



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE

ADOPTION

Casework, technical assistance and advocacy

What is adoption?

Adoption is one child protection measure that may be available for children deprived of their family. Full adoption, as in the majority of intercountry adoption (ICA) cases, allows for the full integration of the child into the extended adoptive family, giving the child equal status with biological children. This type of adoption severs filiation ties with the family of origin, including the forfeiture of rights, responsibilities and obligations of the biological parents or guardian(s), which are then exercised exclusively by the adopters. There is nevertheless the possibility of exceptions with regard to open adoptions and adopting the child of a spouse.

What principles ensure that adoption is in the child's best interests?

- Adoption may provide a family to a child - allowing for his or her full and harmonious development - provided that **each family responds to the individual child's needs**.
- An individualised approach requires for example, concrete efforts to search for the family of origin in cases of abandonment as well as adequate support to parents in their caregiving role to avoid relinquishment.
- Adoptions should only take place when the child is **declared adoptable** by a national competent body and where, **necessary consents** have been obtained **without inducement by payment** or compensation of any kind.
- ICA may be considered when there is evidence that a child cannot be cared for "suitably" in his or her country origin (**principle of subsidiarity**).
- Determining suitability starts from examining care with the family of origin to options that are family based of a durable nature and should continue, until the most adequate solution is found for the child. This will require a thorough comparison of benefits and disadvantages, in particular where the only two realistic options are offered only in large residential care facilities and ICA.
- An examination must occur in a timely manner including for instance, a **detailed evaluation of the prospective adoptive parents' capacity to care for the child's unique needs**, such as evidence of their adequate preparation and support.
- ICA may be considered and given priority over national solutions, when deemed in the best interests of the child, when compliant with international standards (e.g.: intra-familial adoptions, when the child has an urgent medical need etc.)
- Adoptions must be undertaken in a way that respects the **child's rights to know his or her origins**, wherever possible.

Guiding international standards and ISS internal documents:

- [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [1993 Hague Convention and Guides to Good Practice](#)
- [UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#) (pre-adoption phase)
- [UNICEF Best Interests of the child in ICA](#)
- [ISS Manifesto on Ethical Intercountry Adoption](#)
- [ISS thematic factsheets on alternative care and adoption](#)

Casework services may include:

- counselling to persons interested in adopting a child
- provide necessary referrals to competent authorities
- preparation of background reports for the child, family of origin and prospective parents
- post adoption tracing
- mediation

Technical assistance and advocacy may include:

- dissemination of information to professionals (e.g.: Monthly Review, over 100 country situation analysis, comparative studies and thematic publications)
- training of professionals on ethical alternative care and adoption procedures
- evaluation missions at the request of countries about alternative care and adoption
- support in national law and policy reforms
- active participation in expert consultation groups
- work with UN and regional treaty bodies