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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
January 23, 2012

RELEASED IN PART
B7(C),B7(A),B6

Yayesh Tesfahuney
Director of Child Right Protection and Promotion Directorate
Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs

Dear Yayesh,

In the enclosed document you will find, per your request, details of allegations we have recently received against adoption service providers (ASPs) operating in Ethiopia. Some of the information comes from internal U.S. Embassy memoranda, but the bulk of it comes from allegations we have received from American adoptive parents who are reporting their first-hand experiences with the agencies in question. It is important to note that we cannot confirm the accuracy of these allegations but are passing them along to you exactly as we have received them, although in some cases we have changed the names of adopted children or others to protect their privacy.

There is much to be concerned about in the attached document, which covers the period of January 2010 through the present. We have received information that ASPs are charging "orphanage fees" for referrals, that orphanages are promising relinquishing parents financial "rewards" for relinquishing their children for adoption, and that orphanages and agencies are producing falsified documents in order to misrepresent the identities and ages of relinquished children in order to circumvent Ethiopian and American adoption laws. The latter allegation is one of several against a particular ASP that raise troubling questions about the agency's recruitment practices. Allegedly, the same agency partners with an orphanage that has convinced certain *kebeles* to require single parents in their jurisdiction to "register" with the local government so that the parents can later be pressured to relinquish their children. Equally troubling is an admission by a relinquishing relative – just last week – that he knew an adoption contract had been signed with the same agency for his deceased sister's children prior to his bringing them to the orphanage.

Allegations about the recruitment practices of other ASPs include a contract received by the U.S. Embassy containing a provision stating that a relinquishing mother would be fined 1,000 birr if she changed her mind about the relinquishment, and an admission by another relinquishing mother that she had lied in court about her desire to give up her child because she had been intimidated by the ASP into doing so. Finally, we believe that you will be as concerned as we are about allegations of physical abuse of children in

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer

orphanages and adoptive parents being told that their children's biological parents are deceased only to find out that that the opposite is true once the children are old enough to express themselves in English.

Please let us know if you have any questions about the information in the enclosed document. We recognize that strong cooperation between the U.S. Embassy and MOWCYA is essential to ensuring that adoptions in Ethiopia are ethical and comply fully with U.S. and Ethiopian law, and we look forward to continuing our partnership in the future.

Sincerely,

Scott Riedmann
Consular Chief
US Embassy Addis Ababa

Encl: Supporting documents

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