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Adoption 2008

The Future of International Adoption

January 01,2008 / Martha Osborne



As the door of 2007 slams shut with the painful closing of Guatemalan adoption (some believe temporary, others permanent), adoptive families search for answers on what exactly 2008 holds in store for International Adoption. With many major adoption websites painting a dark and fuzzy picture, it is important for prospective adoptive families to seek and find the facts in this developing puzzle.

Some facts have shown 2007 to be one of the most volatile years in US adoption history:

- **Russian adoption** essentially closed to adoption and only recently re-opened by accrediting a few fortunate adoption agencies.
- **Ukraine** announced that it will process only 460 adoption dossiers for 2008, with a heavy focus on placing sibling groups and children over the age of 10-years.
- **Adoptions from China**, the No. 1 source country since 2000, fell to 5,453, down by 1,040 from last year and well off the peak of 7,906 in 2005. The main factor behind this is simply China's much more stringent adoption policy of excluding singles, homosexuals and those whose weight falls in the obese level. In addition, China's waiting time has increased to an

average of 24 months

Over all Adoption Statistics have shown a "startling" decrease in International Adoption of 15% from 2006 to 2007 in the USA. Scary times in international adoption, yes?

Maybe not . Maybe, we're all hitting the panic button prematurely. The truth is, International Adoption is a dynamic process. In the big picture, there are other facts that must be considered:

- From 1997 to 2007, International adoption increased by 27% overall.
- Placing countries change due to politics, economic advancement, and acceptance of differing parenting situations (specifically: single parents).
- The promotion of domestic adoption, whether within the USA to potential US-adoptive parents, or within popular placing countries to their own general populace, creates an increase in adoption placements in-country' for the placing-country.

The decrease in adoptions from China and Russia, the top two placing countries, fail to emphasize that China's adoption focus has strongly switched from placing healthy infants, to placing special needs and older children, and the criteria for adoptive parents has narrowed considerably, with no decrease in the adoption applications made to this placing country.



In addition, Russia's changing policies on International Adoption have caused an uneven flow of placements from that country for many years. 2007 was no exception, with a virtual freeze on

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adoptions for most of the year and only a very recent re-accreditation of a few agencies.

South Korea is the leading example of a Best Case Scenario change in the world of intercountry adoption. Unlike countries such as Romania that slow down or close to international adoption due to current politics or national hysteria towards intercountry adoption without providing any type of support or solution to the growing orphaned population of children, South Korea has instigated a well-thought-out plan to decrease adoptions outside of its borders by promoting and supporting domestic adoption of its children. Korean adoption to the USA **decreased** 32% in 2007, placing only 939 children as compared to 1,376 in 2006. This decrease was expected and applauded by professionals in both countries. South Korea began placing infants with US families over 50 years ago, when it was a war-torn and impoverished nation. In the 21st century, South Korea is recognized as a leading economic, education and political force in Asia . Their promotion of adoption within their own population has shifted the availability of children for international adoption, to adoption within South Korea .

2008: A Look Ahead

This year brings new challenges for adoptive parents, placing countries and the adoption agencies that provide services to both. Pre-adoptive parents must contend with questions such as, " ***What is the Hague Adoption Convention and how will it effect our adoption?***" and " ***Which adoption agency will increase our chances of bringing a child home?***"

Basically, Hague Adoption Convention (HAC) is a multilateral treaty designed to protect children, birth parents and adoptive parents from shady practices, including hidden fees, bribery, and child abduction. Each nation names a central authority In the US, that means the State Department to establish ethical practices, require accreditation for the agencies handling the adoptions, maintain a registry to track complaints and create a system for decertifying agencies that do not meet the standards.

In addition, once the HAC is fully enacted on April 1, 2008 , parents seeking a visa for an overseas adoption must demonstrate to the State Department that a child has been properly cleared for adoption, that a local placement had been considered, and that the birth parents were counseled on their decision and have signed consent forms.

In plain English: The entire International Adoption process is about to undergo big changes. Some of which follow:

Good Changes :

- Some changes, like mandatory training for parents concerning the common physical and emotional condition of orphans, represent good changes. Parents need proper preparation in a formal manner to truly understand the challenges that sometimes come with adopting a child from an institutional setting.
- Children are protected from some of the most malicious practices currently seen in the adoption world.
- Adoption Agencies placing children from countries that have ratified The Hague must be fully accredited, overseen, and follow a mandated standard set of practices. Adoptive families will have a greater protection within the new system than ever before.

Not so Good Changes:

- With bureaucracies in the US and the placing countries expanding to meet the requirements of the treaty, and adoption agencies incurring new requirements on staff training, parent-education, record-keeping, and international oversight, it's a sure bet the expenses related to international adoption are about to go up. Maybe way, way up.
- New requirements, both within the USA and the sending-countries where the children reside, must be ironed out. Delays are sure to happen. While difficult for parents waiting to adopt, delays in the adoption of children perhaps months or even years in some cases, have no positive outcome. For some special needs children needing life-saving surgery, the wait may simply be too long. For others, the potential for mental or physical abuse multiplies each day they remain institutionalized.
- A number of adoption agencies that have assisted children for decades through special needs advocacy, caretaker and nutritional support and other humanitarian efforts, will no longer exist. Offering low adoption fees and using all profits to support the care of children who will never be adopted, these good agencies will close their doors due to the inability financially cover the costs of hiring new staff and processing the paperwork needed to meet new requirements. The loss to the adoption community is very sad. The loss to the children they were able to help, is simply devastating.

International adoption is not truly on the decline, nor is the HAC perfectly formed. Changes are in the making, and fluctuation in the number of adopted children yearly is to be expected. Russia is carefully watching over their newly implemented process, which will release thousands of waiting children to families ready and willing to adopt them. And while China's restrictions will continue to limit the number of children who find families internationally, other countries such as Ethiopia, increased a startling 42% in placements to the USA in 2007.

Looking ahead, 2008 holds great challenges for everyone involved with bringing families together through adoption. Advocates everywhere agree that a standards-of-practice in the placement of

children for adoption internationally has been needed for years. This year, that standard will finally be observed by all countries that have entered into the HAC. What we all must remember is exactly who the HAC was created to help: **orphaned, homeless, children** . To do so, we must protect the waiting children, while not over-burdening the families who wish to cherish and raise them as their own. The balance is essential. Thousands of children depend on families, advocates, agencies, and governments to reach that balance and keep it.

2008 is the year we will keep our promise to the children, birthparents, adoptive parents and caretakers. To do anything else is simply not an option.

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Hi, this can go out to everyone but it particularly caught my eye from the second poster-I am in the military and finding it hard to actually find an international program that would work. Originally it was Guat, but don't know where that is going to go. Anyone else military who has adopted from a different country? Could you meet the travel requirements? Anyone know about military members being allowed to travel to Columbia? or extending the stay should it go over 4 weeks? Would love insight- *Samantha*

With so many Americans waiting to adopt newborns in America, my question to the people saying "adopt domestically" is WHY? Why put yourself through the extensive wait and perhaps extreme heartache when the parents choose to parent the child instead of allowing him/her to be adopted? For many of us, international adoption is the only answer. Those children need homes, too.- *China Mom 04*

To the people commenting about adopting domestically, if you have never tried or never have adopted, please don't proceed to question other's motives about adopting abroad. Each family has done what is best for them. As a U.S. military wife, we are adopting abroad. This is what is best for our family and we do not owe an explanation to anyone on why we choose this route. I think it is very selfish to choose what someone should do when you do not have the information to make your conclusion- *Anonymous*

I just filed my I600A in Nov '06 and am almost finished with the homestudy. I am pressing forward but am becoming increasingly pessimistic about whether I will actually be able to complete an adoption from Russia. Am I the only one who feels I should have jumped into the adoption arena much sooner rather than taking a year to research and contemplate this choice? It seems as if so many doors have slammed shut in the last year & I am not getting positive feedback from Russia right now.- *TME*

At any point in time, hundreds of children wait in the U.S. for forever families. I have adopted internationally and domestically and given the choice again, would choose domestic. Having child seen by your own doctors and specialists, pre-placement visits and less overall adjustment for the child all sound good to me!- *cindy*

I'm Getting my anonymous's mixed up.- *Robin*

The slow downs began long before the changes in China were being discussed much less implemented. The changes are a direct result of a decrease in the number of referrals.- *Anonymous*

I am wondering why my previously posted comments stating the facts as to why bullet number 3's explanation of why there is a slow down in China is erroneous did not get posted. This was not posted as a comment on the changes, but just that the reason given for the slow down is incorrect.- *Anonymous*

Well said Marie.- *Anonymous*

The most important concern of everyone in regard to international adoption should be the welfare of the children. If the changes implemented in each country are going to result in better education for prospective adoptive parents, and more stringent regulation of the agencies themselves, then it is all for the good. While I am sad that I no longer qualify for China (single and high BMI), I applaud the efforts of each country to regulate this process for the welfare of their children.- *Marie*

The decision of which adoption program is best for your family is a complicated and deeply personal one. There are many children in many countries in need of families and all of them deserve to be in loving, forever families. Domestic adoption in our state is very sought after by adoptive families and the waiting lists to adopt a child, including foster care adoptions, are extremely long (several years) unless you are requesting to adopt a child/ siblings over about the age of 10.- *Anonymous*

I am only starting to consider to adopt a 2nd time. I think I am divided in knowing whether or not I should hurry up to adopt another child, or hold back and wait to see how things develop. What are your thoughts?- *Anonymous*

A little encouragement goes a long way. Thank you.- *Judy*

I agree with FM, the wait time for China is only going to go up. The new requirements went into effect on May 1, 2007. China is currently processing applications from Dec. 2005. It is estimated they will only reach Feb. 2006 by the end of 2008. These applications are not effected by the requirements. Do the math.- *jt*

Robert, I think FM was expressing that the current Non-Special-Needs referrals are taking MORE than 24 months, which was the time period reported in this article. At this writing, the last NSN referrals were made at about 2 years and 2 weeks after LID. The time quoted was a close guess. :)- *MarthaO*

Rising costs?? How about cutting some of the fat from already over-priced fees that only serve to make certain people wealthy from the misfortune of children? Or at least make fees based on ability to pay!- *RaeAnne*

If not true, then what are the facts?- *Robert*

"Adoptions from China , the No. 1 source country since 2000, fell to 5,453, down by 1,040 from last year and well off the peak of 7,906 in 2005. The main factor behind this is simply China 's much more stringent adoption policy of excluding singles, homosexuals and those whose weight falls in the obese level. In addition, China's waiting time has increased to an average of 24 months." This is simply not true for those with LID's long before the new requirements went into effect.- *FM*

Very good article. As someone else has mentioned, a monthly- more realistically, quarterly update would be awesome! Thank You for putting it in perspective.- *Tammy*

To the anonymous writer who questioned why more people in the US do not adopt domestically, I must ask if you have ever done it. I have adopted both ways, once domestically, twice internationally-healthy and special needs. I would never again put myself through a domestic adoption. Please don't be accusatory if you have never been there.- *Anonymous*

With all these international issues up in the air, why don't more people in the US adopt domestically? Why are people so compelled to look to other countries, instead of here in their own country? Aren't adoption workers supposed to be working to finding parents for waiting children, not finding children for waiting parents?- *Anonymous*

Once again you have come direct to the point and advised adoptive parents what they may expect. Excellent article and very interesting reading.It is a pity that innocent children may suffer but it is good to stop the corruption.- *John M*

Excellent article- *Anonymous*

Interesting to read an article that is actually to-the-point. I'd love to see a monthly report that updates readers. Just a suggestion.- *Kim Downsend*

As a mother of two children adopted internationally and hoping to add to our family again thru international adoption, I can only pray that the varying government agencies provide the services and support these waiting children need. This article was very clear cut on the current situation and I appreciate that. I will refer people to this article who have questions about the circumstances surrounding international adoption.- *Misty*

I hope to see all International Adoption processes worked out in the coming year. As a mom of biological kids, My husband and I would like to consider adoption to add to our family as we took years to conceive. I would hate to see anyone be discouraged by all the paperwork and issues going on right now and NOT adopt due to all the craziness. - Lisa- *Anonymous*

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Great summary.- *Janet M*

A very good aproximation to the reality. Restriction is the word that countries use. But there are one country, I Know, when the adoption process is died. That's HONDURAS. Hundreds of expedients are forgotten in offices and childhood suffering. Someone can explain about.- *Tana*

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