

INTERNATIONAL SURROGACY
“PRESERVING THE BEST INTEREST OF CHILDREN”
CALL FOR ACTION BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE NETWORK

Over the last few years, international surrogacy has continued to increase around the world. Today it is estimated that approximately 20,000 children are born through this specific mode of reproduction annually, and the numbers are expected to increase. The ISS global casework load is increasingly dealing with individual surrogacy cases but must work in the absence of a consistent, coordinated legal framework.

While some countries have legalized and codified international surrogacy as an option for reproduction, others have either made the process illegal, or simply failed to provide any legislative guidelines on the practice. In general, on the international level, the issue remains unregulated, creating a situation that paves the way not only for very lucrative business opportunities, but also to potentially worrying activities and practices of intermediary agencies, specialized clinics and candidates for parenthood. Unless international surrogacy is consistently regulated the evident economical imbalance between wealthy prospective parents and an ever growing number of women ready to bear a child for someone else for remuneration, can only lead to abuses.

There have already been several individual cases around the world that have highlighted the potential problems and likely abuses of unregulated reproduction through surrogacy. Furthermore, the rights of children to be born through this practice have not been addressed and the International Social Service (ISS) strongly believes that protecting those children rights must be addressed in both the legal and psycho-social arenas.

Therefore, ISS asserts that international surrogacy is not only a private matter between the prospective parents and the surrogate, but is an issue that must be addressed by the international legal, social service, psycho-social and child advocacy communities.

Furthermore ISS believes that addressing the myriad of questions and concerns raised by the practice of international surrogacy is a matter of great urgency and calls for, among other possible actions the following initial steps:

- Explore and document existing good practices
- Study current practices and trends, including domestic laws, economic impact, a geography of actors, exploitation of women and protection of children, the bonding of the surrogate parent/s with the child and special situations such as those of disabled children so seriously deformed that they have little life expectancy.
- Address the concerns of donor conceived persons, and anonymous sperm, egg and embryo donations.
- Address the citizenship of the donor conceived, or surrogate born children.
- Create a network wide campaign to advocate in favor of a new General Comment on surrogacy by the UN CRC and a Hague Convention on international surrogacy and donor conceived children,
- Convene international conferences, gathering State representatives to reach an agreement on the necessity to regulate surrogacy at the international level;

While keeping the best interest of the child as the driving force for all actions it takes, ISS intends in the very near future to work on the following areas related to surrogacy:

- Utilize the ISS network to be the voice of children born through all forms of artificial reproduction in order to preserve the best interest of those children.
- Continue to work for the best individual solution for each individual child in his best interest and in the best interest of the involved adults, especially the surrogate mother through casework mandated by national public authorities, .
- Develop and disseminate a special training program for its casework professionals
- Share individual casework experience within the ISS network and with relevant external stakeholders with a view to regulate this field in the best interest of the child.
- Develop an advocacy campaign that will be developed within the frame of calling for a General Comment on surrogacy by the UN CRC and the need for a new Hague convention on surrogacy