



Monthly Review

published by the International Reference Center for the
Rights of Children Deprived of their Family-ISS

No. 227

DECEMBER 2018

'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.'

**Happy Holidays for the end of this year,
whichmarks the 70th anniversary of the
UniversalDeclaration of Human Rights!**

'An infant does not become a Man, he already is one'

Janusz Korczak

EDITORIAL

A tribute to our past 25 years and a look to the future

As it marks its 25th anniversary, the ISS/IRC would like to express its warm thanks for the loyalty and trust shown by Central Authorities and all partners, who have supported it from the start, or more recently.

The International Reference Centre for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family (ISS/IRC) was born out of the perseverance of its founder, Chantal Saclier, and her determination to guarantee the right of every child to grow up in a family environment that enables them to fully flourish. The ISS/IRC is delighted to be currently celebrating 25 years of existence, alongside the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which have just marked their 29th and 70th anniversaries respectively. Thanks to Chantal Saclier's visionary spirit, and her philosophy of sharing, dialogue and mutual enrichment that crosses cultural, geographical and professional boundaries, the ISS/IRC has been growing steadily since 1993. Now that the organisation is a young adult, with the benefit of experience, this is a good opportunity to look to the past in order to better understand the future. In blowing out the candles on our 25th birthday cake, we would like to make a wish to renew our commitment more strongly than ever.



Early years

While the world was experiencing high levels of intercountry adoption, without the support of an international legal framework, Chantal Saclier was involved in preparatory work for the 1993 Hague Convention, which would go on to be ratified in more countries than any other Hague Convention. She emphasised the importance of the subsidiarity principle in adoption and its multidisciplinary perspective, the psychosocial needs of children and families, the need to prepare and support them in this life journey, and the need to safeguard practices shown to be subject to serious abuses on the ground.

Since the adoption of this crucial convention, the ISS/IRC has been consistently equipping professionals, from governmental and non-governmental authorities, to move its implementation a little further forward each day. From the start, its work has included supporting countries of origin, such as Romania, which was visited by Chantal Saclier in the company of Hans van Loon, then Secretary General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), and Nigel Cantwell, International Consultant and founder of Defence for Children International (DCI), who was actively involved in drafting the UNCRC. Their mission was to support the Romanian Central Authority in designing and implementing legal and practical reforms to its child protection system and adoption system. The varied day-to-day activities of the ISS/IRC also include its Ethical Manifesto, Monthly Reviews, thematic factsheets, routine analysis and advice, training, conferences, advocacy and field visits.

Developing and flourishing

Over the years, the ISS/IRC's activities have continued to grow, to adapt to the changing environment in alternative care and adoption, and to better address the needs expressed by the Central Authorities that fund and support it. There is continuing demand for the ISS/IRC to share its expertise in protecting children deprived of their family. One of the highest points in these first 25 years was the creation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which culminated in endorsement by the United Nations in 2009. The issue of protecting of children separated from their families was at last given proper recognition by the international community. This was followed by key activities to ensure implementation of this tool, such as publication of the guide [Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#) and the launch of the first Massive Online Open Course ([MOOC](#)), which has been accessed by 12,000 people to date.

Over recent years, the ISS/IRC has also developed a [series of guides](#) covering complex situations, such as illegal adoptions, adoption breakdowns and the root causes of abandonment, which had not previously been addressed at the international level. These achievements and lessons learned will be built on, revisited, and perhaps challenged, over the next 25 years.

Looking to the future with confidence

The ISS/IRC and its partners are facing considerable challenges given the speed of technological, political, economic and social developments and of migration, which have a major impact on children, young people and families. The increasing resort to surrogate mothers, and other medically assisted reproduction techniques not subject to international monitoring, and the constant need to rethink child protection interventions and tailor them to the diverse profiles of children and families, are just some of the challenges requiring States to constantly adapt by revising their laws and practices. The ISS/IRC continues to be approached by numerous countries, which have declared their commitment to a more robust child protection

system that focuses on prevention, support and skills-building for children and families, the cornerstones of our societies. The ISS/IRC is determined to put its passion and energy into sustaining and deepening its lasting relationship with partners and future partners among Central Authorities, international organisations such as UN agencies and the HCCH, as well as all the other actors, with which it has the privilege of collaborating to achieve its noble goals for children and families.

Together, we will address the challenges, however major, while continuing to listen to those whose rights we defend on a daily basis. Children's words, gestures and emotions provide us with a compass to find our way. By listening to children and being mindful of their abilities, we will improve the present and work with them to build a happy future.



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December 2018



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