



# Monthly Review

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## EDITORIAL

### The use of DNA tests: A sufficient safeguard to determine the identity of the child and their biological parents?

*The resort to DNA testing in an adoption process may be beneficial in specific cases, but it is a risk to resort to such tests systematically, for example, in order to confirm or ensure the validity and ethics of intercountry adoption procedures.*

In order to determine the identity of the child and their birth parents, DNA tests (see attached box) might currently be used at various stages of the adoption process. Such tests can be useful in specific cases and under specific conditions; however, they may also entail certain risks.

#### What does International Law state?

With regards, in particular, to the right and access to identity, Articles 7 and 8 of the UNCRC focus on registration at birth and preservation of identity. As for the 1993 Hague Convention, its spirit promotes collaboration and mutual trust among Contracting States, notably through a series of procedural safeguards, such as Articles 7, 16 and 17.c (see Editorial of Monthly Review No. 221 of May 2018).

Despite the almost universal acceptance of these international standards, their implementation remains complex in critical contexts, where the risk of illicit practices remains high. In the light of these situations, might the use of DNA tests be an effective means of preventing such practices? While some actors respond in the affirmative, nevertheless, concerns still arise. By allowing access to DNA testing for such purposes, does it not call into question the very spirit of these conventions, which promote, on the one hand, the rigorous compliance with established procedures and, on the other hand, trust and cooperation between Member States as mentioned previously? In the event of doubts or proven risks, should the appropriate response not be to not initiate collaboration or to suspend the ongoing collaboration until the adoption practice is compliant with the said conventions?

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**'Genetic test'** [covering also DNA testing] refers to a 'test involving analysis of biological samples of human origin, aiming to identify the genetic characteristics of a person that are inherited or acquired (...)'.  
Article 4 of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2016\)8](#) of the Council of Europe.

The **DNA tests** discussed in this document are for the purpose of analysing the similarities between DNA samples taken from two persons to establish parental ties – or to refute them.

### When and how are these tests used?

Presently, such DNA tests are used at various points in the adoption process: to establish the child's adoptability, to search for one's origins, or to restore identity and reunite with one's birth family following the discovery of illegal practices. Despite their apparent benefits, DNA tests may present various risks, especially when used in countries that experience corruption and/or falsification of official documents, such as birth certificates. How may we ensure the reliability of DNA testing and its results in countries plagued by illicit practices? Additionally, the systematic requirement of DNA testing in intercountry adoption procedures risks mobilising significant efforts and resources at the expense of

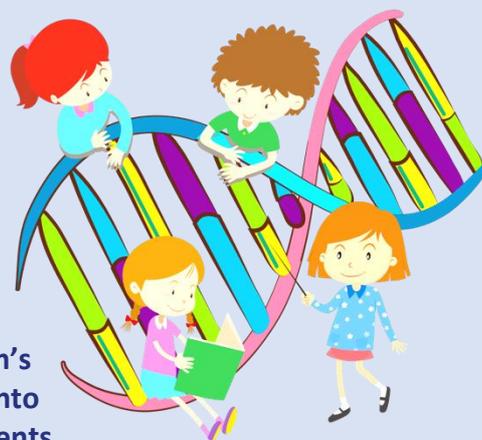
other priorities, such as family strengthening and support in order to prevent family separation. Without adequate resources, it seems, in fact, difficult to manage the proper implementation of such tests and to ensure the preservation of collected data. On the other hand, does the binding nature of DNA testing and its potential implications – aggravated injunction into a person's privacy, prolonged procedures, higher costs and their assumption, etc. – not also question the systematic resort to the latter?

### When and under what conditions may these tests be beneficial?

Given the aforementioned risks, should the use of DNA testing not be limited to specific cases, such as during investigations regarding the sale or suspected trafficking of children. If this is the case, it is essential that these tests occur within a specific framework and comply with a set of safeguards, detailed in the ISS/IRC's position paper on the matter<sup>1</sup>. Among these safeguards, provisions related to the following are of particular importance:

- the establishment of collaborative rules between the receiving country and the country of origin on this specific issue that cannot be left at the discretion of one country;
- the provision of adequate professional preparation and support;
- a data protection policy, etc.

The ISS/IRC recognises DNA testing as a means that, in specific cases and under certain conditions, may ensure access to the identity of an adoptee or their birth family. However, the ISS/IRC also strongly recommends against the systematic and large-scale practice of such tests, especially if they aim at ensuring a system's compliance with international standards, as such tests risk calling into question the spirit and value of the applicable international instruments.



The ISS/IRC team,  
June 2018

### Reference:

<sup>1</sup> Available in English, French and Spanish upon request at the ISS/IRC.

## ACTORS IN ADOPTION AND CROSS-BORDER CHILD PROTECTION

- **Benin:** On 28 June 2018, Benin signed and submitted its instrument of ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention, which will enter into force in the country on 1 October 2018.
- **Fiji:** This country has submitted its instrument of accession to the 1996 Hague Convention, which will enter into force on 1 April 2019.
- **Malta:** This country has appointed its new Central Authority, the Social Care Standards Authority, whose Director is Mr Matthew Vella.

*Sources:* Hague Conference on Private International Law and Government of Malta.

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## ISS NEWS

### ISS in Nepal: Cross-border child protection in South Asia

From 29 to 31 May 2018, ISS participated in a workshop on the 'Role of The Hague Conventions in Cross-Border Child Protection in South-Asia' in Kathmandu, Nepal, which focused on the cross-border movement of children from South Asia and mechanisms to support safe migration. The workshop was attended by 31 governmental experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, UNICEF representatives from these countries and its regional office, as well as representatives from the Permanent Bureau of the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

ISS led group work on case studies and presented good practice in migration based on ISS' extensive casework experience with children on the move and reflected in [ISS' Children on the Move Manual](#). ISS shared experiences and good practices in [responding to illegal adoptions](#), on respecting the principle of subsidiarity and on rights-based responses to surrogacy arrangements.

Further information and the conclusions and recommendations from the conference are available on the [HCCH website](#).

### ISS at the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Agadir, Morocco

On 21 and 22 June 2018, ISS Switzerland and the ISS/IRC attended the [GFMD's](#) 'Thematic Workshop on Children and Youth on the Move: Implementing Sustainable Solutions' that was held in Agadir (Morocco). The event was organised in partnership with UNICEF and gathered over 300 participants – representing governments, international organisations, NGOs, independent experts as well as young migrant adults, who played an important role in the conception and realisation of several workshops. The discussions were aimed at influencing the negotiations and outcomes of the Global Compact on Migration, which will be held jointly with the Global Compact on Refugees in Marrakesh at the end of 2018. Discussions focused on: data collection and protection issues, cross-border child protection, African migration contexts, access to services, health and education as well as crucial partnerships. The issue of adoptions of unaccompanied children in destination countries that intend to circumvent immigration procedures was also raised in discussions off the record. The ISS/IRC is interested in hearing similar experiences in other countries in order to gather more information on this matter. During a side event, a joint EU-UNICEF project, *Hijra wa Himaya*, was launched. Following Morocco's decision to legalise unaccompanied children's stay in Morocco, ISS had the opportunity to promote its eight-step approach to achieve individualised sustainable solutions ([ISS Manual on Children on the Move](#)), and called for reinforced cross-border case management mechanisms based on children's rights standards.

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## BRIEF NEWS

### Decision of the European Committee of Social Rights against France

On 24 January 2018, the European Committee of Social Rights, an independent body established by the [European Social Charter](#), adopted a decision condemning France for several violations to the right of unaccompanied foreign children to social, legal and economic protection in France on several grounds, recognised by the Charter. The Committee based its decision on relevant provisions of the UNCRC, regional legislation, European Court of Human Rights case-law, domestic legislation and case-law, as well as the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Among others, the following considerations were raised:

- shortcomings in the national shelter, assessment and allocation system of unaccompanied children;
- delays in appointing an *ad hoc* guardian for them;
- detention of unaccompanied children in waiting areas and hotels;
- inappropriate accommodation of children and their exposure to life on the street and the lack of provision of a shelter;
- lack of access to health, education and social assistance for unaccompanied children.

For further information, see: Decision of the European Committee of Social Rights on the merits of the complaint of *European Committee for Home-Based Priority Action for the Child and the Family (EUROCEF) v France* (No. 114/2015).

## CELCIS: Recruitment of a child rights/welfare professional

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCIS), based in Scotland, is actively looking for a knowledgeable child rights/welfare professional to help deliver the Centre's international work: securing the global implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and realising children's rights through developments in policy, systems and practice. The professional will also use his or her knowledge of practice and international policy to inform research, knowledge exchange and policy-influencing activities, all aimed at improving the experiences and outcomes of children who are at risk of being placed in alternative care, or who are living in alternative care.

For further information and questions on the job description, please contact: Chrissie Gale, International Services Lead, at [chrissie.gale@strath.ac.uk](mailto:chrissie.gale@strath.ac.uk).

## LEGISLATION

### Quebec (Canada): A legislative step forward towards improving access to origins

*Luce de Bellefeuille, a Consultant, Author and former Director of the Secrétariat à l'adoption internationale (SAI) in Quebec, outlines the provisions of the Act of 16 June 2017 on the right to know one's origins. Long awaited by adoptees, this Act represents a major step forward on such a key right.*

In June 2017, Quebec's National Assembly adopted Bill 113, the scope of which includes rules on the communication of information relating to adoption<sup>1</sup>. The Act, which came into force on 16 June 2018, is specifically designed to respond to the demands of adoptees at national level. The provisions on intercountry adoption have been modelled on those relating to domestic adoption, taking into account the laws in other countries and the limitations of the international context. These include the primacy of the principle of confidentiality, except where the country of origin allows individuals to be identified.

#### A long-awaited Act

The Act has been welcomed both by representatives of adoptees and biological parents, and by researchers in Family and Child Law. Maître Alain Roy, the former Chair of the Advisory Committee on Family Law, sums up the overall assessment of the Act: 'It's fairly significant. It will enable many people to complete the quest for their identity'. It is worth noting that, between 1920 and 1970, nearly 300,000 children are believed to have been adopted in Quebec.

On 16 June 2018, Law 113 entered into force in Quebec. It will allow orphans and adoptees, between the 1920s and 1970s, to know the name of their biological parents; and confidentiality will therefore be lifted in over 300,000 adoption files. The means for lifting this secrecy are detailed in the present article.

#### Lifting the secrecy around origins

To fully understand the significance of this amendment to the legislation, we should recall that the provisions developed in 1960 applied the strictest confidentiality to adoption files. The aim of this absolute secrecy was to protect children and adoptive parents from 'intrusion into their lives by the parents of origin'. This 'reassured adoptive parents about their parenthood'. Since the early 1970s, pressure has been mounting for recognition of the access to origins, which is now seen as an individual's right. In response to this social movement, legislators started by relaxing the rules in 1982, then again in 1994. Despite this progress, access to origins always came up against the confidentiality of adoption and the complete severance of ties between the adopted child and their family of origin.

#### A challenge for law-makers

Demand continued, and the organisation *Mouvement Retrouvailles* ran a campaign for substantial amendments in the access to origins. A multidisciplinary committee was created, and legal experts used its report in drafting the Bill.

The challenge for law-makers was to address the rights of adoptees, while also protecting the

acquired rights of parents (especially mothers) to 'secrecy'. By focusing on the right to know one's origins, the provisions adopted now address both concerns.

Thus, adoptees now have the right to know about their identity of origin, and that of their biological parents. They also have a right to information enabling them to contact their biological parents. On the other hand, parents of origin may register an identity disclosure veto 'in the year following the birth of the child'; the opportunity will expire after this deadline. This measure is designed to address cases of parental distress.

For adoptions, which took place before the reform, vetos that were already registered will be upheld. For other cases, the Act provides a transition period of 12 months for parents of origin to register an identity disclosure veto. After this deadline, if such veto has not been registered, their file will be disclosed if the child requests it.

### Focus on a category of adoptees

A unique feature of this Act is the application to children born in Quebec and adopted internationally. Until now, their files were held by the Directors of Youth Protection, even in the case of intercountry adoptions compliant with the 1993 Hague Convention. This will have an impact on the *Secrétariat à l'Adoption Internationale* (SAI), which now has the mandate of managing these files. In addition to the collaboration already undertaken with the Directors of Youth Protection in relation to this mandate, the SAI needs to develop a new type of relationship with the 'receiving countries' of children from Quebec, who

were adopted internationally. Cooperation between States will be crucial for a successful search for origins in these cases, as in all cases.

### An anticipated trend

At the time of the drafting of the Act to implement the 1993 Hague Convention, the search for origins by children adopted internationally had been sidelined. However, the SAI had anticipated a rise in international requests for 'reunions', given the increase in intercountry adoptions in the 1990s. To prepare for this possibility, the Act also stated that the SAI would be responsible for the search for origins in intercountry cases. Accredited bodies would therefore be required to transfer all their 'closed' adoption files to the SAI. Now that all the data on adoptions is kept in a single place, they are more accessible and it is easier to respond to requests. As expected, requests for access to origins and for reunions have increased significantly over the past five years (from 17 in 2013 to 50 in 2017).

### The right to know one's origins

This is a key issue, both for those adopted domestically and internationally. Across the world, adults, who were adopted as children, go looking for this first chapter of their lives. Some will find answers – whether positive or not. Others will be left wondering forever. The community of professionals involved is increasingly sensitive to this aspect, and is allocating more resources to ensuring this right, which is recognised under Articles 7.1 and 8 of the UNCRC. To address this issue in depth, the SAI is intending to dedicate an international symposium to the topic, to be held in Montreal in the near future.

**This experience from Quebec is part of a worldwide movement for recognition of the right of adoptees to access their origins and, crucially, for effective implementation of this right through new legal and practical provisions. The ISS/IRC welcomes these developments enabling adoptees to search for their origins. It seems imperative to give adoptees the choice of accessing this part of their life story, without needing a court order, and to take all steps to make this possible, with the necessary professional support.**

### Reference:

<sup>1</sup> For further information, see: Secrétariat à l'Adoption Internationale, [http://adoption.gouv.qc.ca/en\\_recherche-des-origines#modifications](http://adoption.gouv.qc.ca/en_recherche-des-origines#modifications).

## PRACTICE

### Supporting children in vulnerable families (Part II): A model approach for ensuring a good start in life in Thurgau, Switzerland

*In this second part, Stéphanie Romanens-Pythoud, Editor of the French-speaking Swiss mental health magazine Diagonales, reports on an approach adopted in the Canton of Thurgau, Switzerland<sup>1</sup>, which is exemplary in terms of targeting needs and providing early support to children and families. This example clearly highlights the important role of networking.*

Is the canton of Thurgau unique in how it protects children living in vulnerable families in Switzerland? It definitely provides an inspirational example, according to several practitioners, who attended the Annual Congress of Switzerland's Mental Health Network. Despite having a largely conservative government, the canton has managed to take significant steps to establish effective prevention policies in this area. Judith Hübscher Stettler, Health Promotion, Prevention and Addictions Officer for the Canton of Thurgau, stated humbly at the start of her speech that 'we are only at the start of the process, but definitely on the right path'.

#### Targeting the needs of families

The canton based its approach on the first objective in its health promotion strategy for 2009-2016: to provide a healthy start in life for all. It began by improving how it targets the needs of families, by carrying out a systematic analysis of births between 2005 and 2008, an inventory of support services, and interviews with practitioners. Based on this, the canton took steps to reshape its provision of advice and support for vulnerable families, offering a stronger base to its work. Among other moves, the canton's seven parent-child forums and four regional advisory associations for couples, families and adolescents were regrouped into two organisations. In addition, the Health Act was revised to incorporate advisory services and plan adequate funding.

#### A good start in life

Several projects have been, and are still being, carried out simultaneously to ensure that a coherent prevention policy is implemented. For example, the project *Un beau départ dans la vie* [A good start in life] was launched to establish common tools, actions and language for all actors involved. A handbook was developed, through a process of round tables with all partners. The handbook specifies criteria for assessing a family's vulnerabilities and resources, establishes a list of services and procedures to follow, provides guidelines for data protection, and includes a form for waiving professional confidentiality. It also provides a leaflet for parents, in several languages, for use in emergency. Hübscher Stettler explains that 'we now need to consolidate this achievement with a pamphlet and website'.

#### The importance of a network approach

According to the specialist, a network approach is crucial for such initiatives to succeed. Provision must also be well-targeted in relation to needs. The specialist also stated that 'we have a good foundation in Thurgau, as the canton is small and all the departments work well together'. However, she emphasised that there must be an ongoing commitment, as the children have no advocacy group to defend their interests. 'When we ask for help for them, we need to speak loudly to make ourselves heard'. Other major barriers include cost-cutting, parochialism, fears of losing control through a network approach, and data protection requirements. Hübscher Stettler also stresses that 'in addition, there is a tendency to focus on urgent child protection cases, and to overlook prevention. However, we should also be looking at cases which are not categorised as bright red, but perhaps amber – or even dark yellow'.

The ISS/IRC extends its warm thanks to its former and very dear colleague, Stéphanie Romanens-Pythoud, for sharing these two inspiring examples for the early detection of the needs of children in vulnerable families in Quebec and Switzerland (see also Monthly Review No. 221 of May 2018). A network approach, the development of a common language based on practical tools, and the active involvement of parents and children are key to working towards effective prevention. As we approach the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, let us use this opportunity to give full force to these initiatives and repeatedly call on all actors to invest in prevention.

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#### Reference:

<sup>1</sup> This is a summary of an article by Stéphanie Romanens-Pythoud in *Diagonales* No. 122, of March/April 2018. *Diagonales* is a bimonthly review published by Graap (*Groupe d'accueil et d'action psychiatrique* [Psychiatric Reception and Action Group]) in Lausanne. For further information, see: <http://www.graap.ch>.

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## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESOURCES

### From child to child: A multimedia tool to prepare children for intercountry adoption

*ARAI<sup>1</sup>, the public accredited adoption body of the Italian region of Piedmont, has developed a tool to prepare children for their adoption, together with the Department of Psychology at the University of Turin. The e-book<sup>2</sup>, designed for children in other countries, who are waiting for a family, reflects the voices of children, who have themselves been adopted.*

*Da bambino a bambino* [From child to child] is an innovative project using new technologies to create a fun tool for children. The interactive e-book uses clay animation illustrations to tell the story of Moïse, a child from Burkina Faso, from the moment he finds out he is going to be adopted up until he is fully established in his new life. What is unique about this tool is that it is based on interviews with adopted children, carried out in conjunction with the Department of Psychology at the University of Turin. Who better than children, who have been adopted themselves, can explain what life is like in a foreign country after adoption? Although the book is primarily designed for children, who are waiting for a family, it can also be used by children who have already been adopted. It should be read with the support of adults, in order to start a conversation. It was originally developed for children from Burkina Faso, who were adopted in Italy, particularly to bridge the two cultures experienced by these children. However, the authors hope it will also become a resource for other countries.

#### Structure of the e-book

Moïse's story is designed to support adoptive children throughout their journey, helping them to make sense of the upheaval they will experience and the emotions they will feel. The tool aims to help the child, and the adult supporting them, to express their feelings.

*Da bambino a bambino* has 10 chapters, each offering a summary of what happens to Moïse (in the form of a short video), pointers as to the aim of the chapter, and, finally, suggestions on how to read it. The first chapter is called 'I'm going to be adopted' and the last one 'Looking back'. Between these two stages, all the key moments are covered: the waiting period, the arrival of Mum and Dad, the leaving party, the hotel, the journey, the introduction to the new home and school. The chapter 'Forever, whatever' is worth particular attention. It explains the role of Mum and Dad, which is to love and take care of the child. Although it will sometimes be necessary to scold the child, he or she is reassured that this makes no difference to his parents' love for him; they love him and will love him forever. The final chapter on looking back tries to explain to the child that, once established in their new life, they may well feel some nostalgia about their roots and the

significant people they have left behind. The book emphasises the importance of not forgetting them, and suggests practical ways of ensuring this, such as sending a photo. Every chapter therefore provides a pretext for the adult to discuss with the child the emotions he or she is feeling, which are expressed so well in the book through the words of children who have been adopted.

### **A tool to help piece together and communicate the child's history**

The authors of *Da bambino a bambino* have identified several critical factors in preparing the child, including involving them, listening to them, telling them the truth, and creating a suitable, secure and calm space. In light of this, before talking to a child about adoption, it is important to collect and piece together their story, by gathering all the information available about them: photos, medical records, preferences, clothes and other items of current and potentially future use. This will later enable the various people surrounding the child to tell them their history. Being clear about their past will help the child in making future relationships. Only after these two preliminary stages can the child's life plan be

discussed with them and be understood. The child will then need an explanation of adoption (including the advantages and disadvantages, such as changing their country and leaving loved ones behind), what an adoptive Mum and Dad are, etc.

The adoptive parents usually feature later on, but they can make contact with the child even before the first meeting, for example through a letter. In the future, the parents are encouraged to keep the child informed about their history, by keeping documents relating to their past, the time spent together in their country of origin, and the continuous progress achieved during their development. In this respect, the authors reiterate the value of compiling a 'Lifebook', starting with the birth of the child and including, among other elements, information about their biological family and/or anyone, who has taken care of them. This book, started by the people around the child in their country of origin, may be given continuity by the adoptive parents and will be a perfect complement to the e-book *Da bambino a bambino*. Both tools are valuable for preserving the child's experience and voice; a voice which can be freed with the help of words from other adopted children.

**In short, preparing a child for a permanent placement takes time, consistency and honesty. We strongly recommend this e-book to all adoptive parents, and to those caring for a child, who is going to be adopted. Its fun side, and the fact that it is based on the real feelings and words of adopted children, make it a highly sensitive tool, which will help the child to express themselves and to feel understood.**

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#### **References:**

<sup>1</sup> For further information, see: <http://www.arai.piemonte.it/cms/chi-siamo.html>.

<sup>2</sup> ARAI Regione Piemonte, with the scientific collaboration of the Department of Psychology at the University of Turin (2018). *Da bambino a bambino*, interactive reader's guide. Available in Italian and French at: <http://www.arai.piemonte.it/cms/dabambinoabambino/435.html>.

## **Unlocking Children's Rights – Strengthening the capacity of professionals in Europe to fulfil the rights of vulnerable children**

*This article offers an overview of this skills-based training course<sup>1</sup>, developed to help professionals promote and protect the rights of children in justice settings through capacity-building and effective communication in child-friendly settings.*

*Unlocking Children's Rights* is a training resource, presented under the leadership of Coram International and child rights advocates from across Europe. A child's right to participation can only be realised if professionals are equipped with

a skill set and knowledge base to effectively advocate for and communicate with children.

## An interactive course of easy access aimed at professionals

This course was created based on the need for strengthened implementation of children's rights in judicial and administrative proceedings. This multidisciplinary course offers modules that include introductions to topics such as: the general principles of international children's rights, child development and communication, effective communication skills for those working with and supporting children, and the Council of Europe's Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

### Easily accessible interactive course content

This free online course is accessible to anyone, but is mainly intended for professionals working with vulnerable children, such as social and healthcare workers, law enforcement officers, judges, attorneys, psychologists, and teachers<sup>3</sup>. A free printable course workbook parallels thematic PowerPoint presentations, encouraging group discussions on each topical module as well as interactive exercises. The course and all relevant materials are offered in Bulgarian, Czech, English, Greek, Estonian, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, and Slovakian.

***Unlocking Children's Rights is effective tool to aid professionals in promoting child-friendly judicial and administrative proceedings in accordance with international principles, including listening to the child.***

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### References:

<sup>1</sup> The course and all relevant course materials may be accessed at: <https://coraminternational.org/unlocking-childrens-rights/>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/child-friendly-justice>.

<sup>3</sup> Unlocking Children's Rights, Participant's Workbook, Introductory Module, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see: <http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com/>.

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## READERS' FORUM

### **SidexSide – Out of a South Korean Orphanage and Into the World**

*This documentary takes viewers on an international journey through the intensely emotional personal memories and experiences of abandonment, relinquishment, orphanages, aging out, and intercountry adoption from the perspective of children born in South Korea between the 1960s and 1990s.*

From 1948-2010, more than 970,000 intercountry adoptions occurred worldwide, and South Korea represented over 180,000 of those intercountry adoption cases. Through 100 personal stories spanning across more than 60 years, across seven

## Practical tools for communication

Module 3 suggests child-friendly communication methods that can be used during biopsychosocial assessments or during judicial or administrative proceedings to help children discuss their wishes and feelings. The module provides examples, such as the use of communication passports, objects of reference, and illustrated exercises that can be used to facilitate conversation with children based on the six phases of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). If a child operates at phase 6, for example, professionals can use pictures, called 'Widget Literacy Symbols', to help the child convey spontaneous feelings or responses to questions about things in the environment<sup>4</sup>. This tool could therefore aid professionals during the assessment of a vulnerable child or family situation, in determining how to support them in their caregiving roles, or identify when reintegration would or would not be in the best interests of the child. Professionals can use these tools to generate and customise their own communication toolkits, which can then be tailored to an individual child's needs or circumstances in order to help discern the best interests of the child.

countries and six languages, filmmakers Glenn and Julie Morey created this documentary<sup>1</sup> to promote greater societal understanding, empathy, and appreciation for children deprived of their families of origin, and in particular, South

Korean children, who have been subject to alternative care.

### A personal connection prompted the creation of the documentary

Some of the stories portrayed in the documentary are similar to Glenn Morey's personal experience with intercountry adoption. Some of the stories recount feelings of confusion, isolation, depression, discrimination, loneliness and a lack of sense of identity. Others narrate experiences about loving and nurturing adoptive families and feelings of immersion, inclusion, and gratefulness for having been adopted. The website enables viewers to filter through the stories by birth year (*i.e.* occurring between the 1940s and 1990s), adoption year (*i.e.* less than two years, two to six years, or over six years), adoptive country (*i.e.* Australia, Denmark, France, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, or the United States), whether or not the child aged out of a South Korean orphanage, and subject matter (*i.e.* experiences involving being mixed ethnic origins, making contact with biological family, and being mothers and fathers).

Of particular interest were the examples of how many intercountry adoptees eventually created

South Korean adoptee support groups as adults. Such groups were formed to offer support, empathy, and understanding by others, who have also experienced the struggles and frustrations often associated with intercountry adoption. Here, many have come to realise that their adoption documentations and paperwork may have been forged, changed, or are blatantly incorrect. This realisation prompted many South Korean adoptees to begin the search for their families of origin so that they could learn the truth of their history.

### Value for adoption professionals

This documentary project can assist adoption professionals as a valuable tool, by helping prepare families, who are considering or wanting to adopt children. This project can help prospective adoptive parents anticipate the types of questions they might be asked by their child, or help them understand that planning for post-adoption programmes and services may be necessary for a smoother adjustment. In sum, the documentary can help prepare the adoptive family with the tools necessary to support the child's integration into a new family environment.

**Intercountry adoption practices have evolved in South Korea over the last few decades, but it is important for receiving countries to still be aware of a country of origin's alternative care practices and more importantly, the repercussions that intercountry adoptees may potentially experience due to a lack of non-compliance by competent authorities and other actors with the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children and the 1993 Hague Convention.**

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#### Reference:

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://sidebysideproject.com/about>.

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## FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND TRAININGS

- **Switzerland:** *Master of Advanced Studies in Children's Rights (MCR)*, University of Geneva, February 2019 – November 2020; Call for applications open until 1 November 2018. For further information, see: <https://www.unige.ch/mcr/>.
- **United Kingdom:** *Contemporary Childhood – Children in Space, Place and Time*, 6-7 September 2018, Glasgow; Conference, University of Strathclyde, Registration: 27 August 2018. For further information, see: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofeducation/newsevents/contemporarychildhoodconference2018/>.

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