

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 1 of 4

From: svcsmartmfi  
Sent: 1/25/2010 9:05:12 AM  
To: SMART Core  
Subject: Ethiopia Adoption Update, January 2010

RELEASED IN PART  
B5,B7(E)

UNCLASSIFIED



REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Strand, Senior Reviewer

MRN: 10 ADDIS ABABA 115  
Date/DTG: Jan 25, 2010 / 251340Z JAN 10  
From: AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE  
E.O.: 12958  
TAGS: CASC, KFRD, CVIS, ET  
Pass Line: DEPT FOR CA/VO, CA/OCS/CI, AF/E  
Subject: Ethiopia Adoption Update, January 2010

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 000115

DEPT FOR CA/VO, CA/OCS/CI, AF/E

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: CASC, KFRD, CVIS, ET  
SUBJECT: Ethiopia Adoption Update, January 2010

1. SUMMARY: Post continues to increase our screening of Ethiopian adoption cases. The most frequent problem we have found is incomplete and/or incorrect documentation. On occasion, we found that agencies and orphanages concealed the true age of an adoptive child to match the age indicated in the adoptive parents' I-600A approval. However, we have yet to find a case where the child, with a corrected age, did not qualify as an orphan under U.S. law. We will continue to increase our scrutiny of these cases, and plan a comprehensive fraud investigation in the next few weeks to perform reviews of several cases. Post is particularly concerned that the GOE's NGO re-registration process, touted as a way to increase local monitoring of adoption agencies, appears to have been a pro-forma exercise. Please see action request in para 12. END SUMMARY.

-----  
INCREASED CONCERNS  
ABOUT AGENCY PRACTICES  
-----

2. As international attention on adoptions in Ethiopia increases, post has intensified its screening procedures on all cases. We require all adoption agencies to provide us with the immigrant visa application packet, including court and MOWA certifications, two weeks in advance of each scheduled visa interview.

B7(E)

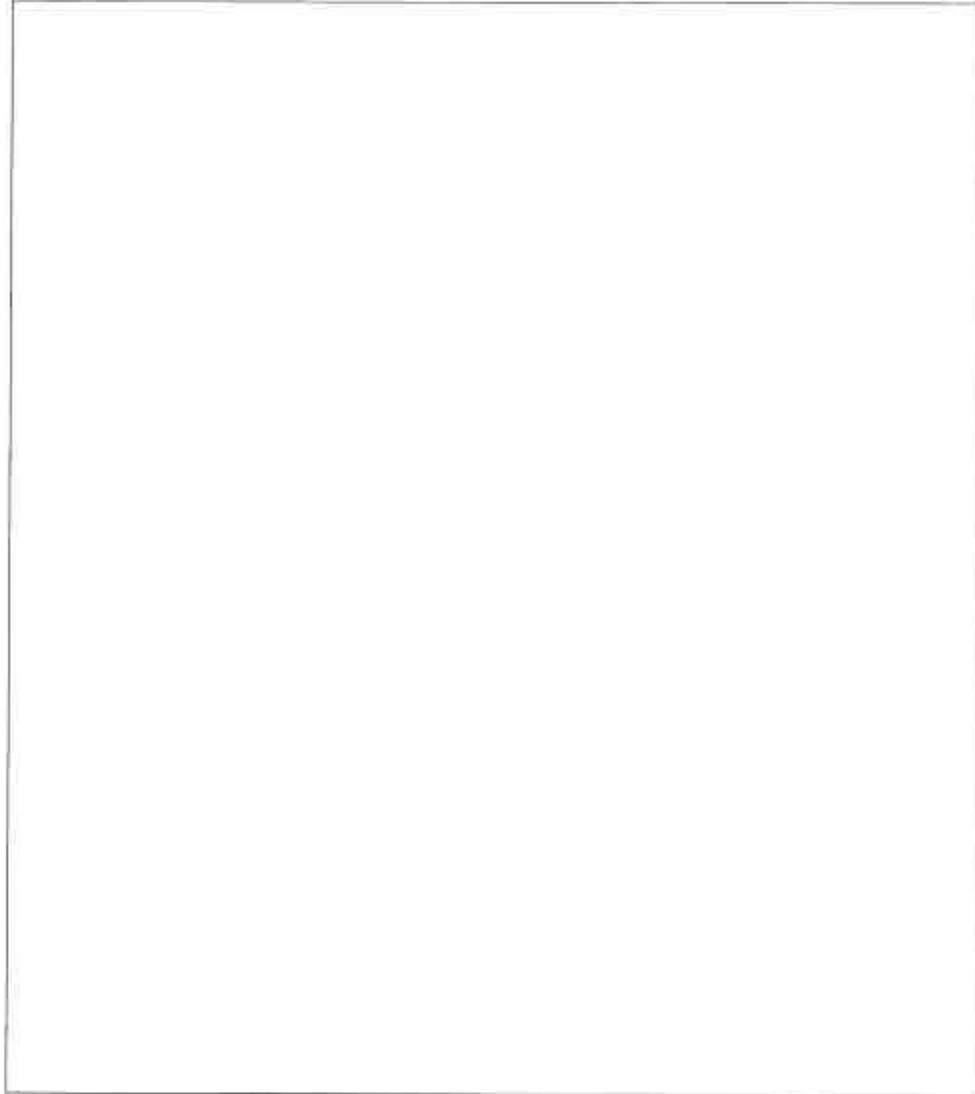
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 1 of 4

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 2 of 4

B7(E)



5. We also conducted three surprise visits to agencies' head offices. In November, conoff visited America World Adoption Agency (AWA) and Christian World Adoption Agency, and in January visited Better Futures Adoption Services. Post found that AWA and Better Futures, which have been the source of multiple cases with incomplete, unclear, or blatantly incorrect files, were disorganized in their recordkeeping practices and staff did not have substantive knowledge about the adoption process or individual cases. Additionally, conoff observed filthy conditions in Better Futures' transition home in children's bedrooms and common areas, including food preparation areas, and inadequate supervision and supplies for the children housed there. Despite the recent bad press, our visit to Christian World showed an organized office with knowledgeable staff and full case files for each child. This was particularly encouraging since the surprise inspection found the transition home to be clean and organized, the children's rooms and staff cheerful and daily activities were not affected by the presence of Embassy staff.

6. NEXT STEPS: In the next month, post plans a series of field

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 2 of 4

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 3 of 4

investigations to look at cases from beginning to end. We will select cases from some of our agencies of concern as well as those who are generally well regarded. Our goal is to determine whether we can have confidence in the process at the local level, the point where we believe the most vulnerabilities exist. At that point, we hope we will have enough information to inform Department as to whether an Orphan First-type program (where a determination is made on the child's orphan status prior to the legal completion of the adoption and filing of the I-600) would be useful here.

-----  
NGO RE-REGISTRATION  
ADDS NO VALUE  
-----

7. Charge d'Affaires Tuli Mushingi hosted a lunch on adoption issues on December 29 for representatives from the MOWA, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Adoption Network (a forum to which all 71 agencies operating in Ethiopia belong), and UNICEF. While all parties at the table agreed that there needed to be close monitoring of agencies' activities, it was clear that our hopes for increased scrutiny would likely not be realized. Officials from the newly formed Charities and Societies division of MOJ indicated that all U.S. adoption agencies, with the exception of the two that had already gone out of business (Main Street Adoptions and Americans for African Adoption), would be re-registered for a three-year period.

8. Back in October, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) indicated that a previous evaluation of adoption service providers operating in Ethiopia found that less than half were operating in full compliance with Ethiopian law. Post had expected the MOJ to conduct a full review of each agency's compliance with local law prior to approving the re-registration. Post sent a diplomatic note to MOJ, MFA and MOWA in November that listed which of the agencies operating in Ethiopia were Hague-accredited. Additionally the Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS) sent a letter indicating which agencies had signed the JCICS Standards of Practice. Both of these efforts were intended to aid the GOE's efforts to take a closer look at agencies operating in Ethiopia, and perhaps decide to limit re-registration of the agencies to those who were Hague-accredited. Despite our efforts and the early reports by MFA officials, neither occurred.

9. While the GOE has repeatedly stated its interest in receiving information from post about questionable agency practices, we have yet to see any response that actually penalizes agencies for such behavior. For instance, in November we realized that we were still receiving occasional adoption cases from Main Street Adoptions, despite that agency having ceased U.S. operations in July. Upon further investigation, and with CA/OCS/CI and JCICS assistance, we confirmed that Main Street had gone out of business but that Adoption Ark, an agency not registered to operate in Ethiopia, had taken over its pending cases. When conoff objected to the Adoption Ark/Main Street local representative that it could not receive cases through an unregistered agency, Main Street's local representative began to process those cases as private cases--which, under Ethiopian law, do not require agency involvement. We sent a letter to MOWA and MOJ providing this information, and MOWA Adoptions Unit Director Yayesh told conoffs on December 29 that MOWA would no longer approve Main Street cases. That said, MOWA was unable to clarify what should occur with respect to Adoption Ark cases that were approved under Main Street's license after that agency went out

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

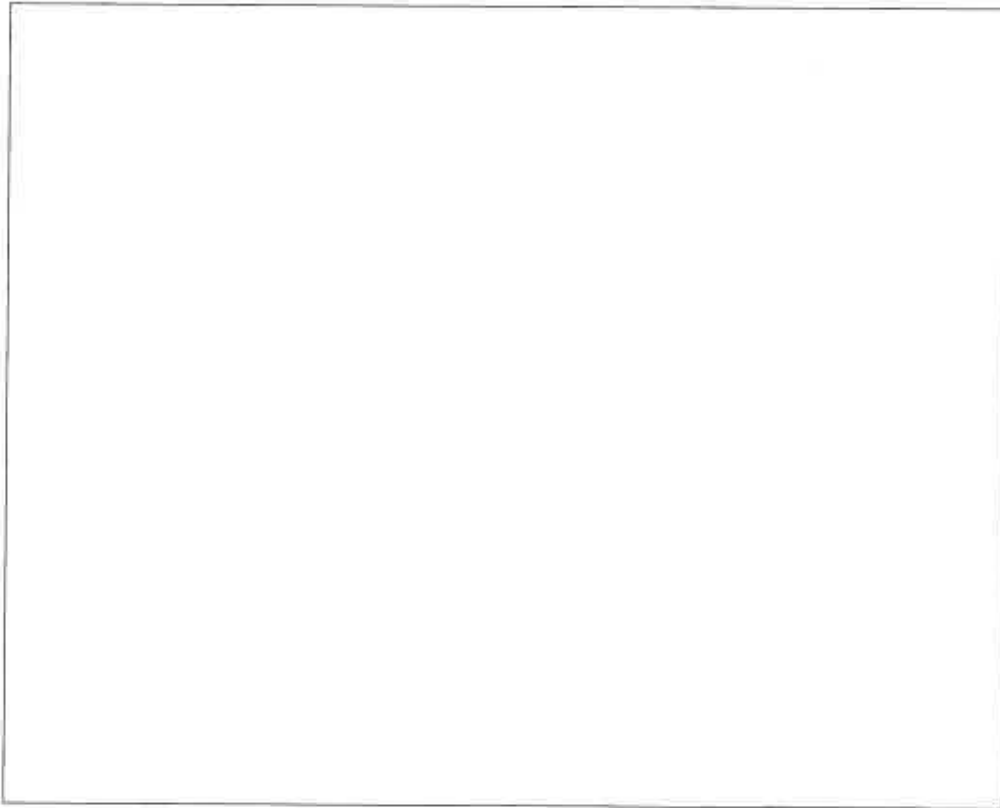
Page 3 of 4

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

Page 4 of 4

of business in July 2009. Post plans to send any such cases back to MOWA for re-adjudication before processing. Post has not received requests from Adoption Ark for any visa appointments.

10. As a result of the GOE's failure to actively monitor or investigate agencies, and its apparent failure to perform any due diligence before re-registering agencies, we plan to demarche the Ministry of Foreign Affairs using a diplomatic note with the following text:



B5

12. ACTION REQUEST: Post requests that CA deliver a copy of this note to the Embassy of Ethiopia in Washington, D.C. to reinforce our concerns about monitoring of the adoption process.

YATES

**Signature:** YATES

---

**Info:** AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

**Attachments:** metadata.dat

---

**Dissemination Rule:** Archive Copy

**UNCLASSIFIED**