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EDITORIAL

The waiting: A recurrent issue in adoption, which is keen on solutions

As a major challenge in adoption, the ISS/IRC addresses the recurrent issue of the waiting period. Even though the latter is, in many respects, a synonym of frustration, doubts, disappointments, it also represents an opportunity for progression towards this important project, which is the building of a family.

Waiting is at the heart of adoption, the waiting of a child requiring a family on the one hand, the waiting among persons wishing to start a family on the other. An often long and difficult waiting period on both sides, sometimes made more complex by factors out of one's control, such as the lack of reliable information on the procedures and real times, political crises or natural disasters. How is it possible to help the persons involved in an adoption to comprehend the latter and to better live it? Given that, even though it raises frustrations, it also is an opportunity to allow each of the parties to grow their adoption project, by offering a greater chance of success to this new family story.

To better manage the waiting period thanks to a realistic speech

There is no doubt that one of the means to better live the waiting linked to the adoption is the expression of a realistic speech with the involved actors, from the beginning of the process. Thus, the authorities in charge of informing and preparing the prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) have a duty to present clearly the current situation of intercountry adoption, which generates increasingly longer waiting periods and increasingly more unpredictable projects. In particular, it is worth informing them on the extension of waiting times on the countries of origin's side (approximately over six years in China, three to four years in Thailand, two years in South Korea, etc) and to explain to them the reasons for these

additional times. Indeed, the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity requires several steps in the country of origin, such as the search for the biological family, the obtaining of the consent to the adoption, the review of domestic applications, etc. Thus, it is essential for prospective adoptive parents to understand that, although this waiting period is difficult, it is also a guarantee that all possible child protection measures have been taken. This – collective and individual – awareness-raising is essential in preventing unnecessary waiting and frustration, which often result in inadequate practices and pressure on countries of origin. At a time when Europe debates the adoption by same-sex couples (see pp. 3 and 4), is this not the right time to remember, for example, that the probabilities for applications by same-sex couples to succeed at international level are almost non-existent (see Monthly Review N° 02/2008)? The media are a key partner in overcoming this challenge. As children's rights advocates, it is our – civil society and governments – duty to inform them of this reality and to encourage them to disseminate it, as is already the case through some reports and press articles.

From an endured waiting to a constructive waiting

In parallel to this realistic speech, quality support for PAPs and the child are essential to better experience the waiting and to transform it into a constructive stage. It is about the latter being able to no longer position themselves in the waiting, but to become



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available for the child, who will need them. Thus, positive experiences may be seen, such as the waiting workshops implemented by the Belgian AAB *A la croisée des chemins* (see p. 6), which are focused on the needs of the children and are adapted to the requirements of countries of origin in constant change, as reflected in the recent Law of the Russian Federation on the preparation of PAPs (see p. 5). Thanks to the creation of a space in which PAPs may raise their emotions, accept their helplessness when faced with numerous intercountry adoption factors that are out of their control and let go, a door opens for these adoption projects to progress. Whatever the end result, the waiting represents an opportunity to prepare oneself for it. Should the project succeed, the better the care and support provided to PAPs during

their waiting, the better the conditions upon the child's arrival at his new home.

The issue of the waiting remains therefore open and keen on new responses in accordance with the permanent developments of the child's needs and the conditions set by countries of origin. Whilst the ISS/IRC addressed, in the present editorial, the waiting from the prospective adoptive parents' perspective, it will address the children's waiting in a forthcoming Monthly Review. This issue, which had already been addressed from a psychological perspective by Fanny Cohen Herlem in our Monthly Review of February 2010, will now be examined through the experience of a country of origin.

The ISS/IRC team
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