

## **Annual Report on Intercountry Adoption**

The U.S. Department of State's (The Department) Office of Children's Issues serves as the U.S. Central Authority (USCA) under the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). The Department submits this annual report to Congress, as required by Section 104 of the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, to provide data on intercountry adoptions to and from the United States and details on our continuing efforts to establish or maintain intercountry adoption as a viable option for children in need of permanency around the world. The reporting period for the 2018 annual report is the fiscal year (FY) from October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018.

### **FY 2018 Overview**

Intercountry adoption remains one of the Department's top priorities. The Department actively works to ensure that intercountry adoption remains a viable option for children in need of permanency who cannot find homes in their countries of birth. Paramount to the Department's efforts is bilateral and multilateral cooperation with foreign governments and engagement with the adoption community. Shortly after the beginning of FY 2018, the Council on Accreditation (COA), the USCA's longest-serving accrediting entity (AE) that accredits U.S. adoption service providers (ASPs) in the United States, notified the Department that it would discontinue its role as an AE by December 2018. The Department undertook, with the assistance of both COA and the newly designated accrediting entity, Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity, Inc. (IAAME), a transition plan to transfer all AE responsibilities from COA to IAAME. We greatly appreciate COA and IAAME's efforts to make the transition as smooth and efficient as possible and avoid negatively impacting individual adoption cases and the overall intercountry adoption process during this time. On April 1, 2018, IAAME became fully operational, assuming the monitoring and oversight of all U.S. ASPs and the receipt of new and renewal applications for accreditation and approval.

In FY 2018, there were 4,059 intercountry adoptions to the United States, a decline of 655 from the prior year. The majority of this decrease (430) occurred in China, which has seen a multi-year decrease in intercountry adoptions as the result of an improvement in economic circumstances and the sustained development of domestic permanency options for children. Additionally, while China's 2017 laws restricting activities by foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in China were not specific to adoption, they continue to affect ASP activities in China. Through our Embassy and bilateral talks through the Office of Children's Issues, the Department continues to engage diplomatically with Chinese authorities on issues pertaining to intercountry adoption. The second largest decrease in intercountry adoptions occurred in Ethiopia, which imposed a ban on intercountry adoption during FY 2018, citing numerous concerns including missing post-adoption reports, concerns about the welfare of children in the United States whose adoptions had been disrupted, instances of adoptive parents returning children to Ethiopia, and concerns about corruption and ASP conduct.

At the same time, some countries noticeably increased the number of intercountry adoptions to the United States. Colombia, for example, passed new legislation designed to move children in institutional care more quickly to permanent families. This legislation was expected to increase the number of domestic and intercountry adoptions in Colombia, and FY 2018 saw more than a 25 percent increase in intercountry adoptions from Colombia to the U.S., from 181 adoptions in FY 2017 to 229 in FY 2018. Intercountry adoptions from India also increased from 221 to 302 in FY 2018.

Furthermore, FY 2018 saw the first intercountry adoptions in at least a year from 16 countries, including Afghanistan (3 adoptions), South Sudan (4 adoptions), and Indonesia (3 adoptions). The Department facilitated

Croatia's efforts to authorize two U.S. ASPs to operate in that country, laying the foundation necessary to reinstate intercountry adoptions between Croatia and the United States. Lastly, 81 children were adopted from the United States to nine countries in FY 2018, including Canada (38 adoptions), the Netherlands (20 adoptions), Mexico (9 adoptions) and Ireland (6 adoptions).

### **Addressing Concerns**

The Department began hosting listening calls with ASPs on a regular basis to provide ASPs the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns on a variety of issues related to intercountry adoptions, including post-adoption reporting and adoptions by U.S. citizens living overseas. In addition, the Department responded to over 3,000 inquiries that were sent to our adoption mailbox, [adoption@state.gov](mailto:adoption@state.gov), and the dedicated email address for the Ethiopia adoption suspension questions. The Department also posted over 100 notices on our website, [adoption.state.gov](http://adoption.state.gov), for the adoption community.

In previous adoption reports, the Department identified certain barriers and threats to the viability of intercountry adoption, including missing post-placement and post-adoption reports, unregulated custody transfers (UCT), and concerns expressed by other foreign governments about ASP conduct. The Department continued to work on addressing those barriers, threats, and concerns throughout the year. While some progress has been made, these issues continue to undermine confidence in the U.S. adoption process. In FY 2018, additional trends that could impact the viability of U.S. intercountry adoption emerged and are discussed below.

**The Welfare of Children Post-Adoption:** Missing post-adoption reports continue to cause foreign officials concern about the welfare and whereabouts of children adopted by U.S. citizen families and thus risk undermining the continuation of intercountry adoption in those countries. The Department continues to emphasize the importance of timely compliance with post-adoption requirements. The Department appreciates efforts by ASPs to encourage adoptive parents to file required reports and deeply appreciates the ASPs who have stepped forward to handle post-adoption reporting requirements for families whose ASPs are no longer operating. As a result of efforts by adoptive parents, ASPs, and the Department, countries of origin received scores of overdue post-adoption reports, thereby strengthening our bilateral relationships with many countries and providing an opportunity for dialogue with many others.

Reports of unregulated custody transfers (UCT) similarly increase countries of origin concerns about the safety of adopted children in the United States. The Department continues to regularly meet with other governmental agencies to raise awareness of UCT, discuss possible preventative strategies, and facilitate communication and information-sharing about potential UCT cases in progress or that have already occurred. During FY 2018, the Department also engaged with ASPs, the National Child Abuse Coalition, child welfare and protection authorities in many states, and the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) on UCT prevention efforts and on specific UCT cases.

The Department is very concerned about efforts by adoptive parents to permanently return adopted children to countries of origin. The Department is aware of several instances in FY 2018 of adoptive parents who were considering or had already sent an adopted child back to their country of origin. These events raise serious concerns in both the Department and in the foreign country. The facts of each situation differ, but the reasons shared by adoptive parents to the Department for such returns include: concerns that the child was improperly separated from birth families to whom they wished to return; false or fraudulent information received during the adoption process; and medical or behavioral issues or previous abuse of the child that the family was not aware of prior to the adoption placement. The Department notes that under the Hague Adoption Convention, written

permission from both the Department and the Central Authority of the foreign country is necessary to return a child to a Hague Adoption Convention country.

**Unethical Adoption Activities:** The activities of some U.S. ASPs and their foreign representatives remain a concern for some countries of origin. In certain countries, foreign government concerns about the ability to prevent corrupt practices and fully regulate those involved in intercountry adoptions are a significant factor in the decline in the number of adoptions to the United States. The Department continues to inform foreign governments of the professional and ethical standards ASPs must meet under U.S. law. We encourage foreign countries to report alleged misconduct by U.S. ASPs or their local adoption facilitators in the Complaint Registry or directly to the Department or the accrediting entity. FY 2018 was the first year that the Department saw notable use of the Complaint Registry by foreign governments, indicating that they are being proactive in reporting concerns regarding ASP activities. IAAME reviews all complaints to determine whether the complaint is substantiated and if any adverse action is required. In addition, IAAME has strengthened monitoring and oversight of ASPs in close coordination with the Department. Of particular note are the required changes being made to ensure appropriate supervision of foreign providers. These adjustments and improvements to monitoring and oversight of ASPs contribute substantially to greater trust and confidence in U.S. ASPs on the part of officials in countries of origin.

In addition, FY 2018 saw increased reports from countries of origin regarding hosting programs, which are often used to identify potential adoptive families for older children. A hosting program refers to a brief homestay visit in which a child from another country is issued a non-immigrant visa for the purpose of a temporary stay with a family in the United States. Several countries raised concerns that hosting was being used to identify children who had not yet been determined to be eligible for intercountry adoption and were being used by certain persons to circumvent intercountry adoption procedures and legal requirements. Toward the end of FY 2018, the Department became aware of more than one country moving toward restricting intercountry adoptions because of concerns about these types of activities.

The Department remains committed to intercountry adoption as an option for children in all countries and looks forward to continuing diplomatic engagement and community outreach, addressing concerns, and strengthening bilateral relations in support of intercountry adoption.

# INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Bureau of Consular Affairs • U.S. Department of State



## FY 2018 Annual Report on Intercountry Adoption March 2019

Pursuant to Section 104 of the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (IAA) (Public Law 106-279), the U.S. Department of State submits the FY2018 Annual Report on Intercountry Adoption.

### IAA §104(b) Report Elements:

- **§104(b) (1):** Tables 1 and 2 report the number of intercountry adoptions in FY2018 involving immigration to the United States, regardless of whether or not the adoption occurred under the Hague Adoption Convention.
- **§104(b) (2):** Table 3 reports the number of intercountry adoptions in FY2018 involving emigration from the United States, regardless of whether or not the adoption occurred under the Hague Adoption Convention.
- **§104(b) (3):** In FY 2018, adoption service providers (ASPs) reported 4 disrupted placements in Convention adoptions, i.e., cases in which there was an interruption of a placement for adoption during the post-placement (but pre-adoption) period. Table 6 summarizes this information.

In addition, information received from the Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to §422(b)(12) of the Social Security Act indicated 72 cases of children from other countries entering state custody as a result of the disruption or dissolution of an adoption. This information was provided in the annual update from states on progress made toward accomplishing goals and objectives in the Child and Family Services Plan. This information was submitted by states to the Department of Health and Human Services through an Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). The most recent APSRs were submitted on June 30, 2018 and contained information from FY 2014-2018. All of the information provided by states in the APSR was included in this count regardless of the date provided from the states on specific actions taken in a case or when it was reported to the state.

- **§104(b) (4):** Table 4 reports the average time required for completion of a Hague Convention adoption in FY 2018.
- **§104(b) (5):** The current list of agencies accredited and persons approved is available on the Department's intercountry adoption website at [http://adoption.state.gov/hague\\_convention/agency\\_accreditation/agency\\_search.php](http://adoption.state.gov/hague_convention/agency_accreditation/agency_search.php).
- **§104(b) (6):** The Secretary did not temporarily or permanently debar an agency or person in FY2018.
- **§104(b) (7):** In FY2018, ASPs reported charging between \$0 and \$ 64,357 for all adoption services, with half charging less than \$30,120 and half charging more. Table 5 reports by Convention country of origin the median fees for country-specific services, including foreign country program expenses, contributions, care of child expenses, and travel/accommodations.
- **§104(b) (8):** Fees for accreditation of agencies and approval of persons ranged from \$2,000 to \$7,650 in FY2018. The Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity (IAAME)'s accreditation fee is based on a tiered fee schedule according to the average number of adoptions for which the agency served as the primary provider during the previous two years. Accrediting Entity fees are found at the following link: [Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity fees](#).

**Table 1: Incoming Adoptions by Country of Origin**  
 (\* denotes a non-Convention Country)

Country or Territory of Origin	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the U.S.	Total Adoptions
*Afghanistan	0	3	3
Albania	5	0	5
Armenia	12	0	12
Azerbaijan	2	0	2
*Bahamas, The	2	0	2
*Bangladesh	0	18	18
*Barbados	0	1	1
Belize	0	11	11
Brazil	9	0	9
Bulgaria	134	0	134
Burkina Faso	4	0	4
Burundi	19	0	19
*Cameroon	2	0	2
Canada	0	5	5
*Central African Republic	1	0	1
China	1,475	0	1,475
Colombia	229	0	229
*Congo, Republic of	3	0	3
*Congo, Democratic Republic of	4	5	9
Costa Rica	14	0	14
Cote d'Ivoire	9	0	9
Dominican Republic	5	0	5

Country or Territory of Origin	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the U.S.	Total Adoptions
Ecuador	7	0	7
*Egypt	0	1	1
El Salvador	5	0	5
*Ethiopia	172	5	177
*Gambia, The	1	0	1
Georgia	2	0	2
Ghana	15	0	15
Great Britain (UK)	1	0	1
Greece	1	0	1
*Grenada	7	0	7
Guatemala	1	0	1
*Guyana	13	0	13
Haiti	196	0	196
*Honduras	14	0	14
Hong Kong S.A.R.	0	3	3
Hungary	13	0	13
India	301	1	302
*Indonesia	3	0	3
*Iran	0	1	1
*Jamaica	21	19	40
*Japan	6	8	14
Kenya	1	0	1
*Kiribati	1	0	1
*Korea, South	206	0	206
Kyrgyzstan	17	0	17
Latvia	79	0	79
*Lebanon	1	0	1
Lesotho	2	0	2
*Liberia	24	6	30

Country or Territory of Origin	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the U.S.	Total Adoptions
Lithuania	4	0	4
*Macau	0	1	1
Madagascar	1	0	1
*Malawi	9	0	9
*Malaysia	1	0	1
Mexico	26	0	26
Moldova	2	0	2
*Morocco	0	18	18
Namibia	1	0	1
*Nicaragua	3	0	3
*Nigeria	173	0	173
*Pakistan	0	35	35
Peru	8	0	8
Philippines, The	0	105	105
Poland	34	0	34
*Republic of the Marshall Islands	7	0	7
Romania	6	0	6
*Samoa	2	0	2
Serbia	3	0	3
*Sierra Leone	67	3	70
*Sint Maarten	2	0	2
South Africa	28	0	28
Sri Lanka	1	0	1
*St. Lucia	1	0	1
*St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1	0	1
*Sudan	0	1	1

Country or Territory of Origin	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the U.S.	Total Adoptions
*Sudan, South	0	4	4
Taiwan	32	0	32
*Tanzania	3	0	3
Thailand	1	42	43
Togo	2	0	2
*Tonga	2	0	2
*Uganda	23	3	26
*Ukraine	202	46	248
*Uzbekistan	1	0	1
Vietnam	28	0	28
Zimbabwe	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,714</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>4,059</b>

State	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the United States	Total Adoptions
Florida	162	20	182
Georgia	127	16	143
Guam	1	0	1
Hawaii	10	4	14
Idaho	16	0	16
Illinois	158	19	177
Indiana	117	7	124
Iowa	39	0	39
Kansas	48	2	50
Kentucky	85	3	88
Louisiana	33	2	35
Maine	21	2	23
Maryland	105	7	112
Massachusetts	54	6	60
Michigan	100	7	107
Minnesota	122	13	135
Mississippi	27	1	28
Missouri	93	3	96
Montana	23	1	24
Nebraska	22	4	26
Nevada	7	1	8
New Hampshire	16	0	16
New Jersey	61	11	72
New Mexico	15	2	17
New York	147	18	165
North Carolina	165	9	174
North Dakota	5	3	8
Ohio	142	16	158
Oklahoma	36	1	37

State	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the United States	Total Adoptions
Oregon	75	4	79
Pennsylvania	131	13	144
Puerto Rico	1	0	1
Rhode Island	9	0	9
South Carolina	43	2	45
South Dakota	11	4	15
Tennessee	146	19	165
Texas	283	27	310
Utah	50	9	59
Vermont	5	0	5
Virginia	143	25	168
Washington	150	5	155
West Virginia	11	0	11
Wisconsin	86	6	92
Wyoming	9	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,719</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>4,059</b>

Table 2: Incoming Adoptions by State			
State	Adoptions Finalized Abroad	Adoptions to be Finalized in the United States	Total Adoptions
Alabama	106	9	115
Alaska	12	1	13
American Overseas	14	0	14
Arizona	41	1	42
Arkansas	27	3	30
California	244	25	269
Colorado	128	5	133
Connecticut	20	1	21
Delaware	6	1	7
District of Columbia	11	1	12

**Table 3: Outgoing (Emigrating) Adoptions**

Receiving Country	U.S. State from which the Child Emigrated	Number of Outgoing Adoption Cases
Australia	Connecticut	1
Austria	New York	1
Canada	Florida	28
	Indiana	2
	Louisiana	1
	Maine	1
	Nevada	2
	New Jersey	1
	South Carolina	2
	Utah	1
Ireland	New Jersey	6
Mexico	California	2
	Oregon	7
Monaco	Florida	1
Netherlands, The	Florida	7
	Maine	1
	New Jersey	10
	Texas	2
Switzerland	Florida	2
United Kingdom	Indiana	1
	Nevada	1
	Utah	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>81</b>

**Table 4: Convention Adoptions and Average Number of Days to Completion by Convention Country**

Convention Country	Number of Convention Cases	Average Days to Completion
Albania	5	356
Armenia	12	773
Azerbaijan	2	707
Belize	11	479
Brazil	9	282
Bulgaria	134	367
Burkina Faso	4	704
Burundi	19	709
Canada	5	824
China	1,475	255
Colombia	229	311
Costa Rica	14	331
Cote D'Ivoire	9	525
Dominican Republic	5	344
Ecuador	7	445
El Salvador	5	585
Georgia	2	369
Greece	1	623
Haiti		878
Hong Kong S. A. R.	3	488
Hungary	13	216
India	302	453
Kenya	1	1633
Kyrgyzstan	17	377
Latvia	79	366

Convention Country	Number of Convention Cases	Average Days to Completion
Lesotho	2	392
Lithuania	4	306
Macau	1	236
Madagascar	1	618
Mexico	26	840
Moldova	2	700
Namibia	1	477
Peru	8	676
Philippines	105	577
Poland	34	634
Romania	6	429
Serbia	28	248
South Africa	3	476
Sri Lanka	1	465
Thailand	43	398
Togo	2	882
United Kingdom	1	521
Vietnam	28	398

**Table 5: Median ASP Convention Adoption Fees**

Convention Country of Origin	Median Fees	Convention Country of Origin	Median Fees
Albania	\$25,300	Kenya	\$6,250
Armenia	\$29,100	Kyrgyzstan	\$19,155
Azerbaijan	\$19,140	Latvia	\$15,850
Belize	\$8,950	Lesotho	\$12,000
Burundi	\$16,650	Lithuania	\$21,000
Brazil	\$14,525	Madagascar	\$12,000
Bulgaria	\$14,125	Mexico	\$16,050
Burkina Faso	\$17,125	Macedonia	\$22,805
Canada	\$32,310	Moldova	\$15,000
China	\$15,725	Mongolia	\$19,945
Colombia	\$13,750	Netherlands	\$4,500
Costa Rica	\$16,680	Panama	\$14,527
Czech Republic	\$11,600	Peru	\$12,580
Dominican Republic	\$13,850	Philippines	\$8,575
Ecuador	\$8,500	Poland	\$20,217
El Salvador	\$15,180	Romania	\$17,212
Ghana	\$11,915	South Africa	\$15,600
Guinea	\$6,250	Serbia	\$5,530
Georgia	\$18,800	Sri Lanka	\$11,250
Guatemala	\$26,622	Thailand	\$13,145
Haiti	\$19,604	Togo	\$3,500
Hong Kong S A R	\$8,400	United Kingdom	\$11,000
Hungary	\$20,050	United States	\$11,155
India	\$15,750	Vietnam	\$13,372
Kazakhstan	\$18,750		



**Table 6: The Number of Convention Placements for Adoption in the United States that were Disrupted**

Country from which the Child Emigrated	The Age of the Child at Placement	The Date of Placement for Adoption	The reasons for the disruption	The Resolution of the Disruption	The Agency that Handled the Placement	Plans for the Child
<b>China</b>	3	28-May-2018	Medical	Remain in China	CCAI	No Further Action
<b>Colombia</b>	5	26-Nov-2017	Behavioral	Re-placed for Adoption	All God's Children International	Adopted by Another Family
<b>Colombia</b>	4	26-Nov-2017	Behavioral	Re-placed for Adoption	All God's Children International	Adopted by Another Family
<b>Thailand</b>	2	11-Jul-2018	Medical	Re-placed for Adoption	Holt International	Placed with Another Family