

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer**

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**Correspondence Regarding Better Futures Cases**

**RELEASED IN PART B6**

- October 23, 2009: Email received from an adoptive family which states, "After many attempts to have our case heard in court, during her trip, it became evident that our agency was assuming that if the family was present the court would be willing to circumvent the investigation. After many lies and story changes my wife had finally heard the truth after being in Addis for over a month. She was asked to leave and leave behind our daughter.

During her visit my wife had gotten to know and build relationships with the agency staff in Ethiopia. It was brought to our attention that many things that were told to us by the U.S. agency was lies. When we tried to get clear answers from our agency we were threatened.



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- November 5, 2009: Embassy learned that Better Futures was working with Beta Saida and an orphanage in Hosana that is run by a former MOWA woman who was accused of malfeasance.
- November 9, 2009: Received email from concerned adoptive parent on stating, "One of the worst things she saw were some men in and out of the care center and he had a gun, her breaking point was he left the gun on the couch and a toddler picked up the gun. The other concern was the health of the children, a lot of babies that were wasting and should have been hospitalized the nanny's hygiene was questionable."
- November 20, 2009: Received email from adoptive parent stating, "We received a lengthy email from Better Future's US rep last night with a story about how the children's biological father had tried to kill the mother and ended up in jail (released from jail only temporarily to appear in court for the relinquishment), resulting in a situation of extreme poverty. However nothing in the court documents we saw from Better Futures supported that version of events. The local rep was not even aware of the details in the story provided to us by the US HQ, which made us even more keen to independently verify which version of events was accurate."
- January 15, 2010: Embassy staff visited the Better Futures Transition Home and noted the following: "Grubby dingy toys crammed in the corner of a corrugated iron room, that was meant to be a garage, which is now the transition home "playroom" featuring a dingy, dirty rug that I believe was once blue and several small chairs all facing the Electronic Babysitter otherwise known as the Television set. Cables from the Television hanging down where small hands can easily grasp them and pull the television off the stand or worse. Bathrooms with a layer of grey, greasy filth.

- **March 14, 2010:** An adoptive parent arrived on at the Embassy with no advance notice from Better Future. Better Future's representative then tried to process adoption the paperwork that same day with a document from the Federal First Instance Court stating the child was 2.6 years old. The Embassy's panel physician had assessed the child's age as 4 years old.
- **July 14, 2010:** Embassy received documents from Better Future's representative that had been submitted to the Federal First Instance Court in an attempt to reverse and adoption. The documents indicated that Better Future's representative informed the court that the U.S. Embassy would not allow adoptions of children over 14 years of age without some sort of extreme special processing. This information is untrue and the Embassy's concerns were reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by diplomatic note (NUMBER: XXXX).



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I am contacting you because I know that UNICEF has been highly involved in revealing the corruption in the adoption system in Ethiopia and hope that you may be able to share any results of investigations done regarding this agency or adoptions in Ethiopia in general. Please feel free to call or to e-mail me regarding this matter."

- **October 19, 2010:** Email from Better Future's Executive Director, Agitu Wodajo, to an adoptive parent, provided to the Embassy by the adoptive parent, states, "As I mentioned to you over the phone, I have presented your case to a top Ethiopian government official and was assured that you and your husband will receive an official apology from the new Minister of Women's and Children's Affairs. On the other hand, our attorney is doing his investigation with the immigration. As this is a transitioning time for government officials, things may not go as fast as we want. I beg your patience until we hear the progress."
- **January 27, 2011:** Email received from a separate U.S. adoption agency license in Ethiopia states. "We have recently been asked by Better Future Adoption Services to partner with them. We would provide the training, home studies, post placement and communication with families on the U.S. side and they would focus their work on humanitarian projects and adoption coordination in Ethiopia."