots Team Taiwan started recruiting for this in December 2019.

## PROJECT AID

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

As Meiling is a non-profit organization, the foundation spends any means it has left from its activities on supporting projects for children in need of assistance in the countries for which Meiling mediates. In choosing the projects to support, the needs of the children and the local or regional possibilities are considered. In addition, Meiling tries to buy the goods needed locally as much as possible to support the local economy.

Meiling spends money on project aid every year. One reason Meiling is able to do this, is that the foundation works entirely with volunteers. Because of this, Meiling is in the position to ask adoptive parents to contribute a modest sum for mediating activities and still make a part of it available for project aid. Also the money made through the project aid shop is available to support projects. In addition, as an acknowledged charity foundation, Meiling regularly receives donations for the projects from individuals, legacies, and school or church collections.

As a rule, Meiling receives its requests for aid through the adoption channels. Requests for support exceeding 5.000 euros have to be agreed upon by the Board.

### CHINA

Also in 2019, Meiling supported several projects (financially). In each case, an examination is being done in order to see if this support actually contributes to improvements for the future situation.

### SURINAM

Surinam is a small channel, with only a few adoptions each year. Nevertheless, the ties between the Meiling Foundation and Surinam are strong. Also in 2019, Meiling contributed to a number of projects in Surinam.

### TAIWAN

#### WORKING METHODS AND PROJECTS

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Project Aid Taiwan determines the projects in consultation with Cathwel and CSS. Cathwel and CSS make a proposal and indicate how much money is needed for a specific project. The project is being further developed. In 2019, many families found Project Aid Taiwan if they wanted to do something for the children in the children's homes of Cathwel and CSS. Project Aid Taiwan has received a large number of donations for both Cathwel and CSS. In consultation with Cathwel and CSS, Project Aid Taiwan also determined the projects for 2019.

Cathwel has four projects:

- Project Baby, for purchasing baby items;
- Project Therapy, for children with intellectual and/or physical disabilities;
- Project Birth Mothers, for offering workshops for mothers to get in touch with each other;
- Sponsor Project, by linking Dutch families to young people for a monthly contribution.

Next to this, the Foundation Catholic Youth Work Antonius and Lodewijk sponsored a summer trip of Cathwel for the third time in a row.

In 2019, CSS had the following projects:

- Project Baby Food, for purchasing baby items;
- Project Therapy, for children with intellectual and/or physical disabilities;
- Project most needed.

## **SPONSOR PROJECT**

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In the meantime, Dutch families support 14 youngsters who live in the Jonah House. In 2018 this was 7. Every month, a small amount of money is transferred to Cathwel through Meiling. Cathwel makes sure this amount is made available for the youngster. This amount is not just pocket money. The youngsters learn to spend the money the correct way. Because, when they turn 18 years old, these youngsters need to be independent and therefore should know how to handle money in the right way. Through this way, we contribute to this learning curve. A close bond often arises between the youngster and the sponsor family. For three youngsters, who have now passed the age of 18, the sponsorship has continued outside Cathwel. Regularly the Dutch families are surprised with a card, a picture and sometimes even a small film. Also the youngsters are often surprised with a card, a letter and a small present, for example when it is Christmas.

With great regularity, Project Aid Taiwan receives updates and pictures of the projects from Cathwel and CSS.

## **PROMOTION / RECRUITMENT / SPONSORING**

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To draw attention to Project Aid Taiwan, it uses a number of communication channels:

- Social media (facebook);
- Website of Meiling;
- Meiling Mailing;
- Country Contact Persons.

In 2019 Project Aid Taiwan was present during the Meiling Day in Aviodrome. Thanks to the grab bag campaign and the sale of Project Aid Taiwan related articles and thanks to the contribution of MeiThings, a nice amount was raised. This amount is evenly spread over the two homes, namely: € 150,- to CSS baby food, € 150,- to CSS therapy, € 150,- to Cathwel babies and € 150,- to Cathwel therapy.

Also, the country contact persons promote Project Aid Taiwan amongst the adopting parents. Many families who travel to Taiwan want to do something for the children's home. The team Roots Travels and the country contact persons advise these families to donate money through Project Aid Taiwan. Project Aid Taiwan provides a cheque which is handed over by the families during their visit to the children's homes. The pictures of the cheque handover are posted on social media – with the consent of the families. We also help families with the organization of activities and develop sales promotions during the month of December.

## **POSITIVE REACTIONS / DONATIONS**

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We regularly receive donations for both children's homes. We also see that adopted children regularly do fun campaigns to raise money. For example, children collect empty bottles, organize school markets, sponsor runs with the aim of collecting as much money as possible for Cathwel or CSS. The children's homes are informed of the actions that are organized by the children.

## **INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION, AND DONOR ACTIVITIES**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

One of Meiling's core activities focuses on the (prospective) adoptive parents and their children who have committed themselves to Meiling as its donors. Besides providing information, a main goal of this core activity has a social purpose, namely, to permanently maintain contacts with adoptive parents and their children as well as the donors amongst themselves.

The committee Donor Activities focuses on:

- organizing information meetings;
- organizing the family day;
- informing about relevant books; and
- managing the project aid shop.

### **MEANS OF COMMUNICATION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

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The Meiling Foundation uses various communication tools and the intention is to reach and inform the intended audience in the best way possible using these communication methods. In the following paragraphs, the various communication tools will be discussed further.

#### **WEBSITE**

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During the past years, the Meiling Website has proved its value as a communication tool with (prospective) adoptive parents and other persons interested in the Meiling organization. The website is and remains an important information source for (prospective) adoptive parents, other interested parties and of course the adopted children who by now have become adolescents. Therefore, an unchanged and important focus for Meiling remains to keep the information on the website up-to-date and to report news items in good time.

#### **INFORMATION LINE**

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Meiling has an information line for questions about (adoption) procedures, requirements of the sending countries Meiling works with, waiting lists and many other adoption related matters.

In most cases the first direct contact prospective adoptive parents have with Meiling is through Meiling's information line. De information line can be contacted through the info email address [info@meiling.nl](mailto:info@meiling.nl) and telephone number 0031 (0)6-1315 5727.

#### **MEILINGMAILING**

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The Meiling Mailing is Meiling's quarterly magazine and is intended for donors. Besides providing information, which is becoming more important, the Meiling Mailing has an important social function as well. The magazine does not only provide information about the different adoption channels and the waiting lists for (prospective) adoptive parents, but also stories from and for parents and pages for adopted children form a major part of the magazine. Next to this, a special place is reserved for the arrival cards that the editors of Meiling Mailing receive.

Meiling Mailing has a circulation of over 1300 copies 3 to 4 times per year. The last couple of years, the number of copies has decreased slightly, due to the fact that there are fewer donors or because some of them chose a new style of donor ship, due to which they no longer receive Meiling Mailing.

In 2019, the editors' team of Meiling Mailing consisted of 3 volunteers.

## **MEILING INFORMATION MEETINGS**

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The purpose of these meetings is to provide clarification and information towards donors / (prospective) adoptive parents of Meiling. This involves informing about the developments in the field of international adoption and subjects related to the adoption routines.

This year, one information evening was organized; on March 15 from own experiences of Meiling colleagues. Gerdine Kwakernaat told her experience about Roots travels from Taiwan, Tom Griffejoen told his Roots story from China and Henrique Ruijter talked about the practical matters involved in planning a roots trip. There were 200 donors present.

We wanted to organize a second information evening, but it was cancelled at the last minute. We planned to organize a number of workshops for donors to choose from. Unfortunately, several workshops were not organized on time and the costs increased. As a result, the second information evening was ultimately cancelled.

## **MEILING FAMILY DAY**

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Another important meeting organized by the committee donor activities is the annual Meiling family day. On that day, the main focus is on the mutual contacts of the donors and the exchange of experience with regard to each other's children.

There is a special walk-in hour for prospective adoptive parents; they can meet each other and the central intake. In 2019, the Meiling family day was held at the Aviodrome. For the first time in a museum and we had beautiful weather! A Meiling information market was also organized this year. It was another fantastic day with an attendance of 550 guests. On this day several activities were organized for the children! Face painting, Workshop Panda bear making and an actor with the welcome speech!

## **BOOK INFO**

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The goal of the book information is to show the literature that is related to adoption. Among other things, the following reading material is available: country info, children's books, travelling literature but also scientific publications.

Through the Meiling Mailing, the donors are kept up to date concerning the recent developments in literature offerings related to adoption. Also, the book table is always present during every Meiling information meeting.

## PROJECT AID SHOP 'MEI THINGS'

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The project aid shop, among other things, sells products that have their origin in the countries Meiling mediates for. Many of these products are brought back by those who travel to one of these countries on behalf of Meiling. Other sources are used as well to ensure an assemblage of useful and attractive products in the shop. As already indicated by its name, the money made from the shop is used to support project aid; small-scale projects where the children's homes in our channels benefit from.

The shop is present at information meetings and during the annual Meiling day. Besides this, the shop team is very active recommending its products on Facebook.

From 2019 on, the committee consists of three volunteers. They organize the information evenings, the Meiling day and prepare the reports for the Meiling Mailing. The committee tries to find varied topics for the different target groups. The committee still sees many challenges for the coming years.



## **BOARD AND MANAGEMENT**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

The Meiling Board wants to present Meiling as a solid organization to all persons and institutions involved in its services, and wants to be able to substantiate this. This quality manifests itself in the information given, in the accessibility of the organization and its co-workers, and in working with predictable, transparent and verifiable procedures.

To guarantee all of this, a number of principles of policy have been determined:

1. Every co-worker has clients, both internal and external. As a rule, the co-worker will come to an agreement with his or her client only if it is certain it can be met.
2. Powers are invested as close to the execution as possible. The Board takes it upon itself to make sure:
  - a. that every co-worker knows what is expected of him or her (requirements);
  - b. that he or she is able to determine whether his or her working results correspond to the relevant demands (evaluation);
  - c. that every co-worker is invested with the powers to ensure that his or her working results with the demands (adjustment). This way, our co-workers are made responsible for their own working results, and so for the quality of our services.
3. Every co-worker has the right and the duty to take note of any deviation in his or her working performance, and to report these to the Board.
4. Every co-worker has the right and the duty to make an appeal to the Board regarding its duty to adjust the organization and method of working when complaints and deviations are reported.
5. The policy to guarantee the quality's main emphasis is focused on predictability and prevention. The Board pursues a policy aimed at continuous improvement of the working processes, client satisfaction and that of other parties concerned and the prevention of errors and complaints.
6. The organization is periodically tested (both internally and externally), to check whether the procedures as determined in the quality handbook are followed, and whether set goals of quality improvement have been attained. This way, the organization is able to keep meeting our clients' wishes and expectations.

### **BOARD COMPOSITION ON 31 DECEMBER 2019**

On 31 December 2019, the Board consists of the following persons:

- P. A. H. Heubach – chairman of the Board
- A. van den Berg – Treasurer
- W. Baaij – secretary
- E. C. van den Aker
- M. N. Heida

In 2019, the Board of the Meiling Foundation consisted largely of six people. The Board represents Meiling in its contacts with official offices and the central adoption authorities both in The Netherlands and in the sending countries, with the European consultation of Euradopt, the complaints committee for permit-holders international adoption, and so on. Next to this, the Board also functions as management team for the different teams and processes within the organization. The Board has the overall responsibility for all of Meiling's activities.

The Board of Meiling meets monthly to discuss matters relevant to the foundation and its activities. It also deals with questions regarding the foundation that require a statement from the Board. These issues are raised in the board meeting through the board responsible for the various teams.

The Board is assisted by a number of persons who perform tasks aimed at internal affairs. These include Donor Administration, Human Recourses, Financial administration and the Quality Management team.

The volunteers play a key role in the work for the Meiling organization. The quality of our activities is directly linked to expert knowledge and the efforts and dedication of our volunteers. Meiling maintains this level of quality and, wherever possible, tries to increase quality by organizing educational activities and regular team consultations.

In addition, the Board is supported in its decision-making processes by a number of volunteers offering their professional expertise on legal, orthopedagogical, or medical matters.

#### MANAGEMENT

Having some 100 volunteers, Meiling is a large organization consisting of volunteers who dedicate part of their (free) time to work for Meiling. Their main motivation to work for Meiling is that, being adoptive parents themselves, they want to make an effort for other children in need of help, and with the interest of the adoptive children in mind, want to help other adoptive parents. In many cases, the work they do for Meiling is closely connected to their daily job. The professionalism and enthusiasm these co-workers exhibit in performing tasks for Meiling is an important factor for the functioning of the Foundation.

In terms of internal communication and knowledge transfer, at least twice per year an information meeting is organized, at which the core teams (the Board, country teams, after-care, Central Matching Unit, intake-teams and information line) have the opportunity to exchange information. Next to this, every core team meets once or several times per year with the member of the Board. Apart from this, the core team volunteers often communicate by phone or email in order to discuss the daily affairs and to decide on actions to be taken.

For adoption-related matters where the board would like an independent advice, it can appeal to the Advisory Board. The discussions and the mirroring of ideas/thoughts with the Advisory Board is experienced by the board as very valuable.

That Meiling as an organization depends on volunteers does not diminish its goal to act professionally in all it does. Reinforcing this professional attitude by using the virtual office, training, internal consultations, and, when necessary, relying on external professional advice is a key focus. Both nationally and internationally (Euradopt), Meiling co-workers take part in adoption-related workshops and seminars.

#### HUMAN RESOURCES / ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

In the field of human resources, we are mainly occupied with filling vacancies in the various teams within Meiling as well as the administrative handling of these in cooperation with the office of the Meiling Foundation. Of importance here is that the vacancies are filled by people with the right competences. Next to this, it is important that the volunteers, which are already present, receive the right attention and possible training.

Due to personnel changes in the various teams and also in human resources, the priorities in 2019 were mainly focussed on filling in vacancies.

A dynamic volunteer organisation means that volunteers sometimes have to make their own choices because their work at the foundation is no longer appropriate for the private situation.

Fortunately, we are in the circumstance that all vacancies, one sometimes slightly faster than the other, can be filled. In 2019, 3 volunteers from various teams stopped their activities, next to this we could also welcome 6 volunteers within the Meiling Foundation. Several teams are represented in this: Aftercare team, translator Dutch-English, Taiwan team.

The appreciation of the volunteers that are already present also shows in handing over an anniversary badge for the men or an anniversary pendant for the ladies; silver for 5 years volunteer or gold for 10 years volunteer. In 2019 we had 6 persons to celebrate a jubilee.

The Meiling Foundation is a volunteer organisation. We consciously chose for this. We want to maintain a personal contact with parents and children. At the same time, we strive to work as quickly and efficiently as possible. The organisation may consist of volunteers, but we work in a professional manner. The Meiling Foundation selects new volunteers with the utmost care and is grateful for its active volunteers. At present, approximately 100 volunteers are active within the Meiling Foundation.

In 2020, no major organizational changes are to be expected. We do intend to keep a careful eye on the chain of adoption, and whenever there is reason to, we will not hesitate to make adjustments to the organization.

#### THE MEILING OFFICE

The Meiling office's address is Groendijk 20 in Driebruggen. Postal address is Postbus 7, 3465 ZG Driebruggen. The mail is delivered here and all current files are kept there. When an adoption procedure has been completed and the adoption file is complete, it is transferred to the long term external archives. Meiling keeps digital copies of the adoption files in its virtual archives.

Apart from its office, Meiling has been using a virtual office since 2001. At this 'office', Meiling co-workers can find all relevant information, board decisions, codes of behaviour, working procedures, and documents. The virtual office has grown into a central element within the working organization of Meiling.