



Published by the International
Reference Center for the Rights of
Children Deprived of their Family

Monthly Review

N° 178
JANUARY 2014

EDITORIAL

A year 2013 full of projects

In this first Editorial of the year, we offer our usual brief flashback on the activities undertaken by the ISS General Secretariat and on what is expected in this new year that is starting.

An important part of the ISS/IRC's activities in 2013 was aimed at supporting various countries of origin: first, the completion of the project undertaken jointly with UNICEF and RELAF in Colombia, which took place in the framework of important reforms decided by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) in May 2014 (see Monthly Review N° 173/June 2013). The ISS/IRC then had the opportunity to support the Permanent Bureau in Haiti, in the framework of its programme of assistance in the implementation of the new Haitian Central Authority. In parallel, important work has been undertaken to finalise the new law on adoption, which entered into force in December of last year (see Monthly Reviews N° 175/September 2013 and N° 177/November-December 2013).

The adoption system in the Democratic Republic of Congo was also the object of an assessment mission, which alarming conclusions were presented in Monthly Review N° 172 of May 2013. At the end of the year, the ISS/IRC team was commissioned by UNICEF to support the ongoing reform process in Ghana, in particular in relation to the review of its adoption law and that relating to foster care, as well as to the preparation for the ratification of the HC-1993. It is also worth mentioning that, in the framework of the project 'Helping children with disabilities in institutions to find a family', training was provided to professionals in charge of this issue in April in Azerbaijan. An exploratory mission was also undertaken in November in Burkina Faso, where the project will be implemented this year, whereas in Vietnam, another of the project's intervention

countries, the means of implementation were examined closely with the Ministry of Labour – Invalids and Social Affairs, UNICEF and the French Embassy in Hanoi, in order to prepare the training of professionals from approximately 20 entities in March.

Receiving countries were not forgotten, as various activities were undertaken for the Central Authorities of Canada, Flanders and Denmark.

This closeness to the Central Authorities of receiving countries and countries of origin therefore allows our team to share the experiences developed across the world with the various actors, and to keep in touch with 'the field', which remains essential to a good understanding of the issues of intercountry adoption.

A connection with the academic sector

The opportunities of the calendar have led the staff of the ISS/IRC to take part, several times during the year, in conferences organised by universities (in particular, the Fourth International Conference on Adoption Research – ICAR4 – in Bilbao in July). Our presentations caused considerable interest among academic researchers, and have allowed to offer a different view on adoption. Indeed, it often appeared that empirical research with adopted children or adoptive families was not able to take sufficiently into account the child's story prior to his adoption, and, more specifically, those abuses that may mar the adoption, without this being apparent in the child's file. The study *Investigating the grey zones of intercountry adoptions* has therefore been very welcome, and several contacts initiated at these



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events have already allowed for the establishment of new cooperation.

A well-liked service

In the framework of its more traditional activities, the ISS/IRC gave a new format to its Monthly Review and published 10 new issues during the year, including one on the issue of the resort to international surrogacy. In view of embracing external contributions, the editorial board opened up its pages to 21 external articles, which also reflects the good quality of our publication. Furthermore, a survey was undertaken during the year as to the dissemination of the Monthly Review by our readers. By playing with the numbers obtained¹, we could say that if half of our readers forward the Review to approximately 20 individuals, the potential number of readers could be as high as 20,000! This number is impossible to ascertain, but we are pleased with it in any case!

A little less than a hundred requests on diverse issues were submitted to the ISS/IRC throughout the year, 13 Country Situations were drafted or updated, factsheets on alternative care and adoption were

submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at every pre-session, conferences and trainings were held. Thus, the assessment of the year is positive and validates the fact that our work is useful and welcome.

For 2014, in addition to our fundamental mission, we hope to launch, on the one hand, our new project 'The discovery of abuses in the search of origins', and, on the other hand, to publish a new version of the Ethical Guide (now called 'manifesto'). Progress has already been made on both these projects and our hopes are high for their completion – our resources permitting, of course.

Through this Editorial, the whole ISS/IRC team would like to thank, once again, the various individuals and entities, who, thanks to their support, have allowed us to pursue our efforts.

The ISS/IRC team
January 2014

