



## Fact Sheet N° 46

### Intercountry Adoption POST-ADOPTION FOLLOW-UP

Similarly to national adoptions (see Facts Sheets N° 31 and 32), intercountry adoption follow-up is fundamental for the success of these adoptions and for ensuring that the child is well adapted to his new family and social environment. However, this follow-up presents some specific characteristics at the international level. Among others, States of origin generally require the sending of reports on the evolution of the child and his social integration. Post-adoption services provided by the States must be able to respond to the specific needs of ‘intercountry’ adoptive families and guarantee that the rights and best interests of the children who are searching for their origins are protected.

#### **Post-adoption follow-up through reports required by States of Origin**

The periodicity of these reports and the length of the follow-up period vary according to the State. It is usual for the follow-up reports to be sent in accordance with such demands. It is usually social workers of the receiving State’s private or governmental accredited bodies, who interview the adoptive families and draft the reports with photographs, which the authorised body (or the Central or competent Authority) sends to the State of origin. In some cases it is the adoptive parents themselves who write the reports, an approach which is not appropriate. It is strongly recommended that at least one visit be arranged to the adoptive home by a professional in childhood matters.

However, this follow-up, arranged as supervision, should not take up too much time. Once the initial period is over, the child and his adoptive parents should be left to their privacy and try to live like a normal, rather than like an adoptive, family. It is important for the functioning of their family relationship. Thus, it is desirable to lower the pressure and not require reports for too many years. An average of two or three years would be reasonable.

In general, follow-up reports are regular and on time, but their content is not always satisfactory. As a result, it is sometimes difficult

to decipher them properly; they have to be read between the lines. It is desirable that these reports contain information about the child’s state of health, the quality of the adoptive parents-child relations, and about the integration of the child in his new environment. These reports should not be considered as an obligation for the adoptive parents, but rather as a support in case of complex adaptation of the child to his new environment.

#### **Post-adoption follow-up through the adoptive family support services**

Within the framework of a national and international adoption system, States should give consideration to who will provide post-adoption services. They can do it through social services personnel, or via accredited bodies, which also approve parents to adopt and prepare them. Some States include this provision of services amongst the criteria for the accreditation and authorisation of adoption bodies. Among the measures that these services have to provide, the following ones can be mentioned:

- measures of psycho-social and medical support for the child and his family, when difficulties or crises arise. The adoptive parents should be informed at the time of their preparation of the existence of these services in

order to use them as soon as they need it. In intercountry adoptions, and even more in cases of adoption of children with special needs, little misunderstandings, or wrong interpretations of words or behaviours, can lead to catastrophic situations, which could be resolved earlier with a professional intervention. At the medical level, sometimes the parents are disappointed when faced with a strange reaction of the child; for example due to the change of climate or food. Post-adoption services can also play an important role in such situations.

- measures helping adopted children to preserve their cultural links with their country of origin, as well as measures helping adoptive parents to recognise the value and importance of such links for the child's future development. These measures may include the promotion of cultural events about the country of origin, and social events with other adoptive parents groups.

### **The search for origins of the 'intercountry' adoptee**

Other services could include assistance for children when information about their country of origin and the search for members of their biological family is received. As explained in Fact Sheet 32 devoted to the search for origins, adopted children can now have easier access than before to information concerning their pre-adoption past. Furthermore, more and more countries save information about the origins of children. But despite these advances, a great number of children still have only little or no information about their origins, or their path

through their pre-adoption life. In order to make access to such information effective, it's important that States take measures to:

- *Systematically collect and save personal and family data of children taken into care*: with this in view, sharing of information between various professional participants is of primary importance. In the case of inter-country adoption, information sharing should also take place between States. Such sharing presupposes close collaboration between the different services involved.

- *Guarantee access to these data*: the adoptee can have access to information through the Central Authority, the agency through which his adoption took place or the institution where he stayed. In case of inter-country adoption, the adoptee's access to his origins can "simply" consist of visiting the country of origin. This journey could be just tourism or it could include a visit to the institution and/or the discovery of the adoptee's personal file.

- *Provide support for adoptees seeking their origins*: this support, provided by professionals, should accompany the adoptee throughout all the process. In the case of inter-country adoption, it can be particularly useful in helping the adoptee in his searches, which can be very complicated. It can, moreover, be especially necessary to support him when he has made discoveries that can be very disconcerting because of the cultural, language, economic and social differences, and for his potential meeting with his birth family.

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### **For more information:**

Hague Conference on Private International Law, *Draft Guide to Good Practice under the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter-country Adoption*, 2005, [www.hcch.net/upload/wop/ado\\_pd02e.pdf](http://www.hcch.net/upload/wop/ado_pd02e.pdf).

ChildONEurope, Guidelines on Post-adoption Services, [www.childoneurope.org](http://www.childoneurope.org), 2007.

RUSHTON Alan, *Adoption support services for families in difficulty: A literature review and UK survey*, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk), 2002.

**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](mailto: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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