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TAGS: CVIS, CACS, CMGT, ET
SUBJECT: Ethiopia Adoption Update

1. SUMMARY: With the number of American families adopting children from Ethiopia rapidly growing, the consular section continues its outreach program to adoption agencies and the government of Ethiopia. Conoff visited five agency care homes and conducted meetings with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) to gain perspective on current conditions. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ANGELINA FACTOR? Americans are adopting more children from Ethiopia than ever before. Post has seen a nearly 600% increase in the number of orphan visas issued from FY 2002 to FY 2006. For the first quarter of FY 2007, adoptions were up 101% over the first quarter of FY 2006. Post projects that over 1,200 IR3 and IR4 visas will be issued in FY 2007. While awareness of Ethiopian adoption was already growing, the country received a great deal of media attention when a popular actress adopted a baby girl in Ethiopia in July 2005.

3. MORE ADOPTIONS, MORE AGENCIES: The number of American adoption agencies is also growing exponentially. Only two agencies were licensed by the government in 2002. MOWA informed conoff that fifteen American agencies are currently licensed and several more are in the process to be approved for licenses by the Ethiopian government. Not all of the licensed agencies have completed adoptions with the Embassy. As new agencies begin processing cases, post conducts training with in-country representatives to ensure that their clients understand and meet the documentary requirements.

4. GROWTH EXPECTED TO CONTINUE: All the agency representatives expect an increase over FY 2006 in the number of children they place. Most families request infants, although the number of older children adopted is growing as well. China recently tightened rules on who can adopt, and thus agencies believe that more families will look to Ethiopia for international adoption.

5. CONDITIONS AT CARE HOMES: The five facilities visited varied in size from 8 children to over 150. All homes provide 24-hour care from nannies. Other amenities range from on-site schools to full-time doctors on staff. One agency has a video production

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer

studio used to make tapes to update families waiting for the adoption process to be completed. All facilities were clean and the children appeared to be well nourished and well cared for. Many of the children, especially abandoned infants, are malnourished and underweight when they come to the care homes. The agencies all provide special nutritional support for underweight children.

6. NOT JUST ADOPTIONS - HUMANITARIAN OUTREACH: The GOE requires that all adoption agencies have projects designed to better the lives of Ethiopian children who will not be adopted internationally. MOWA indicated that the GOE is keenly interested in these projects, and is reviewing both new applicants and existing agencies' dedication to humanitarian improvement. In meetings with representatives of five agencies, conoff learned that these projects include sponsorship programs, capacity building for government orphanages, building schools and clinics, and starting small businesses for girls who "age out" of orphanages before being adopted.

7. FRAUD CONCERNS: Post is concerned that the growth in demand and players in the Ethiopian adoption field will lead to fraud. One agency recently was found to be working with an American facilitator who had previously presented problematic adoption cases. The agency has since terminated their relationship with the facilitator. Post has not uncovered any incidents of fraud or baby-buying, but maintains a vigilant stance.

1. COMMENT: As awareness of international adoption grows, rules tighten in other countries and publicity about Ethiopia increases, post anticipates that the rapid growth in Ethiopian adoptions will continue. Post plans to continue its outreach program to existing and new agencies as well as the GOE to maintain transparency and good relations. END COMMENT.

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