

Peru 21, December 8, 2009

Current Topics Domestic adoptions do not flourish because some Peruvian couples have biases against adoption and also because there are endless bureaucratic formalities in the adoption process that discourage prospective parents.

The bureaucratic hurdles lengthen the wait and discourage the couples. The number of children adopted by Peruvians decreased this year. Overseas adoptions continue to lead the list of adoptions in our country.

Mindless bureaucracy and judicial obstacles delay adoption procedures in the country.

Adoption continues being a drama

Lourdes Fernandez

In our country there are more than 19,000 children and teenagers abandoned or placed in foster care.

Nevertheless, only about 200 children each year are adopted. Therefore, the number of Peruvian minors who grow up without a family is alarming. It seems that the tiresome wait to access the National Register of Adopters and the endless formalities required are the major causes of discouragement for couples seeking to adopt. The result continues to be a problem, minors continue to be abandoned.

Papers and More Papers

The estimated waiting time for the initial attempt to adopt is six months. The couple or single person who wishes to adopt must wait this time before being added to the list.

Afterwards, if they have passed all the evaluations, they are then sent to the National Committee of Adoptions, which is the ultimate decider. However, this period of time could be lengthened by the number of forms with which the parents must cope.

Testimonial

“My Children Adore Their Country”
Elizabeth Bartholet *

My children were born in Perú and I have always taught them that they came from Perú, and that they have a wonderful country. I have done my best to instill respect and awareness of their country. They visited Cuzco and Lima in 1999 and they spent time with friends from their past. This reconnecting of their children with their native country is quite typical among adoptive parents in the United States.

For me the most important issue in adoption policy is for children to have parents, regardless of their nationality. When I adopted my two children, who are now 24 and 21 years old, the most difficult aspect of the adoption process was the poor communication between the two countries. I was in Lima waiting out the adoption process three months for each child. That experience was very good for me, because I was able to get to know the country better and to make friends. These friends have been very helpful to my children as well. However, few North Americans would have been able to spend such a long time in Perú due to work commitments. For the children’s wellbeing it is very important to belong to a family, able to provide loving care.

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This year the highest number of adoptions was in Lima with 72 children; in Cuzco with 28; in Arequipa with 15, and in Puno with 10.

Last year Susana Pinilla, ex-Minister of Women, proposed the reduced adoption time of three months.

Profile of the Candidates Who Can Adopt?

1 To adopt a child or teenager who has been declared abandoned by a judge the person interested in adopting should be between 25 and 55 years old and at least 18 years older than the minor.

2 Parents should be emotionally stable, showing normal affect, respect and acceptance of the children and their origins. Parents should have maturity and enough intellectual resources to support the children in their normal development. And also the parents should have economic stability and adequate housing to guarantee the basic needs of the child to be adopted.

3 The prospective parents should ideally be married. Nevertheless, single people older than 30 and less than 45 years old can request to be considered.

4 The approximate length of the waiting period to get placed onto the Register is six months, which, however, is variable dependent upon prospective parents' situations.

5 The only ones who can adopt in Peru are Peruvian citizens or foreigners whose country of residence or whose authorized organization has signed a current treaty or covenant about adoption in Peru or with the National Secretary of Adoptions.

6 The candidates must present proof that they are not listed officially as delinquent in child support, and that they satisfy other requirements of the National Secretary of Adoptions.

7 The parents must have realistic expectations about children or teenagers that they want to adopt.

Less Time to Wait : Adoption in other Countries

Ethiopia (between six and ten months) The stay of the couples in this country will be ten days long to finish all legal formalities. The family will have the child the first day after their arrival in this country.

Guatemala (between eight to ten months) Once the adoption process is completed, the prospective parent will have to travel to the country to meet the child. The formalities will be completed in two or three days and the child will be allowed to leave the country.

Russia (between one or two months) If the child has already been assigned, the time for prospective parents to stay in the country will be eight days for the first meeting with the child to take place, and twenty days while the legal process of adoption is underway.

Ukraine (between three and four months) The first required step is to contact the personnel of international adoption in the Department of Social Welfare of a given state. Then the ruling of adoption needs to happen before the child can travel with his/her parents to their country.

19 thousand abandoned children and youth live in Perú.

According to Manuel Campana, the representative of Secretaría Nacional de Adopciones del Ministerio de la Mujer (National Adoption Agency of The Women Affairs Ministry) the legal difficulties in the adoption process could last up to one and a half year.

Campana states that the delay is caused by the legal wording – “by an investigation to determine the child’s eligibility” - regarding the child’s status in the orphanage. In other words, before the child is ready to be adopted, it is necessary to establish that the child is in fact abandoned, according to The Act of Abandonment. According to Campana, this process may unnecessarily take as long as 18 months, due to “legal hurdles”. Because of these delays, only 13.5% of children are ruled to be abandoned, which explains the decrease in the number of adoptions. This year 173 adoptions have been completed, while in 2008 the number was 239.

Although the Minister for Women’s Affairs, Susana Pinilla, who last year pledged to shorten the adoption process to three months, the goal has not been achieved up to this point.

456 minors under INABIF jurisdiction suffer some disability.

Prejudices. On the other hand there would be other causes to interfere with the adoption process. According to the psychologist Elva Segovia from Secretaría Nacional de Adopciones, the biases of some Peruvians who still cannot conceive the idea of taking an unknown minor into their care is a great problem. The prospective couple becomes disappointed if the assigned minor does not fill their expectations about race, which becomes a further obstacle in the adoption process of this country. However the prospect is not the same when the adopting parents come from overseas.

The statistics show that international adoptions are one of the best options for a minor to find a nurturing family. Just this year, 102 children were adopted by people from abroad. Among them, Italians and North Americans are more inclined to adopt a Peruvian youngster.