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The Internet websites of the references quoted several times are listed at the end of the review.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Special Edition « Tsunami »

- [The protection of child victims](#) of the tsunami: a priority.
- [For an adequate protection of children separated from their family](#) during natural disasters.
- [The role of the ISS](#) in the protection of child victims of the tsunami.

ISS/IRC News

- IRC's new staff members.

Protagonists in matters of adoption

- Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Iceland, Mauritius and Sri Lanka.

Procedure

- [Cambodia](#): Consultation between Governments of the United States and France, and the Cambodian authorities on the conditions for a resume of adoptions with this country.

Interdisciplinary Resources

- [ATD Quart Monde Europe](#): Working paper "Valuing children, valuing parents: Focus on family ties in the fight against child poverty in Europe: a European discussion paper".
- [UNICEF](#): Publication "Childhood under threat: The State of the World's Children 2005".

Forthcoming Conferences, Seminars, Symposia and Courses.

I. The protection of child victims of the tsunami: a priority

Situation update

International organisations, NGO and governments all concur with the priority status for the physical and moral protection of child victims of the tsunami. According to the data in UNICEF's possession on 17 January 2005, **1.5 million children (in other words, about 40% of the total number of victims) were reportedly affected in one way or another by the disaster.** As a reminder, in these countries hit by poverty, demographic growth and the child population are important. A great number of people have in particular been displaced and housed in temporary camps. For example, according to the same UNICEF sources, 14,000 of the 350,000 displaced persons in Sumatra were unaccompanied children (for the latest estimates of the number of victims, see www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/VID/14400E000707C30185256F87006848E2?OpenDocument, or similarly www.unicef.org/media/files/UNICEFResponse17January05.pdf). At this time, we should not forget that in other parts of the world, especially in Sudan, humanitarian crises are raging and causing the displacement of numerous children some of whom are separated from their families.

The exact number of orphans (children whose father and mother are deceased) of the tsunami is not known, but according to Marc Vergara, spokesman for UNICEF in Geneva, **it will not be as high a figure as was feared in the early hours of the humanitarian intervention.** In fact, it would seem that many children affected by the disaster have still got at least one of their parents. On 18 January 2005, the official in charge of the Department for Child Protection, the Central Authority of Sri Lanka, gave a much lower estimate of the number of orphans (less than half) than that of the requests for domestic and inter-country adoption received as in the wake of the tsunami (*Associated Press*). According to a communiqué by the Indonesian Embassy in Canada, there were reportedly in the region of Banda Aceh 35,000 children with at least one parent dead or missing ; *this, however, does not mean that all these children are adoptable*, since they could be taken care of, if the need arises, by the surviving parent or by another member of their family.

Fears of trafficking in children with a view to inter-country adoption arose in the first days of the humanitarian intervention. UNICEF, without ignoring a real risk, still believes that Western associations are exaggerating the danger. Very few cases have in fact been recorded (*Le Temps*, 7 January, *Tribune de Genève*, 10 January and *The Guardian*, 17 January 2005). Certain countries affected by the tsunami were already exposed to other forms of trafficking in children (for sexual abuse or labour, enforced military or paramilitary service...). **As a result, preventive measures** (like giving the alert and raising awareness among police forces, competent authorities, medical staff, teachers etc.) **must come into play to protect children from all risks of trafficking**, aggravated by the tsunami. A press campaign on the theme has already been launched in Sri Lanka by the government and its partners (especially UNICEF). In Indonesia, the police and the port authorities are on high alert (*press release of UNICEF*, 8 January 2005); UNICEF and Save The Children have also developed programmes of prevention (*Tribune de Genève*, 10 January 2005).

Actions and reactions

Urgent action, yes but action in the best interests of the child.

An inter-agency press release (International Committee of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, Save The Children United Kingdom, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Vision International) was issued in January 2005, under the title of **Unaccompanied and separated children in the tsunami affected countries – Guiding principles** (*available at the IRC*). The communiqué recalls the **distinction between separated children** (separated from their parents or from their legal guardians, but not from other members of their family), **unaccompanied children** (separated from their parents and from other members of their family and not under the responsibility of any adult) **and orphans** (children both of whose parents are deceased). It provides a collection of directives to ensure the protection of child victims of the tsunami and to respond to their needs in their best interests. These principles correspond to those set out below (see part II). *The ISS expressly endorses this document,*

and encourage with UNICEF all NGO to do the same. Furthermore, the same agencies are preparing a supplementary communiqué on psychosocial support for the children.

The programmes of emergency protection run particularly by UNICEF (www.unicef.org/media/media_24628.html), Save The Children (www.savethechildren.org) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (www.icrc.org) are a part of the basic assistance for children (accommodation, food, medical care, psychological support and education) and for the family reunification. In the countries affected, care centres for unaccompanied children have been set up in the camps or the communities. Family reunification is arranged by identifying and registering separated or unaccompanied children; searching for members of their family; reuniting and reintegrating the children with their family. In India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the registration phase (name, address, community and date of birth) is under way. In Aceh, the most severely affected region of Indonesia, five centres for the registration of children were operating on 8 January and new centres were to be opened in the following days. In Sri Lanka, and shortly in Indonesia, children have begun to go back to school. Teaching programmes directly linked to the disaster have been set up by several NGO.

The question of Inter-country adoption

UNICEF, Save The Children and the Red Cross, amongst others, have stressed the risks of foreigners' emotional responses, like the instant wish to adopt child victims. The official positions taken by the international organisations, NGO and governments have recalled that inter-country adoptions as well as placement of children in families living abroad are not adequate measures of emergency assistance for child victims of natural disasters. *Professionals in questions of children warn especially against the further trauma for these children of being uprooted right away and taken to a foreign country.*

According to the Hague Conference on private international law, in the light of The Hague Convention of 1993 on intercountry adoption (THC-1993) « it is clear that, in a disaster situation like that created by the tsunami, efforts to reunite a displaced child with his/her parents or members of the family must be given priority and **that one must prevent or oppose premature or unlawful attempts to organise inter-country adoption for the child** » (http://hcch.e-vision.nl/upload/tsunami_e.pdf).

The ISS feels at home in the midst of these declarations and recommendations, which largely espouse its own guidelines drawn up as early as 1988 in its manual on *Unaccompanied Children in Emergencies: a Field Guide for their Care and Protection* (available in English and Spanish at the ISS) as well as in the « Inter-agency (International Committee of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children United Kingdom, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Vision International) Guiding Principles on unaccompanied and separated children » of July 2004 (www.unicef.org/protection/files/english_guiding_principles.pdf).

To date, the governments of Indonesia and Sri Lanka have imposed a temporary ban on unaccompanied children leaving the country.

- The Government of **Indonesia**, according to its Embassy in Canada, is of the view that the welfare of orphans would be better served by entities within Indonesia. It strongly supports the suggestion that orphans of the affected areas in Aceh be taken into care by members of the Acehnease community residing in various cities across Indonesia. Another option the government supports is for the orphans to be taken into care by various regional governments in Indonesia (www.indonesia-ottawa.org/information/details.php?type=press_releases&id=42). As a reminder, *before the tsunami*, only couples resident in Indonesia for a minimum of two years could adopt children there.
- The **Sri Lankan** government, in response to concerns expressed by the UN that orphans might be targeted by criminal elements, **has banned the adoption of children affected by the tsunami**. Adoption without prior government approval is not possible (Moreover, Sri Lanka is a signatory of THC-1993). "Adopting children until a permanent solution is implemented is illegal", said Mangala Samaraweera, a government spokesman. He added that "Not even a Sri Lankan can adopt a child affected by this disaster until the government has come out with their programme. Even if they are relatives, they are not expected to take children without government permission". With many children forced to live in refugee camps as a result of the tsunami, fears have arisen that some of them may have been abducted. The government is compiling a census to have a clear idea of the number of children orphaned by the tsunami (www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca200501/20050107government_bans_adoption_tsunami_orphans.htm). On 28 January 2005, the Central Authority of Sri Lanka informed us about the

nomination of a suitable fit person in respect of each child who has lost his/her parents, both father and mother. In addition, a financial support scheme for the needy children has been provided through foster parent and sponsorship programme, e.g. Sevana Sarana Foster Parent Scheme.

- As far as we know, **Thailand**, which is also a signatory to THC-1993, has not specifically pronounced itself on the subject of adoption ; however, since 2003, new applications from overseas are only accepted for the adoption of children with special needs (see Bulletins 60-61 and 67). According to the Royal Thai Embassy in Canada, in Thailand “twenty-two orphans who lost both parents in the tragedy are now under the patronage of His Majesty the King who donated his private funds to take care of those orphans until graduation level. There are others 270 other children who lost one of their parents which the Thai government will give financial support and find job for their families” (www.magma.ca/~thaiott/tsunami7.PDF). (For more about Thailand, see Bulletins 52, 55, 60-61, 63, 67 and 70).
- In **India** the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment announced that the “Central Adoption Resource Authority (The Hague Authority) recognized agencies for adoption are being advised to provide care and protection to the orphans and make efforts for their adoption within the State/Country (www.ndmindia.nic.in/Tsunami2004/msocialjustice.htm). The Ministry of Home Affairs said that “The affected States have been sensitized about the apprehension of orphaned children being trafficked. The State Governments Administrations have been requested to keep vigilance about the safety of the children who have been orphaned and women who have been widowed in the Tsunami and prepare list of such orphaned children and widows and monitor their welfare” (www.ndmindia.nic.in/Tsunami2004/mha.htm). Many NGO for the rights of the child are pressuring the government to declare a ban on adoption in the regions affected for a period of one year (*BBC News*, 6 January 2005). (For more information about India, see Bulletins 10, 19-20, 27, 34, 58-59, 62, 63 and 66).

Central Authorities of certain industrialised countries have also issued statements about the lack of relevance of inter-country adoption in the framework of the tsunami, including the following:

- **Canada** : *The inter-country adoption service of the Department for Social Development* (Federal Central Authority) has declared that « for inter-country adoption to be possible, the affected countries must determine which are the orphan children who will have no chance of being taken into care in their country of residence. A member of the extended family often offers to take the orphans into their care. According to accepted policy and procedure at the international level, every effort must be made to find a home for the orphans in their own country before envisaging to uproot them and send them off to another country with a different culture » (www.dsc.gc.ca/fr/pip/ds/11_tsunami.shtml). According to the *Secretariat for inter-country adoption* in Québec, « inter-country adoption is not the best means of coming to the assistance of children separated in such crisis situations » (www.adoption.gouv.qc.ca/fr/).
- **France**: According to *the Mission of inter-country adoption - MAI*, « the surviving children who are separated from their parents are, by this fact alone, not adoptable. In an emergency, a child is only in fact declared "adoptable" after a reasonable period of time that corresponds to the period when all the steps aimed at finding the parents or any surviving member of the family could have been carried out » (www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/mai/ind_last.html).
- **Switzerland**: *The Central Federal Authority* recalls that « inter-country adoption does not offer an adequate solution to the problems that arise. International standards require that we keep children as close as possible to their familiar surroundings in order first of all to establish their identity, and then to search for surviving members of their family (close relatives or the extended family) » (www.adoption.admin.ch/f/adoptionen-index.html).
- **United Kingdom**: *The Department for Education and Skills* stresses that « it is difficult to assert that inter-country adoption would be in the best interests of the child; efforts should be focusing on the search for adequate protection of the child in his/her country of origin before considering inter-country adoption » (www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption/intercountry).
- **United States**: *The State Department* recalls that « staying with members of the extended family is considered a preferable solution to the total uprooting of the child » (http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/notices/notices_2017.html).

The dramatic episode of the tsunami will thus have shown that governments, NGO and international organisations have been able to draw lessons from past disasters. Reactions in tune with the protection of separated children, adapted to their needs and respectful of their interests were in fact arrived at in good time.

Support of local family and sponsorship solutions

However, a certain number of children deprived of family by the tsunami need international solidarity in order to regain a family life within their community. In fact, after assessing the needs and motivations, *psychosocial and financial assistance could be found necessary for certain local families* (extended families, foster families, adoptive families) capable of providing children a home.

The development of collective international sponsorship could also respond to the West's wish to provide humanitarian assistance and supplement the long term action of the government authorities and the NGO (for an example in French, see www.sante.gouv.fr/htm/dossiers/tsunami/faq_collectif.htm).

II. For an adequate protection of children separated from their family during natural disasters

In a communiqué drafted in the wake of hurricane Mitch (November 1988) by the ISS, the International Catholic Child Bureau, Defence for Children International and Save The Children Alliance, principles for the protection of child victims of natural disasters were put forward, ranging from the emergency phase up until long-term solutions (http://imu28.infomaniak.ch/access/www.iss-ssi.org/nph-proxy.cgi/010101A/http/www.iss-ssi.org/Resource_Centre/Tronc_DI/MitchEnglish.PDF). Set out below, these principles can be applied just as they are to the tsunami situation.

1) Emergency phase

During the emergency period, governments and the competent authorities must be sure that the children are not separated from their parents or from the people in charge of them. It is their responsibility to provide protection and special care for children, to find their family and reunite them (art. 20-21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

- **Keeping the child in his/her living environment** : *international support for local programmes of minimal protection* for the child (accommodation, food, medical care, affective and psychological support, education) in his/her living environment, placing the child with others or with adults of his/her family or in his/her community.
- **Identification of the child's family**: procedures for *the registration of children and the identification of their family* must be set in motion as quickly as possible, so that the period of separation is as short as possible. While waiting, the child can be placed under the protection of people from his/her community, and support must be given to these temporary foster families.
- **Unaccompanied children**: a) children separated from their parents and for whom no adult is responsible by law or by custom, must be *identified as soon as possible and research be carried out into their family and community history*; b) during this emergency phase, unaccompanied children must be *taken into care at the local level*, either in a foster family in their community, or be placed in existing institutions. ***The creation of new institutions must be avoided as far as possible*** (risk of abuse during their stay in an institution and the creation of institutions for trafficking purposes). Recourse to institutional placement must, therefore, be used restrictively and must maintain the aim of family reunification in the shortest possible time. Moreover, people and institutions to whom the children are entrusted during this phase must be clearly identified to prevent all forms of trafficking; c) searches for members of the child's family must be *quickly initiated and should last a sufficiently long period of time*. The exceptional circumstances effectively render the displacement of people and the coordination of information more difficult. Furthermore, the search for people and programmes of reunification must be *coordinated by an agency experienced in family and community reunification*.

2) the medium and long term

Once the emergency phase is over and after the first year of reconstruction, steps for final family placement are taken for children who are still without parents. By applying the **principle of subsidiarity**, solutions that allow the child to stay in his/her own country must be sought: preferably an intra-family provision of care or relative adoption and, failing that, domestic adoption. As a last resort, if no local or domestic protective measure has been found or does not correspond to the best interests of the child, a procedure for inter-country adoption can be undertaken. Decisions in favour of long-term

placement must be inscribed in the national context of child protection policies and be taken on an individual basis (case by case). They must involve both the child (when he/she has reached the age required by law) and the community and must be motivated solely by the best interests of the child. As a reminder, a solution that enables brothers and sisters to stay together must also be found.

In the case of natural disasters, the assistance must, therefore, concentrate on :

- *On the one hand, to support families and ensure their survival, the focus is on emergency health and food programmes and the rapid reconstruction of the child's protective environment (the family and community living spaces) ;*
- *On the other hand, the emphasis is on restoring the diverse infrastructures and on rallying the sources of income for the family and the land.*

The priority actions for child protection are those geared towards:

- *no separation –even temporary – from their family or their community ;*
- *and the reintegration of unaccompanied children in their family, their community or their land.*

III. The role of the ISS in the protection of child victims of the tsunami

Thanks to its international network of cross-border social services, the ISS was able, very soon after the disaster, to make an initial response to the affected communities. Beyond *immediate and emergency actions* in support of separated families, in which the corresponding local agencies of the ISS were able to participate in the devastated region, other ISS units responded in their own country. Thus, in Canada and Hong-Kong, which include sizeable minorities of populations from the countries affected, the ISS units are contributing to *psychosocial and community support for people* who have family ties in these regions struck by the tsunami. Furthermore, at the request of the immigrants concerned, the ISS is also participating in *the search for missing persons*.

In addition, the ISS and UNICEF are currently working to *develop principles* described above, in the context of promoting international standards for a better protection of children deprived of parental care. This theme is addressed in considerable detail in the document « Caring for children in emergency situations » (see Monthly Review 72-73 and www.iss-ssi.org/Resource_Centre/Tronc_DI/unicefronc_di.html). These principles provide a theoretical framework that is both relevant and certainly very useful for the whole company of protagonists – government authorities, local and international NGO, intergovernmental organisations – active in the field in matters of child protection.

The network of the ISS, in which different national units have largely adopted the principles advocated by the IRC in promotion of the rights of the child deprived of family, will also contribute to preparing, organising and following up *the cross-border caring arrangements* made for children deprived of their family by the tsunami, particularly in their extended family living abroad, when these caring arrangements are shown, as a last resort, to be in keeping with the best interests of certain children.

Furthermore, the ISS has made available to the authorities of the countries affected, as well as to those of international organisations and NGO already present in the field, its skills and expertise with a view to contributing, in the long term, *to the restoration and strengthening of local and national structures for the protection* of children and families.

IRC/ISS News

- **IRC's new staff members:** Thanks to funding by the Canton of Geneva (see Monthly Review 72-73), the IRC is pleased to welcome two new staff members who come to strengthen the team already consisting of Isabelle Lammerant (Coordinator), Laura Martínez-Mora and Cécile Maurin (Children's Rights assistants), Liliana Almenarez (Administrative assistant), as well as two volunteers, Yasmina Etique and Meenu Hodiwalla.
- *Sylvain Vité*, of Swiss and French nationality, has been appointed Deputy Coordinator of the IRC. With a PhD in law from the University of Geneva, Sylvain functions fluently in French, English and Spanish. He has taught, carried out university research and published material, mainly in humanitarian law. He has also been a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Peru and Colombia, as well as heading the programme on rights of the child in the World Organization Against Torture.

- *Stephanie Pythoud*, a Swiss national, studied international relations and journalism. After working for four years with a Swiss daily paper, she joins IRC as a documentalist. In addition to her responsibility for the bibliographical database ([www.iss-ssi.org/Resource Centre/Resource Center EN/Library Data/library data.html](http://www.iss-ssi.org/Resource_Centre/Resource_Center_EN/Library_Data/library_data.html)), Stephanie will carry out interdisciplinary research.

Protagonists in matters of adoption

Source : Permanent Bureau of The Hague Conference:
<http://www.hcch.net/e/authorities/caadopt.html>.

- **Australia:** Western Australia has updated the particulars of its competent authority.
- **Bulgaria and Germany:** These countries have updated the lists of their Central Authorities and Adoption Accredited Bodies.
- **Canada:** The name of the Federal Central Authority of Canada has changed. The Intercountry Adoption Service under the Partnerships Division (before the Child, Family and Community Division) represents the Minister of Social Development as Federal Central Authority.
- **France:** This country has updated the list of its Adoption Accredited Bodies. Source : MAI
- **Iceland and Sri Lanka:** These countries have updated the particulars of their Central Authorities.
- **Mauritius:** The website of the French Central Authority (MAI) has updated the list of institutions for children who qualify for inter-country adoption.

Procedure



- **Cambodia:** Taking into account not only the difficult situation of children deprived of family in this country as well as the trafficking of children (see Bulletins 50-51, 53, 54, 58-59, 64, 67, 68-69, 70 and 72-73), the Governments of the United States and France, which, among others, have suspended inter-country adoption with Cambodia, are working with the Cambodian authorities on the conditions for a resume of adoptions with this country.

In October 2004, an official of the *US State Department* raised the question of the legislative reform of adoption with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia. According to Cambodian press, both countries wish to **prevent future adoptions from becoming commercial exchanges**. The Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia pledged to halt « indirect » adoptions, that are those carried out by an unaccredited intermediary, and that are a potential source of corruption. Furthermore, he agreed with his American counterpart that, when procedures are resumed, adopters should make a financial contribution to the Government of Cambodia for the country's development and the war on poverty (for more about financial contributions see Monthly Review 72-73, chapter "Protagonists in matters of adoption"). Finally, the Deputy Prime Minister called upon UNICEF to speed up the legislative process of adoption reform (see Bulletin 64).

On 10 December 2004, the French Central Authority announced that **a tripartite mission** – from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Solidarity, Health and Family – would shortly visit Phnom Penh. The mission will consider with the new Government of Cambodia, and in consultation with its European partners, where things stand with the legislative and administrative reforms in the field of adoption expected by the international community. It will also envisage the possibility of implementing safeguards to make it possible, when the time comes, to resume adoption with a maximum of guarantees for the rights of the child. According to the remarks of the French Minister for Co-operation and Development, the mission aims to identify a plan of action that could be implemented when Cambodia proceeds with the reforms expected by the international community, that is the introduction of an internal legislation conforming with the rights of the child and the accession to the Hague Convention of 1993.

Sources: MAI, *US State Department*, http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/adoption_485.html, *Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)*, *Ethica-USA*, *The Wat Phnom Daily* (22 and 26-27 October 2004, 2-3 and 23-24 November 2004), *Midi Libre* (9 and 22 - 25 December 2004) and *Libération.fr* (8 January 2005).

Interdisciplinary Resources

- **Valuing children, valuing parents: Focus on family ties in the fight against child poverty in Europe: a European discussion paper ** : This working paper, prepared under the direction of Pierre Klein by ATD Quart Monde Europe (see too the study of ATD entitled « How Poverty Separates Parents and Children: a Challenge for Human Rights» presented in our Monthly Review 68-69), is intended as a tool for dialogue and reflection. Produced with the financial support of the European Commission under the heading of the Programme of community action for the campaign against social exclusion 2002-2006, it suggests that *the family be considered a resource in the fight against poverty in Europe*. To fulfil this role, it must in any case be recognized and supported in the right way. Specifically, the study notes that in the ten countries involved - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom - *the children taken into care by children's protection services or care centres come largely from the least favoured socio-economic levels of society. So, certain social interventions, injected into an environment scarred by poverty and exclusion, may end up by undermining the family group and weakening its positive resources*. In this context, « Valuing children, valuing parents » aims at **inducing more positive synergy between those active in the fight against exclusion and poverty and those promoting the protection of children**. However it is still difficult to put this synergy into practice. At the same time, the paper advocates **greater involvement of children and parents** in the practices of placement or family intervention. The study *envisages child protection as a sustainable task of promoting the family group, its members and its networks*. In this context, *temporary placement measures* should no longer be seen as a « last ditch» and « forced» attempt, as is too frequently the case, but rather be included in innovative approaches, as the elements, amongst others, of a project thought out by protagonists and parents working in partnership. The paper thus proposes identifying **more than forty initiatives and practices** that, in the countries involved, are tools for the support of families. Sponsorship, schools for parents, neighbourhood outings, chat groups and family holidays are just a few examples. The document « Valuing children, valuing parents » is available in English and French, and a German summary too, on the following website, www.atd-quartmonde.org/europe/precieuxenfants/index_pepp.htm. ATD Quart Monde also announces that independent contributions supplementing the initial document will be put on the website, particularly examples of national practices and an analysis of the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights on the placement of children. *Contact and further information about the E.U. programme that the paper is linked with:* Region Europe Delegation, ATD Quart Monde International Movement, Avenue Général Leclerc 107, 95480 Pierrelaye – France; region.europe@atd-quartmonde.org.
- **Childhood under threat: The State of the World's Children 2005 ** : The annual report published by UNICEF stresses in particular *the right of children to grow up in a protective environment* that fosters their physical and mental development, respects their rights (to education, to health...) and reduces the risks of maltreatment and exploitation. These are concerns that are all specified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 which has been ratified by almost all countries. The protection of children, for which responsibility rests with parents and governments, nonetheless, leaves much to be desired in a large part of the world, as UNICEF contends. According to this organisation, the determination of governments to create and maintain a protective environment for children is not always obvious. Progress has been made for sure, but there is still much to be done. There are *numerous issues that especially destabilise the protection of children*. **Poverty is a flagrant example** in every country. Material deprivation and the absence of family and community resources contribute, in fact, to the affective and spiritual impoverishment of children and to the disregard for certain of their rights, and make them more vulnerable to exploitation. Local solutions are proposed, among others, to remedy the situation. Thus, the *Opportunitades* programme launched in *Mexico* in 1997 that provides opportunities in the form of financial assistance for households on condition its members can prove that they go to school and to the care centre. The results are tangible: in the rural zones covered by the programme, an increase of 57% has been noted in visits to the health centres and an important drop in morbidity among the under-fives. School attendance and study achievements have also picked up. **Armed conflicts** are other circumstances that upset the protective environment of children, particularly forced military recruitment or *separation, sometimes for good, from their parents (unaccompanied and*

orphan children). UNICEF is trying to organise the protection of this latter group, particularly through its efforts to identify them, register them, and to readapt and reintegrate them, as well as backing up their community so that it affords them care and protection. This UN family organisation is also setting up reception centres especially designed for children, where women can also come and, if need be, benefit from psychological assistance. Furthermore, UNICEF has taken upon itself the task of denouncing and combating the violence unleashed against children in times of conflict, as well as raising public awareness of the problem. At yet another level, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in *Sierra Leone* has introduced in its remit consideration of children affected by conflict, including special arrangements for them to audit and participate in its proceedings: a step still unique to this day.

The third element brought out by the UNICEF report, which undermines the protection of children is HIV/AIDS. Among the many statistics produced in the document, we learn in particular that in 2003 the epidemic left some *15 million children orphans* (having lost at least one parent). With the death of a parent, children lose a part of their safety net and, finding themselves sometimes parachuted precociously into the role of head of family, they risk not going to school any more, having to work or again finding themselves victims of maltreatment, exploitation or discrimination. In this context, activities like those launched by KEWA, the local non-profit making association in *Mozambique*, are exemplary. Supported by UNICEF and consisting of people living with HIV/AIDS in the central province of Zambezi, this structure aims to protect the rights of every one of the orphans living in the fifteen districts spread across five provinces that have been designated priorities by UNICEF. These rights include the right to be registered at birth, to have access to care, education and psychosocial support. Currently, the militants of KEWA are looking after about 2,400 orphans.

The report is available on the UNICEF website, [www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_\(English\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2005_(English).pdf). For more about children in emergency situations, such as armed conflict, and children affected by HIV/AIDS, see too the UNICEF/ISS project for the promotion of international principles for a better protection of children who do not benefit from parental care, Editorial in Bulletin 72-73, www.iss-ssi.org/Edito.72-73.eng.pdf, and working documents described therein, www.iss-ssi.org/Resource_Centre/Tronc_DI/unicefronc_di.html.

Forthcoming Conferences, Seminars, Symposia and Courses

- **France :** *Parentalité et filiation selon des modes particuliers (biologie et psychologie): l'assistance médicale à la procréation, l'abandon et l'adoption (Parenthood and ties of filiation by special means (biology and psychology): medical assistance in procreation, abandonment and adoption)*, Copes, Paris, 7-8 April. Themes to be addressed include: the impact of infertility in a couple, psychological aspects; what choice of filiation? (M. Soulé). Abandonment of a child – consent to adoption; relinquishment, delayed legal abandonment; psychological and social aspects; prevention of delayed abandonment (F. Peille). Adoption; adoptive filiation; adoption today and its particularities: the older child, the foreign child (O. Ozoux-Teffaine). Audience: all medico-psycho-social professionals in matters of children, adolescence and the family. *Contact* : 20 rue de Danzig, 75 015 Paris ; tel. : +33 1 53 68 93 40 ; fax. : +33 1 53 68 93 45 ; cofes-formation@wabnadoo.fr ; www.lecofes.com.
- **South Africa (reminder):** *4th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights : The Convention on the Rights of the Child in the 21st Century: Securing rights to children in an age of uncertainty*, Cape Town, 20-23 March. For more information, see Monthly Review 68-69.
- **Switzerland:** *Quel est le travail des intermédiaires en adoption ? (What is the role of intermediaries in adoption?)*, Espace adoption, 28 February 2005, 20 h, Geneva. This conference-debate aims at bringing Swiss Adoption Accredited Bodies together so that they may present their work and answer questions from future adoptive parents on inter-country adoption *in the countries of origin* (criteria for the approval of applicants, the adoptability of children, preparation of the child, matching, meeting the child, etc.). *Contact*: Espace adoption, 30 rue des Vollandes, CH-1207 Geneva ; tel. : +41 (0)22 910 05 48 ; info@espace-adoption.ch; www.espace-adoption.ch.

MAI – French Central Authority: www.diplomatie.fr/MAI/ind_last.html;
US Department of State: http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/adoption_485.html.

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