

U.S. Department of Homeland Security



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Refugee, Asylum, & International Operations Directorate  
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RECOMMEND PARTIAL RELEASE  
B7(E)

Date: February 9, 2011

### TRIP REPORT

**Dates of Trip:** January 18-21, 2011

**Location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Travelers:** [Redacted] USCIS, International Operations, Programs Branch Chief  
[Redacted] USCIS, International Operations, Adjudications Officer  
(b)(6) [Redacted] USCIS, Field Operations Directorate, Adjudications Officer  
[Redacted], USCIS, Nairobi Field Office, Field Office Director  
John Wilcock, DOS, Consular Affairs, Visa Office, Program Officer  
Jill Larsen, DOS, Consular Affairs, Children's Issues, Branch Chief

**At Post:** Abby Rupp, Chief, Consular Section  
Christine Parker, Deputy Chief, Consular Section  
Jeff Ladenson, Adoptions Officer, Consular Section

*(Note: This is a joint trip report with input from DOS, USCIS and Embassy Addis)*

**Purpose of Trip:**

To review the Ethiopian adoptions program in light of growing concerns about fraud indicators in many cases and possible malfeasance in the identification of children to bring into the program. (b)(5)

**Executive Summary:**

[Redacted Executive Summary Content]

(b)(5)

**Overview of Trip:**

The team gained valuable insight from focused case-file and processing review and from analysis of the adoptions database that Embassy Addis Ababa created to assist with analysis of their casework. Site visits were very limited due to time constraints, and the team did not meet with any Government of Ethiopia (GOE) officials.

The team spent Tuesday morning, January 18<sup>th</sup> at the Embassy reviewing the Consular Section's procedures for processing of adoption cases, including observing intake and visa interviews. Late Tuesday afternoon, the team met with the Consular Section Chief (Abby Rupp), the Deputy Consular Section Chief (Christine Parker), and the Adoptions Officer (Jeff Ladenson) and discussed at length how we might implement a pre-processing program for adoption cases in Ethiopia. The team reviewed the draft process map for a pre-processing system prepared by USCIS and discussed how it would work in the Ethiopian context.

On Wednesday, January 19, the Embassy was closed for an Ethiopian holiday, but the team spent the day at the Embassy with several Embassy staff who work on adoption cases and the Consular Section Chief. Several members of the team reviewed a number of case files in detail. Two team members spent the day reviewing and analyzing the database of 3,700 adoption cases that the Consular Section has been building for the past 18 months. The database was newly created as a single Access database just before the team arrived at post, consolidating several smaller spreadsheets and databases into a single source.

At mid-day Wednesday, one team member (Jill Larsen) departed with Embassy Adoptions Officer (Jeff Ladenson) on an overnight site visit to Awassa in southern Ethiopia, one of the predominate regions of origin for U.S. adoption cases and the location of two large sending orphanages in the program from which the Embassy had recently seen a number of cases of concern for various reasons.

On Thursday morning, January 20, the team divided into two groups and one visited an orphanage and the other a transition home in Addis to get a first-hand impression of the standards of care the children are receiving. The team visiting the orphanage also met with the director at his nearby office. In the afternoon, the team reviewed the findings and observations of the previous three days and developed a comprehensive list of issues of concern and action items to undertake in follow-up to the trip.