



EDITORIAL

2013 statistics: Limited changes

Like every year, the ISS/IRC has gathered the intercountry adoption statistics from the main countries of origin and receiving countries, and offers an analysis of the trends and their implications.

Once again, receiving countries face a decrease in the annual number of intercountry adoptions, reflected in a global fall by 17% in comparison to 2012 (42% in comparison to 2010). This event of decline may be explained by various factors, such as legal reforms in child protection systems, aimed at greater compliance with the rights of the child, and the increased awareness-raising in countries of origin in relation to the implementation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (see pp. 4 and 7). However, by contrast to this global decrease in intercountry adoptions, there is also a constant and worrying increase in adoptions from countries of origin, which have not ratified the HC-1993, in particular in countries that experience armed conflict.

The situation in countries of origin

The important drop in intercountry adoptions is due, first, to the strong reduction in the number of procedures in the top six countries of origin (China, Ethiopia, Russia, Colombia, South Korea and Ukraine). In particular, South Korea has experienced the most notable decrease (74% compared to 2012), due, most probably, to the ongoing reforms of the protection and adoption system in the country – the HC-1993 was signed in May 2013 and its ratification is foreseen in the near future. Whilst countries, such as Nigeria,

Receiving countries	2011	2012	2013
U.S.A. ¹	9,319	8,668	7,094
Italy	4,022	3,106	2,825
France	1,995	1,569	1,343
Canada ²	1,785	1,367	1,242
Spain	2,560	1,669	1,188
Germany ³	934	801	661
The Netherlands	528	488	401
Sweden	538	466	341
Switzerland ⁴	367	314	256
Denmark	338	219	176
Norway	297	231	154
Australia ⁵	215	149	129
Total	22,898	19,047	15,810

Thailand and Ghana have maintained a number of adoptions that is quite similar to previous years, other countries of origin have experienced a significant fall, including India, Brazil, Taiwan, and, most importantly, Mali, where adoptions are virtually no longer possible. Conversely, Haiti (over 77% in one year), Poland, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Africa and Latvia have undertaken more adoptions than in the previous year, even though most of these countries had initiated a decrease in their number of intercountry adoptions, in particular by promoting domestic adoption. This is also true for the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the number of intercountry adoptions has increased by over 70% between 2011 and 2013 (therefore placing the DRC amongs the top

five countries of origin), Uganda, and the Central African Republic, which has experienced an increase in adoptions of 69% in one year. However, this situation raises concerns, given the current socio-political environment that prevails in both countries and makes it difficult to undertake transparent procedures.



The situation in receiving countries: Ever more children with special needs

Even though detailed statistics unfortunately remain insufficient, in particular in receiving countries, it is obvious that the number of so-called children with special needs has an increasingly important presence. Thus, Italy – which distinguishes between children with special needs (children suffering from mental or physical illnesses, which are mostly incurable) and children with particular needs (children with characteristics that may improve or disappear) – has recorded a proportion of 21% in 2013 for both groups, whilst the latter only amounted to 13.8% in 2012. Italy's report states that the statistics are probably lower than the real numbers, given that the reports on the children's health situation are drafted by social workers in the countries of origin, and not by medical doctors, and because the diagnosis is often incorrect or incomplete.

Countries of origin	2011	2012	2013
1. China	4,098	3,998	3,317
2. Ethiopia	3,144	2,648	1,923
3. Russia	3,017	2,442	1,705
4. Ukraine	1,054	713	677
5. DRC	339	499	581
6. Colombia	1,522	901	567
7. Philippines	472	374	524
8. Haiti	142	262	464
9. Bulgaria	259	350	421
10. Poland	304	236	332
11. India	688	362	304
12. Vietnam	620	216	296
13. Uganda	219	246	290
14. Thailand	258	251	274
15. Brazil	359	337	251
16. Nigeria	218	238	226
17. South Korea	920	797	206
18. Taiwan	311	291	188
19. Ghana	107	172	188
20. U.S.A.	97	178	163
21. South Africa	120	81	147
22. Latvia	116	59	131
23. Hungary	154	145	105
24. Cantral African Republic ⁶	19	43	73
... Mali	154	127	4

In France, in 2013, 63% of all adopted children had special needs, whilst these only represented 52% in 2012 and 35% in 2011. France includes, in this category, children over the age of five years, groups of siblings and children with some pathology.

In Germany, the adoption of children over the age of three years represents over 70% of all adoptions, and over half of all adopted children are aged between six and 18 years. For example, in 2013, 358 out of 661 children (54%) were aged over six years.

However, these analyses are still extremely difficult to establish, as it remains complex to define children with special needs, in particular due to the fact that the diagnosis established by countries of origin may be inaccurate, and that the characteristics may appear after the adoption or, on the contrary, prove not to exist.

ISS's projects are adapted to the reality and the issues of intercountry adoption

In the world's shaken intercountry adoption context, ISS offers its support and advice to governments and professionals, in order to preserve, at best, the rights and the well-being of children without a family. Several innovative projects, in particular linked to the care of so-called children with special needs, have been undertaken. For example, the project *A better future is possible for children living with disabilities in institutions*⁷ offers training for professionals in charge of these children, in order to improve their care as well as the identification and assessment of the needs of each child and the development of a specific life project. Furthermore, ISS's project aims

to support governments in the implementation of alternative measures that are adapted to the specific needs of children with disabilities. Currently, this project is implemented in partnership with four countries: Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Mexico and Mauritius.

Whereas the trend of decline in intercountry adoptions has accelerated over the last few years, and despite the safeguards set up at international level following numerous cases of irregularities in the past, it is of considerable concern to observe that there exists, in parallel, an ongoing increase in the number of adoptions from countries, in which the transparency of adoption procedures may be jeopardised. In this context, it is important to reiterate and support the implementation of the basic standards and principles enshrined in the HC-1993, whilst strengthening advocacy for adoption ethics.

The ISS/IRC team,
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