



Fact Sheet N° 42

Intercountry Adoption

MATCHING: THE IDENTIFICATION OF A FAMILY FOR THE CHILD

Matching is not only a key step in the adoption process, it is also a delicate step. It is even more so in intercountry adoption, given that the cooperation between, and the responsibility of, two States are at stake. In addition to the principles applicable to all adoptions (Fact Sheet N°26), it is therefore important that other elements be respected, as emphasised in this Fact Sheet.

The transmission of files

For matching purposes, the competent body/ies in the State of origin work on the basis of:

1. the children's files, submitted by the competent authorities, or by the institutions, or, in some countries although very rarely, by domestic accredited bodies.
2. the files of domestic and/or foreign adoption applicants, the latter being transmitted by the Central Authority of the receiving State and/or by the foreign accredited bodies. The ISS is in favour of the latter's intervention given that they are a local third party, which knows the applicant families well, and may be a resource for the Central Authority of the State of origin in the matching process, as well as in the previous and subsequent stages of the adoption process.

In many countries of origin – as in almost all receiving countries – it is unusual to have regulations, which restrict the number of applications, nor qualitative standards relating to their profile. All the applications received are examined and one is chosen for the matching proposal. This creates management problems for the Central Authority (or other competent bodies) of the State of origin (but also for relevant partners in the receiving State), on the one hand, in relation to the

foreign accredited bodies, where existent, because they enter into competition, and on the other hand, in relation to the applicants who are waiting, sometimes in vain. This is an issue of great pressure on the relevant actors.

The processing of the files

It is recommended that each State of origin:

1. Evaluate periodically the needs for intercountry adoption in its country: what are the various profiles of the children who require an adoptive family and which ones will face difficulties in meeting this need within the country (age, sex, state of physical, mental, emotional health, special needs – for example, sibling groups); what is the approximate number of children involved.
2. On the basis of this data, define the profile and estimate the number of families from other countries required to respond to the interests of these children.
3. Inform the receiving States of these needs and establish the relevant norms for cooperation with receiving States, within the framework of the HC-1993, in order to achieve this objective.
4. Define the profile and the number of :
 - receiving States with which to develop collaboration, giving priority to countries, which offer conditions

beneficial to the adequate preparation and qualification of the families available for intercountry adoption (legislation which allows for the adoption of those children in need of intercountry adoption in the country of origin – age, state of health, etc; organized and detailed training of applicants; etc).

- the foreign accredited bodies with which to develop cooperation, giving priority to those that provide services to applicants whose profile would meet the needs of children in the country of origin.

Reversing the flow of individual files

Faced with this problem, a new dynamic is being tested in some countries of origin. It consists of reversing the flow of individual files. There are several formats for this. However, the common approach is as follows: instead of the State of origin receiving a great or restricted number of files from foreign applicants, the Central or Competent Authority of the State of origin submits the child's (non-identifying) file to its counterpart(s) in the receiving State(s) (generally the accredited body), requesting it to suggest a family or families, who could be appropriate for that particular child. However, the number of consulted counterparts must be limited (or, for one child only, to address the request to only one counterpart), in order to avoid duplication and a lack of motivation by the professionals and families affected. On the basis of the files pre-selected by their

counterpart(s), the authority of the State of origin proceeds with the matching.

This system has several advantages: it transmits the message, to the actors involved and to the families, that the child is at the centre of the adoption proceedings; it decreases the pressure linked to the accumulation of adopters' files and it saves time and human resources in assisting the authority in proceedings with its activities at the national level, such as the preparation of the child, the promotion of domestic adoption, training, etc. It also strengthens international cooperation between countries of origin and receiving countries, in meeting the best interests of the child.

Nonetheless, three conditions should be set for such a system to work:

1. It implies the intervention of accredited bodies in the receiving country; only a body which directly knows the family – and not merely via files – may proceed with this search and pre-selection.
2. It implies that the foreign accredited body and its representative in the State of origin are highly qualified in the psychosocial field (which is what carries most weight at the matching stage).
3. It requires a high standard of ethics, both from the authority of the State of origin as well as from the foreign accredited body and its representative in the State of origin.

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For more information:

BYRNE Sheila; *Linking and Introductions: Helping children join adoptive families*. British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, London, 2000

SCHOFIELD Gillian; BEEK Mary *Attachment handbook for foster care and adoption*, BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering), Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS, UK; www.baaf.org.uk; 2006, 450pp

We are interested in your opinion! To tell us your experiences, ask us your questions about the themes addressed in this file, or to send us your suggestions for changes, don't hesitate to write to us at irc-cir@iss-ssi.org. We also invite you to share this file with other interested persons in your country. Thanks in advance!

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