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## Carle.Isabelle

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**From:** Schwartz, Sophia (IRCC/IRCC) (she, her | elle, la)  
**Sent:** Friday, December 12, 2025 10:44 AM  
**To:** Asri, Khansaa (IRCC/IRCC); Dubenofsky, Rachel (IRCC/IRCC) (she, her | elle, la); FiatIngabire, Anne-Lise (IRCC/IRCC); Hibbert, Kevin (IRCC/IRCC) (he, him | il, lui); Kosik, Agnieszka (IRCC/IRCC); Li, Kenneth (IRCC/IRCC); Murden, Steeven (IRCC/IRCC); Rennie, Robyn (IRCC/IRCC); Rooseboom, Myriam (IRCC/IRCC); Smallshaw, David (IRCC/IRCC); Smith, Chelsea (IRCC/IRCC); Tan, Amber (IRCC/IRCC); Warren, Venita (IRCC/IRCC) (she, her, hers | elle, la, lui); Bejar, James (IRCC/IRCC); Belkhodja, Nadia (IRCC/IRCC); Hoffman, Danielle (IRCC/IRCC); Humphreys, Andrew (IRCC/IRCC); Lajoie, Charles (IRCC/IRCC) (il, le, lui | he, him, his); Luneau, Julie (IRCC/IRCC); Martel, Judith (IRCC/IRCC); Sadek, Jillan (IRCC/IRCC) (she, her | elle, la); Tremblay, Michelle (IRCC/IRCC)  
**Subject:** FW: DAKAR-6198: Understanding Adoptions in Sub-Saharan Africa  
**Attachments:** DAKAR 2025 - FLASH REPORT- Understanding Adoptions in Sub-Saharan Africa.pdf

FYI / PVI

### Sophia Schwartz

(she, her | elle, la)

Assistant Director | Directrice adjointe

Complex Case Management Division | Division de la gestion des cas complex

Integrity Operations | Intégrité des opérations

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Government of Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

[Sophia.Schwartz@cic.gc.ca](mailto:Sophia.Schwartz@cic.gc.ca)

Office / Bureau: (000) 000-0000 | Cellular / Cellulaire:

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**From:** [@international.gc.ca](mailto:@international.gc.ca) <[@international.gc.ca](mailto:@international.gc.ca)>  
**Sent:** December 12, 2025 4:59 AM  
**To:** IA Reporting / Reportage AI (IRCC) <[IRCC.IAReporting-ReportageAI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.IAReporting-ReportageAI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)>  
**Subject:** DAKAR-6198: Understanding Adoptions in Sub-Saharan Africa



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada



## REPORT FROM IRCC Dakar

2025-12-12

### DAKAR-6198 FLASH REPORT- IRCC DAKAR- Understanding Adoptions in Sub-Saharan Africa

#### Summary

- A recent interview mission to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire revealed a significant gap between applicants' understanding of adoption and the way adoptions are legally defined under IRPA.

- The SSA caseload frequently involves complex family configurations, including non-plenary adoptions and cases where adult applicants declare children as “biological” even though no biological relationship exists.
- Processing these applications can be complex and lengthy, often requiring procedural fairness letters, H&C assessments, DNA testing, and careful consideration of the cultural and socioeconomic context.

## Context

1. From December 1 to 5, 2025, IRCC Dakar organized an interview trip to Abidjan to assess Express Entry cases – Foreign Skill Workers (FSW) – specifically cases raising concerns linked to family compositions, including applications with older adopted children.

## Report

2. On the African continent, it is not uncommon for non-biological children to live under the same roof as extended family members. To avoid social stigma, it’s also possible for individuals to legally recognize the birth of non-biological children by declaring themselves as the parent of a child born in complex circumstances. Examples that came up during the interview trip included:
  - Parents who worked for decades on a farm, as a gesture of appreciation and respect toward their goodwilled employer, confided the care of their teenaged son to the farm owner.
  - The uncle who paid his niece’s tuition later expected the niece to care for his own daughter, out of reciprocity.
  - A man agrees to recognize the birth of a “fatherless” child to preserve the dignity of the family and secure a better future for the child, even though he did not father the child and has no intention of providing for the child.
5. In the first two cases, applicants purported to have adopted the children as family members. In those cases, the parents were either still alive or had passed away when the adopted child had reached the age of majority, having maintained regular contact with them throughout their lives. In the third case, the child was presented as a biological child on the application, and the true story only came to light when DNA testing was requested. H&C factors to consider the children as de facto dependents were weak in all cases.
6. The legal system in many Sub-Saharan African countries covered by IRCC Dakar is quite flexible to accommodate these types of arrangements. Administrative tribunals can issue adoption orders (“adoption simple”) that provide a legal framework granting adults authority to act in the best interest of children and conferring similar rights to adoptees under the law as biological children. The legal framework in the region generally remains quite broad in how adoptions are considered. Those adoptions do not constitute plenary adoption, as defined under Canadian laws, and are similar to guardianship arrangements. A few excerpts from section 16 (Chapter 3) of the Civil Code in Ivory Coast showcase how flexible the adoption framework can be:
  - *L'adoption simple est permise quel que soit l'âge de l'adopté.* (This explains how 21-year-old adults are adopted as the family is preparing an immigration application)

- *L'adopté reste membre de sa famille d'origine.* (Ties to biological parents are not necessarily severed)
  - *Les règles de l'administration légale et de la tutelle de l'enfant légitime s'appliquent à l'adopté.* (This demonstrates that adoption nonetheless confers rights to adopted children that are equivalent to biological children)
7. The legal system of many of these countries also has legislative provisions for plenary adoptions, but these remain infrequent and less common as they are expensive and imply a perceived “loss of identity” as children are renamed and lose connections with their roots. Furthermore, the socio-economic factors that drive adoptions in the region entail that most adoptions take place within family units or within intimate and trusted social circles. From the Canadian legal perspective, notwithstanding the legal weight and significance of these adoptions in the country of origin, the material facts behind many adoption arrangements in this context equates more to a good faith custody arrangement rather than an adoption that severs linkages between the child and their biological roots, as understood in the Canadian context. Decision-makers must therefore examine each family situation in their individual context to offer the best possible application of IRPA.
  8. Applicants were surprised at interview when they were explained how adoptions are considered under the Canadian legal system, suggesting that they were not intending to abuse the program, but rather did not share the same understanding of what constitutes an adoption.

### Implications for IRCC

9. Processing applications with adopted children in this context is lengthy as procedural fairness letters are often required due to documentation suggesting the adoption is not compliant with IRPA. In several cases, H&C factors must also be assessed where the adoptees could still be considered de facto dependents.
10. As the volume of French language proficiency Rounds of Express Entry invitations has increased, a growing percentage of Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) applications are from a part of the world where such complex family configurations are relatively common. Officers in the integrated network need to be aware of the cultural and socioeconomic factors behind these family configurations to ensure consistency in how the applications are understood and processed.
11. Officers should carefully assess declared parent-child relationships, including when applicants claim a child as “biological.” In some cultural contexts, it is not uncommon for minors with no biological link to the adult applicant to be included in applications under this designation. Where concerns arise, DNA testing should continue to be used as a reliable tool to confirm or rule out a biological relationship.
12. IRCC Dakar will continue to avail its resources to officers in the integrated network that require guidance and training on such matters.

**Drafted:** D/MPM, IRCC Dakar

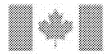
**Reviewed:** DIO, IRCC Dakar; MPM Dakar; SSA ADO

**Approved:** Area Director, SSA AD

BCC

\*IRCC CBS Sub-Saharan Africa/IRCC ACE Afrique Sub-Saharienne D-IRCC-CBS-Sub-Saharan-Africa@international.gc.ca; IRCC.PFIDGO-BDGPFI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca; IRCC.SPRRDGO-BDGPSRR.IRCC@cic.gc.ca; IRCC.IOBDGOffice-BureauDGDGOL.IRCC@cic.gc.ca; \*DAKAR-IM D-DAKAR-IM@international.gc.ca; IRCC.MIOBDGO-BDGDGIO.IRCC@cic.gc.ca; IRCC.IPBDGO-BDGDGPI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca; IRCC.EPPEDGO-BDGPEEP.IRCC@cic.gc.ca





Immigration, Refugees  
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Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada



**December 12, 2025**

**DAKAR-6198**

## **FLASH REPORT- IRCC DAKAR- Understanding Adoptions in Sub-Saharan Africa**

### **Summary**

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<b>Drafted:</b>	D/MPM, IRCC Dakar		
<b>Reviewed:</b>	DIO, IRCC Dakar;	MPM Dakar;	SSA ADO
<b>Approved:</b>	Area Director, SSA AD		