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# NIGERIA

International Adoption Program

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PROGRAM INFORMATION



HOPE INTERNATIONAL

## ADOPTING FROM NIGERIA

### Qualifications for Adopting from Nigeria

#### **U.S. Requirements:**

- 1) You must be a U.S. citizen. If you are married, your spouse must also be either a U.S. citizen or in legal status in the United States.
- 2) If you are unmarried, you must be at least 25 years old.
- 3) Department of State now requires children immigrating to the US to have received COVID vaccinations if available for the child's age.
- 4) You cannot currently be on probation or parole or have any pending criminal proceedings.

#### **Texas Requirements:**

- 1) You cannot have a felony conviction against a person
- 2) You cannot have a child abuse referral with a finding of "sustained or unable to determine"

#### **Nigeria Requirements:**

- 1) Minimum Residency: There is no specific minimum residence requirement to be eligible to adopt in Nigeria, however, prospective adoptive parents may be required to stay in Nigeria for a minimum of a few months to two years to bond with the child before petitioning a court to adopt. Each state determines the length of time for the required bonding period.
- 2) Age of Adopting Parents: In Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers, prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years of age and 21 years older than the child. For married couples, at least one parent must meet the age requirements.
- 3) Marriage: Both single individuals and married couples may adopt. Note that a single person will not be allowed to adopt a child of the opposite sex except in extraordinary circumstances. In most states, married couples must adopt jointly. If married, both members of the couple must be Nigerian citizens (with the exception of Lagos and Ogun states). In a case where only one member of a married couple adopts the child, only the adoptive parent's name should be listed on the Nigerian birth certificate and the other parent's name should be left blank. Same-sex married couples are explicitly not allowed to adopt children in Nigeria.
- 4) Minimum Income: Nigeria does not have any income requirements for intercountry adoptions.

**IN COUNTRY PROVIDER:** none; Hope does not have local contact in Nigeria and does not offer referrals to local child welfare officials or attorneys. Hope is not authorized to work with clients who have adopted children in Lagos or Ogun states.

**TIMEFRAME:** A home study usually takes 3-5 months to complete, the I600a application can take 4-6 months to approve. The I-600 petition to classify the child as an orphan can take 1-3 years to process. Once the I-600 is approved it will take several months to get a visa appointment and then it could take weeks or months for the visa to be issued.

**THE CHILDREN:** Hope only works with clients who have already completed adoption of children who meet US “orphan status” definition. Hope does not refer clients to orphanages or local child welfare ministries.

### **Process of Adoption of a relative child in Nigeria – Non-Hague Convention country**

As with all of Hope’s adoption programs, you must first participate in a general information meeting/phone call prior to contracting with the agency. Once this meeting has taken place and you decide to work with Hope International, you will submit an application. Next the Executive Director will prepare your contracting documents. Once you have reviewed and signed the contracts and paid the initial agency and service fees, Hope immediately begins working on your home study and USCIS approval. Hope strives to offer the fullest level of support and services possible in order to complete your adoption in the quickest manner possible. While there are many aspects outside of Hope’s control with adoption and foreign adoptions in particular, Hope has found during years of experience that hard work on things that can be controlled – such as paperwork for the home study and USCIS – usually quickens your overall adoption process.

**1. Completion of an International Home Study** – For families that live in Texas, Hope International will conduct the home study. If you live outside of Texas, Hope will assist you to find an agency to conduct your home study. Hope International will supervise this agency, and the agency must meet the standards for an exempted provider and use employees to conduct the home study. Your final USCIS approval is contingent upon the recommendation for approval given by your home study agency. Your completed home study is valid for 12 months; an update will be necessary annually until a child is placed in your home and is also required if your living circumstances change prior to your adoption, such as change in health or residence. You are also required to obtain a physical, at least ten hours of pre-adoptive training, and to have both criminal and child abuse background checks. Hope will assist you with referrals for this training and in obtaining the clearances.

**2. Apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** – USCIS must pre-approve you as potential adoptive parents regarding an international adoption. Hope International will assist you by reviewing and submitting an I600A application to USCIS with your completed home study. USCIS must approve your ability to provide proper parental care for a child. Your I-600a approval and USCIS fingerprints will be valid for 15 months. Once you submit the I-600 petition, your fingerprints must be valid at the time of the child’s visa appointment.

**3. Document Review** – even though your adoption process is already complete in Nigeria, Hope will be responsible to verify and confirm the documents you have obtained from the ministry and court. Hope strongly recommends that you consult with an immigration attorney familiar with international adoptions for the submission of the I600 petition. Hope can guide you through the visa application process if you are not working with an immigration attorney.

**4. Preparing to Travel** – You must have a valid U.S. Passport. Some immunizations are recommended by the CDC to travel to Nigeria.

**5. Post-Adoption** – When you return home, Hope International or your home study agency will provide

post-adoption supervision as required by the State of Texas (or your state of residence) and Nigeria. Some Nigerian states may require status updates on the child until the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Hope International or your home study agency will prepare these reports for you to submit to the appropriate Ministry. At the completion of the initial six-month post-adoption period, you will be ready to proceed with your Registration of Foreign Decree. Hope International will refer Texas families to local family law attorneys. If you reside outside of Texas, Hope recommends that you contact a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) regarding the completion of a registration or re-adoption in your state.

**For further information please contact Hope International:**

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