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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer

From: Tadesse, Belay A
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2010 8:14 AM
To: Rupp, Abigail M; Parker, Christine D
Subject: Gelgela Bench Maji

RELEASED IN PART B6

Trip Report

I have visited Gelgela orphanage on March 22 and 23, 2010. This orphanage is one of the branches of Gelgela Orphanage, located in Bench Maji Zone, Mizan town. I have gathered information related to four children (two cases are from other branches).

The orphanage is currently housing 3 children, aged 5, 3 and two. Generally speaking the orphanage is in poor condition. All the children share the same room. The room is dark and suffocated. The house contains more rooms which they use for office, store and a separate kitchen. According to the director, the orphanage house three children at the maximum. However, one of the two nannies has informed me there are times when the orphanage house about 15 children.

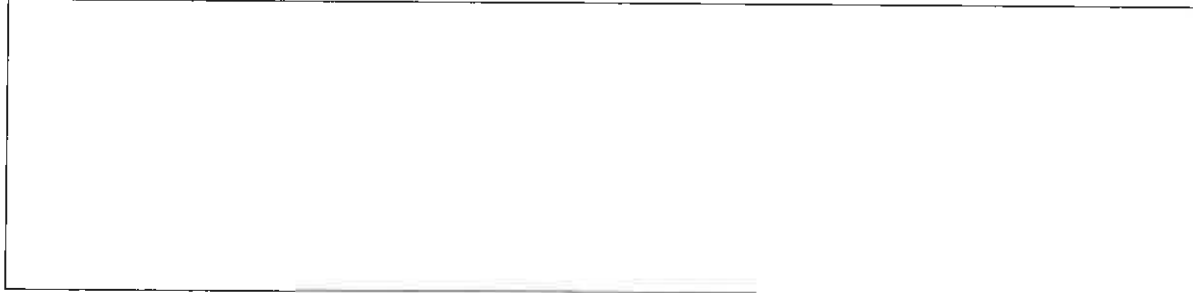
Ato Mesfin informed me that the orphanage accepts the orphans only following normal procedures. They first go to the kebele, after hearing three witnesses the kebele approves the case and transfer the case to the zone's Labor and Social Affairs Bureau. After the case is approved by the Bureau, the child will be transferred to the orphanage. The orphanage also completes a three page life history form during the time of accepting the child. When there are cases of abandoned children, however, the case comes through the police.

Ato Mesfin asserted that the orphanage conducts independent investigation to make sure that the information provided by the kebele is correct. He said that the orphanage will not accept the orphans if they found out wrong information during their investigation. They have returned one case which was presented to them that both the parents are deceased. They found both parent and returned the case.

This being said none of the four cases I brought with me were investigated. The director asserted that one case was an abandoned child found by police and needs no investigation. The others are not investigated. Nor does the orphanage make documentation of their investigations.

Documentation is the other area of problem I observed. There is one register where basic information of the orphan and parents are filled. Other documents such as letters and forms are put in two box files-all out going letters in one file and all incoming letters in the other file. It is difficult to trace the cases as the papers are put here and there.

There is no medical examination during intake of the children. The director said that they have no budge for that and also since the children stay in the orphanage for short period of time, it is not necessary. He said the children will have medical examination only in Addis. So the children are taken to health center only when they show symptoms of illness and even then the records are not kept except receipts.



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Wodajo told me that the police is involved only in cases when a child is found abandoned otherwise the police is not involved with other cases.

Concerns

- The overall condition of the orphanage is very poor; the situation of the rooms, the condition of the children needs more attention.
- Record keeping mechanisms of the orphanage needs to be improved. Currently there is no proper filling system, which makes it difficult to trace cases. The information filled in the life history forms and kept by the organization is often misleading.
- The Kebele uses the same template for all the cases - I found the same information in every cases. The focus is more on establishing the poverty of the relinquishing parent, not legality of the case. They have a tendency to do anything as long as the applicants can bring three witnesses.
- The addresses of the relinquishing parents and all the witnesses is not kept, either by the Kebele or the orphanage, which makes it difficult to get in touch with them when needed.
- There is similarity of all the cases such as all the mother come from other places, they were pregnant when they came, most of them work in bars and most of them suddenly change their addresses. There seems to be somebody advising the relinquishing mothers to present their cases in such a way to get more acceptance.

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