



## Monthly Review N° 1/2008 January 2008

### EDITORIAL

#### **2007: A brief balance for a great year**

*At the beginning of this new year, the ISS/IRC team wishes to present the various activities, which have marked this exceptionally rich year. Given that most of the readers of the Monthly Review do not have access to the Centre annual report, the latter believes it useful to go back over these projects in order to provide you with a more comprehensive picture of its services.*

**2**007 will have been a very full year: in addition to the basic services that remain at the heart of the ISS/IRC's activities (in particular, this Monthly Review), its team has taken on a whole series of assignments, which, even though they were not always easy to fit into our agendas, have certainly been a source of inspiration and satisfaction.

#### **Projects**

The most important project, in terms of time and resources, was carried out in Moldova. This project – entitled 'Development of Integrated Social Care Services for Families and Children at Risk in Moldova', funded by the European Union (TACIS project) and implemented by the UNICEF Country Office – covered the various aspects required for the establishment of a nation-wide social reform. The ISS/IRC was in charge of legislative amendments, in line with the proposals issued by the experts in relation to the reorganisation of social services and alternative care measures for children. An outline for a Law on Children's Rights was drafted, as well as several frameworks for secondary legislation, such as on the accreditation of NGOs active in this field, on complaint mechanisms accessible to children in institutions, etc. This mandate was carried out in

partnership with the Swiss Foundation of ISS, which was in charge of aspects linked to social policy (deinstitutionalisation, code of ethics, etc).

The second large-scale project took place within the framework of a study launched by UNICEF, and aimed at a better understanding of the problematic issues relating to adoption in countries of the former USSR. An initial assessment mission was carried out in Azerbaijan, followed by a 'double mission' in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, a one-week training session was provided to members of the new Central Authority in Baku.

At the request of the government of Cyprus, the ISS/IRC elaborated a legislative framework proposal and attended a roundtable with a view to revising the Cypriot law on domestic and intercountry adoption; this project was completed in 2007. The Centre has also been consulted by Mauritania (Decree on the Abandoned Baby Reception Centre), and by Ireland (Commission in charge of the legislative reform relating to adoption).

#### **Conferences, seminars and training**

The four members of the ISS/IRC have, in addition, travelled thousands of miles around the world to participate in several conferences dedicated to adoption: in Peru (organised by the Central Adoption Authority), in France

(organised by the Agence Française d'Adoption), in India (organised by CARA), in Lithuania (meeting of European Central Authorities), and in Spain (organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

Commissioned by the Swiss NGO Children Action, two members of the ISS/IRC provided a three-day training session on the rights of children deprived of their family in Romania, within the framework of a postgraduate degree directed at social workers, psychologists and lawyers. The ISS/IRC was also involved in a training seminar for adoption intermediaries in France, as well as in Switzerland in the framework of a postgraduate course in the protection of children.

### **Research**

The Federal Central Authority of Canada commissioned research on kafalah and adoption practices in a range of Muslim countries. In addition, the ISS/IRC also undertook a comparative study of the practice of kafalah in various Muslim and receiving countries. This study has been a success and was presented to the Central Authorities attending the meeting in Lithuania. If funds can be secured, it will be translated into English and Spanish, and edited this year. The study of the adoption of older children has, in the meantime, been translated into Spanish and English, and is ready for dissemination.

More limited research and studies have also addressed issues of open adoption, statistics, etc. The issue of protection and care of unaccompanied minors was the subject of a special series in the Monthly Review, published between June and December 2007, thanks to the support of UNICEF.

Finally, the project of 'Training Fact Sheets' comes to an end this month: 54 fact sheets have been published over the past two years, and have been disseminated to an ever-increasing number of beneficiaries (over 2,500 people in 120 countries).

Of course, the ISS/IRC's traditional activities have been carried out throughout the year: 10 Monthly Reviews, 15 country situation reports, whose access is limited to the Central Authorities, which finance the Centre, over 80 documented replies on a range of topics, etc.

### **Promising developments**

This lengthy enumeration reveals that the reputation of the Reference Centre is now well-established, and that its services are appreciated far and wide. Approximately fifteen years after its establishment, the development of activities – particularly the increasing importance of specific projects – not only enables the Centre to widen its sphere of competence and to develop its relations with professionals worldwide, but it also ensures the necessary financial income for its operation. In enabling it to deepen its expertise, it feeds the basic services provided to the authorities, which support the ISS/IRC; these services obviously remain a priority in the organisation of work.

The International Social Service and the IRC team convey their warmest thanks to their various partners for their support and for the trust they have shown throughout this past year. Its thanks go, in particular, to UNICEF's Regional Office for the CEE-CIS in Geneva and to its Country Offices for their excellent cooperation in carrying out the above-mentioned projects, as well as to the governments of Ireland and South Africa, which have joined the group of countries supporting the Centre in 2007, thereby raising it to 20.

The ISS/IRC team also conveys its best wishes for the New Year to all its readers, and is pleased to pursue with them the struggles, which give meaning to our work and our commitment.

The ISS/IRC team