



"Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding."

- Hague Adoption Convention, Preamble

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Office of Children's Issues, United States Department of State

Children Affected by Natural Disasters and Conflict

January 14, 2010

The Department of State receives inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of children in areas of conflict and in countries afflicted by natural disasters such as the January 12 earthquake in Haiti, hurricanes, and tsunamis. Our office shares this concern for children in devastated areas and we understand that some Americans want to respond by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need.

It can be extremely difficult in such circumstances to determine whether children who appear to be orphans truly are eligible for adoption. Children may be temporarily separated from their parents or other family members during a natural disaster or conflict, and their parents may be looking for them. It is not uncommon in an emergency or unsettled situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or for families to become separated during an evacuation. Even when it can be demonstrated that children have indeed lost their parents or have been abandoned, they are often taken in by other relatives in the extended family.

During times of crisis, it can also be exceptionally difficult to fulfill the legal requirements for adoption of both the U.S. and the child's country of origin. This is especially true when civil authority breaks down or temporarily ceases to function. It can also be difficult to gather documents necessary to fulfill the legal requirements of U.S. immigration law. There are many ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children in areas of natural disaster or conflict. For example, individuals who wish to assist can make a financial contribution to a reputable relief or humanitarian organization working in that country.

More Information

- <http://www.state.gov/>
- http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/disaster_haiti#C1817
- [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#)
- [International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)
- [Interaction](#)

Updated information will be provided on www.adoption.state.gov as it becomes available.