

Ethiopia News

At International Family Services we are proud to be working with Adoption Avenues in our adoption ministry to Ethiopia. While we are seeing a slow down and because of the many rumors "out there" regarding Ethiopian Adoptions, we would like everyone to read the following provided by Adoption Avenues. – The IFS Ethiopia Adoption Team

As some of you may know, adoptions of orphaned children from Ethiopia have become more difficult in recent months. The Ethiopian government has made changes to their adoption procedures in that they are trying to make the process as PAIR compliant as possible.

As you also may know, further adding to the confusion and uncertainty, the U.S. Department of Justice recently issued criminal indictments to several employees of the IAG (International Adoption Guide) adoption agency with regard to the activity of those persons in Ethiopia. We are also aware that the internet has become a source of misinformation, fears, misstatements and false accusations concerning Ethiopia adoptions and about some of the good agencies that are continuing to provide services and try to find permanent homes for the many Ethiopian orphans who need them. Given all this it seemed like an important time for us at Adoption Avenues to provide you with some assurance about our Ethiopia program, our practices and our ethics.

All of us working at Adoption Avenues want to let you know that we understand your frustration, concerns and worries in regards to the adoption process in Ethiopia. At the same time we know how hard it is for you, the adoptive parents to trust your agency and feel powerless not having the possibility to have control over your adoption process. It takes a lot of courage and commitment to an orphan child to be able to put up with the emotional roller-coaster that you the adoptive parents have to go through to make an orphan child happy. All of us at Adoption Avenues are willing to reassure you that despite unfortunate situations like the one with IAG, our agency is not affiliated with any orphanages or programs that are not approved by the Ethiopian government. Our agency is providing ethical services to all its clients and if anybody has doubts about that, please free to contact us and bring to us any questions or concerns you have.

Our agency has recently received the Hague re-accreditation and is very transparent as required by COA (Council on Accreditation) and Hague standards. We invite anybody who is willing and interested to find out how ethical our services are to contact us and we will provide them with any documentation on how we run our Ethiopia program and where the money goes. Here is just a brief summary of Adoption Avenues program in Ethiopia:

- Adoption Avenues supports programs in 7 orphanages in Ethiopia. By the Ethiopian law the orphanages cannot be supported by anybody else but by the adoption agencies that were accredited by the Ethiopian government. What means to support the orphanage? It means to support the children's care (food, clothing, depends, school supplies, medicals, lab work etc), to

pay the salaries of the orphanage workers, to pay for the orphanage building rent, to pay for the utilities, so to fully support the operations of the orphanage. Each orphanage runs humanitarian projects, which are approved by the government, and the money for those projects is paid by Adoption Avenues as well as by other adoption agencies that are working with those orphanages.

Here are also some outlines of how the referral process works in Ethiopia:

-Based on the financial support received for their programs, the orphanages refer Adoption Avenues children, which will be referred to our families. The orphanages Adoption Avenues works with are well-established in Ethiopia and are not falsifying any of the children's documents. The status of "orphaned" child is legally given by the Ethiopian courts and forwarded to the orphanages. Only based on that documentation the orphanages can refer the child to Adoption Avenues or other adoption agencies accredited by the Ethiopian Government to work in Ethiopia.

- The other step in the referral process is related to the MOWA letters which is a complicated process that is intended to protect the "orphaned" child and the adoptive families from being exposed to any fraud. For the last several months the regional MOWA letters were not released due to the government trying to implement the new changes. The federal MOWA was asking the regions to change the way the process is working, starting from the grass roots level to make this process more transparent and PAIR compliant – which we think is a very good and positive step forward, something we do applaud.
- We cannot give any referrals until the regional MOWA letter is obtained. In the Oromia region we see some movement and we see regional MOWA letters starting to be signed. In the Southern Nations: no regional MOWA letter was signed for more than one year. In the other regions of the country (which are much smaller regions compared with Oromia and Southern Nation) the work is starting at the local level, so it will take a while until the local, next the zonal and next the regional MOWA will be obtained.

Since the regional MOWA letters in the Southern Nations are not being signed for more than one year we were unable to place any children from the Southern Nation for all this time, BUT we continued to support some of the orphanages in that region financially.

Our staff at Adoption Avenues wants to let all prospective adoptive parents know some important issues that have come up recently and have probably created some confusion due to some inaccurate rumors on the internet:

1. Please do not give any moneys to anybody in Ethiopia for any services except if you decide to stay at the Guest House and for the food that you choose to eat at the restaurants of your choice. All the money for the adoption process in Ethiopia is managed by Adoption Avenues accountant and lawyer in Ethiopia. All the financial transactions are done by wire from Adoption Avenues bank account in the USA to Adoption Avenues bank account in Ethiopia. Annually both accounts in the USA and in Ethiopia are audited by independent auditors.

2. It was brought to our attention that some families are told to send their Post Adoption Reports (PAR) to the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia or directly to MOWA through different carriers who are not Adoption Avenues staff. Therefore, do not send the Post Adoption Reports (PAR) to the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia or to MOWA because they will not take them since this is not what MOWA processes and requirements are. MOWA will only receive the PAR's from Adoption Avenues staff who translates them and hand carries them to MOWA.

Adoption Avenues already informed MOWA about this issue and requested MOWA to release a statement to the U.S. Embassy making sure that MOWA requirements will be followed as indicated in the agency's contract of adoption service with the prospective adoptive parents.

All this being said we here at Adoption Avenues agency want to reassure you that all of our staff in the U.S. and in Ethiopia is well trained in the Hague standards and requirements and on Adoption Avenues policies and procedures in regards to prohibition of child buying and other significant policies and procedures.

Adoption Avenues agency is very transparent with where the money goes and we keep strict accounting and control over how the agency's moneys is being disbursed in Ethiopia. Our main concern is our ethics and the safety of the orphaned children.

We also wanted to let you know that Adoption Avenues is part of the Coalition of Adoption Agencies in the State of Oregon and is working with all adoption agencies in Oregon to continuously improve our services, transparency, share resources and offer support to each other and to our clients.

Again, we encourage you to contact us directly with any concerns or questions you have in regards to our agency's work ethics.

Thank you all for all your great support and love you have for the orphan children in Ethiopia.

Your staff at Adoption Avenues