

On Saturday April 25, 2009, the Joint Council of International Children's Services hosted a meeting of all Joint Council Member Organization's Ethiopia Country Representatives at the Intercontinental Hotel in Addis Ababa led by Tom DiFilipo, President and CEO of JCICS.

The topics covered during the meeting included an update on the JCICS Standards of Practice and JCICS' report on findings from the week's meetings with the U.S. Embassy, Ethiopian Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Below are Ethica's notes of the meeting.

Explanation for last minute cancellation and rescheduling

JCICS had the opportunity to meet with the President of Ethiopia and discuss issues developmental and humanitarian aide in the country.

JCICS Conference in Indianapolis, USA

1. DNA testing presentation
 - a. It looks like DNA testing will begin here in Ethiopia, in hopes of preventing, for example, false sibling issues. The additional testing will add approximately \$400 USD to prospective adoptive parents' fees. It will likely be highly encouraged by the US government, but not likely to be required.
2. HIV+ children
 - a. There will be an emphasis on recruiting US families to adopt HIV+ children.
 - b. There will be an increase training and education for families adopting HIV+ children.

Children over the age of 3 and Special Needs Children

Only approximately 6% of Ethiopian placements are special needs. JCICS encourages a movement towards recruiting families for special needs children and children over 3.

Ethiopian agency input

- a. A speaker informs audience: "you," the Ethiopian agencies, have the ability to influence US agencies. Request families that fit the demographic of the children in Ethiopian agencies
- b. JCICS encourages local organizations to maintain their own statistics
- c. A JCICS report/survey is planned. JCICS hopes to survey organizations in Ethiopia and USA and record total budgets. Ultimately report will aim

to reveal total budgets collectively of Ethiopian organizations in hope of having more influence on policies.

Image/ general view of International Adoption

- a. Ethiopia stats: approximately 28,100 children and families served in Ethiopia, approximately 1700 are through international adoption, which is about 1%. An appropriate amount of international adoption versus other support to children and families.
- b. "The Lie we Love" by Graff discussed corruption in international adoptions. The speaker suggested the article was a bit extreme. Articles like this have led to UNICEF and Save the Children's statements support against international adoption.

Visa Logistics

New visa electronic processing. Mail can be sent electronically which avoids paper works "getting lost in the mail." Electronic processing also allows for easier tracking of paperwork in process. International adoptions will be part of pilot.

Standards of Practice

- a. There are incidences of agencies coming to open non-licensed childcare centers rather than processing through licensed centers. JCICS warns against these illegal practices. Feel free to file anonymous complaints with JCICS.
- b. Umbrellaing: Beware of US agencies are claiming Ethiopian agencies, even unlicensed ones and creating cooperative agreements
- c. New TB protocols
 1. JCICS notes an apparent lack of communication because after new TB protocols were announced many agencies still knew nothing about it.
 2. JCICS suggests moving up TB test - detail it and do it early.
 3. Possible 2 month delay for positive skin test, 6 month delay for active TB
 4. Only place to test is IOM; ideally tests should be possible at more sites than just IOM

Staff Changes at US Embassy

- a. Staff shortage will expected to remain through October
- b. Death of US Embassy staff member
- c. Paul Cantrell (international adoption advocate) is leaving
- d. Scott leaving in August
- e. Linda is still there to do Visas,
- f. 10 appointments/ 2 weeks for each agency due to staff shortage

JCICS' Ethiopia visit

- a. JCICS met with: Minister of Justice, Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of Ethiopia, Women Affairs, MOWA, and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

b. Attended 5th Anniversary of Children's Home Society Event

Films were screened on the work being done in Ethiopia. Reactions of the film were very positive. The films put international adoption in a positive light. The audience saw the breadth of work CHS was doing including development and humanitarian work for Ethiopia. Highlight in the film was the annual family celebration which invites families to return for reunion and Ethiopian cultural experience (food and dance).

c. Minister of Culture and Tourism

1. Planning to create a film for all adopting families with cultural education about Ethiopia.
2. Discussing the organization and preparation of homeland tours.

Corruption and Cultural Sensitivity Concerns

- a. JCICS strongly encourages compliance with government request to keep adopting families out of hotels out of respect and cultural sensitivity.
- b. US agencies are collecting a disproportionate amount of money to money that is coming into Ethiopia.
- c. JCICS encourages Ethiopian network to come together and empower families and serve families. For example, two small agencies can join together in their efforts to support the community.
- d. When families bring cash for fees to Ethiopia, it leaves opportunity for corruption. All payments should be electronic exchanges.
- e. JCICS acknowledges and introduces Ethica's presence at the meeting.
- f. Example of how kids suffer with corruption: In one situation 92 kids were left to live on the street, 28 of them died. One child was used as a "chuck" - a block to stop movement of truck tires.

Good Models

- a. Example: Dr. Tsegaye's family empowerment program. Gives 200 birr/ month to family offers vocational training and education. Graduates of the program become self sustaining earning 1000/month
- b. JCICS critiques UNICEF approach as not sustainable. The evidence is that they are still here. "If we do this right all the work we do here should become development and building programs that prevent separating children." International adoption is just filling a current need that we should ultimately not need.
- c. JCICS strongly encourages support for local orphanages and child centers and domestic adoptions

****** Opened up for Discussion******

Questions

- In reference to suggestion that TB test be done early, IOM will not take and or test child without passport. Thus it is impossible to do TB test early because passports happen at the very end of the process. Same issue with HIV and sputum tests. One agency suggests the creation of orphan/national identification that can be used for medical service during adoption process before passports.
- IOM is the only place for TB test, why not other sites? JCICS and DR. Tsegaye explain PPD is needed for TB test and it is expensive; currently IOM is the only site using it. JCICS suggests working with WWO to see if they can bring more PPD over for additional

- TB testing sites. Another suggestion is to have IOM take pictures at TB test and send to US embassy.
- Concern that TB tests are coming out positive because of vaccinations, which leads to x-ray assessment (exposing children to x-rays-problematic)
 - One agency has 20 kids who need PPD TB test but IOM hours make things difficult. IOM hours are 3 days a week 11- 1pm
 - JCICS emphasizes that the problem with testing slowing down the adoption process by referencing Bucharest Study which finds that every month a child stays in institution decreases health, mental health and IQ. American Scientific will be publishing more accessible version of Bucharest Study soon.
 - Why are HIV positive kids being denied at US embassy? HIV is not transmitted by air or and airborne contagion?

Corruption (JCICS facilitated open dialogue)

- a. If an orphanage suddenly increases population from 40 to 150 it's a problem
- b. If all kids are reported as "abandoned" = red flag
- c. If all kids are reported "abandoned" and found by same doctor or police officer = red flag
- d. Important questions: Where are the kids coming from? It should be various places
- e. It is the responsibility of the Ethiopian agencies to end child solicitation
- f. Example of French: French bring cash, French supposedly only do double orphans but false paper work is suspected. Dr. Tsegaye states, "This is happening here," please identify yourself and the organizations that are doing this.
- g. JCICS reminds network if there are anonymous reports JCICS can report suspected corruption and disseminate information.
- h. Suggestion/discussion about policies around relinquishments that lead/ encourage false abandonment claims in order to avoid the complications of relinquishment. Suggestion that police corruption is involved in false abandonment issues here in Ethiopia.
- i. JCICS suggests creating a list that reports agencies that are no longer following practices ex: agency X is no longer working with coordinator Y.

JCICS suggests: DO NOT increase the predicted adoptions in the next year. 1% of all service should be international adoption. Ethiopia is currently at a good percentage, do not increase there is a risk of following in the footsteps of other countries and being shut down.

- Do not recruit more families than can be handled in 12 months
- Create JCICS network with list of organizations that have signed Good Practices agreement.... and another list for those who have not

JCICS Proposed Legislation: Families for Orphans Act

- US government does not yet have a unifying policy for international child protection
- This legislation will call for 4 pilot programs and will include Ethiopia as one
- JCICS requests the support of the network in passing this legislation

Links on issues referenced above:

Unicef statement on International Adoption:
http://www.unicef.org/media/media_41918.html

"The Lie we Love" by E.J. Graff:

<http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2008/12/11/the-lie-we-love>

Article on Umbrellaing in Vietnam:

<http://vietnam.adoptionblogs.com/weblogs/beware-of-agency-umbrella-ing>

Article on Bucharest study:

http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2006/11/11/study_on_orphans_sees_benefit_in_family_care/