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***WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY JOYFUL AND PEACEFUL HOLIDAY, TRUSTING THAT, TOGETHER IN 2012,
WE WILL FURTHER CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF
CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF THEIR FAMILY!***

EDITORIAL

**Practical and ethical issues in relation to the prospective adoptive parents'
(multiple) visits to the child's country of origin**

An increasing number of countries of origin and receiving countries agree on the importance of prospective adoptive parents coming to the child's country of origin. The debate focuses today more on the requirements linked to these visits, and their impact on the child and the parents.

The international adoption landscape is leaning towards standard practice: the large majority of prospective adoptive parents are now encouraged to go to their child's country of origin during the adoption process. The ISS/IRC welcomes this step forward; the presence of adoptive parents in the child's country of origin is, indeed, an important landmark for him, and seems to be widely acknowledged at present.

Globally, the trend even seems for there to be an improvement of the requirements expected by countries of origin with regards to the applicants' visits: compulsory visit of both parents, extension of length of stay in the country, multiple trips, etc.

This type of requirements may constitute a roundabout way for the selection of those applicants, who are the most determined and/or well-off, and encourages us to reflect on their impact on the child's personal experiences, and their implications for the prospective adoptive parents.

Are the conditions set by countries of origin always considered in the interest of the child?

Despite the beneficial effects of the prospective adoptive parents' visits on the

children, it, nevertheless, creates a paradox, when we observe, for example, the practice in countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia or Bulgaria. The latter now require two trips from the prospective adopters: the first one is a brief stay aimed at meeting the child and spending a short period living together and, in some cases, at attending judicial proceedings, and then, another one to come and get the child at the end of the process. From the child's perspective, this is a delicate situation: in a very short amount of time, he becomes the centre of attention of these adults, who were, until then, unknown to him. The child may only just begin to accept this sudden tenderness when the parents have to take it away again, for what will inevitably be a very long time 'in the child's universal measure of time'.

If he is placed in an institution, the child will fall back into his routine and anonymity among the other children. This sudden meeting, followed by another separation, undoubtedly places the child in an uncomfortable situation, which may perhaps even further weaken his potential vulnerable emotional state.

When adoption becomes a privilege for some prospective adopters

Then, from the perspective of the prospective adopters, in addition to the important psycho-

emotional factor during this waiting period, a more pragmatic issue relating to the global cost of adoption also comes into play: travelling to the child's country of origin twice require another budget. Very few parents choose to stay in the country until the end of the process, since the child might not even be able to be and stay with them, and the logistical costs could be very high. As confirmed by applicants in some countries of origin (Madagascar, South Africa, Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria, Togo...), they must make arrangements to stay in the country for many weeks, or even many months, and this also carries a substantial increase in additional adoption expenses. Even though adoption is not a right, it should not become a privilege for the prospective adoptive parents, who have the financial means to meet such requirements. In order for adoption to remain possible for more humble applicants, receiving countries should be able to provide them with greater financial support, following the examples of Italy and the occasional French department, which offer, for instance, financial

incentives (tax relief, zero rate loans, subsidies...).

Towards the necessary support for children during this waiting period

From the point of view of countries of origin, in those cases in which there are requirements as to multiple visits expected from prospective adoptive parents, it would seem fundamental to raise the awareness of professionals in relation to the child's personal experiences during the transition period, by encouraging channels of communication between the prospective adoptive parents and the child, and, of course, by including specific support to, at best, reassure the child and help him distinguish this separation from being abandoned again.

Even though the parents' travelling to the country of origin truly is a step forward, a thought should be given as to how best to combine the interests of the child with the practical conditions required of the adoption applicants.

The ISS/IRC team
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