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**EDITORIAL**

**At the crossroads of abandonment and international surrogacy – Protecting children's rights at their origins **

*This Monthly Review briefly addresses – at first glance – two very different topics: baby boxes and international surrogacy. Yet, both in one way or another touch upon the rights of the child to know his origins, sometimes at the expense of those biologically connected to them.*

**W**hether it is nature – such as DNA – or nurture – such as the child's environment – that makes a child who he is has been the centre of debate for centuries. Maybe it is both. Whilst the debate is unresolved, one thing is certain, one's history, affects to some degree, the evolving identity of a person.

Given the importance, specifically of the history of one's background (*i.e.* the why, where and by whom did a person come into being), international instruments<sup>1</sup> elucidate the important right of children to know their origins. Yet, the full implementation of this right is not without its costs as the examples of baby boxes and international surrogacy show.

## **Baby boxes and international surrogacy – a complicated paradox**

The phenomenon of baby boxes and international surrogacy\* – in many ways two very different subjects – present in practice a true paradox. With the first, we have parent(s) able to conceive abandoning their child and with the second, we have parent(s) unable to conceive having a child through a third party. The paradox becomes more complex in how either the lack of or possession of money can affect the destiny of a child.

Within this paradox, there are also similarities. In both situations, there is often a degree of anonymity, which can provide protection against issues such as discrimination and reprisals. Baby boxes offer a means of abandonment for parents wanting to remain inconspicuous. With international surrogacy, especially where there is a commercial transaction, the donor or surrogate mother's identity is frequently not revealed to the child.

### **Protecting the child's right to know his origins**

The question then arises as to what extent the anonymity of these actors should be preserved. Such secrecy and concealment can be at a cost for the child, who has no way of accessing information about his past.

This price can be too high, as highlighted by some of our readers in response to the editorial on baby boxes covered in *Monthly Review* 5/2012 (see Readers' Forum, pp. 6-9).

In the case of international surrogacy arrangements, there is often no legal obligation or even a willingness to inform the child of his origins, which is a hindrance, in general, for donor conceived people (see p. 3).

### **Lessons from the adoption world**

By concealing information about the child's genetic origins, family and cultural background, this can have damaging effects on them. Many lessons can be learnt from the adoption world, historically cloaked in secrecy. 'Knowing who you really are is very difficult when you do not know where you come from' and with initiatives such as

TRIOBLA's *Building Bridges Project*, adopted persons are able to reconstruct their identity by discovering their origins (see p. 5).

The lessons from adoption are not limited to the search of origins and moving towards more openness. Specially in the field of intercountry adoption, the international instrument of THC-93 has helped tackle problems such as the legal status of the child as well as providing protection against illegal transactions – although work remains to be done.

### **The ISS/IRC uses its wealth of experience in adoption matters to advocate for the rights of children in international surrogacy**

The newer field of international surrogacy does not yet benefit from a global text. Therefore, the ISS/IRC plans to undertake research covering some of the complicated issues arising from international surrogacy. These also include questions concerning the legal status of the child as well as 'cases (that) have come to light which demonstrate starkly the possibilities for exploitation and abuse'<sup>2</sup>. This international surrogacy research will focus on the rights of the child, at his very origins, as perhaps should be covered in an international instrument. We look forward to working with the international community, to advocate for a better protection of these children.

\* International surrogacy is defined as an arrangement entered into by intending parent(s) resident in one State and a surrogate resident (or sometimes merely present) in a different State. See *A preliminary report on the issues arising from international surrogacy*, Preliminary Document 10, Hague Conference on Private International Law  
<http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/gap2012pd10en.pdf>.

<sup>1</sup> U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 7) and U.N. Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children (para. 42)

<sup>2</sup> See Preliminary Report above, at p.5.

The ISS/IRC Team  
September 2012

## ACTORS

Source: Hague Conference on Private International Law: [http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=69](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.status&cid=69).

- **Cyprus:** This country has updated the contact details of its Central Authority.
- **Vietnam:** This country has updated the contact details of its Central and competent authorities as well as of its accredited bodies.

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## BRIEF NEWS

### **Fiji: Ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption**

According to information provided by the U.S. Department of State, Fiji ratified the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption on 1 August.

Source: U.S. Department of State, <http://adoption.state.gov/>.

### **Haiti: Entry into force of new adoption procedures**

According to information provided by the U.S. Department of State, and confirmed by Haiti's Social Welfare and Research Institute (IBESR), new administrative procedures relating to the adoption process will come into force on 1 October 2012 in Haiti, as a preliminary phase to the effective entry into force of the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. In concrete terms, these procedures aim to regulate the orphanages, child care centres and children's homes through a process of authorisation. Furthermore, Haiti wishes to implement a process of authorisation for accredited adoption service providers or their representatives in facilitating adoptions and to require families to use the services of one such authorised provider. However, all applications registered prior to 7 May 2012 will be treated in accordance with previous procedures.

Source: U.S. Department of State, [http://adoption.state.gov/country\\_information/country\\_specific\\_alerts\\_notices.php?alert\\_notice\\_type=notices&alert\\_notice\\_file=haiti\\_3](http://adoption.state.gov/country_information/country_specific_alerts_notices.php?alert_notice_type=notices&alert_notice_file=haiti_3).

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## PRACTICE

### **The right to information of donor-conceived people: Lessons learnt from adoption**

*The ISS/IRC welcomes this brief overview of how proven adoption practices can positively influence the growing field of donor conception written by Damon Martin, Manager, NSW Office ISS Australia.*

**D**onor conception and adoption are both practices involving the creation of a family, in which the child does not have biological ties to one or both parents. Both have a relatively long history in Australia; however, much more is known about early adoption practices. Historically, both practices have been shrouded in secrecy, and, whilst adoption practices have significantly changed over the years embracing a new sense of openness, donor conception

remains far from transparent. This article - a condensed version of a paper published earlier this year<sup>1</sup> - shows that the field of donor conception can learn from such practices.

#### **How adoption practices have evolved**

Over the years, Australia's adoption practices have shifted from being 'closed' and shrouded in secrecy, meaning that professionals and adoptive parents believed it was best if the child had a

'clean break' from their biological parents, towards a practice embracing a spirit of openness. This new approach to practice strives to create greater stability for an adoptee within his new family, without withholding information about his biological family, this is essential to maintaining his well-being and identity.

Although adoption practice and legislation have undergone significant reform in more recent times, adoption professionals continue to support clients, who remain affected by past practice. This demonstrates that the impact of adoption can be lifelong and inter-generational.

### **Adoption and donor conception synergies**

Despite unique differences, due to the many similarities, the practice of donor conception could rightly be compared to, and learn from, the practice of adoption. The 'world of adoption has a wealth of experience and expertise that should be highly relevant to donor conception'<sup>2</sup>.

The focus of donor conception has largely been about assisting couples with infertility issues wanting to have a child or providing a means for gay and lesbian couples or single mothers wanting to conceive. The voice and views of donor-conceived people obviously cannot be attained at the point of conception and it is not until they grow older that they may begin to question or have a view on the practice and its ethical framework. Drawing on ISS's experience of working with adoptees, it is highly likely some donor-conceived people will encounter some identity issues, or at least have questions at different stages of their lives.

There are already a large number of donor-conceived people in Australia (it is estimated that between 20,000 to 60,000 donor-conceived people are living in Australia<sup>3</sup> and this number will continue to grow). The majority of these individuals have been conceived without any guiding government legislation and when donor anonymity was practised in clinics. It is also probable a substantial number of donor-conceived people are growing up believing they are biologically related to both their parents – a practice that occurred in the adoption field many years ago and no longer continues.

If donor-conceived people are denied access to information on their family history, long-standing identity issues can manifest. Information such as ethnicity, physical characteristics, personality, family history and so on will assist with any possible future identity issues and enable donor-conceived people to create a sense of 'who they are'. However, 'the importance of having access to information concerning a biological parent's

medical history (e.g. whether or not there is a family history of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health issues, and/or other heritable diseases) is undeniable'<sup>4</sup>, and equally important. This medical information is crucial for donor-conceived people and also important to their children, in order to gather accurate medical history.

### **Future opportunities**

There is now an opportunity for the world of donor conception (the clinics and professionals involved, donors and the parents of donor-conceived people) to learn from our adoption experience and lift the cloak of secrecy and embrace a practice of 'openness'. This includes keeping detailed records of donors and ending the practice of anonymous sperm and embryo donation. Furthermore, it is imperative that families tell their children that they are donor-conceived, regardless of whether or not they have access to information about their donor.

Research indicates that when a child is aware he is donor conceived from an early age, he is likely to grow up well-adjusted and happy. This approach also avoids any family secrets and future issues of betrayal. Parents of donor-conceived people also need to understand that it may be perfectly natural for their child to wish to learn about his biological and medical history, and therefore needs to be supported through this journey. It is also important for parents to know that a donor-conceived person's desire to learn about his biological family has nothing to do with how much he has been loved, cared for and nurtured – as our experience with adoptees has taught us.

Undoubtedly the impact of past donor-conception practice will be felt for many years to come, as individuals discover the truth of their conception, and continue to be denied access to information about their biological family and medical history. Compared to adoption practice, the practice of donor conception is still in its infancy, and if a practice of openness is embraced by all concerned now, this will greatly assist the future needs of donor-conceived people. To not take this approach would simply be to repeat the historic mistakes made in past adoption practices.

<sup>1</sup> ISS Australia, <http://www.iss.org.au/publications/reports-papers-and-articles/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Information Rights and Donor Conception: Lessons From Adoption?*, Richard Chisholm, 2012, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Psycho-social, ethical and legal arguments for and against the retrospective release of information about donors to donor-conceived individuals in Australia*, Dr Sonia Allan, 2011, p. 357.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 'Awareness of Family Health History as a Risk Factor for Disease', 2004, *Morb Mortal Weekly Report* 1044.

## **Building Bridges Project (TRIOBLA): Adoptees calling for help!**

*The ISS/IRC presents this short interview with San-Ho Correwyn, who is the current President of Triobla, a Belgian organisation working in the adoption field and providing post-adoption expertise, and who outlines a project to help adoptees find their roots in their birth country.*

**Name, Surname:** San-Ho Correwyn

**Place of residence/work:** Belgium

**Professional occupation:** Photographer/Graphic Designer

**Work in the field of adoption:** President of TRIOBLA and the project [www.geadopteerd.be](http://www.geadopteerd.be).

### **1. Can you describe your background and the path undertaken when searching your origins?**

I was ('probably') born in Masan, South Korea in 1970. I was adopted in Belgium at the age of three but was transferred after nine months to a second adoptive family. Once again, it went wrong. My adoptive mother, who adopted four children, was a single mother and was incapable of running a family all by her own. There was a lack of love and no attention at all to the adoption aspects we were facing as children growing up. If one says that adoptees have 'a backpack', then I can assure you that I carry several ones that a well-filled.

When I was 17, I left the house looking for something I would describe as 'my home'. I realised at that moment that, up until then, I had never experienced the feeling of really 'coming home'. Through a shelter, an observation centre, foster parents and foster care, I searched and found my own home.

### **2. What motivated you to start the *Building Bridges* adoption project?**

I refused to let my sad personal adoption story become a burden, but on the contrary, I try to make use of it to help prevent that this happens to other adoptees. My personal experience became the driving force for my engagement in the adoption field, leading me to getting involved in many adoption projects. The project I have recently started is the following one: *Building bridges for adoptees: a last call*.

### **3. Please describe the project.**

It is a post-adoption project based on equal partnerships (receiving countries and countries of origin), which is officially supported by the

Flemish government. This project aims at building bridges between receiving countries and countries of origin in order to help adoptees in our country to find out (more about) their roots in their birth country. Through this project, we try to provide adoptees with what they are entitled to - the right to know their biological family, as enshrined in the UNCRC and THC-93, given that, despite this right, many doors remain closed in many countries of origin.

The first step of the project is for adoptees and social workers to travel to the birth countries, India and Korea, at the end of 2012. The main purpose is to provide a secure and professional surrounding to all parties involved in the search of roots; as well, to meet people, organisations and governments willing to listen to the personal stories and questions from children sent to our country, so many years ago.

After the mission, adoptees will make a report with their conclusion, their recommendations for all concerned adoption policy partners.

### **4. How will this project help the different actors involved in adoption?**

One can say a lot about adoption. One can ask many questions about adoption. But every adoptee agrees on this: knowing who you really are is very difficult when you do not know where you come from, who you resemble, why you were given up for adoption. Although not every adoptee struggles with this to the same extent, every one of them needs to know who they are to grow into a solid identity, to know where life is heading to!

For biological mothers of origin, this phrase is never out of my mind. A birth mother in an African country said 'not knowing is killing my soul'. So, even if it is a very delicate matter, and we should

do our outmost to guard their privacy, I am convinced that it could be in their interest too, to build bridges to cross!

### 5. Which countries will you start in? Why?

Our project is starting with India and Korea, because for those adoptees it is the last call.

They are in their twenties, thirties, forties. Their birth families are getting older. If we wait any longer, time can erase all traces! In the case of Korea, we are happy to see that adoption services are increasingly investing in post-adoption care. They can often be of great practical and emotional help for both, the adoptees and the birth families. We hope other countries will implement the same kind of initiatives!

### 6. What kind of support will you need to carry out this project?

I believe that looking for the roots of people, and getting in contact with birth families, need a strong and good professional surrounding/setting. Therefore, we work closely together with an adoption coach, Pia Dejonckheere, also involved in our organisation TRIOBLA. We can give our professional help from this side of the world. At the same time, this is our limit. We need partners in India and Korea. We would like to join forces with professionals in those countries. What is still missing in our opinion is the full recognition by local authorities and organisations of our 'right to know'. We hope that this project can be a next step in achieving this.

San-Ho Correwyn, [geadopteerd.be@gmail.com](mailto:geadopteerd.be@gmail.com)

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## READERS' FORUM

### Baby boxes, according to Professor Rainer Frank

*Professor Rainer Frank, former President of the International Social Service (ISS) introduces us, in a detailed manner, to the current social context, in which baby boxes have been established in Germany and France, and shares his definitely critical views about it.*

**F**amily Law is a reflection of the social reality. It, alone, only designs reality to a very limited degree. Family Law reforms typically only establish themselves once the underlying social behaviours have changed and the changed standards have found social acceptance. This also applies to anonymous childbirth and the so-called baby boxes.

France: Anonymous childbirth (*accouchement sous X*) is the result of developments that took place over several hundreds of years. Already in the Middle Ages, foundling wheels (*tours a bébé*) were set up in the outside walls of convents and foundling hospitals, as wooden revolving doors, through which newborn babies could be placed unnoticed. Child abandonment was socially accepted. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who wrote the educational novel *Emile* in 1762 (and whose 300th birthday we celebrate this year), for instance, abandoned five children born out of wedlock, which he had with his partner Thérèse Levasseur, and he probably did not even feel guilty about it. Foundling wheels gained great acceptance in France. It is estimated that, in 1830, approximately

130,000 children were placed in them. In the second half of the 19th century, the foundling wheels were replaced by so-called abandonment offices (*bureaux d'abandon*), in which mothers could anonymously abandon their children 'if they appeared to be under the age of one year'. These developments finally resulted in anonymous childbirth, which was endorsed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR, 13 February 2003, 42326/96, *Odièvre v France*), with a tight majority of 10:7. Since then, on 16 May 2012, the Constitutional Council has decided that anonymous birth is also consistent with the French Constitution, which does, however, not mean that the debate and the future of the secret of motherhood are over.

Germany: The setting-up of the first baby box in Germany in the year 2000 was a great surprise, even for Family Law experts. Nowadays, there are approximately 80 such baby boxes, and it is estimated that about 500 newborn babies have been abandoned in them over a 10-year period. It was a surprise for several reasons: historically, there have never been any foundling wheels or abandonment offices in Germany. Anonymous

childbirth has also traditionally been an unknown concept. Furthermore, to date, there remains, in Germany, a lack of legal basis, which would legitimate the establishment of baby boxes. Relevant post-2000 draft laws did either fall through or were never pursued. Most of all, however, a serious open discussion, which would have been a precondition for the social acceptance of baby boxes, has never taken place. Politics and the media still avoid, today, expressing a clear opinion.

In the meantime, some things have changed: the argument, according to which the setting-up of baby boxes could avoid infanticides, could not be proved through statistics and is nowadays not longer being argued seriously, similarly to France, where the possibility to give birth anonymously has not resulted in any proven decrease in infanticides. Furthermore, in 2009, the *Deutsche Ethikrat* [German Ethics Council] recommended the giving-up of the existing baby hatches in a comprehensive 100-page study<sup>1</sup>. The United Nations advance this point of view (2012): baby boxes 'contravene children's rights to know and to be cared for by their parents'<sup>2</sup>. The Committee on the Rights of the Child's opinion is even more explicit in relation to the Czech Republic (2011): 'The Committee strongly urges the State party to undertake all measures necessary to end the 'Baby Box' programme as soon as possible'<sup>3</sup>. The Council of Europe also calls upon its States Parties to distance themselves from baby boxes and to provide 'transparent abandonment procedures' instead<sup>4</sup>.

The pressure on the German law-making body has gained strength over recent years. Should Germany give in to this pressure, it would not

remain without an impact on those countries, which have followed Germany's example (e.g. Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Russia, the Czech Republic). In fact, so far, baby boxes play a more limited role in these countries than they do in Germany.

According to the German press, a law reform may still offer clarity during this legislative period (i.e. until Autumn 2013). In fact, it is feared that this reform may lead to various dubious compromises. As mentioned in a recent press release: 'According to the plans of the Federal Ministry for Family, there should be no new baby hatches; already-existing ones may however continue to operate'. Considering the current legal situation in Germany, it is hoped that humanitarian and social international organisations express a clear statement, and thereby contribute to baby boxes – which appeared in the Middle Ages – soon belonging to the past.

<sup>1</sup> Deutscher Ethikrat, *Das Problem der anonymen Kindesabgabe* [Anonymous relinquishment of infants: tackling the problem] – Opinion of the German Ethics Council, Berlin, 2009 (<http://www.ethikrat.org>).

<sup>2</sup> 'Spread of 'baby boxes' in Europe alarms United Nations', *The Guardian*, 10 June 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/10/unitednations>.

<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations: Czech Republic*, CRC/C/CZE/CO/3-4, 4 August 2011, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.CZE.CO.3-4.doc> (p. 11, para. 50).

<sup>4</sup> 'EUROPE: Abandon à la naissance: le retour des "tours à bébés" en Europe', AFP, 30 June 2008, <http://www.crin.org/enoc/resources/infodetail.asp?id=17658>.

## Baby boxes in The Netherlands: FIOM/ISS's position and overview

*Hans van Hooff, Director of ISS Netherlands, presents and shares with us his thoughts and ISS Netherlands' position on the delicate and controversial issue of baby boxes.*

### Baby boxes

On average, one abandoned child is found in The Netherlands every year. Each time it happens, the supporters and opponents of baby boxes present their views on the desirability or undesirability of having baby boxes. Thus far, The Netherlands do not have such baby boxes and the (national) government will not take any steps to install them. Like the Child Care and Protection

Board, FIOM/ISS is not an advocate of this facility. Below I will briefly explain why this is the case.

### The child's perspective

Obviously, children, who are abandoned in this way, will be deprived of information about their origins or medical background - information to which the child is legally entitled to, both nationally and internationally. There is no doubt at all about

what it means to them to have knowledge about their origins and identity or, to put it differently, what effect it will have on them to lack that knowledge. Apart from the fact that they will have to integrate an empty place into their personality and identity, they will also have to accept that they were not welcome. Just like it will hurt them all their lives when mothers are forced to abandon their child, the same applies to this category of children.

### **The perspective of mothers and fathers**

When a woman abandons her child by using a baby box, she will be in psychological distress. The question arises whether the decision was taken by herself or by someone in her environment, who exerted pressure on her to get rid of the child in this way. The reasons for mothers to abandon their child are diverse and not only include the desire to conceal the child's birth, but also their psychological and relational problems (denying or hiding their pregnancy, emotional abuse, social isolation, feelings of guilt, not having an emotional bond with the child, confusion, panic and psychiatric problems) that keep them from trying to find a rational solution and to call upon the help of the authorities or professional easily accessible and easy to find.

In the Netherlands, we are in a fortunate position to be able to provide services. Putting the child in a baby box will solve only part of their distress, if any. Add to this that the woman will also be on her own when delivering the baby (in some cases, both literally and figuratively), without proper medical and psycho-social care, thus running every conceivable risk to herself and the child.

In European case-law, increasing importance is given to the rights of the biological father. When a child is abandoned anonymously by using a baby box, it becomes impossible to exercise those rights.

### **The solution?**

The solution should not be sought in anonymity, but rather in the recognition that many pregnant

women are in great distress, needing help. Consequently, professional services during pregnancy and delivery, as well as after the child's birth, should be

custom-made solutions. To this end, the professional service organisations have drawn up a protocol that leaves room for weighing personal interests. This may imply that, in some cases, a child's birth is kept secret even though the information needed (medical and origins) is saved for the benefit of the child. In addition, it remains necessary to pursue an active policy of general education and prevention aimed at acknowledging the problems of pregnant women in distress and at increasing people's awareness as to the professional services, which they can get support from.

FIOM/ISS believes that it should continue to be a legal offence to abandon a child anonymously. Of course, the objective is not to have a (prison) sentence imposed on the mother later on, if she can be traced. Rather, the idea is that the judicial investigative authorities will be more likely to find the mother, who is believed to be in distress so that she can get the support she needs. Indeed, when the mother and the agencies involved have consulted each other, they are often able to find a solution that does justice to the interests of all the persons involved. It is precisely for this reason that it is decided in nearly all cases not to initiate legal proceedings.

### **Conclusion**

Baby boxes undermine not only the rights of the child, the mother and the father, but also the possibilities for professional services to consult (pregnant) women in distress and to find a suitable solution for them – a solution that will respect both the mother's and the child's best interests.

*Sources:* *Valkenhorst* judgment of the Supreme Court of The Netherlands, article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



## Baby boxes: The position of the Dutch Child Protection Board

*The ISS/IRC presents the following opinion of the Dutch Child Protection Board in response to the editorial on baby boxes – written by Policy Advisor J.N. Polders-Reinders (LL.M.) – emphasising that they are not in the best interest of children*

**B**aby boxes or so called ‘safe havens’ are once in a while the subject of attention in the media or in this case of professionals. Supporters of baby boxes claim that these facilities prevent neonaticide and foundlings. In the opinion of the Dutch Child Protection Board, this is not the case, because it is not supported by scientific research or any other evidence. Other child rights organisations and organizations, which help women with unwanted pregnancies in The Netherlands, are also against baby boxes. There are currently no baby boxes in The Netherlands – for a good reason.

### **The risk group cannot be reached by baby boxes**

Alas there is still a group of women, who might kill their baby immediately after birth or leave it somewhere as a foundling. But these women are not reached by a facility like a baby box or safe haven. Research has shown that women, who killed their babies or abandoned them without help, were in panic, distressed and sometimes psychotic. They could not think and act rationally. But that is what someone needs to do to use a specific facility. If a woman, who just gave birth, wants to find and travel with her baby to such a facility, she must be capable of thinking and acting rationally.

In Germany, there have been baby boxes for over 10 years but, still, there are children found dead and children found alive but outside baby boxes, even in the cities where baby boxes are located. After an extended research (2009) by the German Ethics Council, they pledged to eliminate existing baby boxes and other facilities where women can give birth anonymously.

When baby boxes are available, they are sometimes used. Obviously, there is another

group of women, who have given birth or people in their environment, who have used these boxes. These women and people have the possibility to abandon a child anonymously. A child in this situation may be unwanted by the mother or just unwanted by the people that surround the mother. Installing this facility may give people the wrong message that this is an easy way to abandon their child ‘legally’ or it may encourage people in the mother’s environment to force her to make use of this facility. But, in that way, they also realise that the child starts his life anonymously. This way of abandonment neglects the rights of the child – to grow up with its mother and/or father - or when this is not possible, at least to know his identity (arts. 7 and 8 of the UNCRC).

### **Ask for help in case of an unwanted pregnancy**

A baby box suggests that it is fine to abandon a child helpless and anonymous as well as that it is an acceptable solution for an unwanted pregnancy. But it is not. It only discourages women with unwanted pregnancies to ask for help. Recent research by the German Youth Institute (2011, *Neonatizid*) states that the best moment to prevent neonaticide is during pregnancy and not at the moment of birth. That is why we, in The Netherlands, put our efforts to help women in this sort of situation. There are two organisations in The Netherlands specialised in helping women with unwanted pregnancies. This help can be provided discretely so that only the professionals, who help the women, know their name but no one else; and, in general, we try to ensure that it is not a public shame for women, who are pregnant – addressing discriminatory behaviour as best we can.

#### FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND COURSES

- **Africa:** *9ème Congrès International sur l'Observation du Bébé* [9<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Baby Observation], organised by the Ministry of Health, Public Hygiene and Prevention, Dakar, 29 October – 3 November 2012, Dakar, Senegal. For further information: <http://www.congres-bebe-dakar.org/index.php/accueil>.
- **Italy:** *23<sup>rd</sup> International Forum for Child Welfare*, organised by the International Forum for Child Welfare, Naples, 26-29 November 2012. For further information: <http://www.worldforum2012.org/en>.
- **United Kingdom:** *Recruiting Adopters for the 'children who wait'*, BAAF, London, 19 November 2012. For further information: <http://www.baaf.org.uk/training/allevants/2012-11-19t000000>.



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