For 90 years, we have connected vulnerable children, adults, and families, separated by an international border, to the services and support they need.
2014 brought an influx of unaccompanied vulnerable children from the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras) into the United States in unprecedented numbers. Most of these children were escaping poverty, child abuse, neglect, organized crime, and persistent gang violence. They endured an incredibly difficult journey to REUNITE with their families already in the U.S. ISS-USA responded to the crisis in a number of ways: First, to PROTECT these children when they first arrived, ISS-USA advocated for vulnerable children to be temporarily housed with families, instead of in large warehouses. Second, ISS-USA enhanced its services to SUPPORT these children through the difficult adjudication of their cases by ensuring that those advocating for them had all the necessary information from their home countries that was critical to making good decisions on their behalf. Finally, ISS-USA hosted a conference with the University of Maryland School of Social Work. Key input from Ambassadors: Susan Jacobs (Department of State), Jose Julio Alejandro Ligorria Carballido, (Guatemala), Gary Doer (Canada), Francisco Roberto Altschul Fuentes, (El Salvador) and Salvador Rodenzo, (Honduras) and numerous other experts facilitated fruitful discussions about developing child-centered practices in Law, Social Work and Policy for Cross-Border Families. In particular, the conference took a regional approach to protecting the best interests of children in, and from, the Northern Triangle. ISS-USA is celebrating its 90th anniversary of providing cross-border services to children and families around the globe. We are a long way from being finished with our work, but we look forward to continuing to use the valuable lessons learned from our past 90 years to support, protect and reunite children and families across international borders.

Julie Gilbert Rosicky
Executive Director
Mary Mentaberry
Board Chair
ISS Milestones

YWCA, ISS founders, published “The Welfare of Migrants,” the very first report of its kind!

1921

Established international headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland

1924

Incorporated in NYC

1926

Found homes in the U.S. for thousands of refugee children from Europe

1939

Changed name of organization from International Migration Service to International Social Service (ISS)

1946

Initiated family finding for children of U.S. Service men

1950s

Advocated for the Hague Adoption Treaty

1980s

Relocated from NYC to Baltimore

1990s

Began providing repatriation assistance to U.S. Citizens returning from foreign countries, in cooperation with HHS

2000s

Established the Helton Institute

2006

Studied the cross border placement of foster children with relatives abroad

2010

Provided repatriation assistance to thousands of U.S. evacuees returning from Haiti post-earthquake

2014

Advocated for better protection of vulnerable children fleeing to the U.S. from Central America in record numbers

2014

Hosted Ambassadors from Central American countries and Canada to discuss a coordinated approach to child protection for migrating, vulnerable children

2014

Increased capacity to more effectively protect vulnerable children migrating in, and between, Central America, Mexico and the U.S.

More than 130 homestudies were completed in 2014

“My wife lives in Kansas and my kids want to visit, but I’m not sure her home is safe for them.”

(From a man in Canada)

“My client says she cannot go back to El Salvador because her life is in danger, but I need evidence.”

(From a lawyer in Arizona)
Studied the effects of Intercountry Adoption.

Welfare of Migrants, relating to the status of YWCA, ISS founders, Geneva, Switzerland.

Migration Service to develop a task force.

International Social development of the very first report.

Created impetus to the UN Convention for thousands of U.S. Service men and women returning from foreign countries, in Europe.

Advocated to pass from International to thousands of refugee children of the U.S. 

Initiated family cooperation with HHS returning from foreign countries, in Central America in record numbers.

Established the Hague Adoption Treaty from Central America.


Relocated from NYC and pioneered the establishment of the Helton Institute.

Added medical and social work unit.

Increased capacity of organization.

Established in NYC and expanded to more than 130 homestudies were completed in 2014.

More than 736 people received repatriation assistance last year.

ISS answered more than 1,500 questions dealing with cross border issues.

ISS supported, protected and reunited more than 3,000 people from 99 countries and all 50 states in 2014.

“My client says she cannot go back to El Salvador, because her life is in danger, but I need evidence.”

(From a lawyer in Arizona)

“My birth father is American, and I am hoping that I might be able to locate him there.”

(From a woman in Germany)

“My mother moved to Costa Rica, but I haven’t heard from her in months. Is she ok?”

(From a man in Michigan)

“I have been living in South Africa for forty years. Now I am sick and must return home. I don’t have the resources.”

(From a police officer in South Africa)

“My wife lives in Colombia, and I want to find my birth siblings, who might live in the U.S. Can ISS-USA help me, and where do I start?”

(From an elderly U.S. citizen)

“My husband is American and he went back to Russia, I can’t reach him from Russia. Are they safe?”

(From a child welfare worker in Canada)

“My client says she cannot go back to El Salvador, because her life is in danger, but I need evidence.”

(From a lawyer in Arizona)

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