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Ethiopia

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Notice: Procedure for Processing Adoption Cases

This notice provides supplemental information to the adoption notice of October 7, 2011, adding additional details on the process applicable to orphan petitions filed with a U.S. Embassy Consular Section overseas. While the description has been tailored to answer inquiries specific to Ethiopia, the steps described in this explanation apply to all non-Hague countries. This notice only describes the process for Forms I-600 filed with U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa. For processing information on cases filed domestically with USCIS through the National Benefits Center (NBC), please refer to the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](#).

Once adoptive parents are in possession of the final adoption decree from the Federal First Instance Court, approval letters from the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, the child's birth certificate and Ethiopian passport, and all other required Form I-600 supporting documentation, they (or their authorized agent) may file Form I-600, *Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative*, with the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa if they have met the physical presence requirements for filing a Form I-600 petition overseas.

Upon receipt of the Form I-600 and accompanying documentation, the U.S. Embassy begins the Form I-604, *Determination on Child for Adoption*, orphan status investigation – the process to determine if the child meets the definition of an orphan under U.S. immigration law. The time frame for completion of the Form I-604 determination depends on the circumstances of each case, but can take up to several weeks or months. During this time, additional information or documentation may be requested by the U.S. Embassy for cases with insufficient or deficient supporting evidence to determine orphan status.

In certain cases it may be necessary to interview the child's Ethiopian birth parent(s) or guardian, or the individual who found an abandoned child, to resolve errors or discrepancies discovered in the case file. The U.S. Embassy conducts such interviews for cases in which the consular officer deems interview(s) necessary to make a determination on the child's orphan status. Birth relative and other interviews are often an integral part of the Form I-604 determination.

The U.S. Embassy must then determine whether the case is clearly approvable. If a case is clearly approvable, the U.S. Embassy approves the Form I-600 petition and issues an immigrant visa. If there are questions regarding the child's orphan status or the information is insufficient to make a determination, federal regulation requires that the U.S. Embassy forwards the case as "not clearly approvable" to the USCIS Field Office in Nairobi, Kenya, for further processing. When this occurs, the U.S. Embassy sends out a transfer notice to the petitioners when the case is physically forwarded to USCIS Nairobi, and provides contact information for further questions.

Upon receipt of a petition identified as "not clearly approvable," the USCIS Nairobi Field Office notifies the parent(s) that the case has been received and issues requests for additional evidence and other notices, if necessary. Upon review of all available evidence including any response to a Request for Evidence or Notice of Intent to Deny, USCIS issues a decision and notify the petitioners. For details of the USCIS process, please visit [USCIS'](#)

[Ethiopia Q&A page](#) . If the case is approved, USCIS Nairobi returns the case to the U.S. Embassy for visa processing.