

The Need

China has the second largest economy after the U.S. However, in per capita terms, the country is still lower-middle income. In recent years, pervasive unemployment in rural areas has prompted a mass urban migration. By a U.N. measure of living on less than \$1.25 a day, some 254 million Chinese remain in extreme poverty – a major cause of child abandonment.



In Chinese culture, male sons traditionally provide the sole means of retirement support, while daughters are expected to help support their husband's family. In 1979, China imposed a one-child-per-family policy to limit population growth. Facing fines and other consequences if they failed to comply, many impoverished families felt compelled to abandon children they could not support and that would not in time support the family. Consequently, parents primarily abandoned girls – or children with physical disabilities.

With China's recent easing of the one-child policy and overall improvement in living standards, fewer families are abandoning healthy female infants. Rather, more families are adopting healthy infants domestically. Unable to provide needed medical care, however, some poor families still feel compelled to abandon children born with disabilities. As a result, the children living in China's social welfare system are now primarily children with special needs or older children.

In some rural areas, children who have lost one or both parents – especially due to HIV/AIDs or drugs – are also at high risk of ending up homeless or institutionalized.

Holt's History in China

In 1993, Holt facilitated its first international adoption (ICA) from China to the United States. The following year, Holt began

facilitating ICA through partnership with the Guangxi Ministry of Social Affairs and Mother's Choice orphanage in Hong Kong. Holt's ICA program progressively grew in numbers – from 68 in 1994 to 350 in 1995.

With Holt support, Mother's Choice developed a new child care facility in Nanning. And in 1996, Holt helped Guangzhou Orphanage develop a special baby care unit (SBCU) where infants at risk of dying received urgent medical care – enabling them to not only survive, but thrive and be placed for adoption. In 1996, China also established the China Center of Adoption Affairs, standardizing the process of ICA.

Gradually, Holt began allying with the government to develop model foster care programs – providing family-like alternatives for children in institutional care. In 1998, Holt helped Nanchang Orphanage establish their first foster care project and another SBCU. In the ensuing years, Holt replicated this model for children throughout China – a model founded on the philosophy of affectionate, attentive care to nurture children's growth and development while they await permanent placement. In 2001, UNICEF and China's Ministry of Civil Affairs selected the Nanchang Social Welfare Institute as one of eight orphanages in China with exemplary foster care programs.

Initially established in Hong Kong, Holt China Children's Services moved to Beijing in 2003 to better facilitate a blossoming child welfare program. Here, Holt China staff oversees a growing number of projects, including family preservation programs; short and long-term foster care and group homes; and multiple programs for older children and children with special needs.

Current Projects

Holt's mission in China has evolved. As children in China's orphanages are increasingly older or have special needs, the landscape for international adoption has also changed. In 2008, Holt created the China Child of Promise program to propel adoption of children with correctable or treatable medical conditions. In 2009, Holt also began home finding for older and special needs children in China's Journey of Hope program. China's children of promise now comprise the overwhelming majority of Holt's recent ICA placements to U.S. families.

Over more than 15 years of working in China, Holt has cultivated a strong relationship with the Chinese government – accomplishing

all child welfare goals through partnership with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and participating orphanages. Initially, upon determining the service needs in an area, Holt works with local partners to establish community-based programs. As local capacity develops, Holt progressively transfers management and financial responsibility while continuing to monitor, train and provide technical assistance to help programs achieve independence.

As everywhere, Holt strives to promote permanent placement as the best solution for orphaned and abandoned children in China. For many, though, permanency through adoption is not a likely outcome. For older children, and children with medical and developmental conditions, Holt has developed alternative solutions to life-long institutionalization. In long-term foster care and group homes, children receive loving, attentive care from devoted foster parents. Holt provides each family with a monthly stipend, nutritional support, and medical and care supplies. Social workers also partner with local orphanage and government staff to train foster parents in best child care practices, visiting foster homes monthly.



In addition to ICA and foster care, Holt has pioneered in China to stabilize home environments for children at risk of separation from their families due to poverty, HIV and drugs. Through Holt's family preservation program, vulnerable children and families receive funding for basic living expenses, school fees and supplies, as well as nutritional supplements for HIV-positive children. Other Holt projects include emergency medical treatment, and skills training for older children with special needs.

Holt currently manages 32 child welfare projects in nine provinces, serving several thousand children per year.

Strategic Directions

To date, Holt has functioned solely as a foreign charity in China under provisional control of the government. By the end of 2010, Holt will complete registration for the Holt International Foundation of China, enabling full legal protection and recognition as a U.S.-based agency operating under Chinese law. Holt anticipates this move will increase retention of skilled staff, facilitate safer handling of funds, and open more avenues of cooperation and trust with the Chinese Government – ultimately empowering Holt to provide a wider range of services to children in the country.



Adoption trends, however, continue to decline as fewer healthy infants enter care and process for ICA. Holt seeks to hold our position among the top three placing agencies in China by actively recruiting families for special needs adoption. One particularly acute challenge will be finding families open to adopt from China's growing pool of available older children and children with more severe special needs.

Expansion of child welfare programs will significantly increase the number of children receiving Holt services in China. By cultivating partnerships in new regions, we plan to bring an additional 140 children into foster care, and an anticipated 2,000 more children will enter family preservation programs in 2011. Holt will seek to secure donor funding for new projects, such as education for children aging out of our programs – a growing need in China. We plan to triple the number of children in sponsorship, enrolling an additional 1,000 per year. By 2013, the total number of children we serve annually in China should exceed 6,000.