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**International Adoption ¿½ Is it possible to find Triumph from Tragedy**

**By Stephen Morgan**

In the early hours of Dec 26th 2004 the Western world awoke to the unfolding horror that we came

to know as the Asian Tsunami. Those of us still recovering from obscenely large amounts of food and drink from the previous day sat transfixed as we watched a horror story of biblical proportions unfold before our very eyes.

The United Nations estimated that the Asian Tsunami left more than five million people homeless, including about 1.5 million children most of whom became orphaned. The outpouring of emotion from around the world was of mixed benefit as far as the region was concerned in that yes we all dug deep into our pockets and yes we all lobbied our Politicians to something about it and yes bizarrely this tragedy may have had some knock on effect in the movement to alleviate Third World debt and poverty but the blessings were mixed as far as the people on the ground were concerned.

Since the disaster, adoption agencies around the world have been fielding phone calls from well-meaning families wanting to adopt a child from one of the countries hit.

Adoption experts say the best thing people can do is to donate money to causes that directly help the children. They say it's wrong to take a traumatized child away from the environment that they have grown up in.

"Adoptions, especially inter-country ones, are inappropriate during the emergency phase as children are better placed being cared for by their wider families and the communities they know," said the charity Save the Children in a statement released Jan. 6, 2005.

International Adoption needs to be well planned

"The last thing they need to do is be rushed away to some foreign land," said Cory Barron of Children's Hope International, an American adoption agency. "We have to think of the child first."

Adoption by some well meaning couple in the west flying half way round the world bearing large sums of money to whisk the child away to a life totally alien to everything it has known isn't always what is in the best interests of the child.

It is worth bearing in mind the following facts after any tragedy like this:

## International Adoption ¶½ Is it possible to find Triumph from Tragedy

¶½ Children will be experiencing an immense sense of loss and grief.

¶½ They will need to know what they feel is normal and that they're not going crazy.

¶½ They need to be with people they know and to feel as safe as possible.

¶½ They need to establish a daily routine as soon as possible to reduce their fears.

¶½ They should play with other children to have time away from their fears and allowed to have creative expression such as materials to draw.

¶½ Those separated from family members need to be registered as soon as possible and reunified quickly.

¶½ Putting children in a temporary care facility or an orphanage should be the last resort.

Around 200 children were orphaned and many more lost one parent when the Tsunami struck the district of Nagappattinam in Tamil Nadu state, the worst-affected region in India.

The local administration has handled scores of queries from individuals and organisations wanting to adopt the children.

But fears of human trafficking have made the government tread with caution. The emphasis now is on rehabilitating these children in the local communities. Suryakala, a district social welfare officer in Nagappattinam, says many children they talked to preferred to remain here rather than move out of the area.

The local administration has asked those interested in adoption to send in applications. But they are in no hurry to move these children out.

Around 60 children have been put up in an orphanage run by the Zion Church in Nagappattinam.

Parvathi lost her parents but has returned to the school to take her examinations. She visits her relatives once a month and says she prefers to stay in Nagappattinam.

Local charities and social activists have lobbied hard with the government not to "give away" these children for adoption. Aftab, a young activist, says he learned a lot from the aftermath of the Gujarat earthquake in 2000.

He says that in the past two months there have been several instances of representatives of organisations trying to "forcibly" take away orphans. Nagappattinam was one of India's worst-hit areas. The local community objected and expressed its willingness to take care of such children," says Aftab. "None of these children want to be moved out," he says.

The local administration, Aftab says, is still not clear about what it wants to do with them.

He has met representatives of different villages who back the idea not to move them out.

"Why should these children be sent to orphanages and homes far from here?" he asks.

Efforts by individuals like Aftab seem to have had an impact.

The local administrator's office has decided against any hasty decision.

One official summed up the dilemma faced by the government: "The issue of children is a delicate matter in any community... one wrong step and we will invite the wrath of the people."

Adoption experts are hoping the outpouring of interest in adoptions from the tsunami disaster might translate into adoptions elsewhere. The real tragedy is that the tsunami doesn't even dent the numbers of orphans worldwide, the real numbers are unfathomable. Most adoption specialists say the number of orphans globally may be somewhere in the range of 40 to 60 million; 13 million in sub-Saharan Africa alone due to the AIDS crisis there, and many more in Russia, China and Latin America. Only a fraction of those children are in official adoption pools.

We are hopeful that the tsunami-affected countries will eventually have an open mind to international adoption, says Thomas Atwood, President of the US National Council for Adoption. But we're also hopeful that parents will look to adopt children in other parts of the world. There are thousands of children available for adoption right now. For those whose hearts have been tugged by the tsunami, perhaps this is a step in their journey towards another child.

So perhaps even after the darkest and most terrible of tragedies there can be some positive long term benefits and these are that whilst a large number of people may ignore the need or desire to adopt from within their own communities in favour of adoption with an International dimension this raising of the Adoption Profile and the inherent potential problems may well bring some of those new to Adoption back to considering Adoption from within their communities. The other benefit that can be taken from this whole affair may be the overall increase in the awareness of the concept of Adoption itself. If this in turn leads to more children being partnered with Adoptive Families then that can only be considered good.

Stephen is the principal advisor for International Adoption Information, an independent advisory organisation in social and child welfare.

<http://www.internationaladoptioninformation.com>

## **International Baby Adoption**

### **By Michele Oberton**

If you are considering an international baby adoption, then you will need to also find a reputable agency to help guide you through the paperwork and process. In addition, when some families are hoping for a baby adoption, they employ the help of an attorney.

International adoptions are often fast and can be completed in as little 10 to 14 months from the time of application. The majority of children who are eligible for adoption are newborns, who were usually separated from their birth mother within a few days after birth. At that time, they are placed in foster care until the adoption process is complete. In addition to newborn infants, there are also sometimes

older children who are seeking adoption.

Most baby adoption agencies, who help to handle international adoptions, will consider an application from either a married couple or a single woman, who is an adult and has completed a successful home study. In addition, most adoptions are given to individuals and/or families who are both emotionally and financially stable. The number of current children that an individual has, if any, is not usually a deciding factor when it comes to international baby adoption.

As a general rule, once the adoption process is finalized, the parent(s) is required to travel to their new child's country in order to pick them up. This generally takes 2 to 3 days before the paperwork is finalized and the child is allowed to exit the country. The fee for baby adoption will vary from one country to the next and will largely depend on each's policy.

Due to strict immigration laws and all of the paperwork involved, individuals considering an international baby adoption should consult a local attorney. Some families have also consulted with international attorneys with great success. This will help to ensure that all paperwork and other required procedures are done properly in order to avoid delays with the baby adoption and the return home. The attorney will often be required to accompany the adopting family to pick up the child and to finalize the details of the adoption. This will help protect the rights of the new parent(s) and the child as well.

All children who are adopted abroad, and have been in the custody of the adoptive family for a period of less than two years, are required to possess U.S. immigrant orphan petitions and orphan visas before entering the United States. This process typically requires that the adoptive parent(s) be found suitable for adoption, an investigation into the status of the child be completed and finalization of the visa application.

Want to learn more about baby adoption? Make sure you visit our site at:

<http://www.babyadoptionguide.info>

for access to additional baby adoption tips and information.



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