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for the rights of the children deprived of their
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NEWSLETTER

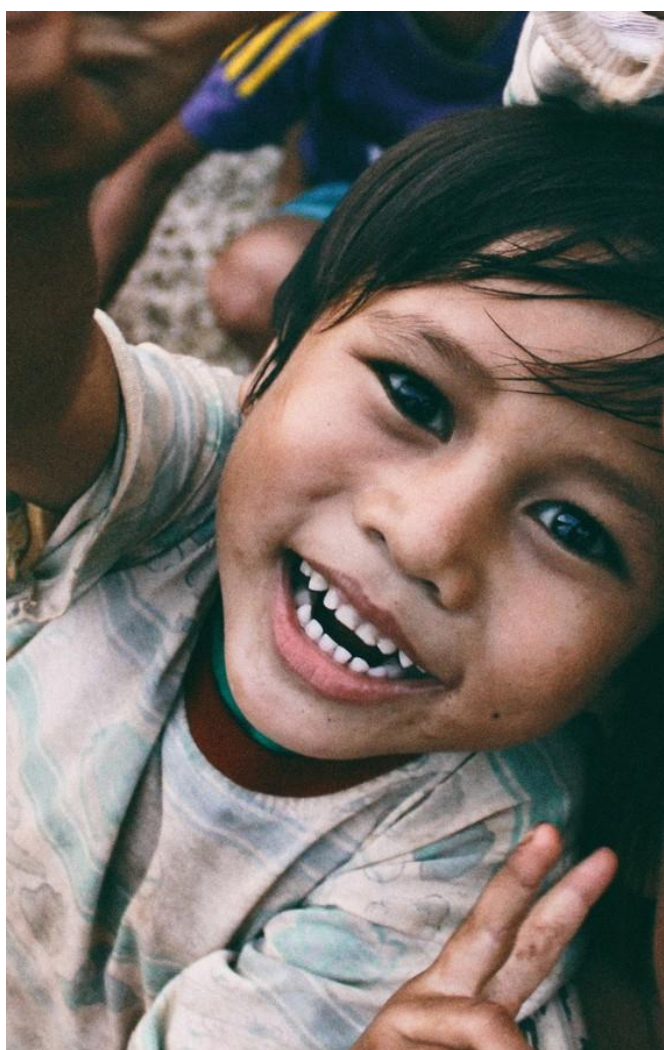


TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	2
ACTORS IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND CROSS-BORDER CHILD PROTECTION	6
ISS/IRC NEWS	6
BRIEFS	8
PRACTICE	12
CHILD-DOG PAIRING IN FOSTER OR INSTITUTIONAL CARE: BENEFITS AND RISKS OF A PILOT PROJECT IN FRANCE	12
KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE WORKS WITH PARTNERS TO ASSIST CHILDREN DISPLACED FROM UKRAINE	13
EMPOWERING FAMILIES: THIS LIFE CAMBODIA'S APPROACH TO SUPPORT AND REUNIFICATION	15
THE FLOOR IS YOURS	18
THE CHILEAN STATE'S DEBT TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH: ERADICATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN RESIDENTIAL CARE	18
CHILD HOUSES: TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF SYRIA'S VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH FAMILY SUPPORT AND FAMILY-CENTRED CARE	19
FURTHER READINGS AND MATERIALS	21
FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND TRAINING	24

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The International Social Service celebrates its centennial: A remarkable journey of 100 years!

ISS recently celebrated its centennial, marking a century of dedication to protecting children and reuniting families across borders. In this edition of the ISS/IRC newsletter, we pay tribute to the remarkable journey and collective efforts that have shaped ISS legacy. Join us as we reflect on key milestones, celebrate the global connections we have fostered, and look toward the future of social work, child protection and family support.

From the 7th to the 11th of October, 2024, ISS hosted a [week full of celebrations](#). The highlight was the [International Conference, "Throughout Time, Across Borders"](#), where multi-expert panels gathered to explore critical issues in child protection and family reunification. The conference, alongside the historic [exhibition "Across Time and Borders,"](#) offered a deep dive into ISS's rich history, with the [Academic Symposium](#) providing valuable insights into its century-long impact. The celebrations culminated in a 100th Anniversary Dinner for ISS friends and partners.

Please also visit our **centennial-dedicated website** for more information: <https://100yearsiss.org/>

ISS' history: A century of casework, advocacy and action

ISS is a historic organisation founded by visionary women who pioneered the use of casework as an innovative method to assist children and families across borders. From the outset, **ISS has been ahead of its time.** It recognised children as rights holders long before international law acknowledged them as such and championed child and family protection well before international standards were established.

From its earliest days, ISS has been at the forefront of international efforts to protect vulnerable children and families through innovative casework and evidence-based advocacy. In the early 1920s, when it was still known as the International Migration Service (IMS), ISS conducted pioneering research on migration challenges. A key milestone was the 1921 survey of migrant issues across Europe, which was shared with the League of Nations and became the foundation for later reports, such as [Mary Hurlbutt's](#) influential 1924 report, "The Welfare of Migrants."

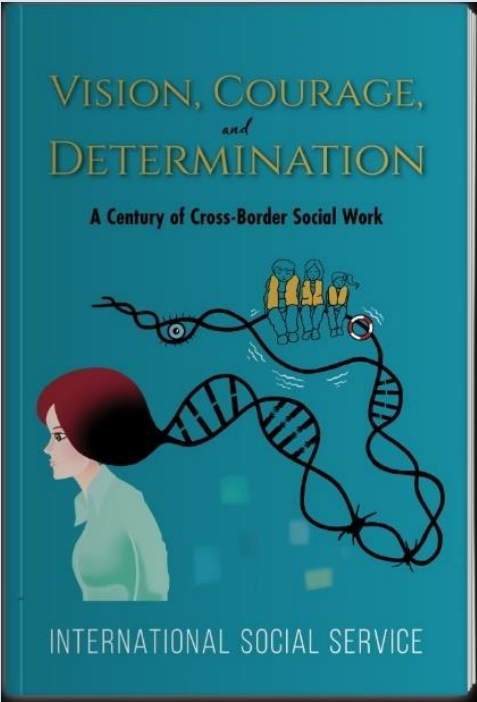
By the mid-1920s, ISS was actively shaping national and international policies through its publications. Reports like "Social Problems of Migrating Children" and "Separated Families" provided insights into cross-border challenges and were used to advocate for legislative reforms. During this period, ISS also began publishing "Les Migrants," an annual report detailing key activities and field studies, the precursor to today's Global Report.

ISS's history of advocacy is also closely linked with key international milestones for children's rights (read also our ISS/IRC Special Edition Newsletter N. 269). It actively contributed to the [1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#), which set forth foundational principles affirming the rights of children, emphasising their entitlement to special care and protection. Decades later, ISS played a significant role in advocating for the adoption of the [1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which remains the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. In the present, ISS, especially through its [International Reference Centre for the Children Deprived of their Families](#) (IRC), continues to play an active role, producing thematic alternative reports, participating in pre-sessions, and advocating for stronger implementation of children's rights worldwide.

The organisation also supported the development of the 2009 UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, ensuring that children deprived of their family environment receive appropriate protection and care. In its work, ISS remains committed to promoting the effective application of these guidelines.

Furthermore, ISS has been instrumental in drafting the Hague Conventions, particularly the 1980 Hague Convention on International Child Abduction, the [1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption](#), and the 1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection. Today, ISS, and more specifically IRC, is actively engaged in offering technical support for their practical operation, ensuring their effective implementation and advocating for their wider ratification.

An area where ISS expertise and advocacy is and will continue to be specifically required is the intersection between International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and Private International Law (PIL). ISS holds this dual expertise, placing it in a unique position to navigate these intersecting domains. This is particularly relevant in complex family and child protection matters with cross-border components. This expertise makes ISS/IRC a valuable partner capable of assisting the Committee on the Rights of the Child or the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), among others, in addressing the intricate legal landscape where IHRL and PIL converge, ensuring a comprehensive and well-informed approach to issues within the fields of child protection, alternative care, and adoption.



Discover the remarkable 100-year journey of the International Social Service (ISS) in this commemorative book. By exploring our story, you join us in our mission to protect and empower families and children across borders. Your support through this book helps us continue our vital work worldwide.

The book *Vision, Courage, and Determination: A Century of Cross-Border Social Work* provides insights into the history and impact of ISS over the past century, focusing on its role in promoting cross-border social work and advancing the rights of vulnerable populations, particularly children and families.

This publication provides a comprehensive overview of ISS's evolution, achievements, and ongoing efforts to promote international collaboration, social justice, and the well-being of vulnerable populations. Through its century-long legacy of cooperation and advocacy, ISS remains a beacon of hope and a catalyst for positive change in the realm of cross-border social work and child protection.

Key themes and insights from the conference

The conference covered a wide array of topics, reflecting the complexities and challenges faced by children and families today as well as the variety of areas ISS works on.

One prominent theme was the increasing number of **children on the move** worldwide, driven by various and escalating crises and conflicts (read article by Child Houses Syria on page 19). These children, especially separated and unaccompanied children (read also article by KIND Europe on page 13), often find themselves lacking essential resources and effective psychosocial and legal support, leading to marginalization and exposure to human rights violations. In addressing these issues, ISS underscored the importance of enhancing resources to empower the social workforce, enabling professionals to better understand and

meet the unique needs of these vulnerable children. Furthermore, the establishment of pathways for multi-agency, multidisciplinary case management is critical for delivering holistic support.

“Different faces, places and voices inhabit us”. “Navigating and searching for one’s origins and identity is a process that process “(...) can turn adoptees’ (and their families’) lives upside down”.

– *Adoptee testimony during the panel on “Beyond borders: Navigating origins in intercountry adoption and surrogacy”.*

While intercountry adoption numbers have declined since 2004 (see ISS/IRC Special Edition Newsletter N. 269), the demand for support related to **search for origins** is on the rise, highlighting a complex landscape of ongoing reforms in different countries. Search for origins is a diverse, complex and often very intense emotional journey marked by contrasting feelings. This underscores the need for targeted support and understanding throughout this transformative experience. Enhanced collaboration among professionals is essential to facilitate this process. The panellists also stressed that responses to the discovery of illicit adoptions need to be improved.

In tandem with these themes, the **prioritisation of quality and family-based alternative care** emerged as a central concern. Factors leading to family separation, such as difficulties accessing essential services and the lack of adequate training for practitioners, demand urgent attention. Children in institutional care are particularly vulnerable (read article on institution-related trafficking in Chile on page 18), and even more so if they have disabilities. Strengthening prevention efforts, including community-based support systems and early intervention programmes (read the article on a Cambodian NGO, This Life's approach to family support and empowerment, on page 15), is essential to reduce the need for institutionalisation and facilitate the deinstitutionalisation process (read an article on innovative solutions for children in alternative care in the French context on page 12). The panel also discussed the role of advocacy action which from ISS’ perspective serves to bridge the gap between lived experiences and structural change and the need to better integrate child participation to achieve real change.

Discussions on **international family conflicts** highlighted the need to apply the best interests of the child in these challenging situations, emphasising mediation as a powerful tool for resolution. Key topics included parental responsibility and the importance of placing children's needs and rights at the centre of conflict resolution. The importance of bridging the gap between private international law and human rights law in practice and more specifically in international child abduction cases, was also explored, serving for further reflection.

Looking ahead: The future of ISS

The final panel explored the shifting dynamics of child protection in an interconnected world where children's rights are increasingly deprioritised, particularly in the face of multiple compounding crises. Discussions encompassed various topics, including advancements in technology and children's digital rights, changes in family and social structures, climate change (see also ISS/IRC Special Edition Newsletter, N. 273, on climate change and child protection), mental health, child participation and empowerment. Expert panelists from academia and key partner institutions, including the HCCH and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, contributed valuable insights into these critical issues.

As the global social work organisation, we also reflected on how the role of social workers is evolving in this rapidly changing landscape, highlighting the need to focus on preventing vulnerable situations before they arise.

To effectively address these challenges and create real change, collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders across various sectors and regions is essential. By fostering partnerships and sharing expertise, we can work collectively towards a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children and families.

“We hope that the conversations we had and the ideas and good practices we shared will continue to resonate in our work, strengthen the bound of our network, and inspire new partnerships to contribute to meaningful progress in the field of child protection”.

– *Giovanna Ricciardi, ISS International Conference Coordinator, in the closing remarks of the conference.*

IRC team

October 2024

ACTORS IN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION AND CROSS-BORDER CHILD PROTECTION

- **Andorra, Austria, Chile, France, Paraguay, Sweden, Thailand, Togo and Venezuela:** these countries have updated the contact details of their Central Authorities, competent authorities and/or accredited adoption bodies designated under the 1993 Hague Convention.
- **Ecuador and Ukraine:** these countries have updated the contact details of their Central Authorities designated under the 1996 Hague Convention.
- New State responses to [Country profiles](#), [Tables on Costs associated to Intercountry Adoption](#) and [Statistics](#) in relation to the 1993 Hague Convention.

Source: Hague Conference on Private International Law, [Latest updates](#).

ISS/IRC NEWS



COFFEE WITH ISS

Building bridges between International Human Rights Law and Private International Law in children's rights

Please join the International Social Service in an engaging session on the intersection between IHRL and PIL. Let's explore together how we can better support your work!

11 September 2024 Palais Wilson
2 PM - 3 PM CET Geneva

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Overview of ISS and IRC Initiatives
- Identification of training needs for future in depth sessions
- Addressing challenges at the intersection
- Building synergies

CONTACT US if you have any questions, please contact us at irc-cir@iss-ssi.org

“Coffee with ISS” – ISS organises a briefing session with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva

On 11th September, ISS held a briefing session with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child at Palais Wilson in Geneva. The session aimed to present ISS's advocacy action and cross-border casework, focusing on the need for a coordinated approach between international human rights law and private international law in complex cross-border child protection cases.

Through this briefing, ISS emphasised the importance of enhancing cooperation to ensure better outcomes for children involved in international disputes and protection issues. ISS also reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Committee in finding solutions that prioritise the best interests of the child and apply this joint approach.

If you wish to have more information on this activity and other key advocacy efforts, please contact Beatriz Santaemilia, ISS Advocacy Coordinator at beatriz.santaemilia@iss-ssi.org

ISS/IRC participates in the 99th pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Our ISS/IRC took part in the [99th pre-session](#) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, where we presented key challenges and recommendations regarding Ethiopia.

Prior to the session, ISS submitted an [alternative report](#) outlining critical issues related to children's rights in Ethiopia, focusing on child protection, alternative care and adoption processes. During the session, ISS further highlighted the lack of a comprehensive legal framework for alternative care and the urgent need to ensure the effective implementation of the foster care and domestic adoption directive. The discussion also addressed the ongoing ban on intercountry adoptions and its implementation.

The session was marked by productive collaboration among stakeholders, fostering a meaningful dialogue on how to address these pressing challenges. ISS remains committed to supporting efforts to strengthen child protection systems in Ethiopia and beyond.

ISS participated in a two-days seminar on surrogacy – University of Bergamo, IT

On 17 and 18 October 2024, ISS actively participated in the [interdisciplinary seminar](#) on surrogacy, organised by the *Università degli Studi* of Bergamo, IT. During these two days, in a climate of important changes for the Italian legal system due to the enactment of a new law criminalising international surrogacy arrangements concluded by Italians abroad, surrogacy-related issues were presented and debated from different legal angles: international, constitutional, criminal, and philosophical law. ISS presented the Verona Principles, its children's rights perspective, and stressed the need for States to

have a robust safeguards system in place to protect the rights of children born through surrogacy, regardless of their political and/or legal stance on this practice.

The seminar was also the occasion to inform about the translation of the Verona Principles in [Italian](#).

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Children on the move in Morocco – now available!

As part of the UNICEF *Hijra wa Himaya project+*, in collaboration with the *Présidence du Ministère Public* (PMP), ISS facilitated the elaboration of SOPs for the care of children on the move in Morocco. The [pilot version of these SOPs](#), as well as [other useful resources](#), are now available on UNICEF Morocco's website in French. As a reminder, the SOPs were adopted in 2023, and are being tested in two regions of Morocco prior to their national adoption and implementation.

ISS celebrates the International Day of Care and Support

To mark the International Day of Care and Support on 29 October 2024, ISS took part in multiple UN events in Geneva and New York, organized by OHCHR, ILO, and UN Women.

In addition, ISS attended the global launch of the [Global Report on Children's Care and Protection 2024: Understanding and Preventing the Separation of Children from their Families](#). The report provides crucial insights into the factors leading to the separation of children from their families and offers evidence-based recommendations on how governments and stakeholders can uphold every child's right to grow up in a family environment. Drawing on global and national research, including new data from eight countries, the report incorporates the perspectives of over a thousand children, young people, families, and child protection professionals. It highlights critical gaps in child protection and social support services and provides recommendations for creating more inclusive, integrated care systems—especially in contexts of poverty, inequality, and violence.

The Global report complements ongoing discussions and consultations led by OHCHR on the so-called [global care reform](#), focusing on the rights of children and other persons in care, rights of caregivers as well as self-care questions. ISS has joined the informal CSO network at the OHCHR to participate in the ongoing consultations on care and support systems.

On this International Day of Care and Support, ISS reaffirms its commitment to advancing care reform and supporting initiatives that prioritise the well-being and rights of children worldwide.

ISS releases comprehensive training package for working with Children on the move!

ISS is pleased to share this new training package for working with children on the move, designed for social and para social workers across a variety of regional settings.

[“Children on the Move: Core Skills and Knowledge for Social Workers and Para Social Workers,”](#) offers a comprehensive curriculum addressing the unique challenges faced by children in refugee, internal displacement, and international migration contexts. The curriculum is designed as a stand-alone module that can be incorporated into existing social work curricula or national training programs for frontline social service workforce members. The material is most appropriate for those with foundational case management skills and providing direct services in countries with large populations of children on the move.

The training was developed by UNICEF in collaboration with ISS partners from the USA, Switzerland, and Australia, alongside academic partners from the University of Cape Town and the University of Belgrade, and technical inputs from UNHCR. ISS is proud to be part of this important contribution to capacity building that enhances practical understanding of child protection and case management with children on the move while emphasizing the rights of vulnerable children crossing borders.

The training is available free to download at: <https://www.iss-usa.org/children-on-the-move-training/>. You may also contact childprotection@unicef.org for questions related to implementing the course in your country.

Please stay tuned for information about upcoming webinars introducing the course in more detail.

ISS participates in the Fifth Conference on the HCCH Children’s Conventions, Malta V

The [Fifth Conference on the HCCH Children’s Conventions](#), themed "Bridges between Civil/Common Law and Islamic Law" (Malta V), concluded successfully in Malta from September 24 to 27, 2024.

Jointly organised by the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) and the Government of Malta, the event brought together legal experts, government officials, and child rights advocates from around the globe.

The Fifth Conference on the HCCH Children’s Conventions (Malta V) continued the work of previous conferences held under the Malta Process, an HCCH initiative aimed at fostering cooperation with States influenced by Islamic (Shari’a) law to address complex cross-border family disputes. Since its inception, the Malta Process has focused on facilitating solutions for international child protection issues, including parental child abduction, recovery of child support, and safeguarding contact rights between parents and children.

Among the key participants was [ISS Switzerland](#), as ISS Network representative, actively contributing insights and expertise in cross-border child protection.

ISS participates in the online webinar “Comparative and Regional Practices in Child Abduction”

In October 2024, on the 31st, ISS participated in the online webinar “Comparative and Regional Practices in Child Abduction,” organized by the Children’s Rights Academy (CRA) at the University of Geneva. Esteemed speakers presented comparative and regional perspectives on child abduction practices within their legal contexts. Among the key insights shared were the limited application of the HCCH 1980 Child Abduction Convention across African and Asian regions and the pressing need to promote its broader ratification.

Discussions also underscored the importance of strengthening child participation in legal proceedings that impact them, as well as the urgency for authorities responsible for child protection to adopt a child-centered approach. Such forums are essential for deepening the understanding of child abduction practices and fostering the global enhancement of child protection safeguards.

ISS joins a United Nations General Assembly side-event on “Children’s rights to access to justice and effective remedies: enabling strategies”

On 16th October, ISS attended the UNGA 79 Third Committee side-event titled “*Children’s Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies: Enabling Strategies*.” Organised by the Delegation of the European Union, the Permanent Mission of Uruguay, and UNICEF, this event explored key strategies to improve children's access to justice, with a focus on marginalised groups.

As ISS continues to closely follow discussions on this vital issue, the event’s insights contribute to our ongoing work advocating for children in alternative care, adopted children, children born through surrogacy and other vulnerable groups. This is especially timely as we look ahead to the release of General Comment No. 27 on children's access to justice.

BRIEFS

UN News

1) Ten years of the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, also known as OPIC.

A [celebration event](#) was held on 12th September, where Ann Skelton, Chair of the Committee, noted that despite the near-universal ratification of the Convention, only 52 States have ratified the OPIC.

The Committee has addressed critical issues through this protocol, including high-profile cases involving foreign fighters in camps in northeast Syria, as well as concerns regarding abortion and violence in residential care settings. Ms. Skelton stressed that these cases have been instrumental in translating rights into reality for children.

With the upcoming General Comment focusing on access to justice, now is the time for all stakeholders to advocate for broader ratification of the Third Optional Protocol. ISS is committed to ensuring that more children worldwide can access justice and uphold their rights.

2) International day of the victims of enforced disappearances – Statement by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In observance of the [International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances](#), 30 August, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a [statement](#) calling on States to take decisive action to uphold the rights of children subjected to enforced disappearances and ensure the restoration of their identity and family ties.

The Committee also recalls the [Joint Declaration on illegal international adoptions](#), approved in 2022 with other UN human rights mechanisms. This declaration mandates accountability for state and private entities involved in illegal adoptions resulting from enforced disappearances and stresses the importance of assisting affected children in understanding their origins and re-establishing family links upon their request.

3) The UN Independent Expert on Albinism presents her report on Children with Albinism and the Right to a family life

On 21st October 2024, the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism presented her [report to the UN General Assembly](#). The report highlights perspectives, findings from a joint research project, and recommendations on addressing the challenges faced by children with albinism, with a focus on their right to family life and improving their daily experiences.

4) The Global Pact for the Future

The UN General Assembly has adopted the [Pact for the Future](#), an agreement among States aimed at fostering collaboration to tackle some of the most pressing challenges facing our world.

This pact emphasises collective action and shared responsibility, setting a framework for countries to work together in addressing issues such as climate change, inequality, and global health crises. The Pact is split into five chapters: 1. Sustainable development and financing for development; 2. International peace and security; 3. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; 4. Youth and future generations and 5. Global governance.

As part of the Pact, the General Assembly also adopted two other documents. The Global Digital Compact sets out how States aim to respond to emerging technology, while the Declaration on Future Generations sets out a series of pledges for how States will promote the needs and interests of people who do not yet exist.

Notably, the chapter on “Youth and Future Generations” contains the bulk of content related to children. It acknowledges youth and future generations as distinct groups, recognising that children possess specific rights and protections under human rights law.

HCCH News

1) New Contracting State to the 1996 Child Protection Convention

[El Salvador](#) has acceded to the 1996 Child Protection Convention, which now has 55 Contracting Parties. The Convention will entry into force in July 2025.

ISS continues to work actively and advocate for the Convention's ratification, reinforcing its commitment to strengthening international cooperation and child protection standards globally.

2) Fifth Meeting of the Working Group established to complete the Country Profile and work on the draft Cooperation Request Recommended Model Form for the 1996 Child Protection Convention

The fifth meeting of the WG was held online on 23 October 2024, hosted by the Permanent Bureau (PB) in The Hague. The meeting was attended by 14 delegates representing 11 HCCH Members and one non-Member Contracting Party, as well as by members of the PB.

During the meeting, participants finalised the draft Country Profile for the 1996 Child Protection Convention, taking into account comments provided by Members in September 2024. For more information, please visit [HCCH website](#).

3) Publication of The Application of the 1996 Child Protection Convention to Unaccompanied and Separated Children — Update 2024

The recently updated *Application of the 1996 Child Protection Convention to Unaccompanied and Separated Children* (now only available in [English](#) and [French](#)) offers guidance for legal practitioners, judges, and child welfare professionals handling cross-border cases involving children without parental care. Originally published in 2022, this document aims to clarify how the 1996 Child Protection Convention applies in cases where children are unaccompanied or separated.

The 2024 update incorporates insights from expert discussions mandated by the Council on General Affairs and Policy, held earlier this year, to ensure the document remains aligned with current practices and needs in cross-border child protection.

Recent child protection case law

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/97/D/135/2021): In communication no. 135/2021, submitted by N.P. on behalf of her two daughters, J.P.M. and M.P.M., against the State of France, the case centres on the institutional placement of the girls to safeguard their rights to health and education.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child found the communication inadmissible under the Optional Protocol due to the author's failure to obtain the informed consent of her daughters, who were 12 and 11 years old at the time of submission. Although N.P. maintained supervised visitation rights, she did not justify why she acted on behalf of her daughters without their consent. Consequently, the Committee concluded that it could not examine the communication and declared it inadmissible under Article 5(2) of the OPIC.

European Court of Human Rights: In the case of [Zavridou v. Cyprus](#) (no. 14680/22), the applicant, Evangelia Zavridou, a Cypriot national born in 1970 and residing in Nicosia, alleges that the national authorities failed to uphold her custodial rights and enforce domestic court decisions. She claims, primarily under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, that the Cypriot authorities did not act swiftly and diligently to enforce Family Court orders granting her custody and care of her children. Zavridou contends that the authorities also neglected to make adequate efforts to facilitate her reunification with her children, thereby violating her right to respect for private and family life.

Around the world

Cambodia: On July 30, the Cambodia Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation launched its "Policy on Alternative Care for Children" to further prioritise the well-being of all children in Cambodia, including those whose circumstances require that they be cared for outside of a traditional family environment.

Source: [Khmer Times](#)

China: China has officially put an end to intercountry adoption except for cases involving the adoption of a child or stepchild by foreigners who are blood relatives within three generations.

Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Republic of China](#); [Reuters](#).

Italy: Italy's parliament has definitively approved Bill No. 824, amending Article 12 of Law No. 40 of February 19, 2004, to criminalise seeking surrogacy abroad by Italian citizens. The new law imposes severe penalties, including significant fines and potential jail time.

Source: [Senato della Repubblica](#)

South Korea: A new report by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) uncovers new evidence on the coercive methods used to force mothers in welfare shelters to give up their children for adoption.

Source: [CNN World](#); [The Guardian](#).

United States of America: A federal report reveals that at least 973 Indigenous children died at US government-supported boarding schools. The report is part of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative aimed at addressing intergenerational trauma and informing future policy. The findings prompt calls for recognition and apologies for the suffering endured by Indigenous communities.

Source: [US Department of the Interior](#)

Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan has launched a Centre for Advancing Community Strengths and Social Wellbeing to enhance social protection and services. In collaboration with Columbia University and UNICEF, the centre aims to develop innovative, evidence-based strategies to support vulnerable groups. By facilitating knowledge exchange and strengthening community-led interventions, it seeks to improve the well-being of children and families nationwide.

Source: [National Agency for Social Protection](#) under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Child-dog pairing in foster or institutional care: benefits and risks of a pilot project in France

In this article, Michel Toussaint, Philippe Badin, Emmanuelle Titeux, Sophie Banaszekiewicz, Elsa Péron, Claire Philippe-Peyrouet and Matthieu Delpeuch present their paper "Child-dog pairing in foster or institutional care: benefits and risks of a pilot project in France", which explores the pilot project in France to pair pet dogs with children living in foster care. The project, initiated by the Commission Nationale Santé of the Fédération Française des Familles Adoptives (EFA), aims to foster children's resilience and promote secure attachment relationships. Through this initiative, the authors examine how the daily presence of an animal can transform the lives of children in vulnerable situations, while analysing the associated benefits and risks.

1. CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Situation of children in foster care

The number of children in foster care or institutional settings continues to rise. In France, this figure increased by 15% between 2010 and 2019, reaching 308,000 children in 2020 and over 450,000 in 2024. Children in foster care or institutions often experience chaotic journeys, marked by frequent changes in environment and unstable social and emotional contacts. These children have a high prevalence of illnesses, disabilities, and educational and social delays. Literature highlights the potential benefits of having animals in children's lives, such as the development of empathy, improved social interactions, and reduced feelings of loneliness. However, there are few concrete actions in the context of child protection.

Project objectives

The main objective is to test the hypothesis that the daily presence of a companion dog would allow children in foster care to develop and/or strengthen their resilience skills. The project aims to assess the potential positive and negative effects of the child-dog pairing by gathering feedback from various professionals on three axes: the child, the animal, and the institutions.

Methodology

A qualitative survey using a semi-open questionnaire was conducted with 59 professionals from various fields (specialized educators, psychologists, veterinarians, dog

trainers, etc.). Participants were invited to estimate the positive and negative effects of the project, as well as the benefit/risk ratio, and to suggest key elements to consider before implementing the project.

2. STUDY RESULTS

Positive and negative effects

Survey participants identified several potential benefits of the child-dog pairing. The main advantages include the development of a reliable and stable bond between the child and the dog, as well as an improvement in the child's education and well-being. Conversely, the main risks relate to the potential mistreatment of the animal and the increased workload for foster families.

Data analysis

The survey results showed a general consensus on the benefits of the project, estimated to be twice as high as the risks. Responses from professionals were coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes, which were then classified into categories and keywords.

3. DISCUSSION

Dog selection and training

The results reveal positive opinions on the mediating effect of the dog, which underlines that the selection of dogs is a crucial element of the project. The dogs must be docile, medium-sized and able to adapt to life in a family. They will be selected from shelters or breeding programmes and will have to undergo a rigorous behavioural

assessment. The aim is to choose dogs capable of developing strong emotional bonds with children while minimising the risks of human-dog interactions.

Implications for foster families

Foster families will play a central role in the success of the project. They will be recruited on a voluntary basis and will receive specific training in child-dog interactions. Regular monitoring by mental health professionals will also be put in place to ensure the well-being of the child and the animal.

Implementation protocol

A detailed protocol will be developed by the departments participating in the project, taking into account specific territorial and human characteristics. This protocol will include steps to assess and monitor interactions between the child and the dog, as well as measures to ensure the well-being of both partners.

4. CONCLUSION

The pilot project pairing children with dogs in France is deemed both desirable and feasible. It offers an innovative approach to supporting the development of children in foster care by promoting stable and secure emotional relationships. The estimated annual cost per pair is considered a justifiable investment given the potential long-term benefits for both the future adult and the institutions and society as a whole.

5. FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Continuous training programs for foster families and professionals involved in the project will be developed to maximise benefits and minimise risks. The project's success could also inspire similar initiatives in other contexts and countries, leading to fruitful collaborations.

Kids in Need of Defense works with partners to assist children displaced from Ukraine

In this edition of the newsletter, KIND presents its commitment to assisting children displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. Through specialised legal assistance and trauma-informed support, KIND aims to protect the rights and well-being of unaccompanied and separated children, ensuring they can navigate complex legal processes while prioritising their best interests.

Introduction: KIND's mission and vision in Europe

[Kids in Need of Defense](#) (KIND) envisions a world in which children's rights and well-being are protected as they migrate alone in search of safety. Unaccompanied and separated children, who are separated from their parents and displaced abroad, are at great risk. They often need specialised lawyers, who can help them in a child-friendly and trauma-informed manner to navigate complex legal procedures and to safeguard their best interests.

In our flagship publication [Advancing Protection for Unaccompanied Children in Europe by Strengthening Legal Assistance](#), we present our joint vision for unaccompanied and separated children in Europe together with our partner Child Circle. Our mission in Europe is to ensure that unaccompanied and separated children benefit from free, quality legal assistance in all procedures concerning their status and fulfilment of their rights. Quality legal assistance should be actively facilitated and supported by authorities in restricted settings (e.g., border and detention) and in complex procedures (e.g., transnational procedures) which pose acute risks to children.

KIND fulfils our vision and mission in Europe by providing and supporting a holistic, child-centered,

trauma-informed legal and psychosocial model. KIND works in partnership delivering technical assistance and capacity building. Where unaccompanied children lack the entitlement to legal assistance, KIND steps in with our pro bono model to fill the gap.

KIND's initial assessments and contributions to the Ukraine response

In response to the escalation of hostilities following the Russian invasion in February 2022, KIND sought to raise awareness of the risks unaccompanied and separated children face when fleeing Ukraine. Together with Child Circle, KIND released a [Note on unaccompanied children fleeing Ukraine](#), which provides an overview of key issues to consider from the perspective of procedural safeguards and access to protection and safety.

As thousands of children were fleeing Ukraine, KIND staff carried out field missions to countries neighbouring Ukraine. Based on stakeholder consultations and need assessments, KIND decided to leverage our existing network to support the provision of child-friendly legal information and assistance for children and their caregivers in Poland, Italy, and the United Kingdom. KIND also now has lawyers working in Poland and Slovakia.

In the Ukraine response, a significant number of displaced children arrived unaccompanied or separated from their parents, while others were evacuated in groups from alternative care settings. In many of these cases, guardianship needed to be verified or established. KIND partners have provided information and support in 409 guardianship cases in Italy and Poland, ensuring that children had a legally responsible adult (e.g., by supporting the verification of guardianship of the accompanying adult or the assignment of a local guardian) and were protected from unnecessary separation from the caregivers accompanying them.

KIND takes a holistic approach to addressing the needs of displaced children. Therefore, in addition to providing legal assistance, KIND asked our partner PoMA Global, a non-profit specialized in

mental health and psychosocial support services, to carry out a needs assessment to identify gaps in mental health services for persons displaced from Ukraine and challenges in implementing effective services to those in need. The assessment found that at the time there were few tangible resources available for caregivers in Ukrainian, and those that existed tended to be infographics or lengthy guidelines rather than easy to consume materials such as video or social media, which were found to be preferred based on the results of the needs assessment.

In response to this need, working with PoMA Global and the Ukrainian community, KIND created video resources to support the mental health and psychosocial needs of children displaced from Ukraine and their caregivers. The main objective of the partnership was to improve the mental health and well-being of vulnerable Ukrainian refugees, specifically targeting parents and caregivers, to equip them with knowledge of how to respond to the needs of children who are experiencing trauma due to displacement. To inform parents and caregivers about how the mental health of children may be impacted by the war, KIND partner PoMA Global created a series of educational videos as part of KIND's work to support children displaced by the war. The [four short films](#) help parents and caregivers understand the psychological impact of the war in Ukraine on children, including the effects of trauma and prolonged stress on a child's brain and well-being, the common symptoms exhibited by children, and what caregivers can do to support children experiencing trauma. The videos were informed by Ukrainian psychologists and refugees and feature Ukrainian actors.

The ongoing need to provide child-friendly information and legal assistance to children displaced from Ukraine

KIND and our partners have learned several important lessons by providing direct legal services to children displaced from Ukraine. Firstly, these children often face a myriad of complex legal needs and require specialised legal assistance. Some of these children need assistance with seeking protection and reuniting with family.

Additionally, the transition to adulthood at 18 creates other challenges for older displaced children, whose foster care placements may end and who may not be entitled to aftercare support. Decisions regarding possible repatriation should take the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.

As part of our initial needs assessment, KIND prepared a questionnaire to examine the situation of children displaced from Ukraine and to analyse the specific legal issues arising as they sought safety abroad. Research was carried out by pro bono lawyers in five countries and validated by national experts. This analysis informed the development of child-friendly Know Your Rights information addressing key questions raised by youth in the context of displacement. KIND has worked with Ukrainian House to prepare Know Your Rights materials targeting youth aged 16-18 years old. Focus group discussions with displaced children and youth from Ukraine reaffirmed that child-friendly Know Your Rights information is invaluable. We also learned that, in addition to the need to seek longer-term solutions, displaced

children and their caregivers need to know how to report concerns and abuse in their current situation, including how to make formal complaints should the need arise.

Through partnerships, technical assistance, and capacity building, KIND seeks to strengthen integrated child protection systems to ensure access to protection for unaccompanied and separated children. Building on its initial work in Slovakia, KIND plans as part of our [Suzir'ya project](#) to strengthen the role of civil society in interagency, multidisciplinary processes. KIND will establish national hubs in Slovakia, Poland, and Czechia within the offices of civil society partners to facilitate implementation of multidisciplinary, interagency referral approaches, and provide child-centered legal case management, including support services for children displaced from Ukraine who are at risk or victims of conflict-related crimes. KIND will continue to provide trainings and capacity building to partners in Europe on a range of issues such as child-friendly interviewing skills and a trauma-informed approach.

Empowering Families: This Life Cambodia's Approach to Support and Reunification

This Life Cambodia is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering vulnerable children, families, and communities throughout Cambodia. With a mission centered on listening, engaging, and advocating alongside those they support, This Life Cambodia focuses on comprehensive family support, reunification efforts, and alternative care solutions. By adopting a community-driven approach and employing effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the organization aims to ensure sustainable and impactful outcomes that help families remain together in safe and nurturing environments.

Overview of Programs and Outcomes in relation to family support initiatives and reunification

[This Life Beyond Bars \(TLBB\)](#): This initiative supports children and young people in prison by providing vocational training, personal development support, and drug counseling. By maintaining family ties and offering legal advice, the program significantly reduces re-offending

rates from 60% to just 2%. Key achievements include:

- 143 juveniles enrolled in the program for life skills training and vocational training in prison.
- 28 families supported to visit their children in prison.

- 36 young people received post-release support and follow-up visits.
- The recidivism rate within six months of release stands at 0%.

[This Life Without Bars \(TLWB\)](#): This innovative program provides alternatives to custodial sentences for children in conflict with the law. TLWB focuses on diversionary measures, ensuring that children can access support and rehabilitation outside of prison. By offering legal assistance, vocational training, and personal development opportunities, TLWB aims to reduce re-offending rates and facilitate successful reintegration into communities. Key achievements include:

- 68 children (two girls) in conflict with the law accessed support from the program.
- 48 of these children received case management; 23 supported their families in small businesses, 14 returned to public schools, nine found employment, and one attended vocational training in motor mechanics.
- The recidivism rate during the six-month diversion plan is 0%.

[This Life In Family \(TLIF\)](#): This program supports families affected by parental incarceration to prevent separation and maintain children within their family environment. Services include resilience building, child-friendly spaces in prison, pre-and postnatal care, positive parenting support, counseling, financial aid, educational support, family reunification services, and post-release support. Key achievements include:

- 247 children received support with school materials, academic performance follow-up, and healthcare.
- 95 families accessed various family support services.
- 48 families facilitated visits to prison to strengthen family connections.
- 29 families received food packages for emergency needs.
- 17 families successfully reunited with released parents.
- 14 families supported through income-generating activities via financial and technical assistance.

- 13 children accompanied their mothers in prison participated in child-friendly space activities.
- Nine mothers and two pregnant women in prison received counseling support.

[This Life Reimagining Care \(TLRC\)](#): This Life Cambodia champions family-based care for vulnerable children at risk of separation or currently living in residential care. The focus remains on family reunification, supporting care leavers, and engaging communities to create sustainable environments. Collaborating with government entities and civil society strengthens child protection systems through meetings, workshops, and awareness campaigns. Key accomplishments include:

- 35 at-risk children received short-term case management support to prevent separation from their families.
- 285 individuals attended community awareness sessions promoting family-based care options.
- Over 1 million people reached through social media campaigns highlighting the negative impacts of institutional care on children.
- 79 care leavers engaged and supported through resilience-building programs after leaving RCIs.
- 36 reintegrated children and youths received follow-up support.
- 16 families were assisted with income-generating activities.

Comprehensive Support for Children Affected by RCI Closures

The project has made significant strides in offering tracing and comprehensive support to 272 children affected by the closure of 33 Residential Care Institutions (RCIs) across 14 provinces. Key achievements include:

- 202 children traced; 70 referred to partner organizations for additional assistance.
- 135 children (62 girls) received case management support and were safely reintegrated into families.
- 35 families supported with income-generating activities.

- Twelve children were successfully referred to another NGO partner for kinship care support; 123 cases remain active under our program.

Partnership and Collaboration to Strengthen the Child Protection System

Collaboration with local stakeholders is essential for strengthening child protection systems. This Life Cambodia regularly engages with government partners such as provincial and district committees, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSVY), prison authorities, and the General Department of Prisons to advocate for improved policies and guidelines. Key activities include:

- Conducting training sessions for RCI staff on case management and reintegration support.
- Organizing workshops that foster collaboration among NGOs and government partners.
- Integrating program activities into district and provincial implementation plans to align with local priorities.
- Participating in developing training curricula for the Social Service Workforce training.
- Fostering collaborations with provincial and national government stakeholders to improve policies related to child protection.

Recently recognized in the State of the Social Service Workforce Report by the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance, Sam Ven, Section Lead for Children and Families at This Life Cambodia, has been commended for his significant contributions to social services. This acknowledgment underscores the organization's impactful work in supporting vulnerable children and families through various programs aimed at

family support, reunification, and alternative care solutions.

Ways Forward

To enhance alternative care and address pressing issues faced by families with children affected by parental incarceration or conflict with the law, This Life Cambodia will focus on:

1. **Strengthening Family-Based Care:** Prioritize family reunification and community-based solutions to prevent unnecessary separation of children from their families.
2. **Support for Families:** Develop holistic support systems encompassing counseling, financial assistance, and educational resources for families impacted by incarceration.
3. **Programs for Children Accompanying Parents in Prison:** Implement initiatives addressing the needs of these children through child-friendly spaces and educational support.
4. **Collaboration with Government and NGOs:** Foster partnerships with government agencies and NGOs to advocate for care reform while strengthening child protection systems.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish robust systems for tracking long-term outcomes of reintegrated children and their families through regular follow-up visits.

THE FLOOR IS YOURS

The Chilean State's debt to children and youth: Eradicating sexual exploitation in residential care

This article addresses the Chilean state's ongoing failure to protect children and youth, focusing on the eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (ESNNA in Spanish) within the residential care system. The group [Actuar es Urgente](#) highlights the urgent need for preventive actions, stronger protection measures, and effective coordination between institutions to safeguard vulnerable children.

Over time, the Chilean residential care system has gone through significant turning points in its response to severe issues affecting children and adolescents under state protection. A pivotal moment came in 2018, with a report from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report revealed that the Chilean state had systematically and gravely violated the rights of children and adolescents in residential centers managed directly or indirectly by the former National Service for Minors (SENAME). Among the abuses highlighted were pervasive sexual exploitation and child trafficking networks, which were aggravated by the absence of timely and effective measures for prevention and detection.

In response to this stark reality, on 5 August 2018, a bill was introduced to dismantle SENAME and replace it with the current National Service for the Specialised Protection of Children and Adolescents (*Servicio Nacional de Protección Especializada a la Niñez y Adolescencia*), which became operational on 3 September 2021. The agency's overhaul was meant to address the serious crisis within the Chilean residential system. However, many underlying issues have persisted.

In March 2022, the Chilean Chamber of Deputies released the findings of the Investigation Commission on abuses and exploitation within state-run residential care. The report concluded that sexual exploitation (ESNNA) remains a chronic and pervasive problem within the system. Institutional failures have allowed these

exploitation networks to infiltrate residential centres, compounded by inadequate inter-institutional responses to ESNNA cases and the lack of conditions within these facilities to address such grave human rights violations.

To date, the prevalence of ESNNA in Chile continues to grow, despite the numerous assessments conducted by various organizations. *Actuar es Urgente's* fourth bulletin, a project aimed at eradicating ESNNA in Chile and monitoring related public policy efforts, revealed that these violations disproportionately affect girls and adolescents. In 2023, 86% of ESNNA victims were female, and 64% were between 14 and 17 years old.

Furthermore, Chile's diverse geography presents distinct territorial dynamics regarding this crime. For example, in the Valparaíso Region, the nature of exploitation differs across municipalities, while in the far southern regions, exploitation networks are concentrated in major cities such as Punta Arenas in the Magallanes Region. These territorial differences underscore the need for protective and preventive systems that account for the structural and contextual realities of each region.

The institutionalisation of children in Chilean residential care system also plays a critical role in the proliferation of ESNNA. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of resolutions issued within the protection system nearly doubled, from 433 to 969. Notably, when comparing the number of

resolutions to the number of children in various types of care—such as community outreach programmes, foster families, and residential centres—ESNNA cases are most prevalent in residential settings, representing almost 10% of the resolutions involving children in these centres in 2023. In the protection system, sexual violence is one of the leading causes of admission, and the lack of comprehensive approaches to address this trauma further perpetuates the harm suffered by ESNNA victims. This issue is not confined to individual centres but reflects systemic failures in the state’s protection framework.

A critical issue highlighted in *Actuar es Urgente*'s fourth bulletin is the high level of geographic mobility in cases of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (ESNNA). One major concern is the unauthorised departures of children from residential centers. As of August 2023, 6% of children and adolescents in residential care were subject to Search and Seizure Orders, the majority being female adolescents aged 14 to 17. This statistic represents approximately 245 children and adolescents in residential care who were unaccounted for, underscoring the failure of these centers to provide secure and protective environments, particularly for girls.

Actuar es Urgente goes beyond diagnostics, emphasizing the urgent need for preventive measures and robust support for victims. It calls on civil society and oversight bodies, including the Ombudsman for Children, to hold the state accountable. The creation of the new Service has not addressed the long-standing issues inherited from SENAME, as insufficient resources have been allocated to combat and eliminate ESNNA within residential care. It is imperative for institutions to collaborate in defending the rights of all children and adolescents—especially those already impacted by violence—to ensure they can experience a safe and exploitation-free childhood and adolescence.

Civil society organisations must stay active and vigilant, continuously developing mechanisms to monitor and assess the State’s commitments to upholding children's rights. Additionally, it is crucial to foster a culture of rights for children and adolescents, where society as a whole assumes the role of guarantor, working collectively to prevent the normalization of abusive relationships, violence, and the infringement of children’s rights.

For more information about the ESNNA situation in Chile, visit <https://actuaresurgente.org>

Child Houses: Transforming the lives of Syria’s vulnerable children through family support and family-centred care

In this article, Child Houses Syria presents its remarkable work in transforming the lives of orphaned, unaccompanied, and abandoned children in Syria. Through its family-centered approach, Child Houses is a beacon of hope, offering nurturing environments and long-term solutions for children in crisis. Since its founding, the organisation has dedicated itself to addressing the urgent needs of vulnerable children, ensuring they have the support they need to thrive, despite the ongoing challenges in the region.

Our Mission

Child Houses is dedicated to transforming the lives of vulnerable children, particularly those who are

unaccompanied, separated, or abandoned in crisis situations. We ensure these children find

nurturing family-based environments, as a loving family is crucial for their well-being and future.

A Brief History

Founded in 2019 by a group of Syrian and international activists, Child Houses addresses a critical gap in humanitarian aid by creating better care solutions for vulnerable children in Syria. Registered in both the Netherlands and the USA, we operate with a full staff on the ground in Syria, supported by a robust technical team through remote management. Our partnerships with local communities and international organizations enhance our effectiveness, helping us achieve significant successes in family reunification and stability for children in crisis.

Understanding the Challenges

Since the Syrian war began in 2011, approximately 550,000 lives have been lost, leaving many children orphaned as caregivers are killed or displaced. The ongoing economic collapse has pushed 96% of northwest Syria's population below the poverty line, while the 2023 earthquake exacerbated the situation, leading to increased abandonment of newborns and highlighting the region's instability.

Our Holistic Care Approach

Child Houses takes a comprehensive approach to care, which includes:

A) Emergency and Long-Term Support: We provide immediate assistance to children in crisis while working long-term to ensure they have stable, loving homes.

- **Emergency Shelter:** Our shelter serves as a sanctuary for vulnerable children, offering 24/7 care and emotional support. We aim to transition children into family-based care swiftly, ensuring they receive necessary medical and psychological support before leaving.
- **Family Tracing and Foster Care:** We engage with communities to help reunite

children with their families, prioritizing their best interests. When reunification isn't possible, we offer a culturally respectful foster care model that provides a loving and stable environment.

B) Community Education and Empowerment: We empower local communities to support these children, creating a strong network of care.

C) Advocacy and Awareness Raising: Our community awareness sessions emphasize alternatives to orphanages, equipping adults and children with the knowledge and tools needed to prevent family separation and reduce stigma.

D) Improving Local Services: We work to enhance local services for children, creating a more supportive environment for all kids in the area.

- a. **Capacity Building:** Child Houses trains community leaders and orphanage workers in child protection, equipping them to keep children safe and connect them with services.
- b. **Psychosocial Support (PSS):** We offer PSS sessions in remote camps and orphanages, helping children express their feelings and fostering resilience.

Our Commitment to Sustainable Change

Child Houses is actively working to introduce foster care in northwest Syria despite the challenges posed by ongoing conflict and cultural beliefs. Over the past five years, we have influenced local laws and reform processes to ensure equal treatment for all children. As the only NGO focused on unaccompanied, separated, and abandoned children, we have earned the trust of local authorities, becoming a preferred refuge for these vulnerable children. By engaging with the local community and enhancing childcare capacities, Child Houses strives to create a sustainable, family-centered alternative to institutional care for some of the region's most vulnerable populations.

FURTHER READINGS AND MATERIALS

Recent resources on specific topics related to child protection, alternative care, and adoption

Adoption England (2024). [*National Adopter Journey Practice Standards.*](#)

This publication sets clear expectations for good practice and to help the sector create a more consistent, reliable, and supportive environment for prospective adopters. The standards were developed by the Adopter Journey Working Group and overseen by the National Adoption Recruitment Programme Board.

Beltrame de Moura, A. (2024). [*The limitations of Private International Law regarding the protection of unaccompanied migrant children in the European Union,*](#) in *Cuadernos de Derecho Transnacional.*

This article aims to explore whether the rules of Private International Law (PIL) effectively safeguard the parental responsibility and protection of children, specifically addressing the protection of unaccompanied children migrating to the European Union (EU). The objective is to enhance the protection of the best interests of these minors. The study employs the inductive method, starting with the analysis of specific legislation and jurisprudence to derive a general premise as a conclusion. The research methodology involves bibliographic and documentary research. The findings reveal that, from a practical standpoint, PIL has limitations in its application, failing to fulfil its role in protecting the best interests of unaccompanied children in the EU.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Good Practices of Foster Care for Children with Complex Needs: Findings from a Rapid Review of the Literature to Inform Programming in Moldova.*](#)

This report summarizes international best practices of specialized foster care and provides critical insights and recommendations for developing and scaling specialized foster care in Moldova.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Household Survey Summary - Guatemala: Understanding Caregiver Protective Factors and Child Well-Being Amongst Families with Experience of Alternative Care.*](#)

In Guatemala, the survey in 2023 targeted all families who had participated in a case management process with CTWWC due to a reintegrating child or a child identified as at risk of separation, as well as a sample of households where the caregiver had attended a parenting school.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Household Survey Summary - Kenya: Understanding Caregiver Protective Factors and Child Well-Being Amongst Families with Experience of Alternative Care.*](#)

A key feature of CTWWC's theory of change is building evidence on children's care and reform, particularly regarding reintegration from residential care, transitions to family-based care, and preventing separation.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Household Survey Summary - Moldova: Understanding Caregiver Protective Factors and Child Well-Being Amongst Families with Experience of Alternative Care.*](#)

This publication is a summary of a household survey conducted in Moldova by CTWWC to provide insights for policymakers and practitioners on the impacts of interventions to support reintegrating families and those at risk of separation. For Moldova, CTWWC adapted its survey tool to fit the local context by adjusting terminology and phrasing of some questions and responses, and removing questions that were not relevant.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Kenya Learning Brief: Approaches for Replication of Kafaalah as an Alternative Family-Based Care Option in Kenya.*](#)

This learning brief explores the formalization and replication of Kafaalah, an Islamic practice of caring for orphans and vulnerable children, as an alternative family-based care option in Kenya.

Changing the Way We Care (2024). [*Promoting Kafaalah as an Alternative Family Care System within the Muslim Community.*](#)

This brief provides an overview of Kafaalah, an alternative family care option rooted in Islamic tradition, where a sponsor (Kafīl) cares for a child (Makfuul) without severing the child's ties to their birth family. It explains how Kafaalah differs from adoption by emphasizing that the child retains their birth family name and inheritance rights. The brief also outlines the legal recognition and support for Kafaalah under Islamic, international, and Kenyan laws, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Kenyan Children Act 2022. Additionally, the brief highlights the religious and moral importance of Kafaalah in Islam, its legal frameworks, and its advantages over institutional care. It includes testimonials from local leaders, such as Ustadh Athman Ali, who discuss the positive impact of Kafaalah in supporting Muslim

children and communities in Kenya. Through Changing the Way We Care's efforts, children placed in Kafaalah receive the love, stability, and cultural continuity essential for their overall development.

Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children and Violence (2024). [*Eliminating violence against children: promoting the adoption of effective measures for ending violence against children through human rights engagement.*](#)

The development of this publication was commissioned by the Working Group of Children and Violence of Child Rights Connect (WGCAV) and coordinated by representatives from its co-conveners: Maria Lucia Uribe from Arigatou International and Anne-Marie Vuignier from World Vision International. The publication reflects the collaboration and contributions of the institutional members of the WGCAV, individual expert members, government representatives, and many other partners. The publication is based on an analysis, conducted in 2020, which found that, although progress to prevent and address violence against children had been made as a result of advocacy to and from UN human rights mechanisms, stronger alignment was needed to accelerate actions at the national level.

Eslamian, A., Afrouz R., Moghanibashi-Mansourieh A. (2024). [*"Who is Going to Help Us?": A Qualitative Study on Young Care Leaver's Experiences in Iran.*](#)

This research aimed to explore the lived experiences of young care leavers in Iran and their perceptions and views of their transitioning to the world outside of home care.

Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (2024). [*2024 State of the Social Service Workforce Report: The Social Service Workforce and Family Care for Children.*](#)

This year's report provides a snapshot of the key trends and promising initiatives shaping the social service workforce. It zeroes in on a particularly important issue: the critical role that the workforce plays in ensuring children can always benefit from safe and stable family care—whether that be in their own family or through family-based alternative care, when needed.

Harrap, B., Gibberd, A., O'Donnell, M., Jones, J., Chenhall, R., McNamara, B., Simons, K., Eades, S. (2024). [*Mental and Neurodevelopmental Health Needs of Aboriginal Children With Experience of Out-of-Home Care: A Western Australian Data-Linkage Study.*](#)

Objective of the study is to identify additional mental and neurodevelopmental health needs of Aboriginal children born in Western Australia, who are placed in out-of-home care (OOHC), relative to Aboriginal children born in Western Australia who were not placed.

International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC) (2024). [*Climate Mobility and Childhood: Examining the Risks, Losing the Data and Evidence Gaps for Children on the Move \(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY\).*](#)

A new report by the International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC), *Climate Mobility and Childhood: Examining the risks, closing the data and evidence gaps for children on the move*, considers how the well-being of children may be affected when climate change and human mobility intersect in their lives – or, what can be described as experiences of climate mobility. This Executive Summary provides the key messages and main findings of the report's four sections.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2024). [*Displacement Situation in Haiti.*](#)

This IOM report reveals that there are more than 700,000 people currently displaced within Haiti, 52% of whom are children. Haiti is experiencing an unprecedented crisis that has affected the entire population, including the many orphanages operating there.

Interparliamentary Taskforce on Human Trafficking (2024). [*A Lawmaker's Guide to Stopping Orphanage Trafficking.*](#)

A collaborative project co-written by the leading experts in the world, this comprehensive resource is designed to help lawmakers worldwide combat the exploitation of vulnerable children in orphanages.

Kim, O. M., Hexter, L. J., Donnelly, E. Y., & Hayashi, Y. (2024). [*Reclaiming lineage: Experiences of pregnancy and childbirth for Asian American adopted adults*](#), in *Asian American Journal of Psychology*. Advance online publication.

This study is a qualitative analysis of 41 interviews of Asian American adoptees who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth. Using a grounded theory methodology, the core concept that emerged in this study centered around the theme of adoptees raising their own biological children as a form of reclamation of family, lineage, and genetic connection. The disruption of lineage between birth family and adoptee impacted not only the adoptee, but also the adoptee's relationship with their future child(ren).

Kyung-eun, L. (2024). [Right to Origins is a Human Right: Dialogues with Adoptees on Their Search for Truth.](#)

Published in 2024 with funding from the South Korean Catholic charity foundation Babonanum, this publication compiles Dr. Lee's writings from the column. This book offers a concise overview of the historical context of Korea's adoption program and explores the growing demand among adoptees for truth, justice, and the right to know their origins.

Nhep, R. (2024). [The Role of Clientelism in Facilitating Orphanage Trafficking.](#)

Orphanage trafficking involves the recruitment and/or transfer of a child into a residential care facility for a purpose of exploitation, including labor, sexual exploitation and servitude, or child institutionalization for profit. Orphanage trafficking has been recognized as a form of child trafficking under international law and has been increasingly reported in a range of countries, including Cambodia and Myanmar. Despite the growing academic focus on this subject, the specifics of how children are targeted, recruited, and transferred into these unregulated orphanages for exploitation remain largely unclear, as do the precise social mechanisms employed. Drawing on qualitative research, this article delves into the significant role that patron-client relationships play in the recruitment, transfer, exploitation, and concealment of child exploitation within unregulated residential care facilities established for exploitative or profit motives in Cambodia and Myanmar. It reveals how orphanage directors exploit clientelism to circumvent regulations, manipulate and undermine bureaucratic systems meant to protect vulnerable groups, and legitimize illegal activities through a process of formalization. The article explores the implications of the use of clientelism in orphanage trafficking for prevention efforts, child protection governance reforms, and rehabilitation of children whose perception of exploitation and victimization has been shaped by their socialization to clientelism norms.

Rakhimova, G., Khamzina, Z., Kalkayeva, N., Buribayev, Y, Sailibayeva, Z. (2024). [Legal Protection of Children in Kazakhstan: Problems and Challenges.](#)

This study examined case studies highlighting specific issues or exemplary practices in child protection in Kazakhstan, providing a thorough, multidimensional analysis of child rights and protection in the country.

Roy, J., Staines, J., Stone, B. (2024). ['Is it a Positive or a Negative?' Children's Participation in Discharge of Care Order Proceedings.](#)

This paper explores the involvement of children in discharge of care applications and the tensions children's guardians and other stakeholders may face when aiming to both uphold children's rights to participate and their right to protection from harm.

Sand, H., Sticca, F., Wehrle, F. M., Eichelberger, D. A., Simoni, H., Jenni, O. G., Lannen, P. (2024). [Effects of early institutionalization involving psychosocial deprivation on cognitive functioning 60 years later: Findings of the LifeStories project.](#)

Institutionalization involving psychosocial deprivation affects child development negatively. However, there are few longitudinal studies, and no prospective study has yet examined the consequences of institutionalization in late adulthood. Objective: Investigating effects of psychosocial deprivation on cognitive functioning 60 years later. Conclusions: This study confirms the early experience hypothesis, indicating that early life conditions have lasting effects on human development, even into late adulthood.

Sinha, A., Kaushik, A. (2024). [Lived Experiences of Children in the Child Protection System in New Delhi.](#)

Ever since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child in 1992, India has come a long way in drafting and re-drafting schemes, policies and laws to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. While a lot of thought is put into drafting these legislations and policies, their implementation varies substantially across states, limiting the fulfilment of their objectives. The two prevalent schemes for children are the Integrated Child Development Scheme and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. Substantial literature is available on the former, limited research and data are available on the latter. Most studies falling under this domain focus on analysing and criticising the legislations, but not on their impact. Through this study, the researcher has tried to view the Child Protection System from the lived experiences of 10 children who are/have been part of the Child Protection System in Delhi.

Stalford, H. (2024). [Children's Rights and Access to Justice](#), in *International Journal of Children's Rights*.

How can the proposed General Comment No. 27 add genuine value to such initiatives? This is a question that should be at the forefront of the minds of those who engage with the Committee during its consultation phase in the coming months. A good starting point might be to confront some of the more conceptual presumptions underpinning existing approaches that have yet to be critically challenged. Is the term "Child Friendly Justice" really fit for purpose, or might it undermine the seriousness or ambition of the endeavour to achieve justice for children as equal citizens? (If anyone should ask a person,

child or adult, what they want from the justice system, would the first response really be, “I want the system to be friendly”?) Does the terminology around access to justice and effective remedies translate into other cultural, linguistic contexts? Do we know enough about how children themselves define or experience justice across the world? And is justice for children doomed to failure if it largely amounts to little more than procedural adaptations to an adult system – designed by adults predominantly to serve the needs of adults?

Transforming Children's Care Collaborative (2024). [Thematic Brief: The Role of the Social Service Workforce in Children's Care and Care Reform.](#)

This thematic brief helps government policy and decision-makers understand the essential role of the social service workforce and how to strengthen that workforce in line with their national commitments to care reform and regional and global conventions. It includes high level guidance, recommendations and practical examples from diverse contexts for consideration when developing, supporting and strengthening the social service workforce.

UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (2024). [Policy brief: Keeping families together in Europe.](#)

The policy brief reveals that the number of children in residential care in Europe is nearly three times the global average, with 277 children per 100,000 living in these settings. The report highlights the over-reliance on institutional care across the region, urging a shift towards family-based alternatives. UNICEF proposes targeted investments in child and family support services and reforms to reduce institutionalisation, emphasizing the need for stronger preventative and non-institutional systems.

UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean (2024). *Newsletter on Children on the Move. Issue 1.*

This quarterly newsletter curates a selection of key highlights and stories from the field to keep you informed and engaged with the work of UNICEF and its partners, and its impact for children on the move. To subscribe, please contact: lacmigration@unicef.org.

Venables, J., Cullin, J., Ellem, K., Healy, K. (2024). [Diminishing their Voice through Choice? How 'Selfplacing' in Out-of-Home Care Affects Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making.](#)

This paper draws on the experiences of children and young people (CYP) who have self-placed in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Queensland (Australia) and the impact of that choice on their participation in decision-making.

Won, H., Irons, C. (2024). [Transition Monitoring Tool.](#)

The purpose of the tool is to assist technical support practitioners to closely track and monitor the progress of residential care services transitions they are involved in. It can be used as a workplan to guide the implementation of a transition strategy, allowing practitioners to identify relevant transition activities, set progress-related goals, and monitor progress against those goals. It links directly to the Phases of Transition Interactive Diagram, an interagency tool that provides an evidence-based framework for transitions. The suggested activities and key milestones outlined in the Phases of Transition Interactive Diagram have been integrated into the Transition Monitoring Tool to establish a baseline for good practice

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND TRAINING

- **Australia:** [First Annual Children's Rights Symposium for Australia and the Asia-Pacific](#), 22 November.
- **Colombia:**
 - [1st Global Ministerial Conference on ending violence against children](#), 7-8 November, Bogota.
 - [II Precongreso mundial de justicia para niñas, niños y adolescentes](#), 12-13 November, Cartagena.
- **The Netherlands:** [Children's Rights Research Day](#), 5 December, Maastricht.
- **Switzerland:** [Global Conference on Justice for Children Deprived of Liberty](#), 17 – 19 December 2024, Geneva, Switzerland.
- **United Kingdom:**
 - [Private Fostering Awareness Day: Breakfast briefing](#), CoramBAAF, 6 November.
 - [Private Fostering Awareness Day: Private Fostering Practice - Who are the children?](#), CoramBAAF, 6 November.
 - [Agency decision makers: Their role and responsibilities for fostering and permanency panels](#), CoramBAAF, 12 November.
 - [Undertaking a child permanence report](#), CoramBAAF, 19 November.

- [The role of the supervising social worker: supervising and supporting foster carers](#), CoramBAAF, 20 November.
- **World:**
 - [BICON Roundtable: Driving Care Reform and Celebrating Progress Across Asia](#), 12 November, online.
 - [Executive Training on Civil Aspects of International Child Protection \(ICPT\)](#), University of Geneva, November 2024 - April 2025.
 - [IDA Online Training Platform](#), online.

The views expressed in external articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ISS/CIR.

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