



# **BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN BELGIUM & INDIA**

ADOPTÉES CALLING FOR HELP - A LAST CALL!

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
JANUARY 2013



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## 1. BACKGROUND AND GOAL OF THE PROJECT

(by San-Ho Correwyn, president of TRIOBLA and coordinator of [www.geadopteerd.be](http://www.geadopteerd.be))

At TRIOBLA (1), we have been planning for a while to do something for the many adoptees in Flanders who want to search for their roots. One has a keen interest in her or his country of birth, another is looking for an answer to the question 'where can I start my search?'. Others are having difficulties with the administrative labyrinth of files and paperwork. Several adoptees have already had their (attempt to) search, but had to cope with bureaucratic, cultural or emotional burdens. The impact of the questions and wishes may differ, but always returning is:

- 'I have the right to get information about my roots';
- 'I really need information about my roots'.

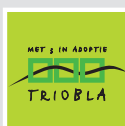
Many questions gradually created the framework of the Building Bridges project. Firstly we wanted to focus on India and South-Korea for the reason that the oldest and largest group of adoptees in Flanders were born there. If they still wish to find 'anything', time is a crucial factor for all those grown-up thirty-some, forty-some and fifty-some. Hence the subtitle of our project: Adoptees calling for help. A last call!

When it comes to finding information about the background of an adoptee - the ones adopted before, say, the nineties - the adoption file in their country often seems regrettably thin, incomplete or simply incorrect. Then it is necessary to look on for further information in the country of origin.

There the difficult search takes its start: in a foreign culture with a sometimes completely different perception of adoption, in a labyrinth of paperwork and with very little support, unfortunately. Despite the successful searches - they indeed exist - many adoptees return from their search with empty hands. Often, they barely get help to answer their questions or fulfil their fundamental wishes and are hardly supported in finding the lost pieces of the puzzle of their life.

That is why we felt the urgency to cross the border.

Adoptioncoach (2), Pia Dejonckheere and two adopted ladies went to India. With Ian Bex, I went to the far east: Seoul, the capital of South-Korea. Two different destinations, yet with the same mission: exploring the actual situation and finding potential partners who are willing to support adoptees in their roots search.



## **ROOTS: 3 different meanings**

This project uses the term ROOTS according to its 3rd meaning.

The broad term ROOTS is often used in the realm of adoption. We therefore first of all narrow its semantic scope and explain its limited sense being used in this Building Bridges project.

Adoptees talk of their roots journey - version 1, if they plan to make a tour in their country of birth. Smelling the atmosphere and culture, looking where they come from et cetera.

Taking a journey of roots - version 2, is returning to the home(s) where the adoptees stayed after they were relinquished by their biological parents and before they got adopted. They often choose to stay for a couple of weeks or months to take care of the children who are staying there now. It happens that they can meet the sisters or nurses who already worked there during their own adoption procedure.

Searching for roots - version 3 is the search by adoptees for identifiable information about their biological mother, parents, family. At that point, travelling itself is not the main goal, unless it is necessary to find things out; for instance by going to the court in their region of birth.

A roots search - version 3 is very often, but not always, also a matter of wishing to meet the biological family.

It is that kind of roots quest(ion)s we are talking about in this report.

## 2. LOOKING FOR INFORMATION OF ADOPTEES IN BELGIUM

(co-written by all the adoptees in this project and Pia Dejonckheere - adoptioncoach)

Before tackling the practical issues, we would like to zoom in on the social and emotional side of a roots search, for that aspect can hardly be underestimated. It is good to know that all kind of emotions brought about by such a search are absolutely normal, human. Those aspects also earn attention and support.

### Adoption parents / surrounding

Many adoptees experience that the bond they have with their adoption parents has a counterproductive impact on plans to undertake a roots search, be it conscious or unconscious. Hence, extra efforts may be required to take initiative. Unfortunately, adoptees cannot always count on the understanding by their surrounding: there could be resistance, within themselves or implied by the adoption parents. Adoptees may feel like they are betraying their adoptive parents, if they want to go and search for their roots. They might feel guilty, ungrateful, or simply not understood: why would you search if you have everything you could ever wish for? The adoptive parents do not always understand that their children need to know more about their origin, they may think they are ungrateful, they wonder why they simply can't be happy with their life 'here' ... Maybe there is merely something 'intern' at stake: the adoptive parents could feel guilty (wondering if they made the right choice having adopted a child? They want to see their child happy,...). While adoptees really need support from their surrounding, sometimes they feel like they are on their own once in a while. If they do get support: all the better, as any kind of help is welcome.

Everyone who undertook a roots search, confirms that it is emotionally heavy. Sometimes emotions rise and adoptees are not prepared to handle them, it can be very confusing. We advise them to look for professional help, talk with people they know or other adoptees. We give some references in our roadmap (3)

### Social-cultural context in the country of origin

Rumour has it about how you would mess up your biological mother's life by searching her: she could be cast off by her family once they know she has an extramarital child, what if she got remarried ... Many reasons are given to avoid a search. After all, it is important that you try to understand the Indian culture and society, among which the position of women. Our western eyes often just don't see the full context.

Our administration is another aspect that differs from the Indian. In the past, it was not uncommon that births were not registered. Registers in homes are often incomplete or incorrect: they were filled from the point of view that it was better to keep no track of the biological mother, it was considered better for both the mother and the child. To get access to files, it takes a whole procedure with very strict rules and often adoptees are totally dependent on the goodwill of the local homes and adoption services.

## **Where can one find information?**

### **Adoption parents**

During the adoption procedure, the adoption parents get a copy or the original of all the documents from the child's file; also verdicts from Belgium and from India are in their possession. It occurs that an adoptee here in Belgium gets to see only a part of the documents (e.g. at the Juvenile Court). Besides that, here as well as in India, communication took place between the mediators before, during and after the adoption.

Mostly, the adopted children arrived in our country by escort (from the home or an employee of the adoption service).

At arrival, the oral information exchanged between the escort (picking up the child in its country of birth) and the adoption parents can be very important.

There are parents who had made notes accurately, kept them and gave them to their children. But there are others who didn't and even didn't give the information to their children; or worse: destroyed it (or told them that they have 'lost' it ...). In that case, the adopted child is fully dependent on the goodwill, decision and sensitivity of her or his parents whether they kept information or stories about her or his past and origin.

According to the experiences of one of the adoptees involved in the project, the information given orally to the parents should have been correct, even if the written information in the file is not.

### **Adoption agency**

As mentioned in the introduction, most of the Indian adoptions took place a long time ago and most of the mediating organisations no longer exist. It may come as a surprise for one who doesn't know the adoption sector, but in those days no one was obliged to make a file and save it. When Adinda in Mumbai calls to her adoption agency, Famille sans Frontières, so as to know the file number of her verdict in India, she gets the following reply by mail: 'Unfortunately Famille Sans Frontières cannot help you. The judgements of the Court of Bombay are sent directly to the parents and FSF does not have a copy. The role of Famille Sans Frontières was to present an adoption request to the Home. Then, the home was taking care of the follow-up, namely for the Mumbai High Court. There was a lawyer assigned for this.' Adinda was given the name of the lawyer and was told that the home could give more information about him if he was still in active duty. 'Don't lose courage and mostly find inner peace soon: life is a gift, no matter where it comes from.'

An important adoption agency (as for its number of adoptions), NIAO (from Ghent, Belgium), quit in the beginning of the nineties because of fraud and atrocities. It mediated many adoptions in India. Where are all those files. who could still tell or find something about them too?

Another point often returning, is that globally (Belgium included) the files from the adoption agencies are allegedly struck by disaster: flood, fire, woodworm etc. Allow us to qualify those explanations as 'not plausible', but there is no proof that they cannot be true, so that adoptees

can't make any objections and are to take them for granted.

The Belgian adoption agency that is still working under another adoptionservice, De Vreugdezaaiers (The Joy Sowers), claims to be fully dependent on their contact persons in India.

Their attitude is as follows: if they don't want to disclose anything in India, we can't do that for the adoptees in Belgium either.

If there are inaccuracies in the files or the sisters know 'something', but can't tell anything, there is no follow-up according to the adoptees in this project.

It seems to be a dead end road.

The adoptees in this project assume that De Vreugdezaaiers did no more than ask the home the question by phone or mail; or they could not do more (according to the adoption agency). Indeed: a deadlock.

### **Juvenile court**

The jurisdiction of India interprets adoption differently. With adoption 'in mind', children are already matched to their adoption parents in the Indian court itself. Once in Belgium, the adoption should be sentenced by the court.

So, every adoptee has a file at the Juvenile court of the territorial jurisdiction where the adoption parents lived at the time of the adoption. Access to an adoption file is possible by simply requesting by letter the responsible public attorney. Together with an employee (criminologist), an adoptee can read her or his file and ask for a copy.

From our experiences, such a request may be useful for those who didn't get an adoption file from her or his parents. On the whole, a file comprises the following: a verdict from India and one from Belgium, and the circumstances by which the child became adopted. The names of the birthparents are not mentioned if they are not mentioned in the file of the adoption parents, and vice versa.

The adoptees of this project emphasise that the file often contains the evaluation file of the adoption parents to be. That is not information the adoptee should (be able to) see, but it is apparently put together in the global file. It can be neutral information, but it could equally be very delicate information.

There is also the experience of one of the adoptees in this project who was sent a copy of the adoption file by making one single phone call to the court.

### **Kind & Gezin (Child & Family) Flemish Central Authority on Adoption (Vlaamse Centrale Autoriteit)**

The right for adoptees to get access to their file is written in the Flemish Act for International Adoption of 2005, and of 2011 (execution 2013). First an approval should be requested; and in case of a refusal, it needs to be motivated.

More specifically, a copy of the adoption file can be read at the VCA. What is more, the director should register extra requests of information or explanation from the adoptee. Thus, the director needs to search for extra information. Yet it is not clear how this will be done in the near future.

The adoptees in this project were, in the past, not given more information than what they already knew; or even less. And extra questions didn't get any follow-up so far.

## **Where can one find identifiable information about one's biological parents in Belgium?**

That is by far the most urging question posed by most - if not all – adoptees that contacts our organisations.

Alas, at the moment there seem to be no openings in our country to find that information. Everything starts and ends with the person, sister, mediator, in India. Unfortunately, there is no one else in the Belgian adoption sector who could help adoptees retrieve information, help them to claim their right to know whom their biological parents are.



### 3. INDIA: 27 OCTOBER 2012 - 3 NOVEMBER 2012

(co-written by all the adoptees in this project and Pia Dejonckheere - adoptioncoach)

#### Prequel

Since the founding of TRIOBLA, many adoptees appealed for help, among others those who were born in India. They make up the largest group in Flanders, but unfortunately there are still no specific figures available about the number of adoptees. What we do know from our experience, is that many were adopted by:

- the adoption service De Vreugdezaaiers (The Joy Sowers), now fused with Ray of Hope (3000 Indian files, it is said);
- the adoption service NIAO (they quit in the early nineties due to fraud and atrocities);
- the Walloon adoption service Famille sans Frontières (no longer recognized as adoption service);
- the adoption service Thérèse Wante;
- individual or other media (often catholic organizations).

In the eighties and nineties, thousands of adoptees from India came to Belgium - those were the booming India adoption days, so to say.

Much more than in the past decade they call for social help, also appealing to the adoption-coach, [geadopteerd.be](http://geadopteerd.be) and TRIOBLA. They are living on their own, are married, often with children, bringing questions about their own past and the choices their biological parents made. Their own children may also ask questions about the origin of their adopted mother and/or father. In comparison with the time they lived with their parents, the adoptees are less inhibited thanks to the loyalty vis-à-vis their adoption parents.

Many of those adoptees eagerly want to know whom their biological parents are. It is very difficult to continue their life, so it seems, without knowing where they come from, whom their biological parents are and why they let them be adopted.

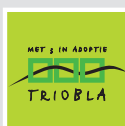
First of all we referred them to the after care of the still existing adoption agencies. For whom there is no agency (anymore), we looked for other means of help. In the end it seems that many of them didn't get the after care they hoped for.

Then we looked for other organisations that could help them. Wereldkinderen (i.e. World children, an adoption service in the Netherlands with an elaborated roots after care, also in India) as well as A.C.T. (Against Child Trafficking, an ngo in Brussels) appeared not to be suitable partners for the adoptees in Flanders.

Hence the board of TRIOBLA insisted to explore here as well as in India the possibilities of a network constructed around roots questions.

This report is based on:

- the experiences and questions of the adoptees from India who appealed on us with the findings and results of the project Building Bridges between Belgium and India. Last call for adoptees - October - November 2012;
- the experiences and findings of adoptees who in Belgium as well as in India intensively searched for identifiable information they did (not) found.



## **Findings and impressions**

In this text we will inform you about our project in two cities in India: Mumbai and Kochin.

### **The Indian adoption knot**

During this mission it became clear that the homes taking care of adoption in India play(ed) a crucial role in mediation. We couldn't find the instructions given by their directions, chiefs, CARA (Central Adoption Recourse Authority), for keeping information about adoptions; yet in the field they are differently implemented.

We've got the same information everywhere we went: it depends of different factors if and how the identifiable information was shared with the adoptees. Even now, After ratifying Hague Convention, it depends of the former responsible people if and how information is now made public.

There is a big difference in how information about the origin of the adoptees is being treated. In our experience, a truthful, reliable transfer of all the information available is a rare phenomenon .

## Update implementation

### 'RIGHT TO KNOW WHOM YOUR BIOLOGICAL PARENTS ARE' in India

#### The Hague Adoption Convention (HAC) and CARA Guidelines

After India ratified the HAC the government, CARA, has (also) worked according to the instructions for Root search (art. 52).

CARA has written instructions, guidelines for the searches, but those are multi-interpretable, it seemed.

A child right activist also working in a home said at the Mumbai meeting

'The right of the child to obtain information about his or her origin, overrules all other rights'.

In the CARA Guidelines you can find the following extra clause:

'The right of an adopted child overrules the right of the biological parents "right to privacy"'

Conclusion: again, as an adoptee, you are completely dependent on whom you meet and who meets your rights as adoptee!

Unfortunately, it doesn't lead to anything specific.

In certain homes it is mandatory that the biological mother signs the clause that she doesn't want to be found of her personal data should never be disclosed. She doesn't have a choice, although it's legally foreseen ?

We also got the impression that the CARA-guidelines are not really implemented in the daily work, although everyone is familiar with them. Apparently, meetings have been organised for the adoption sector so as to stimulate the implementation of those guidelines in their daily work, at least in Kerala. It yields reflection on the side of mediating organisations (before and now), but a lack of action remains.

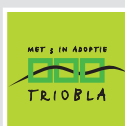
Lawyer Dias Jr. (the son of the lawyer whose name pops up in several verdicts of children adopted by De Vreugdezaaiers) told us that de CARA-guidelines are in contradiction with the current right to get access in Kerala (and elsewhere in India?) and that courts were not allowed to give access. That story appeared not to be true according to our experiences the following day (in Ernakulam, where Beena could see her file) and the week before (in High Court Mumbai, where Adinda even could get a copy of her file).

As for this project, which is a social and not a political project, we chose not to organise a meeting with responsible persons of CARA. However, it seems a good idea to have a talk with the VCA and the adoptees of this project.

#### Thrown off (a bit) by the many questions of adoptees

From many reactions we know that people in the Indian adoption sector (that is, in the region of Mumbai and Kerala) were thrown off by the actions of some adoptees (ngo ACT) and the many questions about information related to their biological parents.

All in all it turned out that in Belgium as well as in India they have never realised in the past



ten, twenty, thirty years ago, what it could mean to be adopted and not to know anything about your background.

On the contrary, the file of Adinda in Mumbai says that they don't give any identifiable information 'because that may cause a psychological complexes'.

During our meetings in Belgium and in India, we were not only confronted with understanding for the questions of the adoptees, but also with disbelief and rejection of the fundamental right of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which says that 'Every child has the right to know whom her or his biological parents are'.

We noticed that they are afraid that an unassisted and unruly search for their biological mother by adoptees may violate her privacy. Revealing her big secret of relinquishment, could be life threatening for her. Of course, we fully understand her situation.

The adoptees have always repeated that no adoptee wishes to do harm to her or his biological mother. They really do want to avoid that, by taking part in an professional after care project as ours. In Mumbai, there is a service that engages in discretely searching the biological mother of adoptees. It is indeed possible!

We have tried to convince social services / adoption agencies in India that we in Belgium also have experience in respecting the privacy of biological mothers, family. We have years of experience in roots searches to and we also want to avoid over here that the search by adoptees for their biological parents causes nasty consequences for anyone involved.

On the other hand we insisted on looking for assistance, a search network, starting and ending with the right to know whom your biological parents are, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as The Hague Adoption Convention.

We asked them firmly not to neglect that right by using the alibi 'we don't want to hurt the biological mother'. The adoptees made their point very clear.

In search of information about your origin, your biological family in India: still a precarious adventure with many taboos, frustrations, huge obstacles ...

Unfortunately, it is still very difficult to undertake a search for identifiable information and biological parents in India.

### **There is information at the homes**

Written and/or in the memories of the sisters.

The access to information depends on:

- the fact if the person (still) works or lives there;
- the willing, goodwill and ethics of the person involved.

Some of the persons responsible admit openly that they have made many mistakes, that they have told lies. If we insist to still make it up with the adoptees themselves, such an operation is said to have potentially far reaching juridical consequences.

## There is information in the courts

We could read files in two courts, Mumbai and Ernakulam. Asking for and getting a copy seems and is more difficult, but is surely not impossible. The adoptee can do it all on its own: according to our experience, assistance by a lawyer is not necessary.

But what is written in the file, sometimes differs from what is written in the file in Belgium (parents and adoption agency) and what the mediating organisation in India (home and sisters) have given to the Court to pass a verdict on. For instance, an adoption file in Mumbai High Court contained a child report, the one in Belgium (of the adoption parents) didn't.

If people chose to not disclose the real data, it is somehow reflected in the file. In our opinion, it's worth to ask for the file and take a copy, even if it reveals no identifiable information. But our experience does not suffice to know if that is the case for all files.

In any case, it moved the adoptees who could read their file. It is a plus that it is written in English. Whether that is the case in all other files ... once again: we don't know for sure.

Based on the two access procedures we may conclude that standard phrases were being used as it boils down to information about the biological family of the child and the reasons to let it be adopted:

- abandoned child;
- relinquished by an unwed mother;
- '... The authorities of the said home also do not insist in getting the real names and correct addresses of the mothers in view of the fact that such mothers have sought the shelter of the said home for the purpose of warding off the infamy scandal and also with object that their illegitimate offspring are brought up without being disclosed as to the identity of the real parents so that children do not develop psychological complexes.'

Another experience of one of the adoptees in this project is that it is not always easy to get access to your own file, on the contrary. She was in Mumbai for days, went on several occasions to the court ( to get acces) and didn't succeed .

## There is information in the registers of baptism

When children were born in a catholic family and they got baptized before they were brought to a home, there is a big chance that one can find identifiable information in the register of baptism.

But there are bottlenecks ...

- Many adoptees don't have certainty about their place of birth (let alone a birth certificate) that makes clear where exactly they were born and/or where their biological family lived at that moment.
- Even if the place of birth is known, it is often not the town or region of the home, but a more distant village where communication and accessibility for the adoptee is extremely limited. In that case an intermediate person in India could certainly be of a great help.

- Even if one knows the location of the church, its pastor (if willing to cooperate) ... yet (s)he needs to know a date or year of birth in order to consult the birth register. And even birth registers are not always correct.

One of the male adopted participants of this project was to be transferred to Belgium ‘as a girl [!] born on 31 [!] November’.

In another file, there were two dates of birth for the same child in one and the same judgement (Bombay High Court)

### **There is information at the police offices where children sometimes are ‘sur-rendered’ or ‘abandoned’**

This information is new to us. The information was given us at a meeting in Mumbai. Somebody told us that children, in Mumbai at least, were ‘left’ at the police office often and that the police kept all the information, after all these years indeed. She was very sure about that.

### **The press**

During our mission in Kerala we met a journalist of a quality newspaper, The Hindu. The result was a good article exposing the problem in the media.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/the-call-of-genes/article4066680.ece>

The journalist, together with a lawyer who was so kind to help us obtain access to Beena’s adoption file in the court of Ernakulam, suggested to expose the theme of ‘searching adoptees’ in the press.

They proposed to do this as a group of adoptees in one media campaign, instead of taking individual action.

The lawyer offered his help to avoid abuse and the attraction of ‘false’ biological parents.

The representative of UNICEF in the region told us that the media, as the third power in India, are very influential. She also advised us to organise a media campaign with a group of adoptees and tries to give the problem more attention with UNICEF India.

An adopted participant of this project once did an individual call in a regional newspaper. We learned from his experience that caution is advisable in this kind of actions.

When it came to ask for a simple DNA-test (taking a sample, at no cost and painless), the candidate-family members withdrew.

Yet that is no reason to definitely block all assistance of Indian media. We’ve received an offer from the chief editor of the Hindu to cooperate

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

written by all the adoptees in this project

**A society that organises adoption and facilitates it actively, also OUGHT to invest proportionally in professional after care for all participants of the adoption triangle!**

(by San-Ho Correwyn at the opening colloquium States General Adoption, Belgium 2010)

### **Our statement**

Adoptees often feel that their roots questions get no or insufficient answers. Yet it is an important right, part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 7 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the right of the child to know its (birth) parents.

Adoptees experience a lack of an after care network around the roots-related questions of Belgian adoptees from India, as well in Belgium as in India..

They are under the impression that the only organisations that support them and undertake an attempt to also build out a professional search network in India are the organisations TRIOBLA and geadopteerd.be.

We, the adoptees involved in the TRIOBLA-project Building Bridges between India and Belgium (2012), have not yet got any help of other organisations as for:

- searching for identifiable information about our biological parents;
- the (real) reason why we have been abandoned;
- assistance for the hard emotional search to who we are via a roots search.

In our search, too often we get the following answers:

- you should be happy with what you have and shut off the past;
- when looking for your biological mother, you endanger her life;
- there is nothing left to be found;
- the responsible of the home doesn't want to disclose anything, doesn't have any thing, can't help you in any way;
- we understand ... but can't help you.

We cannot and will not just accept those answers and worldwide we see that grown up adoptees share that opinion. We are not the only ones with many questions but few or no answers at all.



## **Information in het adoption file: TRUE OR FALSE?**

We, adoptees, in our individual search for information, are often confronted with an 'empty' answer, answers around the bush, standard phrases used to motivate the relinquishment. Notions or words like 'unknown mother', 'unwed mother', 'relinquished' seem to appear in most of the files. But those who did find their biological parents come to the conclusion that the information is not always correct.

We, adoptees, looking by ourselves and also via this project, are too often confronted with confusing, contradictory information.

- An adoptee arrives with a file in which her or his sex doesn't correspond to reality.
- An adoptee has got already three different versions of her or his story, identity, name.
- An adoptee heard of her or his biological parents that they received a letter of the home telling that their adopted child had passed away.
- An adoptee heard that her or his file, identity was linked wrongly to another child, so that identity, passport, name and date of birth are another child's.
- An adoptee heard that sisters from the home know her or his biological mother, but that they don't want to reveal the information.

And of course there are many other cases ...

We know how hard it is to search, and to find a new equilibrium and try to continue with your life.

We are looking for an after care network in Belgium (by this Building Bridges project) and in India that, if necessary, can support us and our biological family.

At this moment, we need to undertake that difficult and emotional journey too often on our own (expenses).

As soon as we have met our family, we have to leave them behind, which is very difficult for both parties. We still need to answer the difficult, but justified question from our family for financial support on our own. That too is far from evident and, according to us, part of the professional after care for adoptees and their biological family.

**In sum: at this moment, there is not yet a true and reliable professional after care network in Belgium nor India supporting adoptees with their roots search and following up the assistance and after care of the potential meeting with the biological family.**

**Moreover, a better cooperation across the borders is of crucial importance in order to truly help adoptees.**



## 5. IN BELGIUM : WE ASK ...

### **Kind & Gezin (Child & Family) Flemish Central Authority on Adoption (Vlaamse Centrale Autoriteit, VCA)**

We ask to take steps, together with the adoptees based on this report, to build that necessary after care network in both countries: the countries of origin and Belgium.

An adopted child is the lifelong responsibility of both countries and that responsibility does not stop when the legal adoption procedure had ended.

An important partner is the CARA (Central Adoption Recourse Authority ) that could, , indicate what they can do for us within their guidelines.

The VCA ( Central authority ) could start a bilateral discussion and a collaboration can be set up. Just as there are many expensive missions to countries of origin so as to explore new ways to bring children for adoption to our country, we hope that a similar (financial and other) effort can be made to help us build such a network.

Of course we are prepared to help the VCA, e.g. by travelling along if necessary.

### **vzw Steunpunt Adoptie (4) (organization that – among other - organize after care in Belgium)**

We as adoptees ask if the roots related after care can be implemented in your organisation. Besides the after care in the adoption agency, we also ask to create independent after care. Of course , collaboration between all actors in the field is desirable.

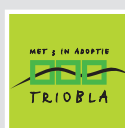
It is not always possible to appeal to the adoption agency. Sometimes it does not exist anymore or there are justifiable reasons why we wish to get help (after care) from another network than the mediating one.

For that and other reasons we hope that vzw Steunpunt Adoptie ( aftercarecenter adoption), can function as a safe point of mutual interest to ask our roots related after care and roots questions.

To us it seems desirable to at least consider extrapolation on European level for we have many contacts with adoptees from India in other European countries who ask us to work together. The many groups and contacts via social media make us clear that it is time to extrapolate this urging matter and to share experience and expertise.

### **The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Consulate General Mumbai**

- To offer information, e.g. on the website, to facilitate the roots search of Belgian adoptees.
- To make translators an offer in order to help adoptees make contact in India for their search
- To be informed about the difficulties adoptees encounter in roots searches;
- To put roots searches on their agenda; think about and work on the implementation of the fundamental right of the adoptees in collaboration with the Belgian organisations and adoptees.



### **The Child Right Commissioner**

- To help us find ways to claim our right 'to know whom our biological parents are', in Belgium as well as in India .
- To help us find solutions for the many atrocities and the tinkling related to adoptions. We need your support here and in India to claim our rights and also find solutions and answers.
- We wonder if the fact that adoptive law is not breaching the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child: art.8 -1° State Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to perseve his or her idnetity, including, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.' ?

### **UNICEF (and other organisations that defend the rights of children and more specifically the right on information about your origin)**

- To help us find ways to claim our right 'to know whom our biological parents are', in Belgium as well as in India .
- To help us find solutions for the many atrocities and the tinkling related to adoptions We need your support here and in India to claim our rights and also find solutions and answers.
- We wonder if the fact that adoptive law is not breaching the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child: art.8 -1° State Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to perseve his or her idnetity, including, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.' ?

### **The adoption agency Ray Of Hope (fused with the only still existing adoption agency De Vreugdezaaiers in Belgium that works in India)**

- Could you make a thorough evaluation of the after care that we've got until now from De Vreugdezaaiers. We are willing to cooperate in a constructive and open way. We hope that the fusion creates hope and openings to find 'identifiable information about our biological parents'.
- We ask you to transfer a copy of our adoption file to the Central Authority in Adoption, as stated in the Flemish Adoption Act (2005-2012). We want to make sure that a copy of our file is soon in safe and neutral hands.

## 6. IN INDIA : WE ASK ...

### TO CARA

- We ask to take steps, together with the adoptees, based on this report, to build that necessary roots search after care network in India
- An adopted child is the lifelong responsibility of both countries and that responsibility does not stop when the legal adoption procedure had ended.  
We would like information about how CARA can help us , Indian adoptees, within CARA guidelines.
- We hope CARA could start a bilateral discussion and a collaboration can be set up. Of course we are prepared to the VCA, e.g. by travelling to India again, if necessary.

### UNICEF AND CHILD RIGHT ORGANISATIONS (that defend the rights of children and more specifically the right on information about your origin)

- To help us find ways to claim our right 'to know whom our biological parents are', in India .
- To help us find solutions for the many atrocities and confusion information related to adoptions. We need your support in India to claim our rights and also find solutions and answers.
- We wonder if the fact that adoptive law is not breaching the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child: art.8 -1° State Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.' ?

### ADOPTION AGENCIES ( still working and adopted in the past), SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANISATIONS AND HOMES ( that sended children in adoption to Belgium)

- To help us find ways to claim our right 'to know whom our biological parents are', in India .
- To help us find solutions for the many atrocities and confusion information related to adoptions.
- We need your support in India to claim our rights and also find solutions and answers.
- To built on that bridge between Belgium and India that helps us finding out who we are, who our mother, father, family in India is and help us heal !

## TO THE ADOPTEE READING THIS REPORT

You know better than anyone else that finding out who you are can be a difficult search. You also know that finding out who you are can also have to do with finding your biological mother, father, family.

The best way to find out who you are, is by knowing where you come from, whom you look after and also why you couldn't stay with your biological parents. We all know that very well.

We dare insist to get help so as to answer those questions.

We want to help you with those answers as much as we can, also by working with professional social services and workers. And yes, to our experience they do exist.

We need not tell you not to make decisions too fast. But worrying, postponing too long can block you. So please don't wait to get help or support.

We can offer you a roadmap with of tools to search for identifiable information about your biological family in India. Of course this is non-exhaustive and we intend to update it. The roadmap can be requested via [geadopteerd.be@gmail.com](mailto:geadopteerd.be@gmail.com)

We set up this Building Bridges project for each of us. This project us just a beginning: it does not stop with this report. this is but a first (important) step to obtain more respect for the right of adoptees and get appropriate support in their roots search.

Adinda	(Mumbai)
Beena	(Kerala)
Babitha	(Kerala)
Barbara	(Mumbai)
Chitra	(Bihar)
Ian	(South-Korea)
Joshi	(Kerala)
San-Ho	(South-Korea)
Pia	(adoptioncoach)

CONTACT: [geadopteerd.be@gmail.com](mailto:geadopteerd.be@gmail.com)  
[adoptiecoaching@skynet.be](mailto:adoptiecoaching@skynet.be)

*(1) Vzw TRIOBLA is a recognized adoption expertise center working in the field of preparation and aftercare in Belgium. From 2013 on merged with vzw Steunpunt Adoptie (fusion of 4 adoption aftercare centers)*

*(2) <http://adoptioncoachblog.wordpress.com>*

*(3) practical guide that helps the adoptee in their roots search*

*(4) translation: adoption support center*

