HELPING HANDS
ADOPTION MEDIATION AGENCY

Information Meeting 2026

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HELPING HANDS

AGENDA

- Overview of HHAMA / Hague Convention
- Adoption Statistics
- Country Profiles and Process overview
- HHAMA Services
- Adoption Dossier & Notary Public
- Originals, True Copies and Foreign Documents
- Challenges with Dossiers
- Renewals
- Q&A

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HHAMA INTRODUCTION

SINCE 2005

HCCH

Pre-Hague Ratification [pre 2010]

- HHAMA mediated over 450 placements from Vietnam

Irish Adoption Act 2010 incorporating :

- The **Hague Convention** on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry **Adoption** (or **Hague Adoption Convention**) 1993

Post-Hague Programme [activity from 2013]

- HHAMA mediated over 280 placements from several countries, China, Bulgaria, Moldova, Poland, Haiti, and USA, Thailand, India, Philippines and Vietnam

Since 2013 there has been a change in profile of child –

- Increasing age profile and additional needs, medical and other

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WHAT HAGUE CONVENTION MEANT

- Closure of certain country programmes : Russia, Romania, Mexico
- Improvement of transparency in adoption process
  - Establish Central Authorities in Sending Country to ensure greater controls
  - Recognise Accredited bodies eg HHAMA
  - Decouple financial gain from source of children to prevent abduction or trafficking of children
  - Establish In the BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD principle guiding all decisions
  - Ensure each child is deemed 'eligible' for adoption
  - Espouses principle of subsidiary – work to support birth family placement
  - Promote Domestic Adoption actively
    - E.G. Domestic Adoption increased by 80% in China / Vietnam

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HHAMA NUMBERS



Country	Vietnam				USA	India	Haiti	Thailand	Philippines	
Complete 2022	13				2	1	1	3		
Complete 2023	10				3	1	0	5		
Complete 2024	8				1	0	0	6		
Placements 2025	6				4	0	0	4		
PLACEMENTS 2026	**4**				**2**	**1**	**0**	**1**	1	
Referral Pending Placement	1				0	0	0	0	0	
Waiting List	17				3	2	C	2	1	

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COUNTRY PROFILES 2026



- Vietnam Active. Cost of VN fees $14,000 approx
- USA Active Cost of US fees $60,000 - $90,000 approx
- Thailand Active Cost of TH fees 0 + €3k-€6k translations
- India Active Indian Nationals Only Cost of IN fees $6,500 approx
- Philippines Active Cost of PH fees – unknown as child specific

Inter-relative Adoptions also possible from the above countries but subject to strict Hague Article 4 requirements

HHAMA Fee : €10,850
payable over 5 different process timed steps

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IRISH ADOPTION PROCESS

- Apply to TUSLA Child and Family agency
- Attend and Information meeting
- Attend a adoptive parenting preparation course 6 sessions
- Undertake an assessment with a social worker – thorough interviews, referees.
- Review by a local area TUSLA committee
- Review by the AAI – Adoption Authority of Ireland
- Receive an Article 15 Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability [DES] to adopt
- Register with an Agency [HHAMA]
  - HHAMA is the only mediation agency in Ireland

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QUICK OVERVIEW

HHAMA AS AN AGENCY:

- We prioritise the preparation of applicants for the country selection: Based on:
  - Sending country eligibility requirements and processes in line with Hague Convention
  - Homestudy Approved Capacity to parent including :
    - All adoption is additional needs parenting
    - Age of child at adoption, Racial Profile, Attachment & Bonding
    - Additional medical or family background considerations
  - Costs & Timeline of programme – although waiting times are not predictable in any meaningful way

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HHAMA FULL SUITE OF SERVICES

- Support at preparation stages
- Sending Country Interactions
- Support with dossier:
  - All dossiers are transmitted to HHAMA for transfer to Sending Country.
- Support at time of match / potential match
- Pre-travel training prior to Sending Country travel
- Documentation updating reminders* ultimately applicants responsibility
- Article 16 review and Article 17 submission to AAI
- Post Placement Report reminders
- Post adoption support

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS

HHAMA issue detail Dossier listings as defined by the sending country central authority.

Dossiers Usually include



- Birth Cert, Marriage Cert or Single Affidavit
- Financial and Health documents
- Assessment report [Homestudy Reports] and Article 15 certificate [AAI]
- Garda Vetting

Less frequently

- Referees, Property ownership, Psychology reports.
- Fingerprinting, Racial Awareness, First Aid

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DOSSIER LISTING

Document Number	Document Detail
1	Original Birth Cert(s)
2	Orginal Marriage Certificate MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires] OR If sole applicant, Declaration of Marital Status (written by your solicitor) sample in appendix Orginal Death Certificate (if applicable) Original Divorce Documentation (if applicable)
3a	Medical Letter (TYPED letter from GP). Male Applicant MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
3b	Medical Letter (TYPED letter from GP). Female Applicant MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
4a	Letter from Employer or Accountant confirming the income. Male Applicant MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
4b	Letter from Employer or Accountant confirming the income. Female Applicant MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
5a	Police Certificate of Character. Male Applicant Issued by your local station regional office for consular purposes. MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
5b	Police Certificate of Character. Female Applicant Issued by your local station regional office for consular purposes. MUST BE ISSUED WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS [and renewed every 12months as it expires]
6	Article 15 Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability granted by the AAI Initial Declaration ___1st Ext. ___ 2nd Subsequent Ext. _____
7a	Photocopy of passport. Male Applicant MUST HAVE BEEN NOTARISED WITHIN LAST 12 MONTHS
7b	Photocopy of passport. Female Applicant MUST HAVE BEEN NOTARISED WITHIN LAST 12 MONTHS
8a	Affidavit of Declaration of Identity (if applicable) Male Applicant (If the name on your birth cert is different to name on any other paperwork)
8b	Affidavit of Declaration of Identity (if applicable) Female Applicant (If the name on your birth cert is different to name on any other paperwork)
9	Section 42 Home Study Report Notarised on each page DATE HOMESTUDY COMPLETED BY SOCIAL WORKER:_____
10 & 11	Application for Adoption of Vietnamese Child form with photographs attached. F035 Application for Adoption of Vietnamese Child form with photographs attached. F035 (TWO COMPLETED FORMS REQUIRED FOR APPLICATION)
	IN ADDITION TO THE DOSSIER ABOVE – which are all Notarised and DFA authenticated, the following are required as part of a dossier.
12	5 passport photographs of each applicant(s) Male Applicant Female Applicant

The detailed dossier listing identifies :

- Document Age parameters i.e. < 12mths
- Where Affidavit is required i.e. Robert aka Bob
- Suggestions for content i.e. application letters
- Notary/DFA requirements
- Unique requirements i.e. sole applicant declaration, homemaker letter, previous child adoption paperwork, parish letter etc etc.

- We also provide samples/templates or specific forms

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS & NOTARY



Which country programmes require bound or unbound dossiers?

- Vietnam — Every page authenticated individually. Seal At least signature page DOSSIER CANNOT BE BOUND / exception multi page documents - must be securely rivetted for DFA apostille
- USA — Key documents require Notary / DFA only as per each of 2 agencies

- Thailand — Bound dossier + schedule of documents & notarial Cert *
- Philippines — Bound dossier + schedule of documents & notarial Cert *
  - **Both with exception of Foreign Documents which are not bound in dossier**

- India — Scans of original documents, ell with Notary & DFA [uploaded to online Portal] APPS will submit the originals to India at time of adoption

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS & NOTARY



Which country prog… …iers?

- Vietnam … be
- …
- …
- Ph…
  - B… …ier
- India Scan… …d to online Portal] APPS will subm… …adoption

One thing that is consistent in inter-country adoption is change

So the HHAMA F020 dossier listing and authentication instructions will always be the most to date source of instruction on the current country requirements

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS & TRUE COPY

All applicants are requested to provide 2 authenticated DOSSIERS

1 original & 1 true copy dossier

Applicants become confused - what is a 'TRUE COPY' and we explain it as :

When we refer to a "True copy" we refer to a photocopy of each document that has been authenticated by the Notary and DFA and therefore described as a "Verified True copy of the Original"

Applicants are advised that some documents in the dossier are not originals – eg printout of e Garda Vetting.

Therefore, even in the 'original' dossier there can be Verified true copy documents.

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DEFINITION OF 'ORIGINAL'

Garda Vetting : printouts from Tusla emails
Notary must apply the appropriate wording to this document, it is not an original but a notary sealed copy must be in the original dossier.

Electronic Signatures : not 'wet ink'
Notary must apply the appropriate wording to this document, it is not accepted as an original by DFA but a notary sealed copy must be in the original dossier.

Applicants are advised to rely on the Notary Public to correctly authenticate the documents and to satisfy the DFA

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PURPOSE OF THE 'TRUE COPY'

HHAMA retains the 'true copy' dossier whilst the original is sent to the sending country.

Should there be any issue with the original,
TNT lost one,
Sending Country mishaps

Then HHAMA has a fully authenticated copy dossier which has the same standing as an 'original' dossier and can be used to replace the lost/damaged one with no additional work required by the applicants, notary or DFA.

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DFA APOSTILLE & FOREIGN DOCUMENTS

Following Notary seal:

All adoption Dossiers BOTH 'ORIGINAL' SET AND TRUE COPY SET require subsequent Apostille in Department of Foreign affairs.

With the exception of FOREIGN DOCUMENTS :

Which must be authenticated with apostille in the country of origin [IF for VN translation at Vietnamese Embassy in country of origin].

The dossiers may undergo subsequent authentication ; The Supreme Court, Thai Embassy London, or country embassy in Vietnam along with departments of foreign affairs and justice in each country

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS CHALLENGES

- Where to apply the Notary seal?
  - Every page ? Notary signature / initials vs Seal Signature page?
- When to use Schedule of Documents?
  - Schedule; only for the bound dossiers
  - Schedule; never include reference to Foreign Documents
- Foreign Documents - detailed in previous slide
  - Considering Employers foreign if address is not in Ireland
- Challenges for Notary sealing documents when the signatory is not present and signing under Notary witness ?
- Applicants trying to use samples / templates as actual forms.

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ADOPTION DOSSIERS RENEWALS



The compilation of a dossier is often only the beginning

- USA annual renewals of key documents
- VIETNAM annual renewals of all documents and post referral Article 18 Notary seal
- INDIA 3 year renewal timeline
- ARTICLE 15/HOMESTUDY 2 year or 1 year frequency renewal

- **ALL still require Notary & Apostille – 'original' & true copy**

So your relationship with an applicant could span several years

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please note, HHAMA will never tell an applicant what a Notary should do or how a Notary should authenticate the documents or dossier.

HHAMA advises applicants what the sending country require.

Notary Publics are the experts on how to provide that.

Please always feel free to contact HHAMA if there are questions.

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Vital for every programme

Confusing for applicants

Frustrating for many [Assessment / Renewals already]

Expensive for some

And adoption is an emotionally challenging journey so

Thank you for your understanding and support

SUMMARY

THE COMPILATION OF A DOSSIER IS

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SOME QUESTIONS RECEIVED – PART I

- **Submission of documents:** When dealing with a large number of documents, can we submit the entire dossier to the Department of Foreign Affairs for apostille or authentication purposes, or does each document need to be processed separately?
  - Depends on the country, Vietnam/India/USA individual. Thailand bound [but not including Foreign documents
- **Notarial certification:** What are the most common difficulties notaries encounter when certifying documents for international adoptions, particularly when different countries have their own requirements?
  - Original and Copy, How to handle 'wet ink' and GV printouts, how to authenticate when the signatory is not present.

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SOME QUESTIONS RECEIVED – PART 2

- **Complex cases:** It would be interesting to hear about some of the more challenging or unusual cases the speakers have dealt with and how they overcame the difficulties.
  - Most of the challenges we become aware of are where applicants misunderstand the instruction and try to impose 'HHAMA said' instead of trusting the Notary. Mostly around original vs true copy
  - The other challenge we become aware of is the DFA process which can be different and changes without notification. We play a bit of catch up in trying to advise applicants.
- **Practical tips:** Are there any recommended procedures for handling large adoption dossiers efficiently and avoiding unnecessary delays or rejected documents?
  - Meet the applicant in advance, ask to see the F020 document HHAMA prepared with the country specific requirements and ensure the applicants present them all to you at one time.

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SOME QUESTIONS RECEIVED – PART 2

- **Dealing with adoption agencies:** Can notaries liaise directly with the relevant adoption agencies on behalf of their clients to help speed up the process, or is it preferable to leave those communications to the applicants?
  - HHAMA is the only agency and more than happy to deal with any Notary with specific client questions.
- **Professional fees:** Is there any guidance on the fees notaries should charge for this type of work, particularly where a substantial number of documents are involved?
  - Not a topic HHAMA has any knowledge of nor input in. We appreciate the level of work undertaken and allow the profession or the individuals to set a rate related to the time and complexity of each case and also the consideration of how to charge for renewals.

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