



Annual Report 2020

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Prologue

In front of you is the annual report of the Meiling Foundation concerning the year 2020.

In 2020, 14 children came home compared to 33 children in 2019 and 34 children in 2018. All 14 children who came home are from Taiwan. There were no children from China in 2020. This is all caused by the Corona virus that originated in China at the end of 2019, after which the Chinese government closed the national borders. Since then, it has no longer been possible to bring children from China to the Netherlands.

Since 2012 there is a decrease of the number of adopted children that has been admitted to a Dutch family. Due to the Corona virus, the number of adoptions from China has come to a complete standstill and the number of adoptions from Taiwan has been limited. Although it can be assumed that the decrease in adoptions, that started in 2012, would have continued in 2020 under 'normal' circumstances, there is no longer any data for 2020.

Because of the continuous nationwide decrease in the number of adoptions the question remains up to date (countrywide and political) on how the future of intercountry adoption should look like. This is also viewed by the 'future intercountry adoptions committee', led by Mr. Joustra. This committee carried out its work in 2020 and will publish its report in 2021.

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. We will of course continue to closely monitor the developments concerning adoption.

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,

On behalf of the Meiling Foundation Board,



Chairman of the Board Meiling Foundation

Annual report



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. The majority of the children who come to the Netherlands via Meiling have a medical report. This medical report can vary a lot, for example: premature birth and operable disabilities (such as a cleft lip or clubfeet), permanent disabilities (such as deformed hands, asthma, intestine problems), children with social/emotional problems or developmental delays.

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 Meilings 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 Dutch Ministry of Justice. In 2020, Meiling mediated adoptions for 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.

In 2014, the Dutch adoption agencies presented the advisory report 'The adoption chain in 2020' to the former state secretary of Security and Justice. During the course of 2015, the ministry of Security and Justice instructed an external consultant agency to conduct an exploratory research for possible scenarios concerning the establishment of a future-proof system on international adoption. The final report was delivered in 2016. 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 2019, the Intercountry Adoption Investigation Committee was established, also known as 'the Joustra Committee'. The investigation focuses on possible abuses in adoptions in which the Dutch government has played a role. In order to carry out its investigation, in addition to its own investigation, the Committee held discussions with chain partners and other stakeholders in the adoption process. The committee also spoke with representatives of the Meiling Foundation. The committee's report will be published in February 2021.

Info line, intake and central waiting list

Information line

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 2020. Apart from that, a lot of prospective adoptive parents used the general phone number (0031 (0)6-13155727) of the foundation to get in touch and/or receive information.

Intake

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 special need-intake. This special need-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 special need-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 special need-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 2020:

In 2020 we received 33 requests for mediation (2019: 40). Eventually, 19 couples withdrew from the procedure this year (2019: 17). These 19 reports were sent back to the Ministry of Justice for reasons of pregnancy, divorce, too long waiting times or other reasons. In 2020, no reports were forwarded to another mediating organization (2019: -).

In all procedures, after the special need-intake interview, families were able to proceed directly to the country intake for Taiwan. In the course of 2020, the corona pandemic made it impossible for China to correctly estimate whether there were mediation options. For that reason, the intake of new families was (temporarily) stopped in October 2020.

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.

As of December 31, 2020, the number of parents on the central waiting list is:

- Taiwan: none
- China: none



Mediation

From the special need-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.

Surinam channel

In 2019, Meiling decided not to conduct any more mediations with regard to the country channel Surinam. Since then we still assist with the post-placement obligations that the families have committed themselves to with the CA in Suriname, Bufaz and with possible roots questions.

Adoption programs Asia

China

Team composition

The table below shows the composition of the China team as per 31 December 2020.

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
Translator Dutch - English	2

General introduction

In 2020, no children (2019: 19 children) arrived from China. After the corona virus was discovered in Wuhan at the end of 2019, China has entered a lockdown and travel to China is no longer possible. All procedures are 'on hold'. This means that proposals have been made in 2020, but unfortunately we have no arrivals yet. It is difficult to indicate whether there are still children in China for whom intercountry adoption is the best option, as we do not receive any information about this from the CA in China (CCCWA) at the moment. The matching procedure has come to a complete standstill.

The average waiting time for parents who want to adopt a child with a special need from China through Meiling has been about 3 years since the corona pandemic. This is 1 year longer compared to 2019.

At the start of 2020, 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.

Since the corona pandemic, we have been in contact with the waiting families by phone, mail or digital meetings. The situation is very uncertain for these prospective adoptive parents.

Trips to China

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. There were no trips to China in 2020 due to the corona pandemic.

Support in China

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 25 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

Until and including 2020, 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.

Special need

Matching only takes place from China for children with so-called special needs. The Meiling Foundation has the authority of CCCWA to find parents for children with medical problems.

Follow-up reports

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

Team composition

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 organized 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

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 2020, Meiling collaborated with four organizations: CSS, Cathwel, Chung Yi and CWLF. Next to this, exploratory conversations have taken place with the Garden of Hope and the St. Lucy center. CSS has stopped international adoptions in 2020.

Christian Salvation Service (CSS)

With regard to the Christian Salvation Service (CSS) in 2020, the following facts are worth mentioning:

- In 2020, 4 children came to the Netherlands (2019: 7)
- CSS has stopped International adoptions as of April 1, 2020.

Catholic Welfare (CATHWEL)

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

- In 2020, 8 children came to the Netherlands (2019: 6)
- In the future, parents have to be willing to accept a broader range of special needs, as well as combinations.

Child Welfare League Foundation (CWLF)

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

- In 2020, 2 children came to the Netherlands (2019: -)

Chung Yi

The cooperation with Chung Yi has started. No children arrived in 2020.

Arrival of children

Until and including 2020, a total of 1061 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 2020 (2019: 14) is shown in the statistic below:

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

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

Ratio boys / girls

In 2020, 9 boys (2019: 6) and 5 girls (2019: 8) arrived in the Netherlands.

Special adoptees

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

The following medical conditions / social situations have been identified in 2020:

'Special need'
(A severe form of) prematurity
Background in drugs / alcohol
Backlog in physical motor skills
Backlog in linguistic development
(Severe) heart disability
Thalassamia
Hepatitis B / C
A child of which one or more members of the birth family, suffer from the following background: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ An intellectual disorder■ A psychiatric disorder

Project aid

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

Centrale Matching Unit (CMU)

The CMU was established in January 2010 to guarantee the quality, correctness and completeness of the adoption matches. The task of the CMU is to determine whether the presented match between child and parent is correct and fully substantiated by the available underlying written information. Each match is judged by at least two CMU members.

In 2020, the composition of the CMU has remained unchanged. All OOM meetings in 2020 were attended in turn by one of the CMU members. The CMU members have contact with each other via a Whats-app group where no names are mentioned. The content of matches was communicated via the Meiling mail until the end of 2020. From December 2020, the content will only be communicated via Nextcloud and only via Meiling mail if Nextcloud is not available due to a malfunction. Since 2019, the CMU has been given its own separate part of secure storage space within the Meiling server, the documents can only be read by a CMU member or someone with whom a CMU member shares the document. The basic principle is not to have files with private information of adoptive parents on the computers of CMU members. From December 2020, the country teams will put the documents of a match on Nextcloud and share them with the CMU. CMU assesses the match, prepares the CMU form and shares it via Nextcloud with the relevant country team and office.

In 2020, 19 proposals were checked by the CMU (2019: 32, 2018: 40, 2017: 30, 2016: 45, 2015: 48, 2014: 36), 8 from China, 11 from Taiwan. The number declined sharply in the course of the year compared to previous years due to the global corona crisis. In particular, the number of matches from China suffered and is severely affected by this and is at a standstill at the time of the close of 2020. Of the 19 assessments, 16 were immediately in agreement and the other 3 were in agreement after the country team answered additional questions. Compared to 2018, the number of assessed proposals from China decreased from 25 to 15 and those from Taiwan increased slightly from 15 to 17.

The CMU did not meet in 2020 due to the corona pandemic.

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 2020, this was realized for all proposals.

During 2020, the course was as follows:

- same day: 0 proposals;
- within 2 days: 3 proposals;
- within 3 days: 6 proposals;
- within 4 days: 6 proposals;
- within 5 days: 4 proposals;
- within 6 days: 0 proposals.

Aftercare

The year 2020 went differently due to the corona pandemic. Arrivals from Taiwan could continue, but not from China. Due to the lockdown measures, the development of 'parent café' has come to a halt. As soon as this is possible again, it will be picked up again.

The team consists of 4 volunteers, 2 have the China families under their care and 2 Taiwan. There is good cooperation. Where necessary, conversations are taken over from each other. Contact is maintained through online meetings and app contact.

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

A few questions have been received by email this year from parents with adolescents and young adults with problems. These people have been called and redirected if necessary. Currently, all parents have been called after arrival.

Collaboration with other license holders

In 2020, there were various contact moments with the other license holders. We know where to find each other when the occasion arises. Together we will continue to closely monitor the developments in the field of adoption, partly in the context of the ongoing research into the future of intercountry adoptions by the Joustra Committee.

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 2020 no assistance was provided for roots travel to China as travel was not possible. Families appear to be quite capable of organizing the trip themselves with the help of the Internet or of contacting specialized travel organizations themselves. Meiling’s contribution has been limited to sending the ‘travel kit’ and providing information about the possibilities and impossibilities of roots travel to China. We know that many families have had to postpone or cancel their planned trip due to the corona pandemic.

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 data 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 44 members (December 2020) 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. As soon as children are 18 years old, we approach them if they want to become a member of the ‘India-Kids-Club’.

Due to COVID-19, the number of contact situations has remained limited in 2020. There have been 4 adoptees who have requested their adoption file. Of these, 2 adoptees asked additional questions. Of these, one person requested the document with background information about roots travel to India.

In terms of content, we have to tell adopted children that it is very difficult to find biological parents. It is also a pity that the children’s home of the Malaysian Social Services (MSS) no longer exists. So active support for roots questions is not possible from this organization. From Roots India we try to help these adoptees on their way as much as possible. In addition to MSS, Roots India maintains contacts with Missions 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 trips.

As far as we know, no one traveled to India in 2020.

Roots questions and trips Taiwan

In 2020, 3 families traveled to Taiwan. Due to the corona pandemic, there have been no more trips after February 2020. All canceled trips have been postponed to a later moment.

Cathwel's roots finding trip has also been cancelled. No rootsfinding trip has yet been organized for 2021 and no trips are planned.

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

In 2020 Meiling supported a number of small projects by sending parcels and supplies. For each project, it is checked to what extent a support contributes to an improvement of the situation for the future.

Taiwan

Working methods and projects

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 2020, 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.

Sponsor project

Dutch families sponsor several young people in the Jonah House. Every month a small amount is transferred via Meiling to Cathwel. Cathwel ensures that this amount is available to the youngster. This amount is not just pocket money. The youngsters learn to spend the money in the right way. Because at the age of about 18, the children must be independent and therefore be able to handle money. In this way we contribute to this learning process. A bond often develops between the youngster and the sponsor family.

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 Donor Activities Committee focuses on:

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

Means of communication

Introduction

The Meiling Foundation uses various means of communication, in which an attempt is made to reach and inform the intended target group as effectively as possible. In the following paragraphs, the various means of communication are discussed in more detail.

Website

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

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 and telephone number 0031 (0)6-1315 5727.

Meiling Mailing

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 2020, the editors' team of Meiling Mailing consisted of 5 volunteers.

Meiling information meetings

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 the first Meiling evening would have taken place on March 13, 2020 and the second Meiling evening in November 2020, however, due to the corona measures, these have not taken place.

Meiling Family day

Another important meeting organized by the Donor Activities Committee is the annual family day. On that day, the mutual contacts of the donors and the exchange of experience with regard to each other's children are the main focus. There is a special walk-in hour for prospective adoptive parents; they can meet each other and the central intake team. Despite the far-reaching preparations, the Meiling Day 2020 also had to be canceled due to the measures surrounding the corona policy.

Book info

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'

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 2020

In 2020, the board of the Meiling Foundation consisted largely of five people. The board represents the foundation in contacts with official bodies and the central adoption authorities in the Netherlands and the sending countries, the complaints committee for license holders for intercountry adoption, etc. In addition, the board also acts as a management team for the various teams and processes of the foundation. The board bears ultimate responsibility for the activities of the Meiling Foundation.

In 2020 there was a change of Chairman of the Meiling Foundation. Mr. Heubach has retired as chairman and in his place Mr. Van Putten took office as chairman. The other board members have remained unchanged.

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 Resources, Financial administration and the Quality Management team.

The volunteers play a key role in the functioning of the Meiling organization. The quality of our activities is directly linked to the knowledge, commitment and involvement of our volunteers. Meiling maintains these qualities and tries to increase them where possible by organizing training activities and regular team meetings.

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 about 90 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, 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 2020 were mainly focused 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, some sometimes a little faster than others, can be filled. In 2020, 7 volunteers from the various teams stopped their work, in addition, we were also able to welcome new volunteers to the Meiling Foundation, such as the chairman, an employee for follow-up Taiwan, a translator and HR employee.

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 2020 we had 12 persons to celebrate a jubilee.

The Meiling Foundation is a volunteer organization. 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 organization 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 90 volunteers are active within the Meiling Foundation.

The Meiling office

The Meiling office's address is Groendijk 20 in Driebruggen. Postal address is Postbus 7, 3465 ZG Driebruggen. Incoming mail is processed at the office, teams are supported administratively and all current adoption files are archived. As soon as an adoption procedure has been completed and the adoption file is complete, it is moved to the long-term external archive. At Meiling, a digital copy of the adoption file is archived.

In addition to the office, Meiling has also had its own 'virtual office' since 2001. All information, board decisions, codes of conduct, working procedures and working documents that are relevant to the Meiling volunteers are made available in this 'virtual office'. The virtual office has become a central element in Meiling's work organization.

