

THE CHANGING FACE OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

The Hague Treaty on International Adoption has significantly impacted the numbers of children being adopted in the United States. The availability of children born abroad who are not US citizens that are being adopted has declined significantly over the past five (5) years. The complexities and specific provisions of the Hague Treaty have both discouraged and made more difficult the adoption process.

For example, in 2005, 7903 children were adopted from China, the leading sending country internationally. In 2009 only 3001 children were placed from China still the leading international adoption country. In 2007, 4727 children were placed from Guatemala compared to 2009 when only 736 children were placed from Guatemala.

What does that mean for people who wish to become parents through adoption? It is much more difficult to obtain a child for adoption internationally. That means the competition for US children to be adopted is that much greater. There are many more people seeking to adopt and many fewer children available for adoption than was the case 5 years ago. There is nothing to indicate that trend will not continue.

Over the past five (5) years, China, Guatemala, Russia and South Korea have always been within the top five sending countries. The country on the increase is Ethiopia which has steadily risen from 442 children in 2005 to 2277 children in 2009. We have also seen the emergence of African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda as significant sending countries along with Ethiopia.

Many of the children being adopted internationally could be classified as special needs children under the US Title IVE definition. That suggests to prospective adoptive parents that even though the numbers of children being adopted internationally are decreasing the risks of getting an unhealthy child or a child that may need significant physical and mental health attention has increased. Better education and greater vigilance is necessary before adopting a child internationally.

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