



INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE

INTERNATIONAL KINSHIP CARE

Principles, working methods, services offered

Why International Kinship Care?

In situations where a child can no longer be cared for by their parents, the form of alternative care which should be prioritised is the possibility of the children remaining within their extended family, as this respects the child's right to family life and maintain family links (article 3, 8 and 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children). This gives the child an opportunity to maintain their identity. In applying these principles, social workers should explore all possible options that allow a child to remain within their extended family, including any potential **family placements overseas**.

What principles ensure effective International Kinship Care?

- Assessments should allow the **child to participate** in decision making, including providing views regarding their relationship with prospective carers and possible 'siblings'.
- Thorough Kinship Placement Assessments or Home Studies should be conducted by **social workers in the country** where the prospective kinship carers reside.
- Reports should include **information on, and analysis of**, all aspects of the prospective kinship carer's family, environmental factors, their parenting capacity, and how they will meet the child's long term developmental needs.
- Assessment reports should include **statutory checks** on the prospective kinship carers, i.e. Child Protection and Police clearance checks.
- A **Transition Plan** should be developed in preparation for the child's impending international move, including information on child's routine and pre-placement contact with their new carer.
- When a child is placed with overseas kinship carers, it is recommended that **post placement visits** occur (preferably funded by the referring Authority, and conducted by the assessing social workers) to ensure the child's transition, and that carers are well supported from the outset.
- Referring Authority (or legal guardian) should obtain specialised **legal and immigration advice** to ensure the child is able to safely travel and legally remain in prospective new country.
- As a child placed across international borders may not be considered a 'child at risk' in their new jurisdiction, kinship carers may not be entitled to the same supports as local foster carers. The referring Authority should provide some ongoing **financial support** to the new kinship carers to ensure the child's access to relevant support services.

Guiding international standards and ISS internal documents:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989
- UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children
- 1996 Hague Convention
- ISS Casework manual

ISS Casework services may include:

- Facilitation of international kinship assessments working with Authorities in 1996 HC contracting states or relevant structures in non contracting States (**see factsheet on 1996 Hague Convention**).
- Conducting international kinship assessments
- Assisting and participating in the development of a Transition Plan.
- Post placement visits, support and reports.
- Counselling and referrals to specialised services can be provided.

ISS advocacy efforts include:

- ISS Intercountry Assessments: Paper on Best Practices Concerning Social Workers
- Promote international kinship care to local Child Protection Authorities as a viable option for children to remain with extended family
- Training
- Treaty body mainstreaming