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The Dalai Mamma

A Hole That Can't Be Filled

by The Dalai Lama on June 20, 2012

in Adoption, Ethiopia

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I just found out today that Wanna/Layla House is closing. This is the only home in Ethiopia that my children have known. It is the one piece of their early history that they share. It is the only tangible place they can connect to. It is where we planned to take them to volunteer for summers in high school. It is where I wanted my children to spend a gap year between high school and college. But it will no longer exist. It will no longer be the children's home it was.

Adoption has changed in Ethiopia. The structure of how children are cared for has changed. When we first adopted Noah (in 2006 and then Zoë in 2008), all foreign adoption agencies were required to set-up and run a children's home to care for the children they would be placing for adoption. This was the setup for years. This setup is changing. The Ethiopian Government has made a move to focus on government orphanages and having agencies support Ethiopia's orphanages. I don't know all the details, as I don't follow the trends in Ethiopian adoption as we brought our daughter home exactly 4 years ago—I arrived in Ethiopia with my dad to pick her up on June 18, 2008 and arrived home in St. Louis with her on June 23, 2008. Since then, I have paid less and less attention to what is going on in Ethiopia.

I never thought their Ethiopian home would close. I just took for granted that one day we would be able to return and take our children there to see where they lived during their short time in Ethiopia. All they will have are the snippets of video we have and some photos, as well as the relationships that I have kept up with the families of the children who lived at W'anna with them.

Something like this happens and it just brings home the loss that is such a deep and inherent part of adoption. Once Wamma/Layla is closed, my children have lost a part of their history; a part of their story. It resides in photos and memories of others, but for them it ceases to exist. For them it is a chapter in the book of their life that has been erased.

