



Press Release

First National Study on Intercountry Adoption in Ireland

TCD's Children Research Centre Conducts First Study on Intercountry Adoption in Ireland

Dublin, June 18, 2007 – *The Outcomes of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland*, the first national study on internationally adopted children conducted by the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin and commissioned by the Adoption Board, was launched today at Trinity College Dublin.

Since a legal framework was put in place for Intercountry Adoption by the Government in 1991, approximately 4,500 children have been adopted into Ireland from abroad. Ireland has one of the highest per capita rates of Intercountry Adoption in Europe. Within Ireland no more than 50 stranger domestic adoptions a year are carried out, compared to almost 500 intercountry adoptions.

During this two-year study, the TCD study team interviewed and assessed 180 children, aged between two and 17 years old randomly selected to be representative of the total population of children who have been adopted from abroad. Interviews took place with the children's adoptive parents on a wide range of issues including their pre-adoption and post-adoption experiences, their experience of parenting and their views on pre and post adoption support services. Further detailed interviews were conducted with young adopted adults, representatives of support groups and social workers.

The children were, on average, 17 months old when adopted, 80% had spent some time in institutional care and they came from 15 different countries. Given the conditions in which they had typically spent their earliest months or years, the study found that most children had made an extraordinary recovery. Their intellectual level was comparable with that of Irish-born children and most were functioning well emotionally and socially. A minority of children (25-30%) had ongoing problems but the problems were very severe and disabling in only a small number of cases.

While the study highlights that in general the majority of children adopted into Ireland are doing well, the findings show there is a lack of support for the particular needs of these children, some of whom are still struggling with the consequences of early neglect

and institutional care. Parents and professionals, including social work managers, practitioners and support groups identified the urgent need for more awareness and specialised help or needs of this group of children, such as a comprehensive, national, post-placement service.

Speaking at today's launch, Professor Sheila Greene, Director of the Children's Research Centre, TCD and Principal Investigator on the study said: "Intercountry adoption provides a very striking example of the resilience of children despite early adversity. The majority of the children in this study have demonstrated a remarkable capacity to achieve and develop to their full potential once they were given the opportunity of a normal, loving and supportive home."

In exploring the opinions of the children, teenagers and young adults who had experienced intercountry adoption, the study found that while the majority of children and teens believed that being adopted did not make a difference to their lives, most of the young adults felt it did make a difference. Within all age groups a majority wished to know more about their birth families, particularly about their birth mother and siblings.

"The Adoption Board commissioned the study from the Children's Research Centre to support its work in regulating intercountry adoption and promoting a child centred approach. The outcomes of the study, in which we hear the voice of the adopted children and young people for the first time, will contribute to improving the quality of the intercountry adoption experience, especially post adoption," concluded the Chairman of the Adoption Board, Justice Jim O'Sullivan.

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Details: *An advance press briefing at 10.00am today, (Monday, June 18, 2007) in the Arts Building Conference Room (across from Douglas Hyde Gallery, Nassau St entrance) with the Principal Investigator of the study, Professor Greene and the Chief Executive of the Adoption Board, John Collins and Deputy Chairperson, Orlaith Traynor followed by the official launch of the report in the Robert Emmet Theatre, the Arts Building, TCD.*

Editor's Notes:

The Children's Research Centre

The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, is a specialist centre focusing on specific areas of research and evaluation in the lives of children and young people. The Centre undertakes multi-disciplinary and policy relevant research into the lives of children and young people, and the contexts within which they live their lives. In its work the Centre strives to produce high quality research of interest to researchers, policy makers and service providers. The Centre also aims to build capacity and know how around researching children's lives. It works closely with statutory, voluntary and

community bodies concerned with children. The Centre is also committed to forging strong links with Irish and international colleagues in the field of child and youth research.

The Adoption Board

An Bord Uchtála – the Adoption Board is a statutory independent body appointed by the Government of Ireland. The Board was established under the Adoption Act of 1952 and is the central authority in Ireland for the administration of the Irish legal adoption system.

The Adoption Board has the power to make adoption orders on the application of a person or persons who wish to adopt a child. Additionally, under the Adoption Act 1991, the Adoption Board has the legal authority to grant Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to applicants intending to adopt children from overseas and to grant entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions for those that do so. The Board consists of a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and seven ordinary members. The current Chairman is Judge Jim O'Sullivan.