



SOCIETY FOR
THREATENED
PEOPLES

ANNUAL REPORT

2017

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Editorial

For 16 long years, Ruth-Gaby Vermot led the Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland as president; in May 2017, she stepped down. During her presidency, the STP evolved into an organisation that is esteemed, respected and sometimes even feared. This is because we have learnt when we must voice clear criticism – but also when we want to cooperate. The whole team, including the board, thank Ruth-Gaby Vermot for her magnificent commitment.

In 2017, we showed how conservation in Peru is making any kind of development impossible for the indigenous population. We visited four of the affected indigenous villages and assisted the indigenous peoples organisation in its fight for self-determination. For instance, we accompanied its representatives to the UN in Geneva, where they demanded their rights. We were also in Geneva with a Yanomami delegation from the Brazilian Amazon and obtained assurance from a gold refinery that it will not purchase any "dirty" gold from the Yanomami reservation.

In Switzerland, we campaigned against antiziganism, which consists of sometimes racist prejudices against Roma, Sinti and Yenish minorities. We demanded more transit sites for travelling Roma, conducted a symposium on the topic and developed a mediation project: As soon as travelling groups in a community are confronted with problems, an expert mediator is brought in to resolve the conflict. At the end of the year, we were able to hand over the project to the Swiss Association of Sinti and Roma.

In Sri Lanka, we fought against the military's land grabbing and held workshops, at which the Tamil population learnt how they can defend themselves. We supported women's protests against the enforced disappearance of oppositionists.

We also continued to protest about Standing Rock, where a pipeline is putting the water supply of the North American Sioux at risk. We criticised Credit Suisse at its General Meeting for issuing loans to the firm building the pipeline and filed a complaint about the bank with the OECD's Swiss contact point.

Our annual financial statement concludes with a small deficit, albeit one that is considerably smaller than was budgeted for. With over 14,000 donors and members, we are in a good position. We sincerely thank all of you who have supported our efforts in the past year.



Christoph Wiedmer
CO-DIRECTOR



Göpf Berweger
VICE-PRESIDENT



IMPRESSUM

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Schermenweg 154, 3072 Ostermundigen, 031 939 00 00, info@gfbv.ch, www.gfbv.ch

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Texts: Delia Brändli, Christoph Wiedmer, Irene Gurtner **Layout:** Tania Brügger Marquez

Editing: Delia Brändli, Dominique Schärer **Cover photo:** Christoph Wiedmer

Campaigns & projects: Successes in 2017

In 2017, the STP once again championed the human rights of minorities and indigenous peoples in various countries. In North and South America, the STP campaigned for the rights of indigenous peoples: in the USA in connection with the construction of the North Dakota Access Pipeline, as well as in Peru in connection with gold mining and conservation. In Sri Lanka, the STP fought against land grabbing and enforced disappearance. The STP was also active in Switzerland in 2017, campaigning for the rights of Roma, Sinti and Yenish. Over the past year, together with partners, we were able to celebrate success in various regions of the world:

USA North Dakota Switzerland

In April, the STP filed a complaint with the OECD's National Contact Point (NCP) against Credit Suisse, which has a significant financial involvement in the construction of the controversial North Dakota Access Pipeline. The NCP addressed the complaint in October.

PERU Cajamarca

Indigenous small-scale farmer Máxima Acuña de Chaupe was acquitted in May, after gold firm Yanacocha S.R.L. accused her of land grabbing. In September, she filed a countersuit against Newmont Mining Corporation, Yanacocha's main shareholder. The STP and other organisations are backing this activist.

PERU/BRAZIL Amazon

To impress the urgency of their situation upon the UN, the business world and politicians, Amazonian indigenous people from Peru and Brazil came to Switzerland in July, joined and backed by the STP, and demanded their collective rights be heeded in projects involving raw materials and conservation.

SWITZERLAND Bern

- The STP launched a new project called "Travelling Roma: Information, Mediation and Awareness" in cooperation with the Swiss Association of Sinti and Roma (VSRS). Its intention is that mediators shall mitigate conflicts between travellers and locals.
- On International Roma Day in April, the STP, together with Swiss Roma organisations, mounted a campaign for more respect and recognition. This was the first time that Roma in Switzerland have jointly voiced their concerns in public.

FRANCE Strasbourg

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Switzerland breached the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of the 2013 deportation of a Tamil family. The father of the family was arrested and tortured after his arrival in Sri Lanka.

SRI LANKA Jaffna Peninsula

In April, the STP organised a workshop, in which those affected by land grabbing were informed about their rights. Around 50 people from various regions and ethnic communities took part and issued their joint demands against land grabbing in the "Nallur Declaration".

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN PERU

In Peru, the STP has spent several years observing the impact of raw material mining on the rights of indigenous communities and drawing attention to the associated human rights violations. However, the rights of indigenous communities in Peru are threatened not only by such mining, but also by conservation projects. In 2017 at the UN, the STP, together with its Peruvian partner organisation FENAMAD, drew attention to the human rights problems in the Manu Nature Reserve, situated in the Amazon region Madre de Dios.



©Photo: Thomas Mueller

WHEN CONSERVATION THREATENS INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

The world-famous Manu National Park is situated in the middle of the Amazon region, in the heart of Madre de Dios. Established in 1973, Parque Nacional del Manú is seen as one of the world's most biodiverse places and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987. Access to the park is strictly limited and monitored. This provides protection against poachers, forest clearance, extraction of raw materials and environmental pollution, while also contributing significantly to the preservation of biodiversity. However, the strict rules complicate the living conditions and development of the indigenous peoples who call this area home and live off subsistence agriculture.

Indigenous peoples should be incorporated into decision-making processes

When the Manu National Park was established, the four Matsigenka communities residing there were not incorporated into decision-making processes and their needs were barely taken into account at all – with negative consequences for the approximately one thousand residents of the park. For example, when it comes to hunting, the indigenous communities are only allowed to use traditional methods and weapons, such as bows and arrows, and they cannot develop any further. They are also prohibited from trading outside the park, which is causing a serious nutrition problem. The healthcare in the park is precarious and the opportunities for education are inadequate, as the school is regulated by an agreement between church and state, and involves evangelisation of indigenous peoples.

Manu Park is not an isolated case. According to the UN, disregard of indigenous rights for conservation-related reasons is a global phenomenon. Indeed, the STP's position is that, in view of the acute threats posed by mining projects, dams, illegal logging and drug dealing, a strong alliance between indigenous peoples and conservationists is the only solution with which to protect the Amazon and valuable human habitats against such encroachments, whereby conservation must be based on the needs and rights of the indigenous peoples.

 **Trapped by conservation**, *Le Courier*, 25/08/2017 https://www.lecourrier.ch/152017/pris_au_piege_de_la_conservation Page does not work, as the Le Courier website gets updated.

Delegation from Peru travels to the UN

In mid-July, hundreds of representatives of indigenous peoples from all around the world gathered for the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) session in Geneva. The STP accompanied a delegation from Peru to the UN, to raise awareness of the problems at Manu National Park. “We have inhabited and protected the Amazon region for centuries,” said Julio Cusurichi, president of the indigenous peoples organisation FENAMAD, during the EMRIP session in Geneva. “We are not against protecting the environment, but we would like to share the responsibility for Manu Park with the government.”

The park's inhabitants feel cheated by the local government and the park administration. They are demanding compliance with ILO Convention 169, which requires the incorporation, participation and consent of the affected indigenous population in commercial and conservation projects. With the support of the STP, the delegation from Peru had an opportunity to draw attention to their grievances in meetings with the conservation organisations IUCN and WWF, with representatives of the Peruvian government delegation to the UN and with several special envoys. Their grievances fell on sympathetic ears and they made valuable contacts. The STP also organised a panel discussion in Geneva, in which representatives of indigenous communities and conservation experts took part. Here, it became apparent that the rights of indigenous peoples are in fact increasingly being taken into account with regard to nature reserves, but the difficulty is mainly in the implementation of strategies when faced with local situations that are often complex.

Facts & Figures

*Before colonisation, an estimated **six million indigenous people** lived in South America; their numbers were drastically depleted by diseases and war.*

*Around **240 different indigenous peoples**, encompassing around **900,000 individuals**, live in Brazil today.*

*About **two million hectares** of the Amazon rainforest disappear every year.*



Chief Davi Kopenawa Yanomami in his village in Brazil. ©Photo: STP

Brazil's Yanomami join the journey to Geneva

In July, the STP accompanied not only the Peruvian delegation to the UN, but also representatives of the Yanomami and Surui peoples from Brazil. Christoph Wiedmer, co-director of the STP, travelled from the Amazon to Geneva with the Yanomami delegation. In Brazil, the indigenous Yanomami and Surui communities' territories are hugely affected by destruction of the environment and by the mining of raw materials. As the Amazon rainforest is being destroyed, the local population's habitat is also disappearing. Moreover, the new Brazilian government under President Temer wants to reduce the indigenous peoples' reserves and open them up for industrial exploitation – without the consent of the affected indigenous population. For years, chiefs like Davi Kopenawa Yanomami have been campaigning for protection of their indigenous reserves in Brazil. “Gold mining brings destruction, poisons the rivers and makes our people sick,” says Davi Kopenawa Yanomami. The delegation was also accompanied by a film crew headed by director Daniel Schweizer, who is making a new film about the indigenous peoples in the Amazon region.

USA: SWISS BANKS INVOLVED IN CONTROVERSIAL PIPELINE

Since 2016, the construction of the highly controversial North Dakota Access Pipeline has triggered protests worldwide. The pipeline runs through the Native American reservation Standing Rock, entailing serious hazards, such as pollution of the river – the livelihood of the indigenous Sioux who live there. Despite this, the American construction firms implemented the project, completing it in spring 2017. The STP criticised the business relations maintained by Swiss banks Credit Suisse and UBS with the construction firms (granting of credit lines, management and holding of shares, administrative tasks) and filed a complaint against Credit Suisse in April 2017.



©Photo: No Spiritual Surrender

A COMMERCIAL OPERATION THAT DISREGARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

The year 2017 began with sobering news from the White House: just days after taking office, US President Donald Trump decided in favour of the completion of the North Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). UN experts, as well as numerous environmental organisations and human rights organisations, had previously warned of the problems that the project entails. The STP called on the US government to peacefully resolve the conflict between the indigenous Sioux peoples, the environmentalists and the security forces, to respect the rights of the indigenous peoples and to carry out a detailed environmental impact assessment. However, the current situation shows that indigenous rights and environmental protection were not taken into consideration at all during construction of the pipeline.

Indigenous peoples' protests not taken seriously

For months, indigenous Sioux and, intermittently, another 200 indigenous groups from all around the world, together with environmentalists, protested against construction of the controversial oil pipeline's final section at the Native American reservation Standing Rock. The Sioux did not oppose the pipeline in principle, but called for the environmental impact study, which has still not been conducted, as well as rerouting. The pipeline runs through their land, constitutes a huge risk to the reservation's water supply in its current form and has already destroyed some of their indigenous sacred sites. The fears of water pollution are justified: Of all the US pipelines, an average of 200 oil leaks occur every year. As recently as November 2017, around 800,000 litres of crude oil leaked out of the Keystone Pipeline, which is not far from the Access Pipeline in Dakota and also crosses the Sioux reservation. Such damage can have devastating consequences for those affected, as it threatens their livelihoods. In the worst-case scenario, a leak in the Dakota Access Pipeline would affect around 17 million people downstream.

Facts & Figures

Around 17 million people are affected by the risks that the DAPL entails.

UBS and CS have each granted credit lines worth several hundred million francs to the construction firms.

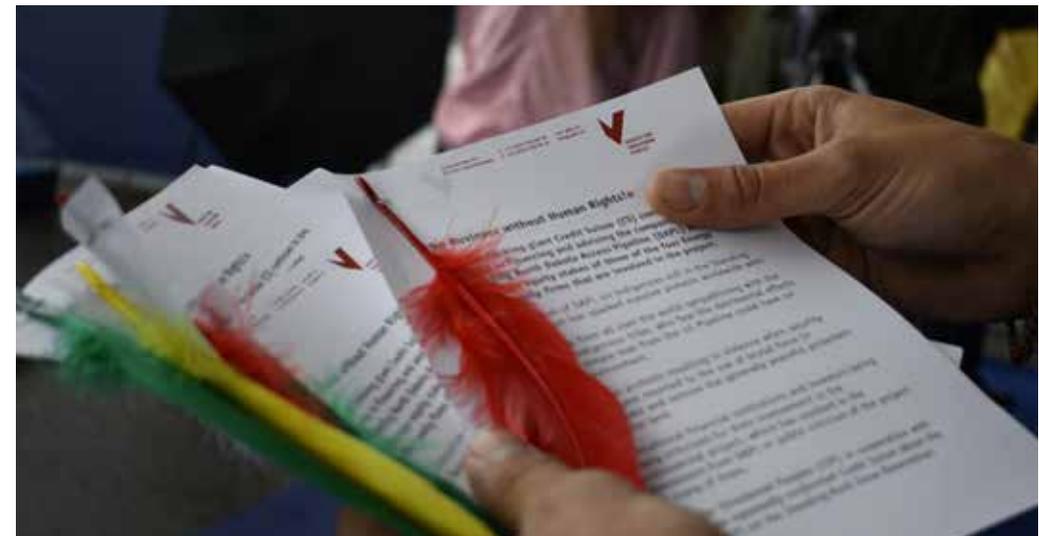
Between 2015 and 2016, there were 69 accidents in connection with construction projects run by ETP, one of the North Dakota Access Pipeline's operating companies.

The approval process for the North Dakota Access Pipeline also breaches the right of co-determination, as the Sioux were never consulted about the implementation of the project, even though it directly affects them and the USA has acknowledged the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, according to which, the US government is obliged to obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) from the indigenous peoples. With his decision to complete the project as quickly as possible, Trump is trampling on human rights and conservation. The indigenous peoples of Standing Rock have no say in this debate: their protests were simply not taken seriously and the pipeline was opened on the 1st of June 2017.

Swiss banks involved in the project

As made public by the STP at the end of 2016, Credit Suisse and UBS provide credit lines and manage shares for the Energy Transfer Family, the consortium responsible for the construction, so these Swiss banks must also be held accountable. For this reason, at the start of 2017, the STP called on both banks to respond to the criticisms of the pipeline project by publicly and clearly stating their position, as well as to introduce mechanisms that make it possible to back out of ongoing contracts with partners if they violate human rights or pollute the environment.

The STP also urged the Swiss banks to carry out a rigorous due diligence regarding the observance of human rights and the preservation of an intact environment, as well as to adhere to their own guidelines. They should also bring their activities into line with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples before services are provided.



At the Credit Suisse General Meeting, the STP handed out copies of its statement on this Swiss bank's involvement in the construction of the highly controversial North Dakota Access Pipeline. ©Photo: STP

The STP files a complaint

On the occasion of the Credit Suisse General Meeting at the end of April, the STP once again drew attention to the fact that this bank plays a leading role in financing the construction consortium behind the controversial North Dakota Access Pipeline in the USA. As CS did not comply with any of the STP's demands and showed no genuine willingness to negotiate, the STP filed a complaint with the National Contact Point (NCP) for the OECD Guidelines (domiciled at SECO) on the 28th of April 2017. In mid-October, the NCP published its initial assessment, addressing the complaint.



Demonstrations of solidarity in Zurich and Basel

In February 2017, the STP supported two initiatives in Zurich and Basel, to show its solidarity with the indigenous peoples of Standing Rock. A surprisingly large number of people, several hundred in all, were mobilised via Facebook and thus conveyed their outrage at the financing of the pipeline by Swiss banks. The initiatives expanded to become a spontaneous protest movement, after the banks had made absolutely no concessions in the preceding weeks.

 **Protests at Credit Suisse GM due to financing of controversial pipeline**, Aargauer Zeitung, 28/04/17 <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/wirtschaft/proteste-an-credit-suisse-gv-wegen-finanzierung-von-umstrittener-pipeline-131275660>

SRI LANKA AFTER THE WAR

More than nine years after the end of the civil war, the human rights situation in Sri Lanka is desolate. The military is occupying large tracts of land, thus depriving the locals of access to land and sea. Moreover, since the war's end, there has still been no explanation of the fate of thousands of people who have disappeared – many of whom belong to minority groups. In 2017, the STP was able to take a stand for the rights of those affected; among other things, it held a workshop on land rights and launched a petition addressed to the Sri Lankan president, demanding that the cases of disappearance be solved.



©Photo: Walter Keller

ON BEHALF OF THE FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

Abduction of those who criticise the government is a practice that the government in Sri Lanka has long used as a form of repression. During and after the civil war, tens of thousands of people disappeared, mostly Tamils with actual or suspected links to the “Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam” (LTTE). The overwhelming majority of documented cases of disappearance indicate the direct involvement of state security forces: the army, navy or police. Since the end of the war, the fate of 146,679 people remains unknown, but to this day, the Sri Lankan government has not completely solved a single case – despite various promises made to the international community. The 2017 STP campaign aimed to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan government in this regard: in an act of solidarity at the end of August, the STP launched a petition addressed to President Sirisena, demanding that the cases of disappearance be solved (*see box*).

Amalie Kandiyar, like thousands of other desperate women, is still waiting for an answer on the whereabouts of her daughter. The last time Amalie Kandiyar saw her daughter was in March 2009, when the two of them, along with thousands of other refugees, had been travelling on foot from the war zone in Mullivaikkal, in Northern Sri Lanka, to Matale in the Central Province. On this route, however, her daughter, aged 17 at the time, and hundreds of other children were abducted. Strangers in uniform loaded the children onto lorries and took them away. Amalie Kandiyar then gathered all her courage and boarded the lorry that was carrying her daughter – to no avail: she was thrown out again in a remote region. “Since then, I have missed my daughter every day,” she says. The 44-year-old Tamil is convinced that her daughter is still alive. Shortly before the presidential election in 2015, she spotted her in a photo that had been printed in propaganda material for candidate Maithripala Sirisena, who is now president. In this picture, Amalie Kandiyar’s daughter stands directly beside the president. When Amalie Kandiyar asked him about her daughter, he promised to attend to the matter. To this day, however, nothing has happened.

Facts & Figures

*The fate of **146,679 people** remains unexplained since the end of the civil war in 2009.*

*According to estimates, around **100,000 people** have been forcibly disappeared since 1980.*

***Hundreds of women** whose relatives are missing have continually protested in various regions of Sri Lanka since February 2017.*

Hunger strike for the missing

Out of disappointment with the government's inaction, Amalie Kandiyar and eight others began a four-day hunger strike in January 2017. After a meeting with high-ranking members of the government proved futile, the strike was resumed in February. There are now hundreds of people involved in protests at various places in the north and east of Sri Lanka. They all have one common goal: to get answers regarding the whereabouts of their family members. The STP was on site in 2017 and supports the women in their protests.

The state's responses to enforced disappearance

In August 2016, the parliament passed a bill to introduce an Office for Missing Persons (OMP), with the task of processing cases of enforced disappearance in Sri Lanka. The OMP is the latest in a long line of domestic commissions set up since 1991 to solve cases of enforced disappearance. To date, all have failed to systematically solve cases of missing persons, to bring those responsible to justice, or to ensure the right to truth and reparation for those affected. The bill on the establishment of the OMP was drafted without consultation of affected families and civil society. In addition, various statements from government representatives are undermining confidence that any serious engagement with the problem of enforced disappearance is imminent. For example, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, among others, has denied the



At Casinoplatz in Bern, those affected vent their despair in August. ©Photo: STP

existence of secret detention facilities and stated that all missing persons are either dead or abroad. This statement was endorsed by former Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and even by the Tamil Minister of National Dialogue and Languages, Mano Ganesan. For what is now more than 30 years, the Sri Lankan government has failed to conduct criminal investigations into complaints, to look into the whereabouts and fate of missing persons or to adequately protect relatives and witnesses.



Solidarity with the forcibly disappeared

On the 30th of August, the International Day of the Disappeared, the STP organised a demonstration of solidarity for the Tamil protesters in Sri Lanka. Around 100 people, mainly Tamils, gathered at Casinoplatz in Bern. With speeches and a short play, the participants drew attention to the problem of enforced disappearance in Sri Lanka, and those affected gave striking accounts. The countless cases of enforced disappearance should be solved: to this end, the STP launched a petition addressed to the Sri Lankan president, at the same time as this campaign.

 "Where is my daughter, Mr President?", Berner Zeitung, 30/08/2017 <https://www.bernerzeitung.ch/ausland/asien-und-ozeanien/wo-ist-meine-tochter-herr-praesident/story/30998500>

EXPELLED FROM THEIR OWN LAND

In Sri Lanka, even though the war ended over nine years ago, the military still occupies large sections of land in the north and east of the island, where the population is mainly Tamil. Here, the locals have no access to their houses, to their cultivated agricultural land, or to their fishing grounds in the sea and lagoons. Over the past year, this situation has led to protests in several places: most protestors are women demanding their land back. The STP attended these protests and informed those affected about their rights in workshops; the civilian population shall not be at the mercy of the military (see box).

Protests should prove effective

One of the protesters is 63-year-old Sinnapu Anthonia Vaas. She has spent years fighting for her land and for access to the sea in her home village Mullikulam, in the north of Sri Lanka. During the civil war, she and her family were repeatedly expelled by the military and, like countless other families in Sri Lanka, lost their livelihood from agriculture and fishing. In 2012, Sinnapu Anthonia Vaas and other former village residents from Mullikulam collectively decided to return home. They first



Workshop on Jaffna Peninsula

On Jaffna Peninsula, where militarisation is particularly high, the STP organised an April workshop for those affected by land grabbing. The approximately 50 participants, who came from various regions and ethnic communities in Sri Lanka, were informed about their rights and possibilities for action. They were evidently astonished that members of other ethnic communities also had to contend with similar problems. The participants issued their joint demands against land grabbing in the "Nallur Declaration". With success: after 27 years of occupation, the port of Myliddy was released in July. This is of enormous importance to the locals; access to its enormous fishing grounds ensures the livelihoods of many.



They want their land back: women protesting in Mullikulam in April ©Photo: STP

protested outdoors, beside the navy camp, and built small huts for themselves there. Later, they regained access to the church and the school. Although they were unable to remain there, the school was successfully reopened and the people obtained permission to attend church once a week. After that, things remained quiet in Mullikulam for a relatively long period.

Last year, encouraged by other protests in Sri Lanka and disappointed with their men, the women of the village once again began to demand their land back with a protest during several weeks. With their dedication, they aroused the interest of politicians, government representatives, other activists, people from the media, church representatives and international organisations. Some protesters were successful, but many of those affected are still waiting to get their land back. Sinnapu Anthonia Vaas is one of these.

ROMA, SINTI AND YENISH IN SWITZERLAND

The Roma, Sinti and Yenish minorities still experience discrimination and racism in Switzerland. Moreover, there is an acute shortage of halting sites for travelling minorities in this country. In 2017, the STP firstly continued its existing “Stop Antiziganism” campaign, taking a stand for more respect and recognition of Roma, Sinti and Yenish in Switzerland. Secondly, it launched the new project “More Space for Travelling Roma”, with the goal of mitigating conflicts between travelling Roma and the sedentary local majority population.



© Photo: Eric Roset

WHEN A SHORTAGE OF SPACE LEADS TO CONFLICTS

From March to October, numerous groups of travelling Roma journey around Switzerland. The shortage of transit sites and the tendency to make existing transit sites exclusively available to travelling Swiss Yenish and Sinti, mean that foreign Roma groups are increasingly forced to resort to so-called “spontaneous halting”. Such halting usually goes smoothly, but it does happen that some groups do not know or respect Swiss laws and conventions, which leads to conflicts. In turn, there is little knowledge about the customs and culture of the Roma among many of the relevant authorities and the police. This leads to misunderstandings and, in the worst cases, to costly police operations.

New STP project

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) and the Swiss Association of Sinti and Roma (VSRS) started a pilot project in order to mitigate these conflicts with an information and mediation programme. As of March 2017, affected Roma groups, land owners, police and authorities have mediators from the Swiss Sinti and Roma community at their disposal, who help in conflict situations by offering advice and attempting to find solutions. At the same time, these two organisations inform travelling Roma groups about Swiss laws and conventions, while also raising awareness among the police and authorities with regard to the culture, customs and concerns of travelling Roma groups.

In cooperation with the Swiss Association of Sinti and Roma, the STP compiled a report that sheds light on the position and needs of travelling Roma. For this purpose, 29 interviews were conducted with Roma and police representatives; these clearly show that, on both sides, there is a strong need for the establishment of more halting sites.

Facts & Figures

Each summer, travelling Roma journey around Switzerland in **500 to 800** caravans – even as many as **1500** in peak months.

In the whole of Switzerland, there are around **31 transit sites**; but some of these are temporary, or reserved for Swiss travellers.

Foreign travellers had at the end of 2017 only four transit sites at their disposal, which encompass a total of **110 pitches**.

Findings of the report: the situation of travelling Roma

Most Roma who pass through Switzerland come from Western European countries and work for several months at a time in Switzerland. According to the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between the EU and Switzerland, they should have the same rights as the Swiss with regard to entering or leaving the country, and work. However, the new STP report shows that, in reality, the opposite is the case: in terms of transit sites, the situation has worsened severely for travelling Roma in recent years. Many cantons have begun to divide their sites into areas for “Swiss travellers” and “foreign travellers”. Moreover, it is rarely possible to carry out manual work in compliance with the applicable Swiss standards at the existing transit sites: this is important with regard to the occupations of the travelling Roma. According to the interviewed Roma, Switzerland is particularly bad in terms of the quality and quantity of available space, compared with the rest of Europe. Those surveyed also ranked Switzerland as the frontrunner when it comes to the frequency of police checks.

The police viewpoint

Our research shows that police officers are also dissatisfied with the current situation regarding sites for the Roma. Inquiries at police stations in frequented cantons revealed that the imparting of knowledge about the history, culture and concerns of travelling Roma apparently has to play a stronger role in police work. This would probably prevent a number of misunderstandings and conflicts. From the research and interviews, the STP gathered that, in connection with travelling Roma, the police often take on tasks that are not in their primary field of activity. For instance, most transit sites are directly managed by the police. In the event of spontaneous halting, it regularly happens that the necessary infrastructure is provided and monitored by the police. It seems that the establishment of official halting sites is a matter of urgency, as far as the police are concerned; their scope for negotiation with travelling Roma is drastically impaired by the shortage of space. Apparently, the acute lack of space is also one of the main points of conflict between the travelling Roma groups and the police.

 **Parliament set to make landmark decision**, Schweiz aktuell, 31/10/2017 <https://www.srf.ch/news/regional/bern-freiburg-wallis/wahlen-bern/fahrende-im-kanton-bern-parlament-vor-richtungsentscheid>

 **Non-stop through the Bern region**, Der Bund, 08/06/2017 <https://www.derbund.ch/bern/kanton/ohne-halt-durchs-bernbiet/story/29087215>



A Manouche girl in front of her caravan. ©Photo: Eric Roset

The demands of the STP and VSRS

Alongside the establishment of more halting sites for all travelling groups, the STP and VSRS are calling for increased incorporation of travelling Roma into the planning processes for halting sites, among other things. The STP and VSRS are directing these recommendations and others towards politicians, authorities and the police, with the goal of preventing future conflicts between travelling Roma and the sedentary local majority population.



Symposium: “Travelling Roma in Switzerland – Information, Mediation and Awareness”

As part of the project “Travelling Roma in Switzerland – Information, Mediation and Awareness”, the STP organised a symposium on the 31st of October 2017. Around 60 people gathered in Hotel Kreuz in Bern to inform themselves and enter into an exchange about the situation of travelling Roma in Switzerland. In a panel discussion, experts from the police, the authorities, and the worlds of politics and law, as well as two mediators from the Swiss Association of Sinti and Roma (VSRS) provided information. Experiences from mediation work and findings from the new report were also presented.

MORE RESPECT AND RECOGNITION FOR SWISS ROMA

The Roma have been part of Swiss reality for 600 years. Their history is one of exclusion and discrimination. For three centuries, Switzerland pursued a repressive “Gypsy policy”, whereby Roma were persecuted, displaced and stigmatised. It is estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 Roma live in Switzerland today: they are sedentary and well integrated, while most have Swiss nationality. However, many hide their Roma identity for fear of discrimination.

The Roma are yet to be recognised

In 1998, Switzerland ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM). Since then, the Sinti and Yenish have been recognised as national minorities, but not the Roma, who have already been recognised as a national minority since the 1990s in neighbouring countries like Austria and Germany under the FCPNM. In 2017, the STP supported the motion to recognise the Roma as a national minority in Switzerland, which was submitted by National Councillor Barbara Gysi (SP). By the end of 2017 though, the Federal Council had still not responded. In April 2017, the STP and Roma organisations also jointly went public with calls for recognition of this minority (see box).



International Roma Day

The 8th of April is celebrated worldwide as Roma Day. This year, the STP organised two preceding events in Bern, on the 6th of April. Together with the Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv (RJSaK), the STP performed a “Detox Dance”, a participatory performance that thematised the relationship between Switzerland and the Roma. This was followed by the panel discussion “Roma in Switzerland – history, present, future”, in which representatives of the organisations Roma Foundation, Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv and Romano Dialog, as well as those from the world of politics and the authorities, took part.



Ignorance is poison: Roma representatives in Bern at an STP photoshoot in January 2017. ©Photo: Franziska Rothenbühler

Stop antiziganism!

In Switzerland, no public review of the history of the Roma has yet taken place. As a result, stereotypes and prejudices remain present to this day. This is particularly evident in the media, as well as among police and politicians. For instance, it was already shown 2013 in a study by the Federal Commission against Racism, that every eighth report on Roma in Swiss media is to be described as discriminatory. Furthermore, Switzerland is criticised internationally for widespread racial profiling of Roma: for instance, Roma in Switzerland face exceptionally frequent police checks. Politicians also frequently scapegoat the Roma.

The STP is convinced that recognition of the Roma as a national minority in Switzerland would help to decrease the persistent discrimination and stigmatisation of Roma in everyday life and in the media. The Swiss Confederation should come to terms with its previous “Gypsy policy” and act firmly against racism and discrimination. Along with recognition of the Roma as a national minority, the STP also calls for antiziganism to be acknowledged as a specific form of racism. In addition, measures should immediately be taken against racial profiling of Yenish, Sinti and Roma, their systematic representation in political decision-making processes should be guaranteed, and their history and culture should be integrated into curricula.

In 2017, the STP was also involved in other, smaller projects and issued statements on various issues. Here are the main new developments in brief:



Chinese president on state visit to Switzerland In January 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping came to the World Economic Forum in Davos for the first time, meeting the Federal Council beforehand. The STP criticised the free trade agreement between Switzerland and China, in which the term “human rights” does not even appear once, and called on the Federal Council to not let itself be guided by financial interests alone and to take a stand for a better human rights policy in the People's Republic of China. In particular, minorities such as the Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongols are severely oppressed in China.



Srebrenica genocide denier convicted In June 2017, the Ticino Court of Appeal approved the conviction of Donatello Poggi, former member of the Ticino Cantonal Parliament from Lega di ticinesi, for his 2012 public denial of the Srebrenica genocide. The 1995 massacre, perpetrated by the Serbian Army against the Bosnian population, claimed over 8,000 people's lives. The conviction was gratifying for the thousands of families of this genocide's victims and shows that denials of proven genocide shall be punished in the context of the anti-racism penal provision.



Criticism of the Better Gold Initiative In March 2017, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Swiss Better Gold Association presented the second phase of the Better Gold Initiative (SBGI). The STP again pointed out that the SBGI, due to its very low delivery rate, is but a drop in the ocean and not enough to combat the production and trading of gold from dirty sources. It thus demanded that, in addition to the voluntary SBGI, the Swiss gold industry be legally obliged to put transparent and rigorous due diligence processes in place. It is also high time for transparency: the gold producers and exporters must be revealed.



Minamata Convention and the Swiss gold trade In August 2017, the Minamata Convention for worldwide reduction of mercury emissions came into effect. Switzerland played a front-line role in the fight for this convention. To a particularly significant extent, mercury is a metal used for artisanal gold mining – with catastrophic consequences for people and the environment. The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) calls on the Federal Council to clarify whether and how the Swiss gold trade is running counter to the efforts of the Minamata Convention. To this end, an interpellation was submitted in parliament at the end of September.



Roma Holocaust Memorial Day Already in 2015, the European Parliament declared the 2nd of August to be Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. The STP and the Roma Foundation demand that Switzerland join this commemoration of the (at least) 500,000 Roma and Sinti who were systematically murdered during the Second World War. For this reason, a motion to recognise Roma Holocaust Memorial Day was submitted to the National Council in June 2017. Unfortunately, it was rejected.



Fribourg trade associations and newspapers charged In mid-June 2017, two Fribourg daily newspapers published an advertisement placed by Swiss trade associations, which warned against entrusting “travellers” with certain types of manual work. In September, this was reported as a criminal offence to the office of the public prosecutor in Fribourg, due to violation of the anti-racism penal provision. The STP supports this charge, as it interprets the advertisement as an expression of rising antiziganism in Switzerland. In November, the charge was rejected, but the plaintiff has filed an appeal.



Shadow report on Swiss minorities In Switzerland, the Yenish, Sinti and Roma minorities are still treated as alien elements and exposed to structural discrimination and stigmatisation. This is established by the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) in a shadow report on Switzerland's implementation of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. For instance, racial profiling and antiziganism are still widespread in politics, media and society, and there are not enough halting sites for travelling minorities. This directly contravenes the framework convention.

Financial Report

The STP can again look back on a successful year. Thanks to the solid equity capital base, liquidity is assured. Without generous support from our members, as well as from donors, foundations and institutions, our work would be impossible. The STP would like to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude for this support. The STP strives to use the available resources in an efficient, goal-oriented manner and to manage them economically.

The complete annual financial statement and audit report can be ordered from the STP or downloaded from the website:

www.gfbv.ch/en/about-us/annual-reports/

Balance sheet as on 31 December 2017

ASSETS	2017	2016
LIQUID ASSETS	792 074.86	911 412.26
OUTSTANDING ASSETS / RECEIVABLES	2 191.40	1 679.30
ACCRUED INCOME	35 860.65	13 041.95
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	830 126.91	926 133.51
TANGIBLE ASSETS	2 911.00	2 861
TOTAL CAPITAL ASSETS	2 911.00	2 861.00
TOTAL ASSETS	833 037.91	928 994.51

LIABILITIES	2017	2016
TRADE PAYABLES / CURRENT LIABILITIES	120 692.85	157 631.49
ACCRUED EXPENSES / DEFERRED INCOME	48 059.91	31 101.00
TOTAL BORROWED CAPITAL	168 752.76	188 732.49
FUNDS	12 515.22	71 169.63
TOTAL FUNDS	12 515.22	71 169.63
ORGANISATION CAPITAL	669 092.39	622 366.79
NET PROFIT/LOSS	-17 322.46	46 725.60
TOTAL EQUITY	651 769.93	669 092.39
TOTAL LIABILITIES	833 037.91	928 994.51

Income statement for 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017

INCOME	2017	2016
SALES REVENUE	1 221.55	1 631.75
MEMBERSHIP FEES AND DONATIONS	1 603 865.75	1 385 235.55
CONTRIBUTIONS	598 699.87	346 653.91
OTHER INCOME	1 936.80	3 088.05
TOTAL INCOME	2 205 723.97	1 736 609.26

EXPENDITURE	2017	2016
CAMPAIGNS AND PROJECTS	1 231 329.58	718 793.10
PERSONNEL EXPENSES	347 139.90	384 620.98
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	125 567.30	106 108.43
FUNDRAISING COSTS	555 645.50	416 426.50
DEPRECIATIONS	905.60	5 968.00
OPERATING RESULT	2 260 587.88	1 631 917.01
FINANCIAL RESULT	-54 863.91	104 692.25
FINANCIAL INCOME	-4 644.71	-6 578.80
EXTRAORDINARY EXPENSES	-16 468.25	0.00
RESULT BEFORE CHANGE OF FUNDS CAPITAL	-75 976.87	98 113.45
TOTAL FUNDS CAPITAL	58 654.41	-51 387.85
ANNUAL RESULT	-17 322.46	46 725.60

General accounting principles

The financial reporting of the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) complies with the professional financial reporting recommendations Swiss GAAP FER 21 and core FER, as well as the Swiss Code of Obligations. This financial report represents the actual situation regarding assets, finances and profits.

The 2017 financial report was approved by the executive board on 14 February 2018 for the attention of the members' assembly.

Income statement

The following organisations have supported us significantly:

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ORGANISATIONS	2017	2016
GREEN CROSS WADI PROJECT	542 396	257 858
REFORMED PARISH OF SISSACH ROMA	5 000	5 000
FEDERATION OF MIGROS COOPERATIVES ROMA IN SWITZERLAND 2017		5 000
HEKS FISHER WORKSHOP IN SRI LANKA		5 500
ROM. CATH. GENERAL PARISH OF BERN FISHER PROJECT IN SRI LANKA		5 000
TEMPERATIO FOUNDATION FISHER WORKSHOP IN SRI LANKA		5 000
PRO VICTIMIS CHECHNYA ARCHIVE		9 000
PRO VICTIMIS DOMARI	-19 296	19 296
EVANG. REF. SYNODAL ASSOCIATION OF BERN ROMA		2 000
GREENPEACE SWITZERLAND GOLD RESEARCH	3 000	
C4ADS GOLD RESEARCH	4 943	
ANNE FRANK FONDS DETOX	1 000	
GLOBAL LOKAL GOLD RESEARCH	3 000	

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	2017	2016
GS-FDHA, SERVICE FOR COMBATING RACISM ROMA IN SWITZERLAND 2017	10 000	10 000
FEDERAL OFFICE OF CULTURE ROMA IN SWITZERLAND 2017	10 000	20 000
BERN CANTONAL OFFICE OF CULTURE / LOTTERY FUND TRAVELLING ROMA IN SWITZERLAND	19 198	
FEDERAL OFFICE OF CULTURE DETOX	2 000	
GS-FDHA, SERVICE FOR COMBATING RACISM DETOX	2 000	
KULTUR STADT BERN DETOX	2 500	

Gratuitous services

The company Proffix AG provided us with individual software adjustments and IT services worth approximately CHF 5 000. During preparation of the new website, the company Faktor4 provided a substantial part of its work free of charge.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

The STP's activities are focused on disseminating information, campaigning and implementing projects. To carry out this work, the STP depends on a sufficiently high number of members and donors. In 2017, the STP invested a total of CHF 555 645.50 in fundraising activities. The recruitment of members and donors simultaneously serves to raise public awareness of the organisation's objectives. At the end of 2017, the STP had about 14 400 active supporters (PY 13 600). For various campaigns, we received donations and contributions from public authorities, parishes and organisations.

The members of the executive board are:

Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold (president, elected until 2017); **Göpf Berweger** (vice-president, elected until 2019); **Sonja Beeli** (elected until 2019); **Theodora Peter** (elected until 2018); **Marianne Helfer** (elected until 2019); **Eva Schmassmann** (elected until 2019).

The executive board met four times in 2017 and worked for a total of about 200 non-remunerated hours for the STP. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our departing president Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold for 16 years of immense dedication to the STP. Thanks to Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, the STP has been able to develop splendidly.

The Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland is the Swiss section of the Society for Threatened Peoples International. The purpose of STP Switzerland is in line with the objectives of STP International. Other sections of STP International are located in Germany, Austria, South Tyrol / Italy, Bosnia Herzegovina and Northern Iraq. The STP has representatives in various other countries.

The STP would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all members, donors, foundations and public authorities for their generous support, as well as the executive board and employees for their commitment. Without all of you, our work would not be possible!



In 2017, the STP was active at a wide range of different places. With initiatives, discussions and trips, our staff championed the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.

1. In January, the STP organises a photoshoot for the campaign to draw attention to the Roma minority in Switzerland. Photo: Franziska Rothenbühler. **2.** At the end of October, the STP organises a symposium on the topic of travelling Roma in Switzerland. Photo: Eric Roset. **3.** Julia Büsser, the STP's Economy and Indigenous Rights Campaign Manager, draws attention to the problems associated with the North Dakota Access Pipeline at Credit Suisse's General Meeting. **4.** With other activists, STP staff in front of the UBS headquarters in Basel demonstrate against the construction of the North Dakota Access Pipeline. Photo: Ruedi Suter. **5.** The two Peruvian delegates Mauro Metaki (left) and Julio Cusurichi (right) in front of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. They travelled to Europe for the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) session in July. **6.** Chief Davi Kopenawa Yanomami defends the rights of his people at the UN in Geneva – supported by the STP. Photo: Ruedi Suter.



7. The STP attends protests held by relatives of the forcibly disappeared in Sri Lanka. **8.** At a demonstration of solidarity in Bern, Yves Bowie, the STP's Sri Lanka Campaign Manager, together with affected persons, calls for the cases of disappearance to be solved. **9.** Ignorance is poison: STP staff, together with Roma organisations, perform a "Detox Dance" in Bern, to support the rights of the Roma, Sinti and Yenish in Switzerland. Photo: Franziska Rothenbühler. **10.** STP director Christoph Wiedmer visits the Yanomami people in Brazil and accompanies delegates to Europe, where they want to make themselves heard at the UN. Photo: Daniel Schweizer **11.** Film director Daniel Schweizer and Chief Davi Kopenawa Yanomami meet in the Brazilian Amazon. **12.** STP staff visit a transit site, where travellers have settled for the summer.

Over the course of 2017, a total of 20 permanently employed people, including 9 interns and 1 apprentice, worked for the STP.

Executive Board



Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold
PRESIDENT (until May 2017)



Göpf Berweger
VICE-PRESIDENT



Sonja Beeli-Zimmermann



Theodora Peter



Eva Schmassmann



Marianne Helfer

Team



Dominique Schärer
COMMUNICATION MANAGER



Yves Bowie
CAMPAIGN MANAGER
SRI LANKA



Martin Wanner
INTERN: BUSINESS &
INDIGENOUS RIGHTS
Until 15.05.2017



Julia Büsser
CAMPAIGN MANAGER
BUSINESS & INDIGENOUS RIGHTS



Meret Stocker
INTERN: SRI LANKA
Since 01.08.2017



Rahel Jud
INTERN: MINORITIES
& DISCRIMINATION
Until 30.11.2017



Christoph Wiedmer
CO-DIRECTOR



Angela Schweizer
INTERN: COMMUNICATION
Until 28.02.2017



Tabea Willi
INTERN: BUSINESS &
INDIGENOUS RIGHTS
Since 16.06.2017



Angela Mattli
CAMPAIGN MANAGER
MINORITIES & DISCRIMINATION



Tania Brügger Marquez
GRAPHIC DESIGNER



Lisa Sollberger
INTERN: MINORITIES
& DISCRIMINATION
Until 30.04.2017



Vanessa Salamanca
INTERN: COMMUNICATION
Until 31.10.2017



Dominic Blumenthal
INTERN: MINORITIES
& DISCRIMINATION
Since 01.12.2017



Delia Brändli
INTERN: COMMUNICATION
Since 01.09.2017



Anita Straubhaar
ADMINISTRATION MEMBER



Dario Schai
FUNDRAISING



Nahom Andemicael
FINANCE & SERVICES
Apprentice



Erika Lerch
MANAGER OF FINANCE & SERVICES,
CO-DIRECTOR
Until 31.03.2017



“Wherever human rights are violated around the world, the STP can be relied upon to boldly take a stand. That is why I support the STP – and you could do the same!”

Ruth-Gaby Vermot, former president of STP Switzerland

WITH THE STP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) is an international human rights organisation that supports the cause of minorities and indigenous peoples. It documents human rights violations, informs the public, raises public awareness and represents the interests of those affected to authorities and decision-makers. It supports local efforts to strengthen the human rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, and works both nationally and internationally with organisations and individuals who pursue similar goals. The STP has advisory status at both the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and at the Council of Europe.

GET ACTIVE – SUPPORT US!

Our commitment is only possible with your support. With your membership or donation, we support minorities and indigenous peoples all around the world.

Register at: www.gfbv.ch/en/support-actively

Thank you very much!