

**International Family Services
Factors that Lead to International Adoptions
from Convention Countries**

In almost all cases of international adoption, the primary factors leading to children being adopted include poverty and lack of adequate social support in the sending countries. This is evidenced in ways unique to the particular country and culture. Studies of those factors are more common where the number of adoptions is greater. Thus, factors in India are less examined than are the factors in China.

International Family Services currently offers adoption programs from three Hague Convention countries, India, China and Guatemala.

India – Poverty and Unwed Mother Stigma

“In India, extreme poverty and the stigma of unwed motherhood often force young women to abandon their children at birth. Many of the babies and children in Indian orphanages are abandoned by parents who are unable to provide for them.”

(Source: <http://india.adoption.com/foreign/india-adoption-background.html> accessed on 12/18/07.)

Adoptions from India to the U.S. in FY 2006 totaled 320 children. (Source: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/stats/stats_451.html, accessed 12/19/07)

China – One Child Policy

“The Chinese government implemented the One Child Policy in 1979. The goal of this policy was to keep China's population below 1.3 billion by the year 2000. Today, China is home to over 1.2 billion people. Couples who violate the One Child Policy are subject to fines (equal to three years' salary!), community ostracism, and even jail time.

“Baby boys are more valued in Chinese society than are baby girls because boys carry on the ancestral name, inheritance laws pass property on to sons, and sons are responsible for taking care of aged parents. Because of this many couples will abandon a baby girl. A heartbreakingly cruel choice, yes, and an event that happens all too often – hundreds of thousands of baby girls are abandoned every year in China.

“The babies are abandoned in public places (such as busy streets, railway stations, and in front of public buildings) so they will be found quickly. The babies are abandoned as infants – usually when they are only a few days old. In addition to little girls, handicapped babies and sick babies (both boys and girls) are also abandoned because most parents in China don't have the money to provide for their special needs. Once found, the abandoned babies are given a medical exam and then taken to orphanages.”
(Source: <http://china.adoption.com/chinese/china-adoption-background.html>, accessed on 12/18/07)

“The social pressure exerted by the one-child policy has affected the rate at which parents abandon undesirable children, and many live in state-sponsored orphanages, from which thousands are adopted internationally and by Chinese parents each year. In the 1980s and early 1990s, poor care and high mortality rates in some state institutions generated intense international pressure for reform.[64] In the years that followed, adoption rates climbed dramatically, increasing to the U.S. alone from about 200 in 1992 to more than 7,900 in 2005.[65] According to Sten Johansson and Ola Nygren (1991) adoptions accounted for half of the so-called "missing girls" in the 1980s in the PRC.[66] Through the 1980s, as the one-child policy came into force, parents who desired a son but bore a daughter in some cases failed to report or delayed the reporting of the birth of the girl to the authorities. But rather than neglecting or abandoning unwanted girls, the parents may have offered them up for formal or informal adoption. A majority of children who went through formal adoption in China in the later 1980s were girls, and the proportion who were girls increased over time (Johansson and Nygren 1991).”

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One-child_policy#_ref-63, accessed on 12/18/07)

Adoptions from China to the U.S. in FY 2006 totaled 6,493 children. (Source: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/stats/stats_451.html, accessed 12/19/07)

Guatemala – Fallout from Civil War, Poverty, Possible Trafficking

One of the major factors leading to international in Guatemala is the extreme poverty evident there. One adoption advocate in Guatemala wrote,

“Of the half a million children that are born each year, 32 of each thousand will die as infants and 43 of each thousand children will die before their fifth birthday of pneumonia, diarrhea and other curable diseases.

“While the adults find difficult to get a job, almost a million children work in Guatemala to support themselves and help to support their families. Two thirds of them live in poverty and one third in extreme poverty.”

(Source: <http://www.adaguatemala.org/English/news/2007/02/post.html>, accessed, 12/18/07).

Adoptions from Guatemala to the U.S. in FY 2006 totaled 4,135 children. (Source: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/stats/stats_451.html, accessed 12/19/07.)

“International adoption in Guatemala arose after the end of their dreadful 36-year civil war (the civil war in Guatemala officially ended in 1996). After claims arose of babies being kidnapped and sold to adoption agencies, many countries (including the U.S.) began mandating that DNA tests be performed to ensure that the woman relinquishing the baby for adoption was in fact the birthmother. All international adoptions in Guatemala occur through private attorneys or through orphanages, since there are no state-run social service programs.”

(Source: <http://guatemala.adoption.com/foreign/guatemala-adoption-background.html>, accessed 12/18/07)

Trafficking prevention efforts are described in a Wikipedia entry.

“To prevent irregularities [outline format added]

- 1) biological parents have to be interviewed by a social worker at the so called Family Court.
- 2) Thereafter Guatemala's Attorney General's office, also called PGN (Procuraduría General de la Nación[2]), scrutinizes all available documents before allowing the adoption process to be finalized.
- 3) If the adoptive parents reside in the United States, the stringent rules of the US embassy in Guatemala have to be followed before the adopted child can receive an immigration visa to enter the USA.
 - a. These rules include two DNA test to ensure the person who relinquishes the child is the child's parent.
 - i. The first DNA test has to be performed before the file enters PGN. The US embassy has an agreement with PGN that no adoptions for US residence can be approved before an DNA test has proven the child's identity.
 - ii. The second test will be performed after PGN to prevent a child swap during the adoption process.
- 4) After PGN gives it's approval to the adoption the biological parent of the child needs to sign off one last time on the relinquishment. After that the child is by Guatemalan law the child of the adoptive parents.”

(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guatemala_adoption, accessed 12/18/07)

Nevertheless, critics such as UNICEF advocate that the whole system in Guatemala be moved from attorneys to government officials (see <http://www.guatadopt.com/archives/000513.html>). However, there is concern that this approach will shutter adoptions from Guatemala, forcing children into under-funded state institutions and onto the streets.

In regards to the Hague Convention, pressure from the U.S. Department of State, is leading to changes in Guatemalan adoption law in late 2007 and into 2008 (see http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry_3903.html).