Our Mission

To protect, defend and assist persons, and in particular children, who as a result of migration, displacement or other circumstances have become separated from their families and vulnerable.
For more than 85 years, the International Social Service (ISS) has vigorously assisted children, vulnerable adults and families separated by international borders. We have developed an expertise and professionalism that is now unmatched in our field.

At the beginning of the 21st century, however, we felt it was time to modernise our strategic objectives to better prepare the network to take on new challenges and address the ever-changing (and increasing) migration patterns. The ISS leadership carefully re-evaluated the network’s identity and core activities, its credibility, image and governance. We took stock of our weaknesses but also of our huge growth potential as a worldwide network, and in 2007 embarked on a global reorganisation by instigating fundamental modifications designed to drive change and considerably enhance our efficiency.

As a result of these adjustments, today we have a revised constitution, a new Governing Board, a Professional Advisory Committee, as well as a consolidated General Secretariat under strict financial controls, driven by a performance culture, all guided by efficient new management systems. As in all management turnaround situations we are aware that “adapting as we move forward” remains a considerable task, however the General Secretariat is ready to fully assume its new role of “serving leader” to the ISS federation.

We dedicate this report to our entire ISS family, the indefatigable social workers and other professionals, as well as our partners, to thank them for their continued commitment and support of our goal to make ISS a more significant and far-reaching organisation.
The International Social Service was founded in 1924 in response to large-scale migration from Europe to the American continent in the aftermath of the First World War. This international Diaspora required a new type of social services for separated families and children. Based in Geneva, ISS was originally created to assist families who were separated during their migration to the West. The first ISS offices were opened at key locations on the routes taken by migrants in order to provide them with information and assistance. Bound by common working principles and methods, various ISS offices quickly developed and were consolidated into a global network which now offers its services in over 120 countries.

Since its inception more than 85 years ago, ISS has concentrated on protecting children and families when they are separated by borders, whether because of voluntary or forced migration. ISS staff and volunteers work at the grass roots level in each country, and each office has legal experts who work closely with local administrative structures. Each ISS office is able to offer a broad range of professional socio-legal services to local authorities and other bodies or persons such as social workers, lawyers, psychologists and mediators involved in supporting children, individuals and families who become separated.

More than 25,000 cases per year are treated by the global Network.
The ISS Network is made up of more than 120 operational members and partners worldwide. These entities directly manage situations with children, adults, and families involved in cross-border family issues by establishing links between social services in different countries and by providing information enabling concerned services to find solutions in the best interest of all parties involved.

Besides ensuring good governance, the General Secretariat (GS) in Geneva also provides capacity building, research and advocacy to ISS’s members — the National Branches, Affiliated Bureaus and Correspondents. National Branches and Affiliated Bureaus are ISS voting members and are represented in different governing bodies.

ISS provides services to more than 50,000 persons throughout the world each year.

Many Hands, One Vision

**GENERAL SECRETARIAT**

Based in Geneva, the GS is the headquarters of the Network. It has a leading role in the coordination of all ISS units.

**NATIONAL BRANCHES**

The 13 Branches are legally independent non-profit organizations. They represent ISS in their respective countries.

- Australia
- Belgium
- Canada
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Netherlands
- Philippines
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Venezuela

**AFFILIATED BUREAUS**

The 4 Affiliated Bureaus are either governmental or non-governmental. In addition to their main activities they undertake assignments as members of ISS.

- Israel
- New Zealand
- Portugal
- South Africa

**CORRESPONDENTS**

The Correspondents are associated organizations engaged in social work and legal services representing the ISS Network in more than 100 countries. For the most part, they primarily handle casework. They collaborate closely with the GS. (Full list on page 18)

**PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT**

ISS has more than 500 social workers, lawyers, psychologists and mediators plus 6,000 volunteers and support staff in more than 120 countries.

The Federation is comprised of the General Secretariat, National Branches, Affiliated Bureaus and Correspondents.

The ISS Network is made up of more than 120 operational members and partners worldwide.

The ISS worldwide network members benefit from:

- Assistance from the General Secretariat for all general issues
- Access to the legal expertise of the International Reference Centre for the rights of children deprived of their family
- The availability of seminars and training in intercountry casework and related issues
- The opportunity to influence international policies and legislation related to the best interests of children, adults and families separated by international borders
- Regional and international visibility and accreditation through membership in a worldwide professional network

**ISS Cases by Field of Activities**

NUMBER OF CASES

- Family/ Maintenance
- International Family Conflict
- Adoption
- Legal Assistance
- Forced & Voluntary Migration
- Others
- Documentation
- Other

*One-on-one counseling, divorce, marriage, pre-marital counseling, separation, health-related assistance, change of family name, financial issues, social benefits, education and other.
THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT

A Pivotal Role Across Borders

The General Secretariat is more than just the “central office” of ISS. It is the nerve centre of the ISS Network and its structural backbone, coordinating the different expertise available globally, providing institutional support to the Network, and disseminating general information on ISS services to Network Members, Correspondents, external organisations and entities requesting assistance.

The specific mandate of the GS is to:
- Guarantee the coherence and coordination of the Network’s cross-border activities.
- Develop and strengthen the operational capacity of the Network’s members.
- Coordinate, sustain, supervise and assess the functions of the Network.
- Organize all communication and shared knowledge-base of the organization.
- Represent the organisation and advocate at the international level.

Besides coordinating the Network’s activities, the General Secretariat also reinforces support provided to ISS partners and members throughout the world. This support is provided through the following functions of the Secretariat:

1. TRAINING AND NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

The General Secretariat’s Casework Division (ISS/CW) is the focal point for members on intercountry social and legal cases.

2. RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

The ISS General Secretariat Internationial Reference Centre (ISS/IRC) has expertise in policies and legislative practices concerning research, knowledge-sharing and best practices, as well as expertise in the protection of children deprived of their families or at risk of being deprived, in need of adoption or already adopted.

ISS/IRC is well-known among professionals thanks to the ISS/IRC monthly newsletter which focuses on international adoption and analyzes the latest developments in the protection of children deprived of their family.

ISS is supporting SOS Children’s Villages International and various partners, in organizing the Quality in Alternative Care International Conference to be held in Prague 2011. The objective of this Conference is to identify ways to empower children and young people, to promote the implementation of quality care standards, to provide a platform and networking opportunities, and to identify changes needed in policy and practice to align them with international frameworks.

3. PROGRAMME AND POLICY SUPPORT

The General Secretariat defines ISS’s strategy, policies and objectives in close collaboration with Network representatives and provides the support necessary to ensure effective governance.

Accomplishments in 2009

- Supported the revision of the ISS statutes. Ensured that ISS has the most effective constitution and governance model possible.
- Initiated collaboration with 10 new countries, ensuring that cases of separated children and families can be dealt with by a wider network of partners around the world.
- Organized training seminars to strengthen the capacity of existing partners.
- Developed comprehensive solutions to reinforce the Network in Africa and Latin America.
- Signed cooperation agreements with 2 international organisations to expand the ISS global presence.
- Trained professionals in 9 countries on 4 continents.
- Published and distributed a Monthly Review to 5,000 entities in 185 countries. The objective of this publication is to further the promotion of best practices in international adoption, and to improve those practices both in receiving countries and countries of origin.
- Assessed child protection frameworks, including adoption situations in various countries of origin. Findings and recommendations of these field missions are increasingly taken into consideration in the review and implementation of laws on inter-country adoption.
- Worked closely with SOS Children’s Villages International, UNICEF, and other organizations, in collaboration with the government of Brazil to draft the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.
- Introduced a measurable performance culture within the General Secretariat, and strict budgetary controls to monitor expenditures. Operating costs have been reduced by 22% since 2008.
- Generated a new website for the Secretariat that enhances the visibility of the ISS global Network.

Objectives for 2010-12

- Instigate an international project related to the promotion of transnational family mediation which will:
  - Provide an international database of mediators and reliable country documentation on the status of mediation;
  - Train social workers, judicial and administrative authorities on international mediation. Create a practical tool to reinforce cooperation between states in the context of serious family disputes.
- Inaugurate collaboration with 15 new countries.
- Form cooperation agreements with new international organisations and have 10 new agreements by the end of 2011. This would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the ISS Network around the globe and provide increased visibility.
- Publish a manual containing ISS methodology and procedures for handling intercountry casework, taking into consideration the recent evolution in casework around the world.
- Continue to assess the child protection framework, including adoption situations in various countries of origin, such as Guatemala, Ivory Coast, Vietnam and Haiti.
- Promote a family environment for children with disabilities.
- Search and recruit for a high level and globally recognized professional for the post of International President.
- Maximize the positive effect of a new constitution, a new governance model and a revised secretariat structure to help ISS realise its full growth potential.
- Launch a new edition on the rights of the child in domestic and intercountry adoption, ethics and principles, guidelines for practice.
- Promote global implementation of the UN Guidelines in child protection and migration as well as the UN millennium goals.

In the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, ISS issued a position paper calling for the application of international standards when dealing with adoptions. These guidelines were embraced by numerous aid organizations and governments during the disaster relief operations.
Branches and Affiliated Bureaus

INTERCOUNTRY CASEWORK
ISS establishes links between international social services, providing them with the information necessary to enable decisions in the best interests of the beneficiaries. ISS services include drafting social reports on the situation of a child, his/her family and/or environment and providing mediation services relating to international family conflicts.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (EXAMPLES)
- Western Africa — ISS supports the voluntary return of children who are victims of trafficking and helps victims re-integrate into their community of origin.
- Hong Kong — ISS assists the social and professional integration of ethnic minorities of non-Chinese origin. Services include psychological support, information sharing, temporary shelter and language courses.
- Philippines — ISS provides temporary shelter and assists abused labour migrants, victims of human trafficking as well as women in crisis. ISS also advocates greater respect for human rights of migrant and overseas Filipino workers.
- Libya — ISS UK organizes missions to establish contact between parents involved in family conflicts and identifies solutions in the best interest of the children.
- Bulgaria — ISS has developed various programs to support the social and professional integration of young people leaving care institutions, and to improve placement structures for children at risk.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ADVICE
ISS supports legislative/administrative and national/international reform processes, organizes training seminars for social work students and professionals working on child protection issues.

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY
ISS is the hub of international policies and legislative practices on research, knowledge sharing, best practices and expertise on child protection. Special focus is given to children deprived of their families, and families involved in international family disputes.

In 2009 ISS worked closely with SOS Children’s Villages International and UNICEF to ensure that the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children were welcomed by the UN General Assembly.

ISS provides professionals from developing and transitional countries with fact sheets outlining procedures that can be used in supporting children without parental care.

Strategic Objectives
- Extend casework services to new areas
- Effectively rebrand, market and network

Active in:
- Argentina
- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Hungary
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Israel
- Italy
- Japan
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Korea (South)
- Korea (North)
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Morocco
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nicaragua
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Qatar
- Romania
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Switzerland
- Sweden
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam
- Yemen

Adaptable and bright, he integrated very quickly and started to attend school.
At the request of French Social Services, ISS managed to locate Amir’s family in his home village.
It came to light that Amir’s departure was provoked by his parent’s critical socio-economic situation. They had had to make the impossibly difficult decision to send their son abroad where potential opportunities might insure his survival.
Meanwhile, ISS France helped to normalize his legal status. He also received psychological counselling and training. ISS ensured that he maintained contact with his family.
Later on, Andreea was picked up by the local authorities and placed in foster care.
The authorities contacted ISS UK and asked for assistance in finding Andreea’s family in Romania.
ISS UK discovered that although it appeared Andreea was brought to the UK for a better life under private fostering arrangements, in reality she had been sold by the uncle to recover the cost of her education and living expenses.
Andreea remains in official foster care while the local authorities and ISS UK conduct assessments on the birth parents and family members in Romania in preparation for Andreea’s safe return.

Later in 2009, almost all intercountry cases involved a home study.

436 persons were repatriated in 2009, most of them children.
FIELD NOTES

Going As Far As Necessary

Little Aimée was 3 1/2 years old and needed medical treatment which was not available in DR Congo, her home country.

A friend of the family suggested taking Aimée to Sweden for care. The family agreed, and she was placed temporarily with a foster family in Sweden, a family which had lived in DR Congo.

When the medical authorities realized that Aimée would need ongoing close medical supervision and possibly further operations, it became necessary for the child welfare authorities in Sweden to make long-term plans for her care.

ISS was asked to arrange contact with her parents and to determine how they wished to proceed. Would they agree to placement if a suitable long-term family could be found for her?

The ISS correspondent in DR Congo had some difficulty in contacting Aimée’s parents who lived in a distant part of the country and could only be reached by radio.

Some two months later, however, ISS received a reply. The parents had been interviewed and agreed that it was best for Aimée to remain in Sweden. They also gave their consent to placement. The father asked to visit Sweden the following summer in order to meet the family that was offering to care for his daughter.

Branches and Affiliated Bureaus (continued)
Correspondents are associated organisations engaged in social work and legal services representing the ISS Network in more than 100 countries. They primarily handle casework and inform the General Secretariat about changes in relevant legislation in their country and the social environment. Correspondents collaborate closely with the ISS GS and the Network.

Algeria
Andorra
Anguilla
Antigua
Argentina
Aruba
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belarus
Belize
Benin
Bermuda
Bolivia
Bosnia Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Cambodia
Cameroon
Cape Verde
Cayman Islands
Chile
Colombia
Congo Brazzaville
Costa Rica
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Dominican Republic
Egypt
El Salvador
Estonia
Fiji
Finland
France
Gabon
Gambia
Germany
Ghana
Gibraltar
Grenada
Guatemala
Guinea Conakry
Guyana
Iceland
India
Indonesia
Iran
Ireland
Italy
Ivy Coast
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Korea
Kosovo
Laos
Latvia
Lebanon
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Malawi
Malaysia
Mali
Malta
Mauritania
Moldova
Monaco
Morocco
Namibia
Nepal
Netherlands Antilles
Niger
Norway
Pakistan
Palestine
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Puerto Rico
Romania
Russia
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Sao Tome e Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Singapore
Slovenia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Syria
Tanzania
Thailand
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
Vietnam
Zambia

Statistics (2009)
The National Branches, Affiliated Bureaus, Correspondents and external organisations exchange services and provide assistance.

Correspondents

ISS Cases by Country

- South Africa: 2,642
- United States: 1,126
- Germany: 666
- United Kingdom: 1,213
- Japan: 625
- Hong Kong: 659
- Philippines: 188
- Australia: 246
- Netherlands: 530
- Portugal: 53
- Zambian

Help Line Support

- Number of Cases
- Forced & Voluntary Migration: 9,488
- Family Based Care & Adoption: 3,284
- International Family Cases: 1,044
- Others: 370
- Cross-Cultural Marriage and Counselling: 331
- Legal Assistance: 246

Others

- 370

ISS Cases by Global Totals

- 9,114
- 3,157
- 2,642
- 1,213
- 1,126
- 666
- 659
- 530
- 246
- 188
- 53
- 246
- 1,044
- 334
- 328
- 170
- 128
- 370
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Publications

ISS produces publications on various issues relating to child and family protection. These documents provide up-to-date information on legislation, practices and challenges, including a critical analysis and relevant commentary.

- **Expediting Intercountry Adoptions in the Aftermath of A Natural Disaster... Preventing Future Harm**
  - 2010, 73 pages
  - Available in English
  - This report examines intercountry adoption practices in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti. Haiti has been a 'popular' country of origin, meaning that thousands of children were at some stage of the adoption process – in some cases simply “identified” as potentially adoptable – when the earthquake struck. This report documents and reviews the vast range of responses and the exceptional measures implemented by some countries, with the principal objective of this report being to identify lessons to be learned from this situation in order to prevent future harm.

- **The Place of the Child’s Health in The Adoption Process.**
  - 2010, 20 pages
  - Available in English, French and Spanish
  - In the current context of intercountry adoption, which is witnessing an increase in the number of children with medical problems, the Service de l’Adoption Internationale (International Adoption Service) of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the ISS/IRC have jointly undertaken a study, which focuses on the place given to issues linked to the child’s health in the adoption process.

- **Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children**
  - A United Nations Framework
  - SOS Children’s Villages International and ISS
  - 2009, 29 pages
  - Available in English and other UN languages
  - This publication presents the final version of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which was formally welcomed by the UN General Assembly to mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In each section, the publication includes questions relating to national policy which aim at inspiring reflection on the implementation of the key principles of the Guidelines at the national level.

- **Adoption from Viet Nam**
  - Findings and Recommendations of an Assessment
  - A report produced by ISS
  - 2009, 82 pages
  - Available in English and French
  - The main aims of the report were twofold: first, to identify and address problems in the adoption processes; second, to review the new draft law on adoption, and propose any relevant amendments. The report makes recommendations targeting key participants not only within Viet Nam but also in the receiving countries, agencies and international organizations.

- **Assessment of the Adoption System in Ivory Coast**
  - Available in French
  - Today the system of child protection is very limited in Ivory Coast. The cultural tradition of informal foster care largely dominates. Government support for families is virtually nonexistent, both on a financial level and for psycho-social issues. This publication presents a clear and detailed picture of the adoption system in that country, and proposes measures for its improvement.

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- **Do It for the Children: How to Build A Secure Parental Relationship After A Separation**
  - by Jennifer McIntosh, Ph.D.
  - 2010, 28 pages
  - Available in English, French and German
  - Being separated parents can prove to be a difficult task. This booklet offers support, ideas and a bit of wisdom on how to get there, do it for the children.

- **Assessment of the Adoption System in Ivory Coast**
  - Available in French
  - Today the system of child protection is very limited in Ivory Coast. The cultural tradition of informal foster care largely dominates. Government support for families is virtually nonexistent, both on a financial level and for psycho-social issues. This publication presents a clear and detailed picture of the adoption system in that country, and proposes measures for its improvement.

- **Help us one day, we help everyday”**
A Brief Lexicon

Intercountry casework represents the main activity of ISS. ISS has developed an expertise in providing assistance and counselling to parents and children facing complex social situations of an international nature. The global ISS network ensures the capacity to provide coordinated international assistance by establishing links between social services in different countries and providing them with accurate and comprehensive information to enable them to propose the best solution for all protagonists involved.

International family mediation offers support to bi-national parents of children deprived of family change and disruption. A family mediator(s) helps these families improve communication and to work towards agreements which are acceptable to all concerned. At the centre of these discussions is the protection of the children’s best interests.

International family mediation can help avoid long, painful and expensive legal battles where the psychological distress on children is often overlooked.

The International Reference Centre for the rights of children deprived of their family (ISS/IRC) is a programme of the General Secretariat launched in 1997. Its principal goal consists of sharing, distributing and promoting good practices in the realm of intercountry adoption and more broadly the protection of children deprived of their family. The ISS/IRC advocates for the ratification and application of international conventions relating to the rights of children.

In 2009, 852 files were opened by ISS Branches and Affiliated Bureaux regarding tracing relatives in other countries.

National Branches and Affiliated Bureaux are ISS voting members, comply with the Statutes and General Principles of the organization, and are committed to ISS’s vision and mission. These organisations are represented in the different governance bodies (International Council and Professional Advisory Committee) as voting members.

Correspondents are associated or partner organisations, engaged in social work and legal services. They represent the ISS network in more than 100 countries but are part of the ISS network and are committed to respect the General Principles of the organization.
Su apoyo nos da fuerza y paciencia

Благодаря вам, я снова окружен моим семейством

Thank you again for your support

I am eternally grateful

Thank you, I'm back with my family

Your help has been invaluable to us

Your help gives us strength and patience

I am a winner of the world's best photographer.

Thank you for your help

Concept and Design:
VINCENT WINTER ASSOCIES
Paris

VWA has created editorial design strategies and concepts for a wide range of publications globally.

Vincent Winter is also an award-winning photographer.

CONTACT: vw@vwaparis.com

ISS General Secretariat
32, quai du Seujet
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 906 77 00
Fax: +41 22 906 77 01
E-mail: info@iss-ssi.org
Web: www.iss-ssi.org