



**INTERNATIONAL
SOCIAL
SERVICE
GLOBAL
REPORT**

2015

For 90 YEARS, we have connected vulnerable children, adults, and families, separated by an international border, to the services and support they need.



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE



CONTENTS

1. A WARM WELCOME	P.2
2. MAKING OUR NETWORK STRONGER	P.6
3. SHARING OUR EXPERTISE AND CONSOLIDATING OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE	P.8
I. Through advocacy, research and field support	p.9
II. Through global projects	p.10
III. Presence on the international child protection scene	p.13
4. VOICES FROM OUR GOVERNING AND CONSULTATIVE BODIES	P.14
5. VOICES FROM ISS MEMBERS: ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES	P.20
I. Moldova	p.21
II. Honduras	p.21
III. Nepal	p.22
IV. Austria	p.23
V. Rwanda	p.24
6. 90 YEARS OF BRIEF HISTORY	P.26
7. OUR PARTNERS	P.28
8. WORDS FROM PEOPLE WE CARE FOR	P.32
9. WE INVITE DONORS TO REACH OUT AND SUPPORT	P.36

1



A WARM WELCOME

“You may have read about, and seen on your screens, all those Syrian, Iraqi and other refugees who have died, been wounded or who are merely surviving in the region’s refugee camps. Thousands more are stranded along asylum routes around Europe.

Our world has many problems to resolve. War-torn countries and failing states glare at us from the headlines. Cases of discrimination, poverty and human rights abuse seem to greet us every morning, in every language, across every media channel. Each day, world affairs make grim reading. More than ever, ISS is needed at the four corners of the world.

Having embarked on the change of course we set ourselves with the 2014-2018 Global Strategy, we believe we can face the ever-changing challenges ahead of us with more hope of success.

Our General Secretariat is now better able than in past years to support the ISS network, engage in global projects and face financial challenges. Added to that, we have the expertise and insight of our directors behind our Professional Advisory Committee, as well as a Casework Coordinator’s body that works towards delivering outstanding services.

By enhancing the capabilities of those who can help, and improving our worldwide services still further, we can get even closer to the children and families we have served continuously for more than 90 years. We can be their voice and serve their interest on the global scene.

And we won’t stop there. Our challenge now is to learn how to further improve the way we operate as a globally effective network to make the world a better place for children and families to be.

We’ll look ahead and try to shape our core strengths alongside international social work. We’ll borrow from a vast store of expertise and insight, acquired over long years, to deliver even better services, global advocacy, training and research.”

Jean Ayoub, Secretary General



ISS IN ACTION: CHILD PROTECTION AND PLACEMENT

Abused one-year-old returns to a safe family life

International child protection and child placement are key missions of ISS. One such mission involved Marian, a baby girl whose family moved to Australia soon after her birth in China.

Marian's first months at home weren't happy. Following treatment after "having fallen from her father's arms", the hospital felt the need to alert authorities. Her health status was alarming. She had been hospitalised with a serious head injury and a severe state of dehydration. Sadly, medical staff also found traces of former injuries, bruises, even bite marks to the baby's body.

With her father subsequently prosecuted for child abuse and her mother expressing "difficulty taking care of the child", Marian was first placed into foster care before it was proposed to place her into the care of maternal grandparents back in China.

ISS Australia reached out to ISS Hong Kong who thoroughly assessed the grandparents' living environment and ability to care for the child. The report was encouragingly positive and, with the approval of Australian authorities, ISS Australia and ISS Hong Kong worked together to escort Marian to her new home to ensure she settled well.

(Source: ISS Hong Kong)





MAKING OUR NETWORK STRONGER

One of the 2014-2018 Global Strategy objectives focuses on our membership structure. Our aim is to make it more inclusive and more representative of our members' diverse and multi-disciplined organizations. In the last year alone, 10 new organizations joined as new members.

ISS Network: working and growing for a purpose

Today, our Network can count on over 110 members in as many countries. On a yearly basis, ISS handles an average of 20,000 individual cases reaching around 100,000 people.

In complex cross border social situations, it is vital that authorities and service providers in one country, like courts or social services, receive accurate,

professional and trustworthy reports on the specific situation of a family or one of its members in another country, to make sure that decision making is more informed and respects the best interests of the child, family and/or individual.

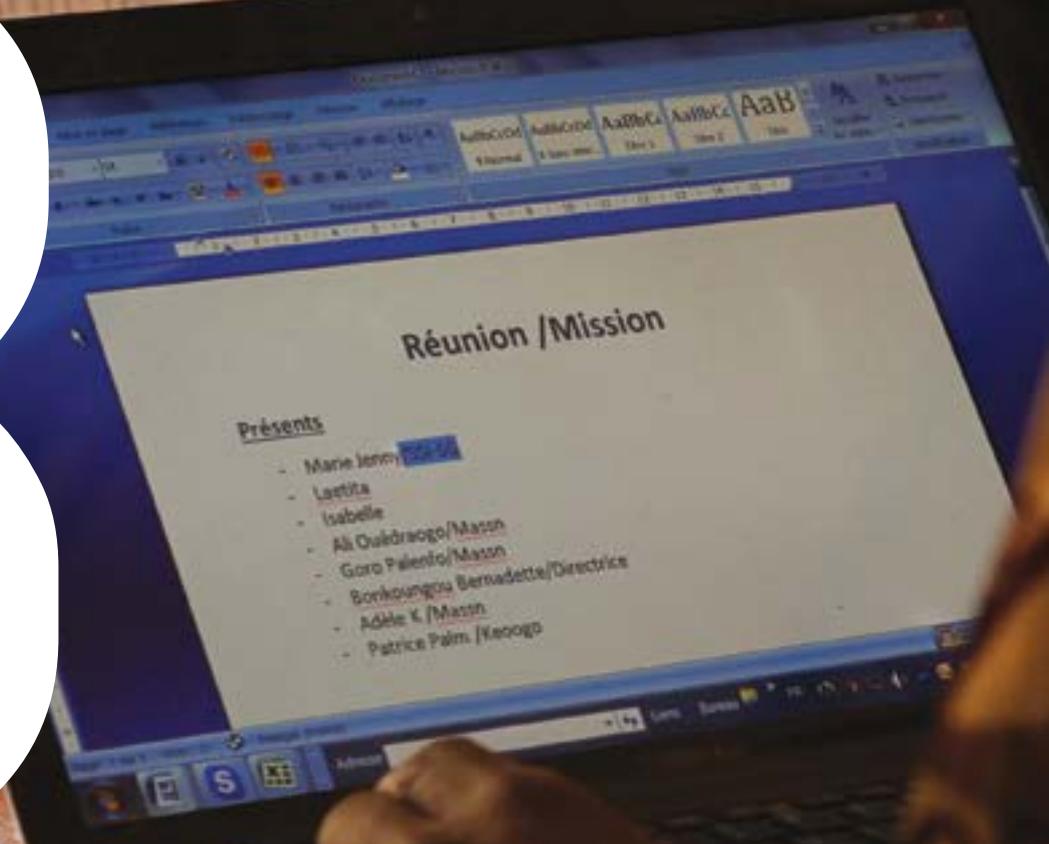
Cross Border Casework is one of the core strengths of the ISS network and cross-border cooperation lies at the heart of our work, constituting the backbone of our organization. One of our General Secretariat's (GS) main roles is to develop and strengthen our worldwide capacity to deliver those services.

Using extensive first-hand experience of social cases, ISS members can invest this knowledge into worldwide advocacy efforts for the betterment of child protection.

THE ISS GENERAL SECRETARIAT IS IN CHARGE OF THE FOLLOWING COLLECTIVE TASKS FOR THE NETWORK:

- *Guaranteeing the coherence and coordination of Network's activities.*
- *Developing and strengthening the operational capacity of its members.*
- *Coordinating, sustaining, supervising and assessing the functioning of Network's activities.*
- *Organizing the communication and knowledge sharing of the organization.*
- *Representing the organization and advocating at an international level.*
- *Supporting Governance and International Council.*

3



SHARING OUR EXPERTISE AND CONSOLIDATING OUR KNOWLEDGE BASE

Over the years, ISS has gathered a vast store of knowledge and expertise in the field of child and family welfare. We want to share this insight and information for the benefit of the people we represent, and we encourage the professionals of governmental and non-governmental agencies to talk constructively and work to find solutions that bring families together.

I. Through advocacy, research and field support

The International Reference Center (IRC**) for the rights of the children deprived of their family is an ISS programme set up in 1997. It supports central authorities and child rights professionals across the globe, sharing up-to-date information, delivering technical advice and promoting good practice for children deprived - or at risk of being deprived - of their family.

Over the years, IRC has helped increase the capacity of all stakeholders to

protect children deprived of families and/or involved in alternative care matters as well as inter country adoption. It develops resources to help professionals (government officers, judiciary, lawyers and social workers) to better implement international standards such as the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the 1993 Convention on Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Inter country Adoption.

Working with central authorities and in collaboration with UNICEF, IRC provided training in several countries worldwide and developed training tools for capacity building of professionals. Publications such as country factsheets and guidelines such as the most recent 2015 'Manifesto on Ethical Inter-country Adoption' are readily available to professionals around the world.

In collaboration with an inter-agency group, plans are underway to organise an International Conference in 2016 on Alternative Care, alongside the

development of an online training course freely accessible to all.

(For more information, please go to <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/international-reference-center>)

II. Through global projects

A. *‘A better future is possible for children with disabilities living in institutions’*

Our long experience of visiting orphanages and institutions worldwide has convinced us that numerous children with disabilities under their

care could actually get the chance to live happily in a family environment, while also benefiting from more adapted care services. The people delivering those services need targeted training and support to take on this huge responsibility.

So one of the project’s main objectives is to identify and train local trainers, who can in turn train staff caring for children with disabilities in partner institutions. Staff will be in a better position to understand children’s needs, so they can deliver improved daily care and more child-focused activities, as well as carry out systematic evaluations.

ISS IN ACTION: CHILD ABDUCTION

An emergency intervention resolves an international family conflict

Another of ISS key missions involves protecting children in cases of international abduction. This particular case involved Audrey, who was born in the UK and raised in Australia. Both parents are UK citizens.

After they divorced, Audrey was to live with her mother, although she regularly spent a lot of time with her re-partnered father, Aden. However, when he discovered his wife had taken Audrey to the UK where she would spend some days before leaving to live in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the father feared he’d never see his daughter in Australia again.

It’s important to understand that, unlike the UK, UAE is not a party of the Hague Convention - a fact that makes child protection and legal actions to return the child more complicated.

The father immediately contacted ISS Australia who prepared an urgent application under the Hague Convention to return Audrey from the UK to Australia. Fast-tracked through the Australian Central Authority, the application was quickly picked up by the Central Authority for England and Wales, who immediately appointed a lawyer to pass the application at the UK court.

With the coordinated efforts of a vast network, we were able to process a comprehensive demand in only a few days. UK Police confiscated the mother’s passport to ensure she remained with Audrey in the UK, where the father’s application is now being processed through the English High Court.

(Source: ISS Australia)

Throughout, we will accompany and look to strengthen the capacity of our local project partner. We'll make sure local authorities are fully engaged, giving them the support to help children adapt to home life away from the care institution and putting in place alternative care solutions.

Currently, the project is set in Vietnam, Burkina Faso and Mauritius, and a pilot project is about to start in Mexico and Romania. We aim to extend the project further in Western Africa, Latin and Central America, as well as to Eastern Europe. (For more information, please go to <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/cwd-en>)

B. International Family Mediation (IFM) Project

Convinced that we can do more for the protection of children involved in international cases of parental conflict, we launched this project in 2011.

Parental conflict cases can be legally very complex, as well as emotionally challenging. So IFM offers a precious and efficient tool to solve cross border family disputes and prevent child abductions.

Three phases are necessary to complete this project:

Phase One: Producing the 2014 Guide to International Family Mediation for families and professionals. Written in a way that makes it easy to read and use - and with contents taking into account major languages, cultural differences, and national legislations - the Guide is the result of an extensive consultation process. It is now being distributed internationally and comes recommended by such organizations as the Hague Conference on Private International Law.

Phase Two: The second phase is to adapt and publish the above Guide's content on a dedicated website so that families and professionals can easily search country-specific, reliable information to find mediators, specialist legal advice and central contact points for mediation. This phase will be completed in 2015.

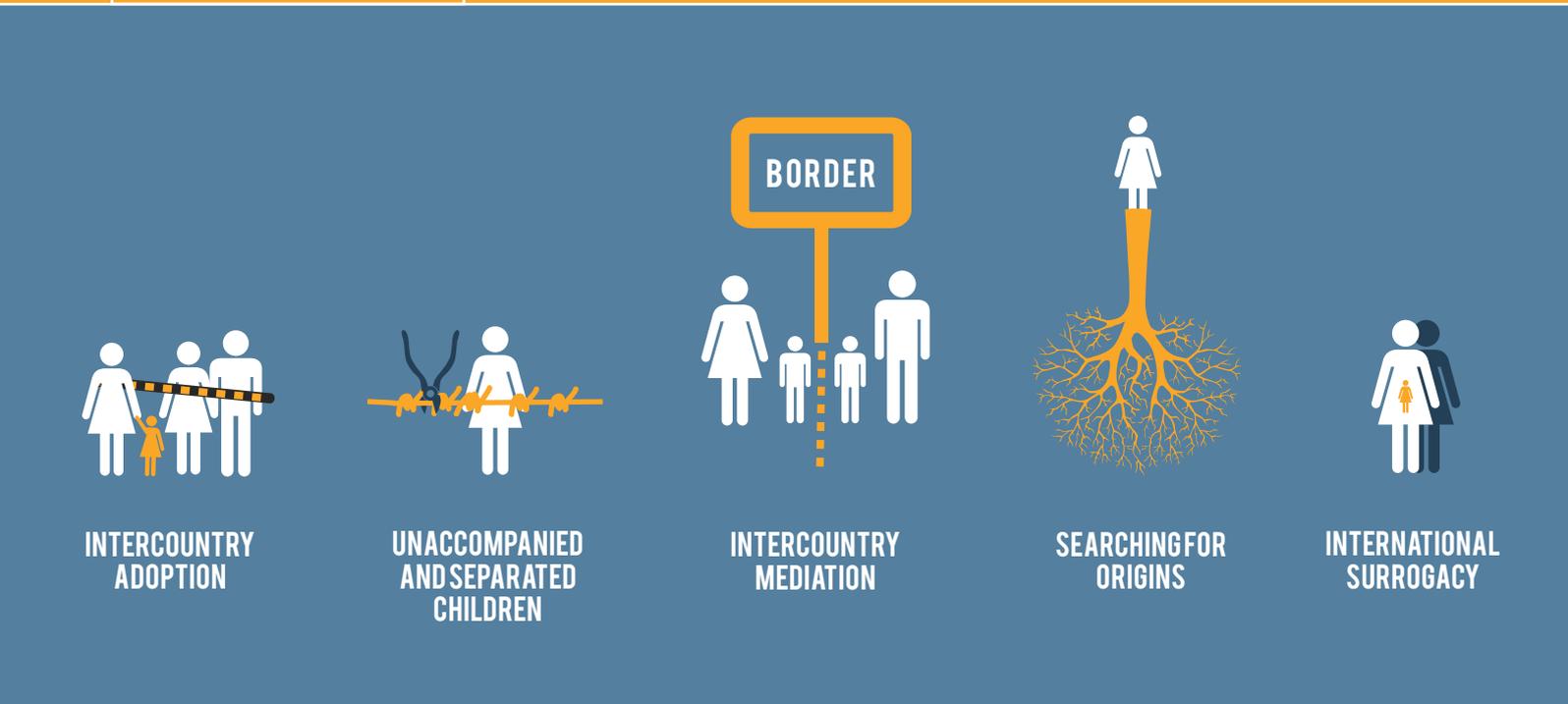
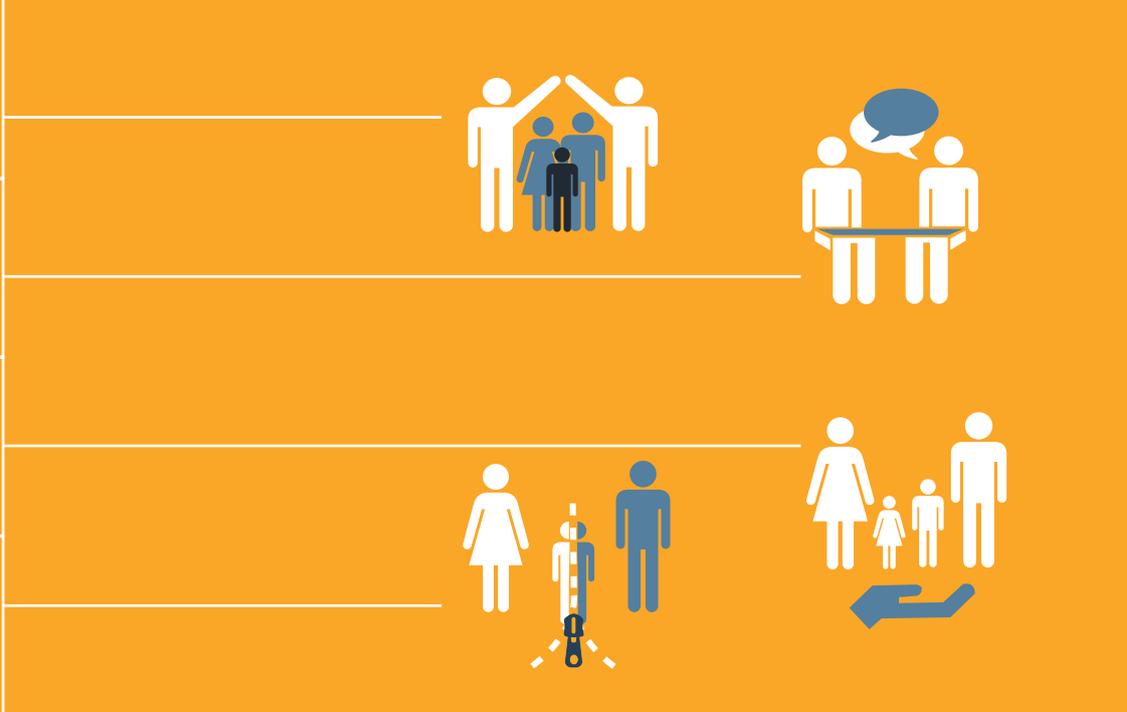
Phase Three: This phase sets out some key principles and practices of International Family Mediation to enable State authorities and other major bodies get a better appreciation of this specialist area of mediation.

To achieve that phase, 50 international mediators and professionals gather in October 2015 to exchange ideas, expertise, multicultural perspectives and lessons learned in the fields of training, deontology and general practice. ISS aims to create an environment of engagement and collaboration as we head towards achieving an international charter that recognizes expertise in this specialist field. (For more information, please go to <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/mediation-en>)

C. International Surrogacy: research leading to better protection of children's rights

Since our Call for Action 'Preserving the Best Interests of Children' in 2013, efforts are underway to work on the delicate and complex theme of international surrogacy. It's one of our ultimate and medium-term plans in an area where ISS feels strongly there is still a vacuum in knowledge.

	PROTECT
	MEDIATE
	SUPPORT
	REUNITE



**SINCE
1924
117
PARTNERS
110
COUNTRIES
7,000,000
PEOPLE REACHED**



To start with, ISS Network will team up with international legal, social service, medical and child advocacy bodies to promote a better understanding of international surrogacy. This will help us galvanise interest around this complex subject and look for partners and resources to launch it as a project starting in 2016 (research and advocacy).

(For more information, please go to <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/what-we-do-en/surrogacy>)

III. Presence on the international child protection scene

International Conference on Cross-Border Child Protection

The Hague Convention of 1996 (THC-1996) on parental responsibility matters and child protection measures covers many issues to do with cross-border protection of children that are:

- at the heart of international family conflicts concerning custody, visiting and contact rights;
- the subject of international abduction;
- placed abroad due to alternative care arrangements;
- unaccompanied and separated.

Unfortunately, at the moment its influence is limited: only 41 countries formally recognise it and authorities often fail to cooperate as they might. So, running parallel with our International Family Mediation Workshop in October, ISS organises an International Conference with the aim of implementing THC-1996 more effectively and successfully. Our long-term goal is to develop and design tailored services to authorities and professionals that could lead to THC 96 being more widely recognised and applied.

(For more information, please go to <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/conference-2015>)

**** Some IRC achievements in 2014**

- *ISS issued 10 monthly reviews that went out to more than 4,000 professionals and partner organizations*
- *We published a situation analysis on alternative care and adoption of 14 countries, bringing the total number of country situation analyses to 94*
- *At the request of central authorities and in collaboration with UNICEF, we carried out missions to Ghana, Armenia, Tunisia, Moldova and Denmark to give relevant and practical guidance on national child protection systems*



VOICES FROM OUR GOVERNING AND CONSULTATIVE BODIES

“ISS, 90 years and counting...”

Message from the International President – Mr Douglas Lewis

“As the ISS Network looks back on 2014’s celebration of our 90th Anniversary with great satisfaction, we remain focused on ensuring that our unique Network is fully prepared for an even brighter future.

In a world with the greatest ever number of migrants - many of them vulnerable in every sense of the word, and many of them unaccompanied children - it remains crucial that our Network, each member and collectively, stand up to the challenge and provides a unique and much needed service to tens of thousands of people who turn to us for help.”

“With resolve and goodwill...”

Message from the Chair of the Governing Board – Mr CP Ho

“Paraphrasing English novelist Charles Dickens: ISS stands today in the best of times and in the worst of times.

Best, in that an idea born in 1924, of a need to protect and assist families and children across borders, has taken root and grown into a big international network. Worst, in that the world is in such crisis and turmoil, even though it is not in a declared state of a world war.

The facts are there for all to see. In particular, the plight of child refugees and displaced people has reached new heights in many parts of Europe, Africa and Asia. Mindful of our mission statement, the way we at ISS handle this problem is our challenge.

I am reminded of the difficult situations that arose when thousands of Vietnamese boat people descended on Hong Kong in the ‘70s-80s’. I covered the human side of that history as a journalist and, in the process, became aware of ISS and its work. I myself joined ISS in 1999 and became chair of the Hong Kong Branch in 2002.

In May 2015, I was elected Chair of the Governing Board to oversee and coordinate efforts among ISS representatives in more than 110 countries and territories.



Opportunities come out of crises, as I well know in my previous reincarnation as a newsman and in my current life as a businessman. Which is why I feel we have a need to work together with similar bodies and organizations all over the world. And with resolve and goodwill, we shall overcome.”

“With real determination and energy...”

Message from the Chair of ISS Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) – Mr Fionn Skiotis

“I started working for ISS Australia in 2009, over six years ago. I’d just finished almost ten years with an international human rights organization – which also had its head office in Geneva.

I was drawn by the international nature of the work and the opportunity to keep focusing on human rights, though with a different emphasis (mainly on child rights) and context. At that stage I’d worked in the not-for-profit sector in Australia for over 20 years, but I’d never heard of ISS until I saw the position advertised.

In May 2014, I was elected to a two-year term as Chair of the Professional Advisory Committee or PAC. The PAC brings together the chief executives of all full network members, in an advisory role complementing those of the General Secretariat and Governing Board.

It’s a privilege to serve in this position and through it as a voting member of the GB. I think there’s a vital role for PAC – and

indeed all the organs and bodies of ISS – to play in implementing our goals and building our network.

I have always enjoyed being part of the ISS family, although I've been concerned over the years at the many challenges faced by ISS and the tremendous time it takes to tackle those challenges. I remain convinced that ISS has a key role to play addressing modern world challenges, a world in which more people are on the move around our planet.

ISS has suffered from lack of resources, capacity and unity behind its mission and vision, and it will now take a truly herculean commitment to emerge through this, as a more efficient and capable organization in the lead up to our centenary in 2024. My vision for ISS is that we will soon modernize and simplify our membership structure and reform our name to better reflect our name and brand, as essential first steps on the path to a more sustainable future.

As is the case for older worldwide organizations, none of the steps on this path of necessary change will be simple or easy but today we're at a crossroads and we need to take decisive action sooner rather than later if we want to pursue our 91-year-old mission and prosper again in the near future.

I'm certain that with real determination and energy we can turn things around so that we continue to assist tens of thousands of children and families across borders and have much to celebrate and look forward to on our 100th birthday."

"Lobbying for children's rights is deeply rooted in our expertise..."

Message from ISS Casework Coordinator Representative (CC) Mr Stephan Auerbach:

"I've been working at ISS for 11 years. I share its basic values and working principles: being committed to the best interest of every individual child, using a mediation-based approach to resolving family conflicts, and empowering children and families to take responsibility over their own lives.

ISS is an extraordinary organization because it allows us to work on a concrete, case-by-case basis on an international level, using different languages, and working with highly committed colleagues throughout the world.

I particularly cherish ISS' bottom-up-approach, which means that lobbying for children's rights is deeply rooted in our expertise, taken from our everyday experience in working with children and families in need.

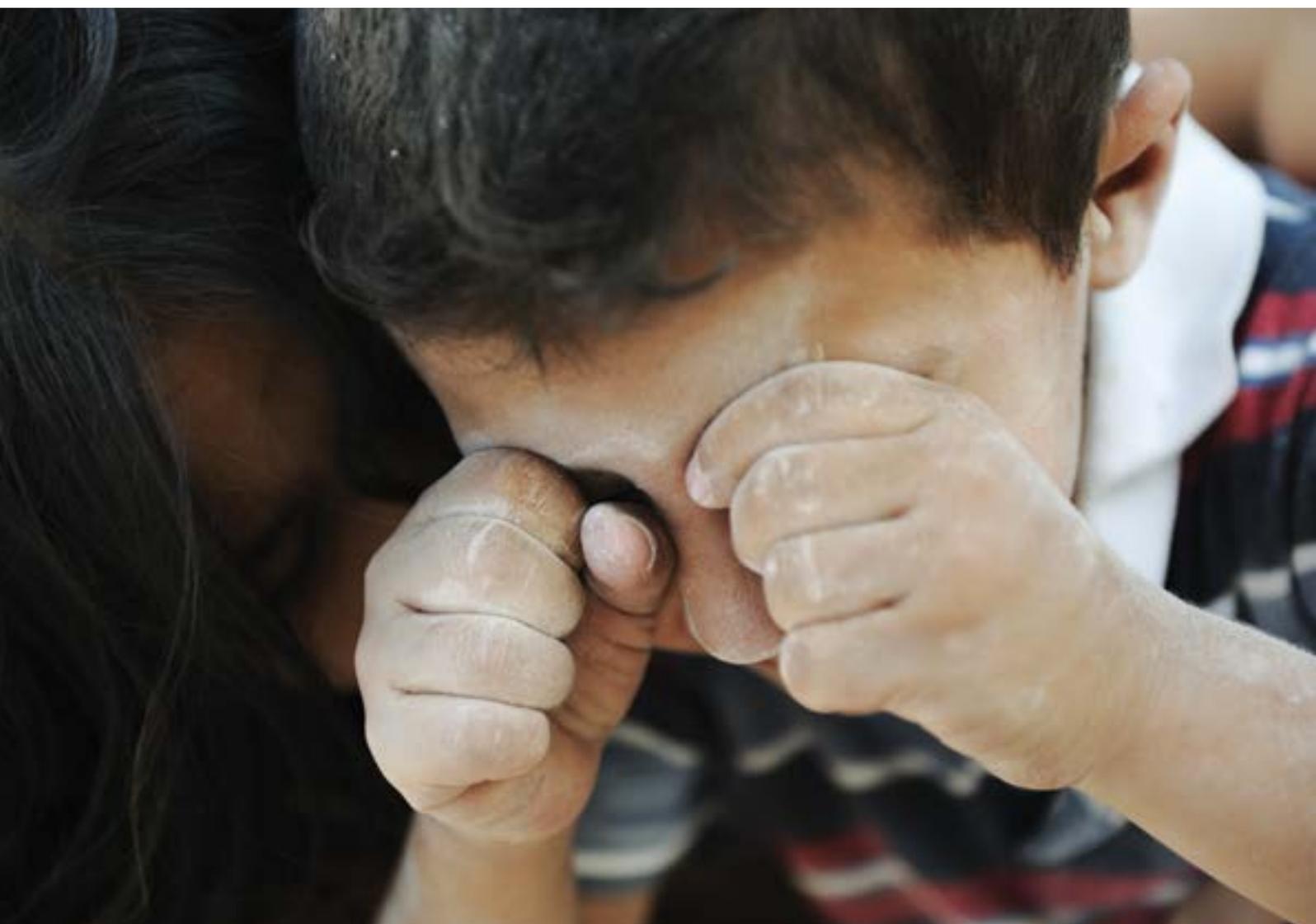
The Casework Coordinator's Group is the professional body composed of the caseworkers of the different units of the ISS network. Its purpose is to exchange experience and expertise, apply and develop ISS methodological standards, and to identify new trends and needs in cross-border family situations, and bring them up to the director's level.

We initiate new ideas and projects helping our network to better meet the needs of the people we serve. As representative of the CC Group, my role is to coordinate its activities, especially the bi-annual meetings, identify

the agenda items and liaise the Group's activities with PAC. It's very motivating for me to work as CC rep at the service of a group of highly committed and competent caseworkers from a variety of countries and cultures.

I hope that in the future the CC Group can take an even more active role as a key player within the ISS network, being close to new

trends and developments in society. It will also be important to enlarge the Group's representation by opening it to today's ISS members in training, as well as to further develop ISS methodological standards applicable for all ISS network members."





ISS IN ACTION: SOCIO-LEGAL ADVICE

Family bonds save a Roma child from devastation

We take a very close interest in alternative care solutions in cases of neglect and abandonment. One such case was Mara, whose parents separated when she was just two and later divorced. Her mother returned to Bulgaria, leaving Mara in Macedonia with a homeless, alcoholic father.

Although the child's grandmother on her father's side had married and lived in Switzerland for almost 30 years, the ever-deteriorating situation of her grandchild led her to return to Macedonia and raise Mara on behalf of her overwhelmed father.

After some years, Mara's grandmother and her husband finally took the child to Switzerland, leaving behind an uncaring father and entirely absent mother. It didn't take long for Swiss social services to get involved and ask ISS Switzerland for help.

ISS Switzerland conducted an assessment of the grandparents' situation and instructed them on their legal status, gave advice on migration issues and provided coaching regarding all necessary procedures both in Switzerland and Macedonia.

Convinced that the grandmother's care was in the best interest of the child, ISS Switzerland fully supported the couple, reported positively on their ability to raise the child and underlined the parent's inability to do so.

With the consent of her parents, and a formal decision by Macedonian Court, Mara finally received permission to reside in Switzerland. Today she attends school and is fully integrated into Swiss life.

(Source: ISS Switzerland)

5



VOICES FROM ISS MEMBERS: ASPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES

I. Moldova

“The ISS network allows us to exchange with colleagues around the globe”

Let’s listen to Ms. Mariana Ianachevici, CEO, Association for Child and Family Empowerment (AVE Copiii) and ISS representative:

“Ave Copiii’s mission is to develop and promote qualitative social services for children and their families in Moldova.

Our future plans are to expand our action to target adolescents aged 16-17, as this group of young adults does not benefit from clear protection policies and services from the State.

Our aim is to become the key partner in Moldova in capacity building of stakeholders involved with this vulnerable group.

To get there, we work jointly with parents, care givers in institutions and the teenagers themselves to find long-term solutions and prevent behaviours that represent potential risks such as alcohol, conflict with the law, prostitution, and trafficking.

Our plan as an organization affiliated to ISS is to become a fully fledged member in the near future. By belonging to ISS, we have the opportunity to exchange information with other colleagues around the globe relating to services for children and families in Moldova and abroad.

We can share information on relevant conferences, research, good practise and advocacy campaigns relevant to child protection professionals.”

II. Honduras

“The ISS collaboration helped us better understand... violence faced by young people”

Here’s Mrs. Yaneth Contreras Parada, National Director of Buckner Honduras

“Since its foundation in 2009, the mandate of Buckner Honduras is to transform the lives of vulnerable children and build stronger families.



Our community projects relating to illegal migration and its inherent risks for vulnerable children and young people have allowed us to help many youths and prevent illegal migration. Our plan is to further expand these awareness-raising activities to other cities in Honduras.

Partnering with ISS has been very enriching to our organization. Through ISS cases, we have reinforced our knowledge about the difficulties faced by vulnerable young people who are forced to leave their country.

We have a better understanding of the degree of violence in their lives, which is the primary cause of departure. These young people see migration as the only way they have to save their lives.

One of the major results of our ISS collaboration is that it helped us to understand and engage more on violence faced by young people as well as to develop more prevention activities."

III. Nepal

"The affiliation with ISS gives children's rights and protection issues more exposure"

A few words from Mr. Dinesh Raj Sapkota, Director, Creating Possibilities Nepal (CP Nepal):
"CP Nepal is a non-political, non-religious, non-profit social organization. We look forward to a democratic society where all children and women have their basic human rights fulfilled.



Our aim is to establish an educational fund for the underprivileged children and women of Nepal. We work specifically on launching income-generating programmes for parents, helping women and children improve their quality of leadership and initiating local, regional and international alliances to combat labour exploitation and sexual violation of children and women.

CP Nepal plans to achieve these goals by raising resources from within Nepal as well as from international charities and private donors.

We prepare women and children to recognize and maintain their rights by connecting them with social networks who remind the government of its obligation towards women and children.

The affiliation with ISS gives children's rights and protection issues more exposure. The network gives us the opportunities to provide and exchange services with national authorities, while also allowing us to play a vital role in child welfare issues on a global level."

IV. Austria

"The main added value of belonging to ISS is to work on child protection issues with worldwide country experts"

This is Stefan Bauer, Director and case worker at ISS Austria:

"The International Social Service Austria was set up in March 2015. Our future plans are to further enhance our social work services to unaccompanied minors, children in institutions and foster care families by actively communicating our child protection activities.

We want to strengthen our position as the key NGO in Austria working on child protection on a national and global level.

The main added value of belonging to ISS as a well-established and operational network is the possibility to work on child protection issues with worldwide country experts and to learn from good practises as well as challenges abroad."

V. Rwanda

“Being affiliated with ISS will help us have a strong voice in child welfare matters”

Let’s hear from Mr. Chaste Uwihoreye,
Country Director, Uyisenga ni imanzi (UNM)

“Uyisenga ni imanzi organization will remain focused on the child. We believe that every child has to grow up in a safe family.

Where it is possible, we believe that children have to stay with their biological families and, if not possible, with the extended families and then with the foster families.

Our work and plans are based on the wellbeing of children where we believe that children need both material (education, health, shelter, food, clothes, etc.) and non-material needs (affection, families, identity, relationship, attachment, attitude, etc.)

We will continue by working on systems for prevention of family separation within the communities and bringing the families together.

Especially in Rwanda and in the context of conflicts in Burundi, where children have been separated from their families and been sent to Tanzania or to DRC, work has to be done with regard to the process of reconnecting these children with their families on one side, but also we need to bring direct support such as education as well as basic needs.

Being part of ISS network helps us share experience from the network and learn from the processes and best practices of the latter. Being part of the network will strengthen the organization in terms of skills as well as capacity building.”





ISS IN ACTION: CHILD TRAFFICKING

At only 15, Nada has already gone through hell

Another of our priorities is family reunification in sad cases of trafficking. This one involved Nada, a minor girl in a group that caught the attention of US authorities who carried out a human trafficking raid in Louisiana.

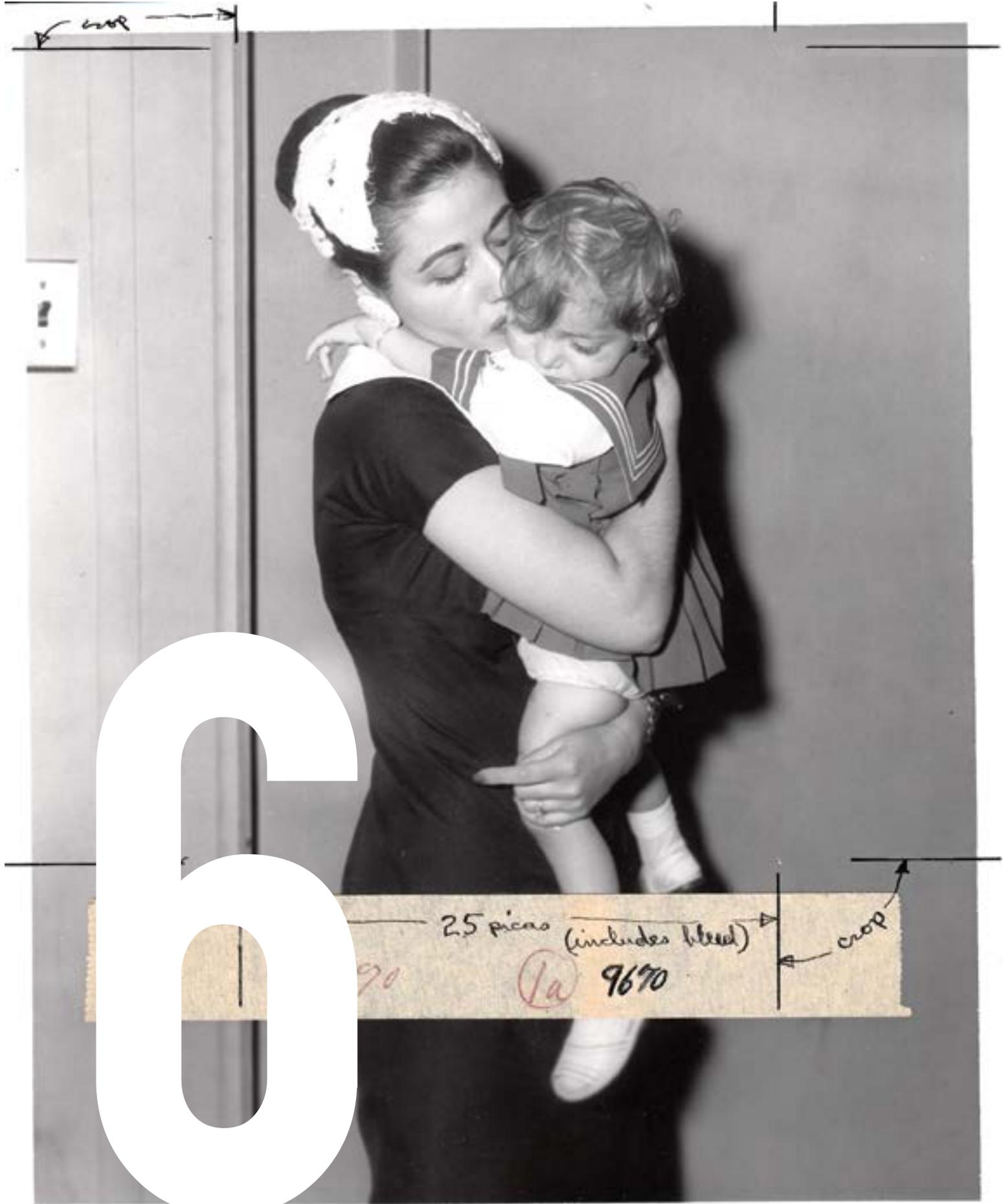
Taken care of by the local child welfare agency, 15-year old Nada gradually started to feel safer, more comfortable and inclined to share her tough story. She confessed to being brought to the US by an uncle “who then went away”.

To survive in this hostile adult environment, Nada had been forced into prostitution until authorities uncovered the trafficking network. The more Nada talked, the more information was gathered by the child welfare agency who finally asked ISS USA for help.

ISS USA, with the helpful information given by Nada, could locate her Bosnian family and re-establish contact with her mother, who was relieved and grateful to hear her girl was alive.

ISS further assisted Nada in getting a copy of her birth certificate, so she could respond to US identification requirements. Nada is currently safe and her future – foster care, family reunification, and so on – is being evaluated according to what will be best for her as a teenager.

(Source: ISS USA)



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90 YEARS OF BRIEF HISTORY



One of the consequences of the social upheaval in the wake of the First World War was a large-scale migration to the Americas. Unsurprisingly and unfortunately, migrants found that huge social, logistical and legal problems followed them.

The Great Depression accelerated the movement and World War II further opened migration routes that were unthinkable until then. Forced and voluntary migrants faced a lack of government protection. The conflicting laws of different countries stood silently, but solidly in their path. Families were separated, lonely and calling for help.

As early as 1921, representatives from the United States, United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Poland and Switzerland gathered to discuss problems and solutions, and the International Social Service was born in 1924.

With a General Secretariat based in Geneva, the first ISS offices opened at key locations along migration routes and seaports to provide first level information and support. Bound by common working principles and methods, these offices gradually developed into today's vast, coordinated and efficient network connecting more than 110 countries.

ISS has always worked closely with local structures and, with the expert help of social workers, lawyers, psychologists and mediators, it now offers a huge and essential range of social and legal services.

Times change, migration changes and new challenges emerge, but our overriding mission will always be to protect children and serve the complicated needs of children and families across borders.

In association with



International Social Service
Service Social International
Servicio Social Internacional

Geneva, Switzerland • Stockholm, Sweden • Copenhagen, Denmark



Supported by



THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**Better
Care
Network**



OUR PARTNERS

There is an immense value in collaboration among partners who share the same mission and ambition.

Key Institutional Partners

- **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):** ISS has acquired observer status since 1947.
- **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** ISS sends country fact sheets, focusing on issues such as children deprived of parental care and adoption, for every Committee pre-session. These documents allow Committee members to gain a quick, clear understanding of the problems, allowing informed discussion with concerned countries.
- **Hague Conference on Private International Law:** Exchanges with the Permanent Bureau continued all year round, including involvement in the “Expert Group on the financial aspects of international adoption” and the organization of the October Conference on Cross Border Child Protection.
- **African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child:** With our new Observer’s status, we can ensure an effective exchange of information with the Committee on themes of common interest, such as adoption and alternative care measures.

International Organisations

- **UNICEF:** ISS carried out several projects in countries of origin on behalf of UNICEF, especially in Ghana, Tunisia, Armenia, Columbia, Vietnam, Haiti, to name a few.
- **NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child:** ISS continued to co-chair one of the working groups ‘Children without parental care’. The Group continues its activities relating to the implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.
- **RELAF (*Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar*):** ISS provides feedback and shares its expertise with RELAF on issues of common interest. In 2012, we carried out a joint mission in Colombia on behalf of UNICEF.
- **Médecins du Monde:** The French NGO remains a privileged partner in the project: “A better future is possible for children with disabilities living in institutions”.
- **InterAmerican Court for Human Rights:** ISS (with RELAF) enjoys the status of *amicus curiae*.
- **Better Care Network, Family for Every Child, Save the Children, SOS Children’s Villages and USAID.**



ISS IN ACTION: ADULT PROTECTION

Elderly person suffering from memory loss safely relocated to India

A key part of our remit is international adult protection and record checks. For example, a social worker in Michigan, USA, had an elderly client suffering from severe dementia, but lacking any access to long-term medical care.

The social worker knew about her son in India and his willingness to care for his mother. However, before initiating any such steps, he wanted to make sure all the elderly lady's needs were met.

Through its large network, ISS USA contacted its partner in India to conduct an assessment of the son, including a record check and his ability to care for his mother. This was necessary to determine what sort of medical services would be needed locally.

With a positive assessment, and confirmation from our Indian partner that all the necessary medical care was in place, ISS USA and the social worker in charge could relax and proceed with returning the lady to her home country, where she now lives safely with her son.

(Source: ISS USA)



80



WORDS FROM PEOPLE WE CARE FOR

We're here to help people. We never lose sight of that.

As we go forward, we remember that our continuing development as an organization with global reach and influence rests on our ability to always stand beside a child and a family, and support them however we can.

Those who are best positioned to value our work, and express their opinions, are those we strive to help every day. These are some of their words...

"Your dedication and patience have made all the difference."

"You knew how, in my darkest moments, to give me back hope and courage not to give up."

"I thank ISS for the legal support it provided me in an environment of quality and respect."

"My special thanks and gratitude to you and the rest of the organization for all you have done in saving and helping my daughter's life."

"I owe a great deal to the people at ISS," W... says. "They opened doors no one else could. They couldn't have been more lovely... Now, for the first time, I feel complete."



“When I was young I asked my mother where I came from. Her answer was complicated. She explained she and my father had adopted me.

Eventually, with some trepidation, I began my search and located my birth mother in Europe. She’d never forgotten me and hoped that, one day, I would find her. We’ve corresponded and I met her recently when she visited Australia. I’m going to Europe soon to stay with her.

What impressed me, and what I appreciated about ISS Australia, was their international network, their capable, trained social workers, their objective to protect and honour the privacy and confidentiality of each individual, above all else, and the care and support they gave, provided with empathy and sensitivity.

I commend ISS Australia for the expert way they outlined alternative courses of action, asked me to decide which course to follow, and then did what had been agreed, (with) diligence, thoroughness and effectiveness.

The value of ISS Australia’s service to my birth mother and I is immeasurably greater than the token fee paid. I’m very grateful that they exist, and for the very special services they provide.

Without ISS, I doubt that I would have found my birth parents, or have begun friendships with them. On behalf of my birth parents and me, our heartfelt thanks to ISS.”

Andrew, Melbourne, ISS Australia





WE INVITE DONORS TO REACH OUT AND SUPPORT

“No one has ever become poor by giving.” Anne Frank

For the life and success of an organization like ISS, donor support, both private and institutional, is crucial to allow us to fulfill our mission and ambition. A special word of thanks to ISS General Secretariat donors.*

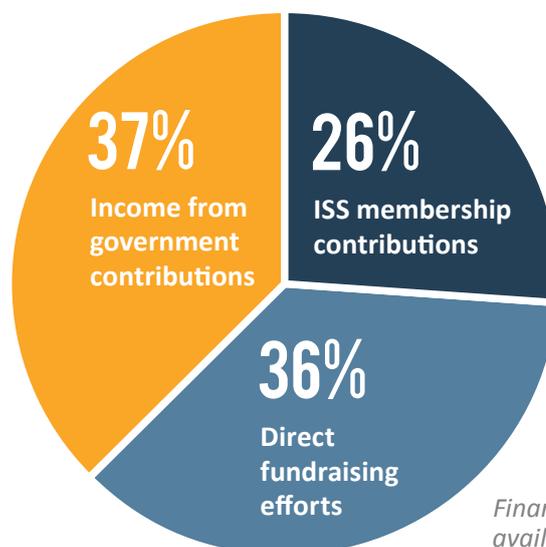
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Financial report 2014 is available upon request.

*For donors who want to support our national ISS members, please find their contact information here <http://www.iss-ssi.org/index.php/en/home/network>

SO WHO ARE WE REALLY?

We are the International Social Service, ISS for short.
Even if in certain countries we are called something else, it doesn't matter!

We do all we can to protect and support children and families separated by borders.

We work to safeguard children placed in vulnerable situations or deprived of their families often for reasons they do not fully grasp such as economic and social migration, complex social family problems, neglect, child trafficking and abduction.

We help children to trace their origins and reconnect with their loved ones.
We help with cases of inter country adoption, foster care and placement.
We make sure the law is on the side of children who need it.

We lobby for better care and protection for children and help develop policies aiming just that.

We carry out research and share information about laws and good practice in child protection.

We train professionals, care givers and decision makers.

We do that for more than 90 years now.

Thank you for willing to learn more about us. If you would like to help, you are welcome and we will be grateful.

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