



**Monthly Review n° 2/2006
February 2006**

EDITORIAL

**POST-ADOPTION: The usefulness of professional support
for the adoptee and his adoptive family**

At the start of a series of three editorials devoted to the post-adoption period, the IRC presents the issue of professional support during the first moments of the adoptee's life together with his new family.

The IRC team proposes a series of three editorials devoted to the post-adoption period, covering three themes: professional support during the first moments of the adoptee's life together with his new family; the question of follow-up reports required by the country of origin; access to information and possible post-adoption contacts with the family of origin.

Professional support during the first moments of the adoption process

Adoption is a *process* and not just an act limited in time. In conformity with good practices developed internationally, this process begins, in the country of origin, with the task of providing support and information to the family origin, followed up, if need be, by checking the child's adoptability and the chances of him being taken into care in his country of origin (the principle of subsidiarity), and finally by the preparation of this latter option. At the same time, it involves informing, selecting and preparing prospective adoptive parents in the receiving country. Then, in cooperation with the professionals in both countries, follow the professional matching and the first meeting between the child and the adopters, preferably within a professional supportive setting.

Supportive action, if possible obligatory, for the first moments of their life together

Naturally, the adoption process does not stop there. The first stages of their life together may also require *professional support*, in the best

interests of the child, as support for the adoptive parents and as a sign of respect for the parents of origin. *Overseeing the placement in view of adoption* can be useful or even essential up until the legal completion of the adoption, the moment when the adopters officially and definitively become the parents. The verification of this effective act of creation and of a sufficiently harmonious parent-child bonding further allows the judge charged with declaring the adoption to take his decision in the best interests of the child. Furthermore, if this tie does not materialise, an early shift of the child to another family has often proved in practice to have a positive result for the child.

Supportive action, upon request, after legal completion of the adoption

After the legal finalisation of the adoption, the situation is quite different since the adopters are henceforth recognised as the child's parents. In the interests of the whole adoptive family, and particularly of the child who then needs emotional stability and a feeling of integration, it might be preferable, in principle, for the authorities and agencies to abstain from intervening with the family. The adoptive *family becomes a family like any other*, in the sense that it must benefit from the same protection and the same offers of assistance as any other family, without being suspected more than another of dysfunctions. Nonetheless, it remains different since it must reconcile itself with the fact that the adoptee « comes from somewhere else », bearing a path of earlier disruptions and

abandonment before his entry into the adoptive family. Moreover, the adoptee will recall it himself if this reality was to be denied. By virtue of this special family structure, the adoptive family may well need more specific support, ideally made available upon request.

Training of staff working with children

To make this offer of specific supportive action effective, several countries ensure the training of staff who work *with children* (teachers, social workers, psychologists, doctors...) by underlining the specificities of the adoptive situation and the need to offer forms of support which are adapted to adoptees and their family. This support might be assured by specialised post-adoption *services*, offered by accredited adoption bodies and/or specialised psychosocial bodies. A variety of services may be developed, preferably in a complementary manner: hot lines; individual consultations; family, adopter or adoptee groups or meetings; information, documentation, conferences, training; visits to the country of origin.

During preparation for adoption or at any other moment during the process culminating in adoption, the prospective adoptive parents in several countries are expressly informed of the need, in certain cases, for post-adoption supportive action, and of the services available.

A tool to prevent failures

Post-adoption services constitute the last link in the chain of *professional and multidisciplinary services that are* indispensable in guaranteeing that the global adoption process succeeds in the best interests of the child and out of respect for all interested parties. The existence of this chain of services constitutes probably one of the best tools in the prevention of adoption failure (See also *Interdisciplinary Resources*, below).

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