

Both Ends Burning
Paper Chains

Report on U.S. Government Actions and the Impact of these Actions
on Nepal's Abandoned Children, 2010-present

Both Ends Burning has prepared a Report documenting the detrimental impact of misguided policies and actions taken by the United States Government resulting in the suspension of international adoptions from Nepal. The Report details the devastating effect the decision made to suspend adoptions from Nepal by the U. S. Department of State and the U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services (USCIS) had on the American families and the Nepali children they had adopted.

In August 2010, the U.S. Government suspended adoptions for abandoned children from Nepal, abruptly eliminating any viable opportunity for Nepali orphans to come into American families through adoption. On the day the suspension was announced, 62 American families were in the final stages of completing adoptions from Nepal (the "Pipeline Families"), and hundreds more had submitted dossiers to the Nepali government and were awaiting their referrals of Nepali orphans. The cases for Pipeline Families immediately became stuck, pending a Department of State investigation into their legitimacy. After the investigations were complete, the Department granted approvals to only 10% of the families, claiming to have found serious irregularities in the remaining cases.

The remainder of the Pipeline Families were issued Requests for Evidence and required to conduct costly and lengthy investigations into the orphan status of their adopted children. They hired lawyers and paid for investigators to go over the same ground that the Department of State had already travelled in investigating these cases. In every case, the Pipeline Families found that the Department of State's concerns were unsubstantiated.

In the end, not a single case was denied and every child was able to come home to the United States. **No fraud had been found in any case.** But the damage had been done:

- On average, the delays caused by the actions of the Department of State, based on **suspicion** of fraud but with **no evidence** of fraud, prevented these children from coming home to their American families by 201 days. Damage had been done to each child as the result of unnecessary months spent languishing in orphanages, where, day by day their health and mental development was further impaired.
- The cost of re-doing the orphan investigation and preparing their response to the Request for Evidence averaged over \$25,000 per family. This elevated the average cost of each adoption to \$57,000, causing many of the family's extraordinary financial hardship. Some were even forced to sell their home or a car in order to get their children home.
- American families felt they had to fight to protect their adopted children from the unwarranted actions of their own government. Adoptive parents also described being crippled by feelings of fear, anxiety and helplessness resulting from the unfounded allegations of the Department of State.
- The U.S. suspension, which is still in force, has eliminated any chance for abandoned Nepali orphans to come into American families through adoption. Hundreds, if not thousands of children have been denied the opportunity to become part of a loving family and today remain trapped in orphanages.

An objective analysis of the facts, detailed in full in the Both Ends Burning Report, leads one inexorably to the conclusion that the Department of State and USCIS decided without any substantial evidence to support its decision, to end international adoptions from Nepal. After all of the pipeline cases were approved and no wrongdoing was found in those cases, the Department of State and USCIS should have re-evaluated the policy, lifted the suspension, and allowed adoptions from Nepal to resume. But the Department of State has steadfastly refused to re-open Nepal for adoption, clinging still to its unsubstantiated allegations of widespread fraud.

Both Ends Burning calls on Congress to review the actions of the Department of State and USCIS in suspending American adoptions from Nepal and determine whether the current suspension is warranted.