

## **Holt International Children's Services**

### **Response to Possible Suspension of International Adoptions from Vietnam**

The State Department's recent announcement of the **possible suspension** of international adoptions from Vietnam by the Vietnamese government, is the latest illustration of the complexities of international adoption. This announcement ends weeks of speculation and rumor that action would be taken by the Vietnamese government in response to months of allegations and ongoing media coverage of abuses and unethical international adoption practices.

In this environment of uncertainty and suspicion, Holt International supports the Government of Vietnam in their decision to suspend adoptions while efforts are made to thoughtfully review and address ongoing allegations of corruption in international adoption practice.

Holt International supports the Vietnamese in their intent to assure proper safeguards and ethical adoption practice, to develop a transparent system of checks and balances. Holt urges this process to be given the highest priority by the government of Vietnam; and if new procedures and policies are established, that they be implemented without delay in recognition of the urgency to meet the needs of their children.

Holt first established an adoption and child welfare program in Vietnam in the 1970s, and re-established programs in 1989. In response to the critical needs of homeless children in that country, our commitment to working in Vietnam has never wavered. In recent years, we have become increasingly concerned by evidence of flawed and inappropriate adoption practices. Historically, these situations affect the reputations of all who work in adoption, regardless of the ethical practice of individual agencies or individuals.

Holt intends to maintain its Vietnamese adoption program and to continue accepting applications from families interested in adopting from Vietnam. However, these families must be aware of, and be willing to accept the uncertainties of the process in Vietnam and expect delays in their adoption. We at Holt will do all we can to support families in the adoption process. Staff in Eugene are in daily contact with our local Vietnamese staff in Hanoi who keep us informed of the latest developments in Vietnam. The Vietnamese staff also support adoptive families when they travel and receive their children home.

During the next few weeks, and until there is more certainty about international adoptions from Vietnam, Holt encourages the adoption community to express support of the Vietnamese effort to address the concerns and problems in the current adoption process.

A fundamental principle of international adoption is that it is a permanent, life-long solution for children who would otherwise not have a family. These children deserve the investment by governments and policy makers to establish an adoption process that assures their best interests for a safe, secure and ethical adoption. This is the only means to secure the long-term viability of international adoptions from Vietnam.

February 13, 2002