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From: Rupp, Abigail M
Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2011 1:52 PM
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer
RE:

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Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
SensitivityCode: Privacy/PII

Dear Mrs. Ward, I apologize for the delay in responding. You are not the first adoptive parent to express concerns about Hope, and I appreciate your willingness to share. We take complaints like this very seriously. I'd like your permission to share your concerns with the Government of Ethiopia, who may wish to be in touch with you directly over your report.

Have you considered filing a Hague complaint against Hope as well? The link and more information can be found here:

http://adoption.state.gov/hague_convention/agency_accreditation/complaints.php

Sincerely,
Abby Rupp
Consular Chief

Privacy/PII
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: [Redacted]
Sent: Monday, May 30, 2011 7:58 PM
To: Rupp, Abigail M
Subject: FW:

please reference the forwarded email below this one. We also used Hope Adoption Agency and would like to let you know about our experience.

Here are a few bullet points of my concerns about Hope:

- they frequently give referrals that are not "paper ready". I believe that this is because they receive half of their payment at referral so that is \$5,000 they receive at that time. There are several issues with this including the heart break that parents experience when they are later told they will be possibly waiting one year or more (if it ever happens) for their child.
- they are very slow to get children paper ready. One good question would be to ask people how long their children have been waiting in the orphanage. Some people have waited 2 years from referral meaning the parents have stared at a picture of their child for 2 years. That means the child lived there much longer than that contributing to a whole host of mental health problems for the child, difficulties for the family as a whole and makes international adoption seem to others as a problematic option.

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- I was told by one of the case workers that part of the reason that it took so long was that the person that was working on the case left and no one else picked up the ball. He said it without any shame in his voice as if this is a usual occurrence. This is irresponsible for the entire family, especially the child. There is quite a bit of staff turnover. During my stay in Africa, two different case workers were working on my case because there was staff turnover. Combined with everything else, this is another red flag for me.

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[Redacted]

- While at the orphanage, I saw donations come in and they were never given to the children. Donations I brought were never seen by me again. I believe that my witnessing of such events was part of the reason they wanted me to leave. There was a room of children about 1 year old that were all sitting in a circle staring at each other not moving. There were no toys. We are all told to bring donations of toys when we come. As families, we often have to pay for extra luggage to do so. These donations are not being given to the children.
- They are very understaffed considering the money that families provide as part of their fees and considering how inexpensive it is to hire additional help. I counted a one in twelve ratio of nannies to children. [Redacted] I saw children suffering from severe dehydration. Medicine for hydration is not that expensive either. It is clear that it is run like a business with the bottom dollar in mind, not children. After visiting the orphanage, there were people in the group I was with that could not sleep that night. Their children no longer lived at the orphanage and it still haunted them. There are way worse conditions at other orphanages, I realize, but it is not what it should be. They have a transition house where they house children after court so their families pick them up at the transition house which has about a one in four ratio and many toys. So many parents have no idea about the conditions where their children actually lived.
- They tell adoptive families that they are not allowed to meet the birth families which is a red flag for me. When I started the process, I was informed by their local staff that it is "illegal" to meet birth families. This is of course, not true, and many agencies as well as the US embassy encourage families to meet one another

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Sincerely

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To: [redacted] michelle@adoptionconsultantsinc.org;

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Subject: [redacted]

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From: [redacted]

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Date: Thu, 21 Apr 2011 10:42:09 -0400

I sent this out to our Yahoo group but wanted to encourage all of you who are not on that group or may know of other families who have had bad experiences with Hope to step forward, it is time this ends. If any of you have the email address of [redacted] adoptive father please pass this along, I wasn't able to get his email while we were in Ethiopia. Our son, [redacted] is doing well but I can't help but wonder what he will think of all this one day, I need him to know I at least tried to set the record straight.

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To all the Hope families:

First off I want to thank you for your support during our adoption process and it is with some fear and great frustration that I write this email to all of you. Some of you know that our son's history was a complete lie and that Hope fabricated all of it, individuals were paid to say that they were my son's relatives. We found this out a day before our Embassy appointment and were absolutely devastated. Now that we have been home for almost 3 months I have decided to proceed with a formal complaint to the Embassy and to the Hague Registry.

I would encourage all of you who have had a negative experience with Hope to please get some advice from PEAR first, I spoke with Gina Pollock via phone and email and was assured that our position was secure as far as anyone coming to take [redacted] away from us. She can be contact at pearadopt@yahoo.com. Then please contact Abby Rupp at the State Department see her response below encouraging all of you to step forward. She can be reached at RuppAM@state.gov.

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[redacted] *Thank you for the complete explanation. The allegations that are of most concern to us would be the agency's unwillingness to give you your child's history, the age discrepancy of your child's documents, and of course the information that the agency deliberately concealed the true history of your child's birth parents. We will put this information in an official letter to the Government of Ethiopia, which controls an agency's ability to operate in Ethiopia. I also strongly suggest you file this as a complaint with the Hague Registry, so that they can look at whether this should affect Hope's status as a Hague accredited agency. If you think there are other families who have had similar experiences, I would appreciate if they could reach out to me as well; then I can put together a more complete report.*

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Thank you again for providing this information, and I will let you know what else I find.

Sincerely, Abby Rupp

I know that for some of you this is a very scary and uncertain prospect but please think of the devastating consequences of not reporting Hope. Shimeliss continues to profit substantially at the expense of the children, the biological mothers and all of the potential adoptive parents. This is simply not how international adoptions should go, please give this some serious thought and proceed at your comfort level.

Love and prayers-

[redacted]

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