

International Adoption

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Adoption is a large business in the United States, “[t]he United States adopts more foreign children than all other nations combined, Evan B. Donaldson (Adoption Institute)”. The Department of Records of the United States indicate that “since 1995 international adoptions by Americans have increased more than 140%”. The reason mentioned was that it was due to a lack of healthy American babies available for adoption. Thus, the “US is now the fourth largest supplier of babies for adoption to Canada” according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. Adoptive parents from the United States who adopt from developing countries largely do not receive a medical history on their child. Canadians and other foreigners however, choose to adopt from the United States due to the availability of medical records and family histories. The Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) 1994 was widely argued against in the United States and resulted in its removal, since it did not produce the much-anticipated outcome of reducing delays in the permanent placement of children for adoption or foster care irrespective of race, colour or ethnicity. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Service Report (2011), 43% of children adopted were white and 24% were African-American. The United States Government Accountability Office report (2007) stated, “African-American children still stay in foster care an average of nine months longer than white children”.

The increase of adoptive parents from the United States adopting from Ethiopia, which is now second to China in child adoption, has raised concerns. Ethiopia, officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is a nation located in East Africa. The current estimated population is 83 million according to projections from the national census (2007). EPP/Spectrum (2011), estimated that “there are nearly 789,900 currently living with HIV/AIDS (607,700 adults and 182,200 children aged 0-14 years); and 952,700 AIDS orphans”. Data from the Ethiopian Ministry of Health Report (2007), state that, “an estimated 5.4 million are orphans as a result of the death of one or both parents and 15% of these believed to have been orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS”.



In 2009 and 2010, Ethiopia confronted a wide range of allegations of adoption corruption and trafficking. An adoption agency based in Minnesota was one of several agencies that had its license revoked by Ethiopian authorities due to adoption fraud and child trafficking. The agency claims all allegations are false. The US Department of State, however, issued an adoption alert on their website. Ethiopia is proving to be a popular destination for adoption due to the lack of proper regulation and the potential for financial gains. The

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Report on Ethiopia (2010), stated that “child abuse was widespread” and that “within the country children were trafficked from rural to urban areas for domestic service, commercial sexual exploitation, and forced labour in street vending and other activities”. American and foreign adoption agencies state that their work is not profit driven. Nonetheless, genuine prospective adoptive parents are charged thousands of dollars and in some cases were deliberately misled into adopting children who were not abandoned. The same agencies that claim that the orphanages in Ethiopia are unbribeable, also run those overly crowded orphanages where reports of physical and sexual abuse are common.

Ethiopian authorities confirmed the closure of ten orphanages according to the Department of State (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2011). The closures were apparently due to the high number of fraud cases and child trafficking. Demographic patterns of adoption in the United States over the past 15 years show that “over 40% of those significant ‘sender-nations’ have virtually dropped out of the inter-country adoption system, apparently due largely to scandals related to child buying, child trafficking, child stealing, and corruption”. According to the United Nations, “trafficking is a \$32 billion industry that ensnares about 2.5 million people around the world at any given time”. Prospective adoptive parents from the United States have created a human trade market in Ethiopia. This practice exposes already vulnerable children to greater risk of being trafficked because now, they have a price tag. The US Department of State recorded that “between 600,000 and 800,000 people who mainly are women and children are trafficked across international borders each year”.

Bureaucrats have somehow managed to spend millions of dollars on strengthening international adoption policies however, surprisingly, have done little to help orphans live better lives in their communities. The Ethiopian government and other international communities are doing little to combat core issues that arise from poverty i.e., prostitution, rape, diseases and high mortality due to a lack of medical facilities, which result in family and community breakdown. International adoption is not a viable solution to the orphan crisis in Ethiopia, or Africa in general, as it is impossible to adopt all orphans. A long-term solution to the crisis is through education on HIV/AIDS prevention, strengthening women’s rights, and assisting families and communities financially to combat child abandonment and abdication of responsibility.

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Ethiopian orphans:

<http://www.carolinahopeadoption.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/compressed-9.JPG>