



EDITORIAL

2012 statistics: The economic crisis, a visible factor in the decline and a challenge for children’s rights

As it does every year, the ISS/IRC has compiled the statistics from the top leading receiving countries and countries of origin in matters of intercountry adoption and provides an analysis of the resulting trends and their potential new factors and implications.

Whilst general trends are continuing to evidence a general decrease in intercountry adoption (- 55% since 2004) and the strengthened presence of the African continent in the panorama of countries of origin (one adopted child out of five was of African origin last year), the impact of the economic crisis is also slowly becoming more evident as well as its long-term implications for all actors concerned.

The impact of the economic factor on receiving countries

Even though the start of the world economic crisis now dates back a few years, intercountry adoption is

Receiving country	2010	2011	2012
U.S.A ¹	11,058	9,319	8,668
Italy	4,130	4,022	3,106
Spain	2,891	2,560	1,669
France	3,504	1,995	1,569
Canada ²	1,970	1,785	1,367
Germany ³	980	934	801
The Netherlands	705	528	488
Sweden	655	538	466
Switzerland ⁴	388	367	314
Norway	353	297	231
Denmark	419	338	219
Australia ⁵	222	215	149
Total	27,275	22,898	19,047

slowly starting to feel its implications for all actors concerned. Indeed, given the high costs of intercountry adoption, some prospective adoptive parents are now abandoning their adoption plans or turning their applications towards countries and intermediaries with lower costs, when possible... This has undoubtedly had an impact on the operation and sustainability of many accredited adoption bodies, in particular those, which were only undertaking a limited number of adoptions per year and fully depended on the financial contributions of the parents. An example of the decrease in the number of adoption applications submitted by prospective adopters may be observed in the Belgian French-speaking Community⁶, where not only the approach taken by its Central Authority as to the reality of intercountry adoption today (limited number of adoptable children, with special-needs profiles for many of them), but also the effects of the

economic crisis, have resulted in such a situation.

Central Authorities have also suffered from the budgetary cuts that many countries have had to decide in relation to their institutional structure, including social and children’s issues, and might have had to continue undertaking a variety of functions in the adoption process with more limited and overworked



teams. The complexity of undertaking intercountry adoptions in this context has been discussed in Italy⁷, for instance.

The impact of the global crisis on children

Several studies⁸ already evidenced the close relationship between economic hardships and children's wellbeing. These include cuts in the financial support to alternative care programmes (both from national, international, public and private funders) and an overreliance on the – temporary? – placement of children in institutions by their parents. Of course, such a situation leaves open the question of the adoptability of the child, knowing that poverty itself is never a sufficient cause to declare a child adoptable. Even though it is only through comprehensive studies that (domestic or international) adoption may be considered, cuts in social services programmes and structures may make these evaluations even more difficult, leading in turn to a lower level of protection for children. Thus, it is not accidental that several African countries experiencing economic and political crises are present on the list of leading countries of origin. In addition,

Country of origin	2010	2011	2012
1.China	4672	4098	3998
2.Ethiopia	3977	3144	2648
3.Russia	3158	3017	2442
4.Colombia	1549	1522	901
5.South Korea	991	920	797
6.Ukraine	1091	1054	713
7.DRC	166	339	499
8.Philippines	413	472	374
9.India	473	688	362
10.Bulgaria	230	259	350
11.Brazil	373	359	337
12.Taiwan	310	311	291
13.Haiti	1361	142	262
14.Thailand	124	258	251
15.Nigeria	236	218	238
16.Poland	307	304	236
17.Vietnam	1243	620	216
18.USA	147	97	178
19.Ghana	128	107	172
20.Hungary	117	154	145
21. Mali	123	154	127
22.South Africa	71	120	81
23.Latvia	120	116	59
24.Central African Republic ¹⁰	12	19	43

and from a more global perspective, even though among the first 24 countries of origin, 10 have not ratified the the HC-1993, the total number of adoptions processed in those countries still represents 51% of the total number of 2012 intercountry adoptions.

What to expect over the next year?

Whilst intercountry adoptions have generally been falling in receiving countries, it is worth highlighting that the latter are increasingly witnessing the intercountry adoption of children with special needs. For example, in France, in 2012, 53% of all adopted children had special needs, a clear increase in comparison with the previous year in which they amounted to 35%. Finally, another trend has been confirmed: the higher age of prospective adoptive parents⁹.

Following concerns raised in last year's review of the 2011 statistics, several African countries have started considering potential legal, institutional and practical reforms in order to move towards a better implementation of children's rights and of the principles and standards of intercountry adoption. This is the case of Ghana, where ISS is currently providing technical assistance to prepare the country's accession to the the HC-1993. Similarly, the evaluation mission that took place in Kinshasa last May can be seen as a very first step in questioning the current adoption system prevailing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The initiative taken by Francophone countries during the seminar that took place in Dakar at the end of 2012 under the auspices of the Hague Conference, and at the African Conference on Intercountry

adoption in Addis Abeba in May 2012, are other positive signs. Also, it will be worth observing what potential initiatives – such as legal, policy, institutional and practical amendments – may be taken by those countries that have recently signed and/or acceded to the HC-1993 and which will start implementing it, such as the Republic of Korea, Lesotho, Swaziland, and how this may have an impact on their current intercountry adoption practice.



Thus, whilst some of the trends of recent years seem to confirm themselves, new factors and regional moves are having and will continue to have an impact on the current panorama of intercountry adoption. It is important here to continue reiterating and implementing the fundamental principles and standards established by the HC-1993 in all circumstances, and not to allow the economic contexts to give priority to financial issues rather than the rights of the child and of other involved parties. In this context, the principle of cooperation and shared responsibility plays a key role in ensuring that all actors work towards the same objective, despite the challenges ahead of them.

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