



## CCAI Delegation to India

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*March 19<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, 2005*

**Delegation Members:** Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), Brooke Roberts (Legislative Director for Senator Craig), Kathleen Strottman, Legislative Director for Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Barbara Walzer (CCAI Board), Paul Singer (CCAI Board) and Wendy Cosby (interim executive director of CCAI).

### **Goals and Objectives:**

- Strengthen relations with Indian officials who oversee adoption and the care of children in need of homes.
- To understand the core issues which have led to the large numbers of orphans in India.
- To determine ways in which the United States Government can support the efforts of the Government of India to care for orphans.
- Demonstrate that the U.S. Government is a strong advocate of adoption for children who cannot remain with their biological relatives.

### **Overview:**

The large numbers of orphans is a symptom of greater and deeper issues that any group looking to help orphans long-term must address – such as poverty, poor infrastructure, effects of natural disasters such as the tsunami in South Asia, overpopulation, access to health care, education, and HIV/AIDS. The congressional delegation spent time in both New Delhi and then traveled south to Bangalore, meeting with government officials and visiting child welfare centers, private and government run orphanages and non-government run organization in each place.

The delegation had a very productive meeting with the new Secretary of the Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA), Renuka Chidambaram. In this meeting, the delegation and CARA shared their mutual desire to make the international adoption process more



transparent. CARA shared that it was considering launching a public awareness campaign in India to encourage more domestic adoptions and the delegation confirmed that this has been an effective practice in the United States and encouraged them to seek funding from corporate partners. The delegation also met with several other Minister and Secretary level government leaders in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Department of Women and Children, Ministry of Overseas Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs.

The delegation visited two different orphanages, Holy Cross and the Delhi Council for Child Welfare's orphanage called Palna. After these visits, United States Ambassador David Mulford hosted a reception at his home with a cross section of individuals working in the political and economical sectors of India and Deputy Chief of Mission, Bob Blake, hosted a dinner at his house. At this dinner, Indian NGO's and American families who had just completed their adoptions shared their adoption experiences and communicated areas of concern in the process. The delegation's last evening in Delhi was spent at a reception hosted by USINPAC, a group of Indians and Americans working to build stronger relationships between the United States and India.

In Bangalore, the delegation was hosted by executives at an influential Indian based technology firm, Infosys Technologies Limited. The discussion focused on corporate responsibility and ways that companies like Infosys might give back to those in need in the region. Paul Singer, CCAI board member, shared with them Target's model for the Target Adoption Network which supports employees considering adoption or those in the process of adopting. After this meeting, the delegation went to Vathsalya Charitable Trust to learn about how they were caring for orphans and to visit one of their foster homes. CCAI then hosted a roundtable discussion of the history of international adoption in India with three government leaders including the chairperson of CARA, Dr. Aloma Lobo.

### **Conclusions:**

The delegation came away from this visit with the confidence that the foundation for a relationship with the Indian child welfare officials had been laid. They were renewed by the obvious enthusiasm and skill demonstrated by those in charge of reforming the laws and programs affecting orphaned youth. At one point during our meetings, the Secretary of CARA pointed out that with nearly 2 million orphans, India must do more than promote international adoption. They must and will put in place programs based in India that help to strengthen at-risk families and promote domestic adoption as an option for Indian couples looking to build a family. CCAI looks forward to continuing to work with CARA to achieve these goals.

