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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and has the honor to express our concerns regarding the following information to the Women's Affairs Directorate General of the Ministry, the Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Federal Affairs (Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency), and the Federal First Instance Court of Ethiopia.

In all inter-country adoption cases, the consular section of the United States Embassy is required to determine if a child meets the definition of an orphan under U.S. immigration law in order for the child to be issued an immigrant visa. As part of this process, the U.S. Embassy conducted a field investigation on January 20 and 21, 2011 into cases from the Bethany Adoption Agency and Shalom Orphanage in Hawassa, Ethiopia.

During this investigation, our office confirmed that the Shalom Orphanage employed [redacted] an official of the Borecha Woreda Office of Woman's Affairs, to assist birth families willing to relinquish children to the orphanage. A Consular officer then interviewed five relinquishing birth parents in Borecha Woreda on January 21, 2011 who confirmed that [redacted] directed them through the

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relinquishment process. In two of these cases, the relinquishing families stated that [] told them that the Shalom orphanage would provide a financial reward to the birth family after the completion of the adoption. One of the families indicated that they believed the purpose of our Consular visit was to provide them with this financial reward.

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The United States finds unethical the practice of a government employee coercing and offering financial incentives to birth families to relinquish a child. The United States is also concerned that a government employee with the authority to facilitate the relinquishment process is also receiving a substantial and regular salary directly from a private orphanage. This type of relationship between a government official and orphanage, and practice of offering financial incentives to induce relinquishment, goes against shared belief that inter-country adoption and institutionalized care should be the very last resort for children in difficult circumstances.

The Embassy of the United States of America avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia the assurances of its highest consideration.

Embassy of the United States of America

Addis Ababa, January 26, 2011



cc: Ambassador Teye Atskeselassie, Acting Director General for
American affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ambassador Halima Mohammed, Director General of Women's
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

W/o Mahder Bitew, Head of Children and Youth Affairs
Ministry of Women and Youth Affairs

W/o Teiba, Head of the Oromiya Women and Youth Affairs
Oromiya Regional Bureau

Ato Ali Siraj, Director of Charities, Societies Agency

Ato. Desalgen Berhe, President, Federal First Instance Court