INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION BOARD (ICAB)

HIGHLIGHTS OF CY 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION BOARD
CY 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

The Intercountry Adoption Board (ICAB) is the Philippine Central Authority for the purposes of implementing The Hague Convention of 1993. It is the policy making body for purposes of carrying out the provisions of Republic Act 8043 (The Intercountry Adoption Act of 1995). ICAB ensures protection of Filipino children which it places for international adoption through monitoring and regulation of its partner agencies (FAAs) and to ensure compliance with the standards and deter trafficking of Filipino children.

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS ALONG MAJOR FINAL OUTPUTS

1. Regulation of Foreign Adoption Agencies

ICAB prescribes rules and regulations, policies, guidelines, procedures, programs and services that prevent trafficking of children and protect the Filipino child who are cleared and adopted by foreigners.

Forty-eight (48) Board meetings were held in 2017 where issues and concerns on ICAB policies and procedures, bilateral agreements and problems were discussed, deliberated upon and resolutions arrived at.

- ICAB continues to review the modification on the allocation system on the number of adoption applications and placement per foreign adoption agency effectively lessening the waiting period for child referral.
- Accreditation/Re-accreditation of Foreign Adoption Agencies
  - Re-accreditation/authorization with due diligence visit to the following adoption agencies as well as consultation/dialogue with the Central Authorities:
    - USA-Based Foreign Adoption Agencies (FAAs):
      1. Hawaii International Child and Family Services, Hawaii
      2. Holt International Children’s Services, Oregon
      3. Bay Area Adoption Services, California
      4. Vista Del Mar Family and Child Services, California
      5. Hand in Hand International, Indiana
      6. Wide Horizons for Children, Massachusetts
      7. Adopt Abroad, Pennsylvania
      8. Associated Catholic Charities, Maryland
      9. Resources for Life, Hawaii
     10. Lutheran Social Services, Wisconsin
• Canada-Based Foreign Adoption Agency
  1. Sunrise Family Services, Province of British Columbia
• Europe Based Foreign Adoption Agencies
  1. AC International Child Support, Denmark
  2. InterCountry Adoption Center, United Kingdom
  3. Asociacion Para El Ciudadado Dela Infancia, Madrid Spain
  4. Creixer Junts, Mallorca Spain
  5. Asociacion Instituc Genus, Barcelona Spain

• Non-renewal of the authorization for 2 USA-Based Foreign Adoption Agency.
  1. Children of All Nations (CAN) for failure to disclose a disruption due to the sexual abuse of a child during the Board’s accreditation visit. The non-disclosure reflects an extraordinary lack of transparency that has resulted in ICAB’s loss of trust and confidence.
  2. Resources for Life, Hawaii was assessed not meeting the standards set by the Board. The remaining cases from this FAA have been transferred to another ICAB accredited FAA.
  3. Suspension of placement of Filipino children with Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales due to serious concerns noted regarding the handling of disruptions, case management and their failure to abide by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act 8043 specifically Sections 45-48 (Section 45. Supervision of Pre-adoptive Placement, Section 46. Emergency Intervention and Report, Section 46. Emergency intervention and report, Section 47. Disruption and Termination of Placement, and Section 48. New Placement for Child).

• Resolution to sanction an FAA with a record of two (2) or more disruptions within the three (3) year accreditation period. The FAA shall automatically be placed on probationary status. Additional disruptions within the probationary period will cause an automatic review/assessment with possible cancellation or non-renewal of accreditation.

• Outline for the re-authorization report – a minimum standard format of the reassessment report on a FAA after due diligence visit.

• Matching of Legitimate Children
  o The Board resolved to remind the DSWD and Child Caring Agencies (CCAs) that if a legitimate child is cleared for ICA and issued a Certification Declaring a Child Legally Available for Adoption (CDCLAAs), the Deed of Voluntary Commitment (DVC) should be signed by both the birthfather and birthmother.
• Policy for Older Children
  o In order for Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs) to be more aware and be duly prepared to address the needs of an older child, the Board approved to indicate a waiver in the child’s proposal that any possible history of child sexual abuse should not to be ruled out.
• Placement and Travel Authority
  o The Board approved the amendment of the Placement Authority and the Travel Authority which should specifically indicate applicable provisions of The Hague Convention and the Philippine Intercountry Adoption Law.
• Post Placement Supervision
  o For closer monitoring and supervision by FAAs of children under the Special Home Finding four (4) post placement reports (PPRs) shall be submitted every 2 months. Failure to submit in a timely manner may cause a review of the FAA’s authorization. Monitoring shall involve the physical visit to the child and the submission of photographs of the FAA social worker with the child/ren and the adoptive family during each visit.
  o Submission of the first post placement report after the first month of the child’s placement. The first month is the most crucial period in the child’s adjustment with the adoptive family.
• Adoption Fees
  o No distinction on the fees to be charged for regular cases and cases with prior finalized local adoption. All cases for inter-country adoption without distinction undergoes through the same process before approval or disapproval by the Board.
• Intercountry Placement Committee (ICPC) Consultants
  o The Board approved for endorsement to the Chairperson the renewal of appointment of ICPC Consultants who have shown commendable performance for their initial term: three (3) social workers, three (3) lawyers, five (5) doctors, one (1) psychologist and one (1) NGO representative.
• Production of A Quick Guide/Handbook for Child Caring Agencies
  o The Board approved the ICAB’s creation/production and distribution of a Quick Guide/Handbook which is a quick reference for social workers on the steps and documentation requirements for children being processed for intercountry adoption.

2. Program Development and Implementation
• One thousand two hundred twenty-seven 1,227 inquiries were responded to and clarified on the peculiarities of the Philippine ICA law particularly on relative adoption; its process, procedures and requirements.
• 329 new adoption applications were assessed during the year of which 318 were approved. Among the approved adoption applicants, 112 were carry-over from CY 2015-2016 and 206 new applications were only approved during year. The adoption applicants were found to be eligible and suitable prospective adoptive parents and complied with the documentary requirements of ICA.

• During the year, a total of 306 approved adoptive applicants were matched with child referral and 252 of them accepted the child referral.

• 263 adoptive parents came to the Philippines for the entrustment of their prospective adoptive child/ren (PACn) of which 23 were PAPs who accepted the child referral during the last quarter of CY 2016 as the pre-travel documents of the children were completed in the 1\textsuperscript{st} quarter of CY 2017 only.

• At the beginning of the year, a total of 188 children were carried over from the previous year and 343 new cases of children were cleared by the Department of Social Welfare and Development – Protective Services Bureau (DSWD-PSB) during CY 2017.

• Among the 343 new cases of children cleared for ICA, 194 were under the care and custody of non-governmental Child Caring Agencies while 149 were under the governmental agencies particularly the DSWD Reception and Study Centers.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Category & Cleared Children & Matched and Approved & Accepted by PAPs$^1$ & Entrusted to PAPs$^1$ \\
\hline
Regular & 177 & 161 & 158 & 187 \\
Special Needs Special Home Finding & 99 & 100 & 103 & 101 \\
Relative & 48 & 30 & 30 & 29 \\
Independent Placement & 8 & 10 & 10 & 15 \\
Ratified local Adoption & 11 & 5 & 5 & 0 \\
\hline
TOTAL & 343 & 306 & 306 & 332 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Distribution of Children Cleared for ICA According to Adoption Category}
\end{table}

• Of the total number of children (N=531) awaiting placement, 306 children were matched, and 306 were accepted (including 28 children who were matched in the last quarter of CY 2016) while 332 children were entrusted to the Prospective Adoptive Parents who personally came to the Philippines and stayed for at least 5 days and that trial custody commenced. Children entrusted during the year, 92 were accepted in the last quarter of CY 2016 but their pre-travel documents were completed only in the 1\textsuperscript{st} quarter of CY 2017 only.
| Deed of Voluntary Commitment CDCI A | Cleared Children | Matched and Approved | Accepted | Entrusted to PAPs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned CDCL AA</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Distribution of Children: Cleared, Matched and Approved, Accepted and Entrusted to their PAPs According to Legal Status and Sex

- Of the 332 children entrusted to their PAPs, 156 were placed with their European PAPs, 124 with USA based PAPs, 42 were with placed with Canadian PAPs and 10 was entrusted to an Asia-Pacific-based PAPs.

![Pie Chart](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Table 4: Distribution of 135 Children Entrusted to Prospective Adoptive Parents According to Geographical Location [N=332]

- The DSWD Secretary issues the Affidavit of Consent to Adoption (ACA) if reciprocal child-adoptive family bonding is proven. The outcomes of the three (3) post placement reports done every two months during the 6 months trial custody period are the bases for the issuance of this legal document. 355 ACAs were endorsed to the CAS/FAAs during the semester of CY 2017.
- 404 Adoption Decrees were received during the year. The Adoption Decrees received during the year were for the children whose placement occurred from 2014-2016.
- Post legal adoption services: ICAB assists the adoptive child/ren and their adoptive family (and even birth family/relatives who desire to know their child’s situation) to trace their birth family/relatives.
  - For CY 2017, there were 42 adoptees who came home to touch base with their Homeland and returned to the institutions/orphanages where they spent the early years of their life.
  - Thirty-eight (38) adoptees have written the ICAB and requested for a search and reunion meeting with their birthmother/family. The search and reunion request are coordinated with NGO Child Caring Agencies or the DSWD Field Offices concerned.

*inclusive of children cleared, matched, accepted and entrusted in the last quarter of 2015 but travel documents were only completed in 1st semester 2017.*
Among the 38 adoptees who requested for search of birth family/parents/relatives, 10 adoptees had a successful search facilitated by the DSWD field Offices and NGO.

Seven (7) adult adoptees had a successful reunion with their birthparents/relatives. The reunion provides the adult adoptee an opportunity to know his roots/origin, meet his relatives, share experiences and clarified feelings and doubts. The adult adoptee and their birthmother have achieved some peace of mind, healing and closure.

3. Networking and Advocacy

- The Inter-country Adoption Board held dialogues with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Bureau Directors, Field Office Directors and Social Workers; Reception and Study Center Heads and Social Workers; Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Consular Services, DFA Legal Affairs, Department of Justice-Commission on Filipinos Overseas (DOJ-CFO) Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Department of Health-National Center for Mental Health (DOH-NCMH), PHILS, Supreme Court, Department of Budget and Management, AO 25 Secretariat, Government Procurement and Policy Board (GPPB), Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), Presidential Communications Operations Office of the Philippine Government (PCOO-OP) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT).

- The officials of the USA Embassy Immigration Section, and the Australian Embassy met with the ICAB officials to learn and exchange experiences in dealing with the emerging issues of children for intercountry adoption particularly children with special needs. The visit was also to better understand the Philippine adoption system and foster cooperation.

- The ICAB participated in the 18th National Adoption Consciousness Day which was spearheaded by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in partnership with national government agencies (NGAs) and members of the Association of Child Caring Agencies of the Philippines (ACCAP). With the theme “Pagmamahal Palaganapin, Legal na Pag-aampon Ating Gawin! [Spread Unconditional Love through Legal Adoption],” the celebration aimed to promote legal adoption as a means of providing compassion and unconditional love to abandoned, neglected and surrendered children. Moreover, the celebration also encouraged families to undergo legal adoption in order to protect the welfare of adopted children and ensure that their rights are same with that of biological children. The Adoption Consciousness celebration advocates for the strengthening of the legal process of adoption to ensure that the rights of adopted children are protected and that they are justly recognized in our society.

- A group from the Netherlands, Foundation Adoption Services came to ICAB for a meeting with ICAB Executive Director and Secretariat Social Workers to learn about the specific situation of children for intercountry adoption. Their group is under the authority of the Ministry of Safety and Justice which offers advice and support to adoptive applicants/adoptive parents.

• New IPC members were oriented on the Philippine ICA program, its processes and procedures, turn-around/timeline, and ICAB’s organizational structure to ensure familiarity before taking part in the Matching Conference.

• Foreign Adoption Coordinators/Executive Directors of Sacred Portion Children’s Outreach Montana USA; Associated Catholic Charities, Maryland, USA; and Save the Children Finland visited the ICAB. The discussion focused on the ongoing conditional moratorium on adoption application, hosting program guideline, status updates of their approved adoptive parents, post legal adoption services requests and how to institutionalize a better system of cooperation.

• ICAB Social Workers participated in the Regional Workshop on Adoption Process in Asia “Creating Enduring Families – A Life Story” where various speakers from 11 countries shared the overarching common principles, similarities/commonalities and challenges that govern practice of adoption. Despite widespread use of adoption (domestic and intercountry) the socioeconomic, legal and cultural context of each country had to be put into its proper perspective. The regional workshop was envisioned to provide the foundation for a localized Asia Care Network to champion family-based care options for children and calling on the distinstitutinalization of residential care for children.

• The ICAB Senior Social Workers were invited as Resource Persons for the DSWD Technical Assistance Forum for the Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao Cluster where they discussed the ICA programs and services, processes and procedures. The forum also focused in harmonizing the contents of the Child Study Report and the supporting documents for adoption to assist the social workers/case managers facilitate the movement of these children. Specific ICA cases were discussed for learning points in handling the cases of children particularly relative and independent placement.

• ICAB’s Social Welfare Officer IV shared process and procedures on alternative placement of children specifically on intercountry adoption program to hasten the management of cases of children under the DSWD’s and NGO residential facilities.

• The Executive Director attended and participated in the CY 2017 Special National Management Development Conference (NMDC) which dealt on the accomplishments of DSWD OESUs, Field Offices and Attached Agencies.

• The ICAB Social Welfare Officer IV attended and shared experiences on the conduct of the 4-day Regional Workshop on Social Case Study Report Writing which aimed to improve the case writing skills of NGO and GO social workers of Region V.

• The Executive Director, the SWO V and a SWO III were resource persons in the DSWD sponsored dialogues and consultation with Family Court Judges, lawyers and court social workers which tackled process and procedures of ICA program particularly on relative adoption cases...

• The Executive Director and one of the ICA Board Members attended and participated in the 22nd National Convention and Seminar of the Philippine Women Judges Association in Vigan City. Both discussed and shared experiences on intercountry adoption procedures and laws.
ICAB conducted its first On-Site Matching for CY 2017 in Davao City and social workers from Child Caring Agencies (CCAs), medical facilities, local social welfare and development offices (LSWDOs) were invited. It was a venue for the center social workers to clarify issues about the intercountry adoption process and emphasized the crucial role of the social workers from the LSWDOs who refer cases of children to CCAs. Social workers were reminded the necessity to record all the facts regarding the child which will be the basis for the case management and permanency planning. The Intercountry Placement Committee Consultants and the ICAB Secretariat visited the CCAs in Davao and discussed concerns on the case movement of children and how best to address the delay.

The Secretariat social workers were tasked by the ICA Board to craft the Working Draft for Social Workers Guidebook which to be launched during the 14th Global Consultation on Child Welfare Services in September 2017. The guidebook is envisioned to address gaps and challenges in efficiently and substantially manage cases of children for permanency planning and placement.

ICAB spearheaded the 14th Philippine Global Consultation on Child Welfare Services held last September 6-8, 2017 at the Manila Hotel. Three hundred twenty-eight (328) adoption advocates and experts in the global and local adoption community attended the conference. Topics for plenary and break-out sessions were relevant, informative, right on spot and responsive to the present issues/concerns being faced by social workers, CCAs and other partners/stakeholders. Perfect choice of speakers, well-versed and experts on their topics. Considering that the theme is about disruption and illegal adoptions, testimony from an adoptee with these background is more appreciating.

Case conferences with the concerned DSWD Field Office and NGO CCAs were conducted to resolve issues and challenges in aborted and disruptive placements.

Three (3) capacity building trainings on intercountry adoption program and preparing children for adoption were conducted for Region II (April 24-28, 2017); Region III (June 5-9, 2017) and Region VI (October 9-13, 2017) social workers. The regional training is in fulfillment to the ICAB’s commitment to DSWD’s SG3. A total of 122 social workers from the DSWD FO, RSCC, NGOs, Family Courts, hospitals and PIMA/CSWDO attended the training.

Technical assistance and advocacy visits provided to DSWD/LGUs/NGOs to assist in the case movement and management of children for ICA:

- [ ] DSWD FO I
- [ ] DSWD FO II
- [ ] DSWD CALABARZON (IV-A)
- [ ] DSWD FO III
- [ ] DSWD FO V
- [ ] DSWD VI
- [ ] DSWD FO VII
- DSWD FO VIII
- DSWD CAR
- DSWD FO X
- DSWD FO XI
- DSWD NIR
- DSWD NCR
- RSCE CAR
- RSCE VIII
- RSCE NCR
- RSCE XI
- Beacon of Hope foundation Naic, Cavite
- Bethany Home Sto. Nino Orphanage, Bulacan
- Child Hope-Field of Dreams Children's Charity Foundation, Davao
- Children's Joy Foundation, Davao
- Children Shelter of Cebu
- Destiny's Promise Tantay
- Dorcas House, Iloilo
- Faith, Hope and Love Kid's Ranch, Sariaya Quezon
- Gentle Hands, Quezon City
- Harvest House Orphanage, Davao
- Healing Heart Ministries, Baguio City
- Holy Infant Home, Bacolod City
- Home of Joy Dasmarias Cavite
- Hospicio de San Jose, Manila
- House of Refuge Quezon City NCR
- Kalipay Negrense Foundation, Bacolod City
- Kaisahang Buhay Foundation, Quezon City
- King's Garden Children's Home, Orion Bataan
- Livingstone's Network of Hope, Davao
- Mama's Hope Haven of Norway Cavite
- Mercy House Tanay
- Meritxell Children's World Foundation, Marikina City
- My Father's House Paranaque City NCR
- New Faith Family Children's Home Foundation Cainta
- Norfil Foundation Inc. Quezon City
- Onesimo Bullilit Center, Quiapo Manila
- Palm Haven Davao
4. ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

- ICAB began ISO 9001:2015 Trainings/Workshops with DAP beginning October 2017. The outputs from the ISO trainings/workshops and inputs of the DAP team caused the current revision and harmonization of the contents and annexes in the ICAB PAWIM and ICAB QMS Manual. Notwithstanding its limited technical expertise/experience and limited staff to comply with the international quality management standards of ISO 9001:2015, ICAB has and is continuing to fulfill the requirements.

- The ICAB complied with the Good Governance Conditions (GGC) for the CY 2017 Performance Based Bonus:
  - Civil Service Commission ARTA requirements and posting in the most public accessible area of the agency.
  - Freedom of Information Manual
  - Submission of ICAB FY 2017 APP to GPPB
  - Posting of the ICAB FY 2017 APP Non-CSE in the ICAB's Transparency Seal Page
  - Submission of FY 2016 Financial Reports to COA
  - Submission of ICAB APCI Self-Assessment Results for FY 2016 to GPPB

- The ICAB participated in various conferences, dialogues, workshops and meetings which equipped the ICAB Secretariat with new knowledge and skills in the efficient and effective delivery of intercountry adoption program and services, understood strategic goals of the Department, familiarized with the performance governance system, government accounting, procurement and auditing policies/procedures:
  - Adoption Consciousness Week Celebration
  - Adoption Consciousness Celebration “Walk For Legal Adoption” Kick-Off Activity
  - Anti-Drug Campaign and Waste Management
  - CY 2016 Program Review and CY 2017 Strategic Planning Workshop
  - CY 2018 Planning Workshop
  - CSC 2017 Public Sector HR Symposium “Shaping Changes”
  - CSC Workplace Learning and Development Course
  - DBM FY 2018 Budget Forum
  - WSH-PS-DBM Consignment Agreement Discussion
  - Microsoft Philippines Customer Immersion Experience Event
  - Training on Government Procurement Process
5. ICAB Budget & Expenses

- At the end of the CY 2017, the ICAB operated on a total budget of Php 47,650,973 Million which was derived from the Regular Allotment (RA 10924) of Php 18,813,978 Million and Php 28,837,000 Million from use of income per Section 13 of RA 8043.

- A summary of allotment/obligations and balance is stated below as of December 31, 2017:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Allotment R.A. 10924</th>
<th>Use of Income R.A. 8043</th>
<th>Add'l SARO</th>
<th>Total Allotment Received</th>
<th>Obligations Incurred</th>
<th>Unobligated Balance of allotment</th>
<th>% of Utilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Service</td>
<td>16,494,000</td>
<td>3,100,973</td>
<td>19,594,973</td>
<td>19,554,040.58</td>
<td>40,932.42</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.99%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOOE</td>
<td>27,805,000</td>
<td>(781,000)</td>
<td>27,024,000</td>
<td>27,019,528.29</td>
<td>4,473.71</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>1,030,040.00</td>
<td>1,960.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>99.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16,494,000</td>
<td>28,837,000</td>
<td>2,319,973</td>
<td>47,650,973</td>
<td>47,803,606.87</td>
<td>47,366.13</td>
<td>99.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During CY 2017, the ICAB earned a total of Php 32,350,267.35 Million of which Php 25,620,765.37 were issued BTR Certification while Php 6,529,501.98 were through bank to bank transfers/remittances of the Foreign Adoption Agencies/Prospective Adoptive Parents through the Philippine Central Bank and the Bureau of Treasury without BTR Certification.

III. CONCLUSION:

The ICAB’s best practice in its processes and procedures is acknowledged and the expertise of the ICAB is tapped by partners and stakeholders for capacity building activities of direct service practitioners/implementers.

The close and continuous collaboration between ICAB, DSWD, NGOs and LGUs will redound to the protection of Filipino children.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

These are challenges for ICAB in the coming years unless immediate action is pursued:

1. Limited number of children cleared for intercountry adoption as against a large number of adoptive families waiting for a match and applying.
2. Pre-identification of unrelated child for adoption
3. Pursuing domestic adoption by couples with dual citizenship but are habitual residents abroad.
4. Amendment of RA 8043.
5. Delay in the issuance of the BTR Certification for fees and charges which affects the official income earned by the agency.

Addressing the challenges:

1. Continuous provision of capacity building packages on ICA zeroing on LGUs, hospitals/lying-in Clinics, courts.
2. Strong coordination with DSWD PSB, Field Offices and NGOs on cases of children for intercountry adoption.
3. Pursue legislative agendas.
4. Intense collaboration with BTR and DBM in facilitating updated certifications of fees and charges remitted directly to BTR.

Prepared by:  

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Date: 6-4-18

Noted and Approved by:  

BERNADETTE B. ABEJO  
Executive Director  
Date: 6-4-18