Association for internationally adopted Sri Lankans in Switzerland

Annual report 2024

Association Back to the Roots 02

International adoptions 06

Back to the Roots: Prospects 07

Finances 08

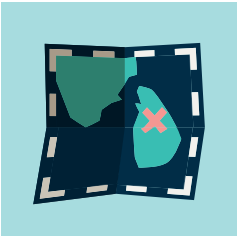
Thanks to 11

WE STAND UP FOR YOU

Back to the Roots

Association Back to the Roots

DISCOVER MORE ON OUR WEBSITE: BACKTOTHEROOTS.NET



Editorial

Dear members and friends of Back to the Roots

It is with great satisfaction that we can look back on the past year.
Together, we have not only strengthened our commitment to a sustainable future, but also successfully extended the service contract with the Confederation and the cantons.
This recognition and trust demonstrate the importance of our work and the positive impact we can have together.
For us, Back to the Roots is more than just an association - we are a community that wants to make things happen with passion and dedication. Without your commitment and support, these successes would not have been possible.

I›m looking forward to the year ahead and to continuing to make things happen together.
Thank you very much for everything we›ve achieved together - and for what is still to come.

Sarah Ineichen
President Back to the Roots

The quotes in the speech bubbles are statements from those affected in exchange with Back to the Roots

Association Back to the Roots

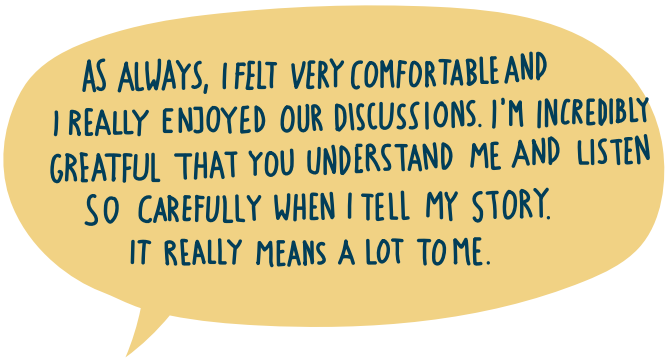
Adopted, supported, and now?

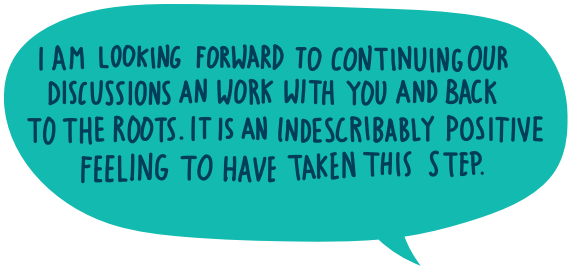
2024 was an important year for the organisation. It was the third and final year of funding from the Confederation and the cantons. Back to the Roots was granted a one-year extension, as demand remained high and no alternative solution was found. Despite the convincing results - 6 reunifications, countless positive reactions and a concept that doesn't just work on paper - the signs are that funding is coming to an end.
2024 has enabled Back to the Roots to continue offering this opportunity to adopted persons with unfailing motivation and commitment.

As the retrospective here shows, Back to the Roots has once again been present at many different levels to make its voice heard. At events held by organisations, in political work, in research projects, in the media, on podiums and at exhibitions. We continue to work to ensure that intercountry adoptions and their consequences for the people concerned are not forgotten.

Support for adoptees from Sri Lanka (mentoring and support services)

If we compare the third year of Back to the Roots with the annual cycle, we can see that it was a year of achievement: the team supported six family reunifications in Sri Lanka. Thanks to some meticulous detective work, the unimaginable has always been possible: Mothers or close relatives were found. The Sri Lanka team accompanied the families in Sri Lanka as well as the adopted persons with empathy, mediation and a great deal of consideration for the families' situations.





But also because countless people in the programme have taken a step forward in their adoption management. Thanks to the support of Back to the Roots, they have been able to answer their questions and resolve their uncertainties.
To be able to continue to successfully harvest in the years to come, it must be cared for, from the roots to the tips of the leaves.
It is therefore necessary to maintain this kind of support. For all the people involved in the programme beyond the project. But also for those who will follow.

Association Back to the Roots

Network for adopted persons

Adopted and now? For many adopted persons, networking among themselves represents a major step towards self-determination and self-evidence. Where once the usual clichés prevailed, a new self-awareness is emerging.

Black hair, which has often been the subject of much discussion up to now, is worn with pride. Having one person and many others with a similar appearance has an empowering effect. Empowerment in every way.
From the beginning, Back to the Roots has organised and supported various networking events, some of which have given rise to new groupings.
In 2024, a meeting was held in March in Berne. Adopted persons from different countries of origin found a space for personal questions and exchanges in a relaxed atmosphere.
Following an in-depth assessment of the evaluations of the last meetings, the range of networking events will be fundamentally reviewed and adapted to the needs of the people adopted.

Today, networking is increasingly done via social media or at external events. Back to the Roots strives to provide the most comprehensive information possible through digital channels and to share content tailored to the community.

Mother and Child Reunion project in Sri Lanka

Since the creation of Back to the Roots nearly seven years ago, one thing has become clear: DNA tests are a must when it comes to searching in Sri Lanka. Initially, the idea was for adopted persons to network in databases and find links between each other. But it soon became clear that we needed a structure that also existed for biological families. This is why the Mother and Child Reunion project was created in 2021.

Donation-funded newspaper advertisements were published in Sri Lanka, and the team initiated DNA testing and family follow-up by trusted individuals. The approach and the need have proved Back to the Roots to be right: a total of four reunifications have taken place in Switzerland or in other countries since the project was launched!

Association Back to the Roots

Diary entries from L.V., who met her biological family in 2023.

Tuesday, 23.5.23

After a sleepless night in the hotel, I am on the terrace. I watch the green world spilling out at my feet. The birds are singing - more intensely than yesterday? Fog covers the trees. That's how I feel. Fog inside me and in my thoughts. What's waiting for me at my mother's house? Who will be there? How will we react when we meet again

Wednesday, 24.5.23

What a day! !! I could hug my Amma! She fainted when she saw me. She is so small and looks so fragile. Like a fragile little bird. Today, I stayed as long as possible with my family, we had a meal together, my mother even fed me. We looked several times at the photo album that I brought her.

And I felt a deep intimacy with these people. Do they look like me? I don't know....

Tuesday 30.05.23

It has been a week since I saw my Amma for the first time. Tomorrow I will fly to Switzerland. With a full heart, full of pain, full of unanswered questions. But also with the impatience to see my children again. To be able to tell them about this experience. And to be able to talk to the people from Back to the Roots. You gave me so much support and accompanied me through those emotional moments! I'm so grateful. For all of this. And I have promised my Amma that I will be back soon...

Wednesday, 1.1.25

Today is the beginning of a new year. I wonder what it will bring me. I have received many answers about myself and my origins. I am grateful for so many things! And yet there still remains a pain that will never go away.... I found my Amma, I can hear her over and over again on the phone. I can spend time with her. And yet we are still missing a time that will never come back. Now we are trying to make the most of it. But sometimes I find it hard to accept...

For more information or to make a donation:
https://backtotheroots.net/verein#mother-and-child

International adoptions:

HOW FAR BACK CAN YOU TRACE YOUR FAMILY TREE?

Participation in committees and research projects

Since 2022, Back to the Roots has had the honour of being an active member of the Swiss government's 'International Adoptions' expert group. The group's mandate was to draw up recommendations with a view to defining a Swiss policy on international adoption. Particular emphasis was placed on developing a system that promotes the well-being of children and safeguards their rights. It was important for us to bring our expertise and experience to the dialogue, in order to work together to find solutions that meet the needs of children at an international level.

As a representative of the interests of the people concerned, one of the central objectives was to highlight the importance of updating knowledge in order to learn from past mistakes and to be able to claim the right to know one's origins for adopted persons.

The proposals will now be submitted to the Federal Council. We look forward to the decision and the direction it will take!

→ Link to the report

Unknown mother' research report by the cantons of Zurich and Thurgau

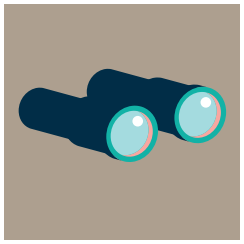
On 27 September 2024, a team of researchers led by Professor Rita Kesselring (HSG) published a detailed research report on adoptions in India from 1973 to 2002, commissioned by the cantons of Zurich and Thurgau. The main aim of the research was to shed comprehensive light on the issue of out-of-home placement. The results have left those involved feeling powerless, consternated and angry, and once again demonstrate the urgent need for action.

→ Link to the report

IF I HAD TO GIVE UP MY SON STRAIGHT AFTER HE WAS BORN, IT WOULD BREAK MY HEART.

Prospects

WHERE DO YOUR STRENGTHS LIE?



Back to the Roots: Prospects for the future

The offer of support has been so successful that the Confederation and the cantons have decided to extend the Back to the Roots offer for another year, until the end of 2025. Our support concept was analysed by the external organisation SocialDesign, which came to the following conclusions:

- → reduced service
- → guaranteed basis of trust
- → the service is independent of the state, both in Switzerland and in Sri Lanka
- → individual needs are taken into account

This service is extremely useful for the people concerned and is recommended as a complementary service to the cantonal structures.

Back to the Roots will continue to reinforce the needs and concerns of adoptees and focus on the Mother and Child Reunion project. We hope that as many new reunions as possible will take place in the coming year.

What could result from the Mother & Child project?

Thoughts from our project manager and our employee in Sri Lanka: Assuming Back to the Roots had unlimited financial resources, what opportunities would arise in Sri Lanka and Switzerland?

Office in Sri Lanka

Collaborators from all regions of Sri Lanka

Wide-ranging information on DNA testing, with the support of any other organisations.

The same comprehensive range of care and support for tracing mothers/families as for adopted persons

Networking events

Participation in the ICRC's «Restore family links» family tracing service

Finances

Operating statement 2024

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Operating income in CHF	2024	2023
Total donations	10'711	11'243
Voluntary membership fees	2'791	1'350
Public contribution - Confederation	156'000	156'000
Public contribution - Canton incl. lottery fund	258'364	239'683
Total contributions	417'155	397'033
Total service and product sales	4'966	11'680
Total other income (membership of committees, etc.)	2'441	5'474
Total operating income	435'273	425'430

Operating expenses in CHF		
Total expenses for materials, products, services	-2'543	-7'929
Total personnel expenses incl. social benefits	-324'073	-297'922

Other operating expenses		
Space requirements	-13'957	-15'060
Maintenance, repairs and replacements	-383	-780
Property insurance and taxes	-2'667	-620
Administrative and IT expenses	-11'232	-20'376
Advertising expenses, agencies & travel expenses	-36'380	36'436
Other operating expenses	-22'000	
Total other operating expenses	-86'619	-73'273
Total operating expenses	-413'235	-379'124

Operating result	22'038	46'306
Total financial expenses and financial income	-183	-339

Result before change in fund and organizational capital	21'855	45'967
Withdrawal / allocation to organizational capital	-21'855	-45'967
Annual result	0	0

Finances

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2024

Assets in CHF	2024	2023
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	107’985	222’198
Office rental deposit	2’882	2’867
Trade receivables	745	6’155
Inventories	3’667	4’128
Accrued income and prepaid expenses	1’025	1’048
Total current assets	116’303	236’395
Fixed assets		
Total fixed assets	0	0
Total assets	116’303	236’395

Liabilities in CHF		
Debt capital		
Trade payables	1’580	3’264
Accrued expenses and deferred income	31’245	193’508
Provision for termination of service contract	22’000	0
Total liabilities	54’825	196’772
Organizational capital		
Total organizational capital	61’478	39’623
Total liabilities	116’303	236’395

Finanzen

Finance report

2024 was a very positive year for Back to the Roots. The service mandate from the Confederation and the canton was fully met. We were able to guarantee a high standard of quality, particularly in terms of support and advice for the people concerned.
From a financial point of view, it was also a successful year for Back to the Roots. Thanks to our flexible organisational structure and targeted use of resources, as an organisation we were able to guarantee both financial stability and the efficient implementation of our projects.

In 2024, Back to the Roots recorded a slight increase in its turnover, which enabled us to cover slightly higher staff costs. Other operating expenses remained stable compared with the previous year, resulting in a positive annual result.
The efficient use of financial resources was one of the keys to our success in 2024. Thanks to a lean organisational structure, we have been able to ensure that a large proportion of funds are directly allocated to our projects.

This year, a mother and child «match» as part of the Mother and Child Reunion project was a particular success. These heartbreaking stories always motivate us to move forward.
The Mother and Child Reunion project enabled us to carry out DNA tests on targeted mothers in Sri Lanka, which is often the only chance of reuniting them. Thanks to donations, 5 DNA tests were carried out in Sri Lanka. We also need financial support for this important project in the future, as it is funded exclusively by donations.
We would like to express our warmest thanks to all our donors for their financial support in 2024. Your trust and your contributions have enabled us to continue our important work and give new hope to the future.

With the positive result of the 2024 financial year and the continued support of our funders, we are confident that Back to the Roots will continue to operate successfully in the next financial year. We warmly invite new donors to become part of our mission and make a difference with us for people affected.

With great gratitude and confidence,
The Executive Committee of Back to the Roots

Dank

Danke - Merci - Thank you

Many thanks to:

The collaborators of Back to the Roots, the adopted persons, the members of the association and the community of interests, the members of the Executive Committee, the donators, the Swiss authorities, the researchers, the scientists, the media, and a special thank you to our families and friends who have always been supporting us.

Support our projects now:

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