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Ethiopia

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Regional Policies on Approval of Placements for Intercountry Adoption in Ethiopia

The Department of State wishes to update the adoption community on information received during lengthy discussions with the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth Affairs (MOWCYA) regarding the delays in some regions and changes to regional level policies toward intercountry adoption. Regional authorities in Ethiopia have authority to make regional level policy changes to intercountry adoption processing. The following regions have reported changes in their policies towards approvals of placements for intercountry adoption.

Tigray Region – As of January 2014, the Tigray regional Bureau of Women, Children’s, and Youth Affairs (BOWCYA) will not provide approval for placement of children from the Tigray region for intercountry adoption. The regional BOWCYA will also not provide a new letter of approval to conform with the change in requirements published by the federal MOWCYA in November 2013 for any case approved prior to that change. There are significant delays in cases from Tigray that were in either in the court hearing stage or awaiting the final approval from MOWCYA certifying the adoption decree before the November 2013 change in policy for regional approvals. We continue discussions with MOWCYA for more information on how these cases can be resolved.

Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People’s Region (SNNPR) – The regional BOWCYA in SNNPR no longer grants approvals of placements of children from SNNPR for intercountry adoption. The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa and MOWCYA were not able confirm the date this policy change went into effect, though reports indicate it may have occurred after February 2014.

A number of regions including, **Addis Ababa, Amhara, Dire Dawa, Harar, and Oromia** have reportedly enacted official bans on, or have effectively banned, relinquishments in their regions. Following these bans, these regions have seen an increase of children being presented as abandoned. In some cases, the supporting documentation presented to the prospective adoptive parents, the Ethiopian regional and federal authorities, and potentially to U.S. adoption service providers may not match the true circumstances of the child’s situation. In such circumstances, adjudication of the Form I-600 petition for the PAIR filing may take additional time.

There have been no reported changes to existing regional policy in the **Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, or Somali** regions.

The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa continues to engage MOWCYA on the issue of regional policies toward intercountry adoptions. The Department will publish any new information as it becomes available.