
October Adoption Agencies Quarterly Meeting Review

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Dear Agencies,

Please find below a review of the October Quarterly Meeting and attached is the Power Point Presentation.

<<October 2008 Adoption Agencies Quarterly Meeting.ppt>>

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Summary: The main topic discussed was the Government of Ethiopia's Review of Intercountry Adoptions. Agencies were very concerned about the manner in which the GoE and especially MOWA were applying "guidelines" to orphan processing. They believe that the GoE's actions may be putting children at risk. They expressed a strong desire for the Embassy to raise some points with the GoE and to help them find a forum by which they can discuss issues with the GoE.

1. There were approximately 30 attendees from 20 agencies for the meeting on October 9, 2008.
2. Topics covered were:
 - a. The Government of Ethiopia's Review of Intercountry Adoptions
 - b. Review of Definitions, Forms and Procedures
3. The Government of Ethiopia's Review includes Three Committees:
 - a. First Committee – reviewing government structures and laws with the goal of ratifying the Hague Convention.
 - i. Agency input was that GoE entities often base decisions on informal "guidelines" rather than citing law. They are frustrated that procedures are not being consistently followed, resulting in delays and confusion.
 - b. Second Committee – reviewing all adoption agencies for violations and procedural corrections.
 - i. A major concern of agencies was that they feel that MOWA is not listening to their concerns. They feel that MOWA is not treating them with respect and is delaying cases arbitrarily due to officials' personal beliefs or conflicts with the First Instance Court. They expressed a strong desire for the Embassy to help them find an appropriate forum for which to express these concerns to MOWA.
 - c. Third Committee – reviewing all orphanages providing children for intercountry adoption.

- i. The Consular Officer reminded all agencies to make thorough investigations into the background of children and not to trust documents from orphanages.

- d. GoE Future Goals – 1) more Ethiopian children adopted domestically, 2) stabilization of numbers adopted abroad, 3) greater follow-up post adoption.

- 4. Review of previous Quarterly Meetings – The Definition of an Orphan in U.S. Immigration Law
 - a. The Consular Officer reviewed the ways that a child can meet the definition of an orphan when processed through agencies.

- 5. Review – Forms
 - a. The Consular Officer reviewed common mistakes made in filling out forms.

- 6. Talking Point
 - a. One agency requested talking points from the U.S. Government regarding their position on Ethiopian Intercountry Adoptions. Here is the most pertinent one concerning the topics of the October meeting:
 - i. We often hear rumors that suggest that the GoE is considering imposing new restrictions on who can adopt or how many children a family can adopt, etc. If the GoE is contemplating such policy changes, we urge you to seek broad input from professional organizations, agencies, parents, and foreign missions, and that you consider a wide range of points of view before making any such changes.

Scott Driskel

Vice Consul

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