

**Parker, Christine D**

6-29

**Sent:** Monday, March 28, 2011 11:15 AM  
**To:** Parker, Christine D; Rupp, Abigail M; Ladenson, Jeffrey L; Fitzpatrick, Agata D  
**Subject:** Hawassa meeting report - zone admin, Gladney and Initiative Ethiopia

RELEASED IN FULL

All,

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer**

I have participated in a meeting organized by Sidama Zone Finance and Economic Development Bureau at Awassa from March 25-27, 2011. The following is the summary of the meeting.

The meeting was organized by Sidama Zone Finance and Economic Development Department and it was sponsored by The Gladney Centre for Adoption. The meeting was attended by 19 Woreda 2 Town Administration officials, police officials, representatives from Women and Children Affairs, orphanages operating in the Zone, Federal first Instance Court, Women and Children and Youth Affairs representative. There were about 120 participants in the meeting. There are 26 orphanages operating in the zone, but only five of them participated in the meeting.

According to presentations from the zonal finance and Economic Development Department, there are totally 64 NGOs in the Zone, 26 of them (45%) are NGOs working on Adoption. Out of this they checked 9 orphanages and they have found out the following problems.

- Most of the orphanages are focusing only on Adoption and Sponsorship programs and some orphanages are exclusively working on Adoption. The orphanages have neglected other programs such as institutional care.
- Some orphanages signed agreements with the agencies to participate only on adoption -- no other development programs.
- Some agencies provide fund to the agency based on the amount of children they supplied for adoption (paying per child).
- Orphanages are employing government officials.
- Orphanages processing large number of adoption cases than they agreed to.
- There are orphanages that have no office in the Zone and after the paper work is completed the orphanages take children from families and directly send them to the orphanage in Addis.
- There is no follow up mechanism from concerned government bodies such as Women and Children Affairs Bureau. And there is no one checking how the orphanages are operating.
- Most of the information in documents are approved by the Woredas are not correct and there are large number of cases where the cases were processed as orphans, but who have both parents alive.

The Gladney Centre for Adoption also gave presentation on the experience of the agency by the president of the agency and the country representative. According to the agency representative, the agency is working with 8 orphanages, 3 of them are government orphanages and two of the orphanages the agency is working with do not give adoption services. Since their establishment in Ethiopia the agency has sent 504 children to the US through adoption. In addition to this the agency participates in sponsorship programs, scholarship programs income generation projects for orphans.

Presentation from Women, Youth and Children Affairs representative focused on the Guideline for Alternative Child Care in Ethiopia. He discussed what each meant and their order of priorities. To surprise of many, including me, adoption is not the last alternative. According to the presenter, the last alternative is Institutional Care and this is due to the fact that most of the orphanages are not equipped with the necessary facilities necessary for providing institutional care for the orphans. This invited many questions from the participants as there was general understanding that adoption was the last resort.

The Mrs. Rehila Abas from the Federal First Instance Court have also given presentation basically on documents required by the court. She stated that the court requires the following documents

- Child's Life History form on all cases,
- Petition from relinquishing person,
- Death evidence, if one or both of the parents are deceased,
- Declaration of absence if one or both are disappeared for more than two years or a letter from police on the disappearance,
- Guardianship paper if the child is relinquished a relative,
- Police report in all abandoned cases,

I have also given presentation on the documents that is required by the embassy to process adoption cases. I have also discussed some of the concerns we so far have like problems we found out in the documents, the general conditions of the orphanages, government employees on orphanage payroll, lack of proper training and understanding by social workers of the orphanage, lack of keeping proper records by the orphanages. The participants raised a number of questions. Police officers and Orphanage representatives repeatedly asked why the US embassy requires after the court has given the final approval and they wondered whether this is not respecting the decision of the court and that there any many children stranded due to this. The police officials said some of those are not orphans and the police cannot write report of disappearance. I replied that the embassy respects the decision passed by the court. However, the embassy has an obligation to ensure that the child meets the definition of orphan by both Ethiopian and the US law and that is why we require additional documents. I also made clear that when we are asking additional documents we are not asking the police to write new report, but to send us the documents produced during processing of the cases. In addition, I explained to the police officer that they can send us whatever finding they have.

The general atmosphere of the meeting was that most of the participant seems to understand that there are serious concerns that need to be addressed. However, there was a kind of animosity between various participants, blaming one another, recrimination and counter recrimination was common throughout the meeting. The head of the Finance and economic Development Bureau assured the participants that the meeting was not to put the blame on somebody. Everybody has its own share to the problem; he asked all concerned bodies to look in to how they are doing things and take the necessary corrective measures. Otherwise, he promised that the government will take measures on those who are participating in illegal activities. There were no words from Woreda officials, I have talked to some of them during tea breaks, but they do not seem to know what is going on and this was their first exposure to the issue.

There were a number of appreciations from the participants to the US embassy. The strict requirements of the embassy are alarming them to do more on the issue. If the other embassies also took the same steps, it would have strengthened the pressure.

We have also visited Initiative Ethiopia Orphanage based in Awassa. The Orphanage is housed in a compound approximately 400 square meters. It has about 8 service rooms and the house is new. It has clean bathrooms and kitchen. There is a small green playing ground in the compound. There is some stock of food items in the store. The agency's country representative informed me that previously they were providing money to the orphanage to cover the food expenses. But now the agency started to buy the items and send them to the orphanage rather than sending money. The orphanage has employed 1 doctor and 2 nurses on part time basis as per the recommendation of the regional government. But they still have no social worker the 1 social worker they have is employee of the agency.

There are currently 35 children in the orphanage. According to the information I got from the director of the orphanage Mr. Arega Melaku, 28 of them have wrong information in their documents. They were processed as orphans, when they went out to check, it was found out that they have both parents. The orphanage is now negotiating with the parents to return them or put them on the sponsorship

Thank You

Belay

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This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

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