



Final Evaluation Report - ISS Screening for VCA

Candidate Partner: Des Racines Naissent Des Ailes // EMAYÉ

Country of Origin: Ethiopia

Screening Date: 21.08.25 – 09.10.2025

Report Submission Date: 21.10.2025

1. Executive Summary

- **Organisation:** Des Racines Naissent Des Ailes (DRNDA) and its branch EMAYÉ
- **Address:** 17 rue du lavoir, 38590 SAINT ETIENNE DE SAINT GEOIRS
- **Contact person:** [REDACTED], President
- **Email:** [REDACTED]@gmail.com
- **Phone number:** [REDACTED]
- **Additional Contact Details:** [REDACTED], National Coordinator of EMAYÉ, [REDACTED]@gmail.com, [REDACTED]
- **Website & Social Media:**
<https://www.facebook.com/share/1AKGG9p5Kk/?mibextid=wwXlfr> ;
https://www.instagram.com/EMAYÉ_adopteeshome/
- **Date and Place of Foundation:** July 23, 2014, France
- **Mission & Vision Statements:** Support young adoptees in their quest for their origins. This support will allow them to rediscover and reposition themselves in relation to their original culture, to better embrace their multicultural identity. The organisation currently focuses on adoptees from Ethiopia in France, with emerging activities in Spain and plans to expand globally through initiatives such as a worldwide adoptees' family reunion to strengthen the association.
- **Description of the Main Activities:** Support and assistance for adoptees seeking their origins; support for the cultural quest (dance workshops, cooking classes, language classes); psychological support for biological families; hosting, meeting, listening and support in a guest house in Addis Ababa; organisation of workshops to prevent abandonment.
- **Primary Beneficiaries:** Adoptees, birth families
- **Geographical Coverage:** "Des Racines Naissent des Ailes" (DRNDA) works in France while EMAYÉ covers the whole Ethiopia, with the exception of the conflict-affected areas. Before the war, they covered the entire country. However, due to the ongoing conflict, they said to do their best to reach these areas too.
- **Working Languages:** French, Amharic and English
- **Summary:** The association "Des Racines Naissent des Ailes" (DRNDA) is based in France and offers adoptees an end-to-end support in their search for origins (SFO), including organisation of travel and accommodation in the country of their origin, introduction to their original culture, and mediation between biological parents and adoptees. In 2022, it created a local branch in Ethiopia, EMAYÉ Adoptees' Family (EMAYÉ), to facilitate, prepare and organise the reunion of adoptees with their biological families.
- **Relationship between DRNDA and EMAYÉ:** Association DRNDA, a French non-profit membership organisation, and EMAYÉ, a charitable organisation registered in Ethiopia and created by Ethiopian adoptees, maintain a close collaborative relationship. DRNDA is the primary France-based support structure for adoptees and focuses on preparing adoptees and families through psychological support, mediation, planning journeys to their country of origin, and cultural workshops. EMAYÉ acts as its Ethiopian branch and complements this work locally by providing family reconnection services, hosting adoptees, organising cultural experiences, volunteering opportunities, and managing events.

2. Timeline

The candidate organisation submitted a part of required documents on 25.08.25 (5 days past the deadline), completed the surveys on 21.08.25 (1 day past the deadline) and 05.09.25. On 03.10.25, the candidate organisation provided limited information regarding two external individuals, and their relationship to the candidate organisation remains unclear. ISS has received one key stakeholder survey on 07.10.2025. Some of the required documentation is still outstanding, after two reminders from ISS (sent on 05.09.25 and 20.09.25) as well as one reminder from VCA. ISS and the candidate organisation met through Teams for two online interviews on the 19.09.25 and on the 09.10.25.

3. The Screening Results

3.1 Preliminary Screening Results (ISS NDT Unit)

- **Component 1: Structure & Integrity**

The overall score for this component is **4 (green)**. The organisation's mission clearly guides its decisions and is well reflected in reports and activities. Both representatives of DRNDA and EMAYÉ, [REDACTED] respectively, articulated it consistently, though alignment among other staff could not be confirmed. There is thoughtful attention to key social issues. The candidate organisation recognises both the humanitarian intentions behind adoption and the harm caused by weak oversight and poor documentation, which exposed intercountry adoption to illicit practices and unjustified family separations. It acknowledges that these past violations disrupted children's rights, identities, and cultural connections. The organisation also notes that social stigma and limited acceptance of adoptive families continue to hinder domestic adoption in Ethiopia, contributing to an overreliance on institutional care, which cannot offer the same stability as family-based settings. Advocacy for adoptees' rights and intercountry adoption is visible through their social media presence, as well as the organisation's support to NGOs focused on children's rights and vulnerable populations, and assistance to biological mothers in overcoming their trauma through an abandonment prevention campaign in Ethiopia.

Although governance is outlined in the Statutes, there is no mention of caseworkers or other staff members. Some members of DRNDA governance are also involved in daily operations, such as managing cases. For example, [REDACTED], being the DRNDA President, focuses on mediation and psychosocial support in France, while [REDACTED], EMAYÉ National Coordinator, oversees strategy, partnerships, and operations in Ethiopia. During the second interview, [REDACTED] appeared hesitant to provide further details regarding team composition or to share CVs of staff potentially involved in the VCA mandate. This lack of transparency restricts the ability to verify internal roles and responsibilities. Ethical protocols, including safeguarding and staff policies, appear to be established. However, only a list of these policies was provided, and their actual content, effectiveness, and enforcement mechanisms could not be assessed. While internal complaint mechanisms are mentioned, no supporting evidence was provided.

While EMAYÉ describes partnerships with government entities on its website, and [REDACTED] noted in the preliminary survey that DRNDA works closely with other individuals, NGOs and government entities¹, no list of partners or formal agreements were provided. Additionally, [REDACTED] stated during the interview that no formal collaborations are currently in place. Collaboration with one funder is documented, with a confirmed grant from the French Embassy in Ethiopia.

¹ Quote of [REDACTED] from the preliminary survey: "we work closely with other individuals and NGOs that provide counselling, cultural education, and advocacy, ensuring that families have access to wraparound support beyond reunion events. By engaging with government entities, we navigate legal processes related to adoption records and family tracing, making it possible for reunions to take place in a respectful and lawful way."

A reputational consideration was noted in relation to an individual (staff) member of the candidate organisation identified via EMAYÉ's Instagram account who may be affiliated with the organisation. The individual shared views on intercountry adoption and adoptive parents informed by their own lived experience. Their current role within the organisation, as well as any prospective involvement with the VCA mandate, remains unclear. In addition, one concern involved a negative rating of DRNDA on Google, neither of which were able to be addressed in exchanges with ISS.

To summarise, the organisation demonstrates strong values and intent but provided insufficient documentation to verify the consistent implementation of its ethical and structural commitments.

- **Component 2: Operational and Financial Capacity**

The overall score for this component is **3 (Orange)**. Activity reports are detailed and reflect strong understanding of community needs. Projects are developed collaboratively with adoptees, families, and partners, and adapted based on feedback. Internal teamwork is evident, but no strategic objectives or external consultations were shared.

Resource planning is described by [REDACTED] as follows: "I plan and allocate resources by first assessing the specific needs of each activity—such as travel support, venue costs, counselling services, or cultural programming. Budgets are then created to prioritise what will have the greatest impact on adoptees and their families, while ensuring transparency and accountability in how funds are used." However, no budgets, financial reports, or any other supporting financial documents were provided despite repeated requests by ISS. Both [REDACTED] insisted these had already been shared. The lack of responses provided severely limited verification of financial management and transparency. Similarly, though mentioned as a source of income, no details were provided on DRNDA member fees, detailed or disaggregated service fees, or how these are allocated within the budget. The funding received in July 2024 from the French Embassy in Ethiopia was provided for a year-long project to support adoptees in their search for origins, with the main objective to accompany adoptees coming to Ethiopia to find their biological relatives. As no project budget nor report were provided, it could not be confirmed whether the accommodation of adoptees at EMAYÉ's guest house was covered in full or partially by this funding (EMAYÉ charges adoptees for their accommodation in its guest house).

[REDACTED] The broader team is described as multi-disciplinary with psychologists and lawyers, but due to reluctance to share staff's CVs or names, the ability to verify the team's capacity and background was not possible. Clear criminal records of [REDACTED] are currently pending and to be shared in due course, but [REDACTED] did not share any, nor of their staff potentially involved in the project with VCA.

Furthermore, no reference letters were provided. One stakeholder, whose direct relevance is unclear but who has participated in joint working groups and engaged in informal collaboration, offered generally positive feedback. The guest house feedback notebook also contains positive reviews from adoptees. No formal survey or procedure to gather independent beneficiary feedback is in place.

To summarise, the organisation demonstrates operational engagement and commitment to community needs, but limited transparency regarding finances and staff constrains full verification of capacity.

- **Overall appreciation**

ISS NDT Unit recommends continuing with the technical screening, paying careful attention to verifying financial documentation, service fee structures, staff qualifications, and the implementation of ethical and safeguarding policies to ensure transparency and operational capacity.

3.2 Technical Screening Results (ISS IRC Unit)

- **Component 3: Knowledge on children's rights, child protection, including adoption**

The overall score for component 3 is 4.65 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation indicates in the technical survey to have detailed knowledge of children's rights, child protection, domestic and intercountry adoption systems of the past and present, identity rights and search for origins processes. Overall, the candidate organisation's knowledge is centred on the journey and lived experiences of adoptees, who are clearly identified as the main beneficiaries of their work. The documentation, surveys, and interview underscored their knowledge in the field of identity rights and search for origins processes.

- **Component 4: Technical capacity**

The overall score for component 4 is 2.73 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation demonstrates specific and relevant experience and technical capacity in Search for Origins (~90% of activities), with limited experience in adjacent fields. While this affected the overall component 4 score, it does not indicate a lack of suitability. The measurement was designed to allow comparison with organisations that have broader but less specialised profiles.

The candidate organisation has a comprehensive approach to search for origins processes, including cultural mediation and psychological preparation and support. The candidate organisation has a local team existing out of 13 people in Ethiopia that speak different languages and are acquainted with diverse regions in the country, which is extremely relevant within Ethiopia's complex socio-political environment. The candidate organisation employs diverse research methodologies, including archival document review, field-based inquiries (door-to-door, speaking with elders as "village archives"), and cross-verification of documents, that comply with legal standards² and include empathy toward adoptees and birth families, supported by a multidisciplinary team with local knowledge. During the first interview, the candidate organisation elaborated on

² This evaluation did not include a detailed review of the general Ethiopian legal framework concerning legal investigative methods. Nonetheless, the candidate organisation's investigative methods appear consistent with generally accepted practice and do *a priori* not raise legal concerns.

difficult cases they had that required creativity in the use of investigative methods. The candidate organisation also uses DNA testing, upon request, to address challenges arising from widespread illicit and illegal practices. DNA verification is carried out only if the adoptee and the biological family provide their consent. The adoptee orders the DNA kit and sends it to the family through DRNDA. The sample is collected by a healthcare professional. The samples are then sent by confidential mail or hand-delivered by a member of DRNDA in a sealed envelope. As DNA testing is illegal in France, it remains unclear how the adoptee would undergo the test, and where samples are being tested for matches.

During the first interview, the candidate organisation referred to advocacy efforts in Ethiopia, including events organised with local communities to address the stigma surrounding adoption. Some advocacy activities were also mentioned in France, mainly targeting adoptees and adoptee associations, although no further details were provided.

- **Component 5: Collaboration**

The overall score for component 5 is 3.13 (rounded to the second decimal point). The candidate organisation is not a member of any regional network and states to be the only actor in the Ethiopian panorama focusing on and providing SFO services. While they do not maintain a formal partnership with [Ministry of Women and Social Affairs](#), Ethiopian Government department responsible for adoption (domestic and intercountry), they occasionally engage with the ministry. They also collaborate with the French Embassy in Ethiopia.

- **Component 6: Independence from intercountry and domestic adoption**

The overall score for component 6 is 5. The candidate organisation has no prior or current involvement, whether through engagement, facilitation or financial links in domestic and intercountry adoptions. Independence from intercountry adoption is a specific requirement for their staff members.

- **Overall rating for the technical screening**

The overall score for the precedent four components is 3.87 (rounded to the second decimal point). It is worth reiterating here that this score reflects a specific screening on administrative investigation capacity and is not intended as an overall assessment of an organisation's suitability, but rather one element to consider.

4. Contextual and qualitative evaluation summary

Summary of the contextual evaluation

Ethiopia presents a fragile environment for child protection and adoption due to persistent political instability, armed conflict, and widespread humanitarian needs. The country has ratified several international child rights instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#)) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Nationally, adoption is recognised under the Constitution and Directive No. 976/2023, although legislation remains fragmented and lacks a comprehensive Children's Act. Institutional responsibilities are divided among ministries, with the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) as the main competent adoption authority.

[Adoption](#) in Ethiopia has deep customary roots, only formally regulated with the [1960 Civil Code](#). From the 1970s onwards, [intercountry adoption](#) (ICA) expanded rapidly, especially during famines, wars, and social crises, positioning Ethiopia as one of the world's leading sending countries by the early 2000s. However, this growth was accompanied by [widespread](#)

irregularities, including abduction, trafficking, falsified documentation, and corruption. By 2009, over 70 foreign agencies operated in Ethiopia, with little oversight. These abuses, combined with high-profile international cases³, led to increasing domestic and international criticism, culminating in a nationwide suspension in 2017 and a formal ban on ICA in 2018. Despite this, some cases have continued under exceptions or unclear legal frameworks. Furthermore, when foreign accredited adoption bodies closed their offices following the general suspension, many records were lost.

Significant obstacles continue to hinder search for origins (SFO) efforts. The absence of a centralised register of past intercountry adoptions, combined with extremely low birth registration rates, makes tracing biological family members highly challenging. Moreover, displacement, poverty, and conflict have separated families, and strong societal taboos surrounding adoption have fostered secrecy and discouraged the sharing of information, while limited digital and administrative infrastructure have further complicated SFO processes.

This challenging context naturally impacts the candidate organisation. The lack of digitised or centralised records, weak institutions, poor archiving, and reluctant stakeholders require lengthy investigations, in-person inquiries and personal facilitation of contacts. Conflict, displacement, stigma, and occasional security risks further restrict access to information and can possibly cause lengthy timelines. Despite these challenges, the candidate organisation demonstrates a clear understanding of the complexities at play, with a methodology adapted to this delicate context, and remains strongly committed to achieving meaningful results for adoptees.

Qualitative evaluation and interviews

The candidate organisation demonstrates dedication to their work on search for origins. Activities are sometimes disrupted in conflict-affected areas, although the candidate organisation indicated that these are resumed as soon as the situation allows, demonstrating particular resilience and commitment to the adoptees they accompany. Several staff members based in France were themselves adopted from Ethiopia, which gives them a personal understanding of the quest for identity and the challenges adoptees may encounter.

The team's personal experience is reflected in the sensitivity shown towards the needs of adoptees, who are accompanied throughout the procedure in both France and Ethiopia. In France, adoptees receive preparatory support, including psychological assistance and expectation management. In Ethiopia, adoptees may stay at the guesthouse of EMAYÉ, where additional support and cultural activities to reconnect with their identity and roots are provided. Families who stayed at the guesthouse wrote fondly in letters about the hospitality and commitment of the candidate organisation to promote Ethiopian culture and traditions. Finally, the adoptees are accompanied in their search for their biological family. The candidate organisation recognises the complexity of family reunions and provides ongoing support before, during, and after these encounters, while accommodating safe and neutral spaces where adoptees can reconnect with their origins under professional guidance.

³ See also <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/angelina-jolie-adopts-african-girl/>.

The team in France reportedly consists of five members, led by [REDACTED], who collaborates with a psychologist in preparing adoptees for the search for origins. Throughout the process, the focus lies on providing psychological support to address trauma, and where family-related issues arise, systemic family therapy can also be offered. After this preparatory phase, cases are dispatched to the Ethiopian team. Post-trip support may also be offered, involving adoptive families where appropriate. The investigative team in Ethiopia, led by [REDACTED], is a multidisciplinary team, composed of thirteen people. Each case is discussed within the team before being assigned to a specific caseworker of the team, based on regional knowledge and language skills.

The candidate organisation demonstrates awareness of the sensitivities surrounding birth families, particularly mothers who may face stigma or social exclusion when past adoptions are revisited. Their approach prioritises the consent of biological family members before proceeding with any step in the search for origins process, reflecting respect for privacy and cultural norms. Consequently, a balancing of the competing rights of biological families and adoptees is part of the candidate organisation's approach in a respectful manner.

Communication with adoptees is described as continuous and direct, allowing for ongoing feedback and the ability to assess the emotional and practical impact of the candidate organisation's work. They avoid creating false expectations and discuss possible outcomes of the search transparently with adoptees. The candidate organisation indicated that in their prior collaboration with VCA, timeframes for the search for origins were agreed jointly with VCA, ensuring a shared understanding of the process. The candidate organisation positions itself as an "in-between actor," mediating between adoptees, adoptive families, and birth families.

As mentioned above, the candidate organisation faces substantial challenges in its search for origins work due to the past irregular and illicit adoption practices. Many institutions and individuals remain reluctant to share information, because of their possible involvement in or proximity to these past practices. The candidate organisation seeks to circumvent this reluctance by adopting a pragmatic approach, aiming to convince these stakeholders by saying that collected information will be used solely for the purpose of reuniting adoptees with their biological families, rather than seeking accountability from institutions or individuals. Furthermore, the candidate organisation indicates to have working contacts with courts or certain childcare institutions.

The candidate organisation's closest collaborations are with the French embassy in Ethiopia and *Mission de l'Adoption Internationale*. Although the candidate organisation has submitted proposals to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, contact has been minimal. The candidate organisation indicates to be the only organisation working in search for origins⁴. Though it expressed to have sporadic interactions with organisations that work with vulnerable subjects of rights, these were not specified. Throughout this evaluation, however, the candidate organisation appeared reluctant to share professional contacts. While this caution is

⁴ Although at least one more organisation working in Ethiopia on search for origins of adoptees has been identified, [Beteseb Felega - Ethiopian Adoption Connection](#), which works toward family reunifications and manages a DNA database. It is unclear if there is any collaboration or contact between the organisations.

understandable given security concerns in the Ethiopian context, a similar hesitation was observed regarding their exact collaborations in France, limiting the assessment of their broader professional network.

Moreover, as noted previously, several documents and details were not provided by the candidate organisation, limiting the assessment. During the first interview, the candidate organisation showed openness and cooperation in sharing information about their work. However, in the follow-up exchange, scheduled to address these doubts, they expressed reservations regarding the depth of some questions and preferred not to elaborate, reiterating that they had already shared all relevant information. ISS again explained the rationale for the rigorous evaluation framework developed jointly with VCA, and, after clarifying that participation in the interview, and the overall screening process, was voluntary, it was decided to conclude the discussion. This limited the level of detail that could be verified during the screening process.

Finally, responses were submitted with some delay, which can reasonably be attributed to unstable internet connectivity and the ongoing conflict, and the candidate organisation also highlighted personal security risks due to the sensitive nature of investigating illicit adoptions and the persistent reluctance of certain professionals to assume accountability for past practices and mentioned that they are connected to professional and legal associations in France for legal advice on this matter.

5. Final ISS Observations & Recommendation

Main strengths

- The candidate organisation's capacity to remain operational and continue SFO work nationwide despite conflict, mobility restrictions and personal security risks demonstrates their motivation and determination.
- The investigative team in Ethiopia is acquainted with different regions and languages and indicates to have a good community network.
- The candidate organisation demonstrates great psychosocial sensitivity, in which the adoptee is clearly positioned at the centre of the process. Psychological support is offered to the adoptee before, during and after the search process. Adoptive family members can also be involved in this support if beneficial for the adoptee.
- The candidate organisation applies adaptive and creative investigative methods so that work can be continued despite of the illegal and irregular practices of the past.
- Community dialogues are held to shift local perceptions of adoption which may help avoid stigma and create awareness of harmful past practices.
- Finally, the guesthouse EMAYÉ in Addis Ababa can offer a secure base for searches and family reunification meetings.

Open points to be addressed:

- At this stage, it was not possible to identify which individuals will form part of the project team, nor was an organigram provided. Before signing an agreement, it is recommended that VCA requests an updated list of all staff and volunteers who will be directly involved

in the project in France and in Ethiopia to ensure their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and align with VCA's standards and project methodology.

- The current fee structure and service rates could not be verified in this evaluation. To prevent potential misunderstandings, it is advisable that VCA and the candidate organisation agree in advance on a transparent fee schedule, specifying costs per service and outlining possible variations based on case complexity.
- Several supporting documents, such as criminal record checks and internal policies, have not yet been received. It is recommended that VCA request all relevant documentation before the start of the collaboration to complete due diligence and ensure compliance with internal standards (criminal record check, policies, etc.).
- It is recommended that VCA clearly defines, together with the candidate organisation, which services will be provided under a potential collaboration agreement. In particular, emotional support, cultural mediation or logistical accompaniment should be explicitly outlined to avoid overlap and ensure complementarity. Similarly, whether collaboration would take place through DRNDA, EMAYÉ, or through both.
- To ensure clarity and predictability for both parties, it could be helpful to establish clear timelines for each case at the outset of the collaboration. This will help manage expectations and avoid potential delays or misunderstandings.
- The candidate organisation reported collaborations primarily with the French Embassy and the *Mission de l'Adoption Internationale*, but did not provide detailed information on other partnerships, which are therefore not included in the framework of this evaluation. It could be advisable for VCA to establish contacts with the French Central Adoption Authority (*Mission de l'Adoption Internationale*) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the candidate organisation's activities in France and/or in Ethiopia.
- Given that the candidate organisation and VCA have previously worked together, there may be pre-existing expectations regarding working methods and project management. Any adjustments to the current project methodology should therefore be communicated clearly to avoid confusion and ensure mutual understanding.

Based on the ISS screening process, the candidate organisation demonstrates strong motivation and dedication to supporting adoptees in their search for origins, even under complex circumstances. The psychological sensitivity to the needs of adoptees and locally adapted investigative methods that cover different regions of Ethiopia are two of the elements that stood out. At the same time, several aspects of the candidate organisation's internal structure and functioning, the collaborative framework and the required documentation remain to be clarified. Prior to any eventual collaboration, ISS therefore advises that VCA clarifies those elements they consider necessary directly with the candidate organisation.