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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Nigeria: Passports, including whether passports from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are issued in Nigeria; information included in the passport; security measures to detect passport fraud; procedures for issuing passports within Nigeria and abroad; ECOWAS travel certificates [NGA105319.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

This Day 22 May 2007). Sources report that Nigeria launched the Nigerian ECOWAS passport in May 2007 (ibid.; *Vanguard* 18 May 2007). Keesing Reference Systems indicates that the ECOWAS Nigerian passport, which includes a contactless chip, started to be issued in December 2007, while noting that an older national passport, which started to be issued in 1997 and which does not include the ECOWAS emblem, is still in circulation (Keesing Reference Systems n.d.). However, the *Daily Champion*, a Nigerian newspaper, reported in 2010 that as of 1 January 2011, "only Nigerian holders of the e-passport would be allowed to travel in or out of Nigeria" (18 Apr. 2010). A 2012 article by *Vanguard*, a daily Nigerian newspaper, reported that at that date, Nigeria had started to issue "only electronic passport[s] for new passport applications" (30 Aug. 2012)./p>

The website of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), the government department responsible for the issuance of all Nigerian travel documents (Nigeria n.d.b), indicates that Nigeria issues different types of passports including the diplomatic passport (red cover); the official passport (blue cover); the standard Nigeria passport (green cover); the pilgrims passport (whose colour varies annually); and the seaman's book, also known as a certificate of identity (maroon cover) (ibid. n.d.c). The same source notes that passport applications can be submitted to a passport office, embassy or high commission for processing (ibid.).

According to the website of the EU's Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online (PRADO), the maximum validity is five years with no extension possible (EU n.d.). In contrast, Keesing Reference Systems indicates that a five year extension is possible (n.d.).

1.1 Information Included in the Passport

Sources report that Nigerian passports include the cardholder's name, date of birth, nationality, gender, a personal number, an issuing date, the issuing authority, an expiry date and the cardholder's signature (EU n.d.; Keesing Reference Systems n.d.). Keesing Reference Systems notes that the passport also includes a "document number" (ibid.).

1.2 Passport Features, Including Security Measures to Detect Passport Fraud

According to PRADO, Nigerian passports are in the form of a single booklet, made of green plastic, with a cover embossing which uses the hot foil stamping technique (EU n.d.). The same source notes that the cover has an ECOWAS emblem, an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)-specified e-passport symbol, and that the outer back cover of the passport has a print of the Nigerian coat-of-arms (ibid.).

According to PRADO, the standard Nigerian passport contains 32 pages and measures approximately 88mm in width and 125mm in height (ibid.). The website of the Consulate General of Nigeria in New York indicates that a 64-page standard e-passport is also available (Nigeria n.d.a). Sources further report that passport features include a hologram and UV features (EU n.d.; Keesing Reference Systems n.d.) as well as microprint (ibid.). Samples of Nigerian passports from PRADO and Keesing Reference Systems are attached to this Response (Attachment 1 and Attachment 2).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an official at the Nigerian Police Special Fraud Unit stated that security measures used to detect fraudulent passports include the use of UV comparison, fingerprints, and manual checks comparing the passport with the holder's "other previously acquired documents" (Nigeria 3 Nov. 2015). In the official's view, fingerprints were not always a reliable security feature, as previously stored information was not "effectively managed due to capacity problem[s]" (ibid.).

The Daily Trust, a daily Nigerian newspaper, reports that the NIS is responsible for the passport office in Alausa, located in Ikeja, Lagos State (*The Daily Trust* 20 Oct. 2015). The same source quoted a representative of NIS as stating that the office has "uncovered attempts by syndicates to engage in what he called identity fraud" (ibid.). *The Leadership*, a daily Nigerian newspaper, reports that in June 2013, the acting Comptroller-General of the NIS "expressed concern over the alleged irregularities in the issuance of international passports," stating that there were "many laxities" in due process for passport issuance (*Leadership* 6 June 2013). The same source stated that the NIS dismissed some officers at its headquarters for "engaging in fraudulent issuance of travel documents" (ibid.).

In contrast, the *Nation*, a daily Nigerian newspaper, reports that in 2014, the coordinator of a network called the Coalition of Civil Society Groups gave the view that the e-passports "as presently issued have been discovered to possess security features that made it almost impossible to be compromised" (31 Oct. 2014). The official of the Nigerian Police Special Fraud Unit gave the opinion that passport fraud has become less common with the introduction of the electronic passport (Nigeria 3 Nov. 2015).

Further information on security measures to detect passport fraud could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Passport Procedures in Nigeria

The website of the NIS indicates that Nigerian standard e-passport applications must be submitted online using the NIS website (Nigeria n.d.h) and cost 5,100 nairas [approximately C\$33.57] (Nigeria n.d.f). Once the applicant has submitted their application, the website will prompt them for payment either by bank transfer, credit or debit (ibid. n.d.d). Upon payment, the applicant is issued a validation number, which will be used to confirm their payment, and the applicant will be issued an acknowledgement slip (ibid.). Upon payment confirmation, the applicant must present themselves at a passport office with a printed copy of their signed application form (ibid. n.d.c) for an interview (ibid. n.d.e).

According to the website of the NIS, the requirements for obtaining a standard Nigerian e-passport in Nigeria include:

- A guarantor's form duly signed by a [C]ommissioner of [O]aths...
- Photocopy of; (a) Data page of guarantor's passport and
 - i. Photocopy of National identity card
 - ii. Drivers License
- Father's Letter of con[s]ent for minors under 16yrs (Mother's letter of consent in case of deceased father)
- Marriage Certificate where applicable

- Husband's consent letter
or
Letter of introduction for employee of government or corporate organization
- Court affidavit and police report in case of lost passport
- Birth Certificate or Age declaration
- Letter of identification from Local Government of origin or residence
- One (1) passport photograph
- Acknowledgement slip and receipt of payment. (ibid. n.d.g)

The NIS website further reports that the standard e-passport has "a life span of 10 years with an initial validity of five (5) years" (ibid.). Additional sources similarly report that Nigerian passports are valid for five years (EU n.d.; Keesing Reference Systems n.d.). Information on passport processing times could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Passport Procedures Abroad

The website of the Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa indicates that all standard e-passport applications and payments must be made using the NIS website (Nigeria n.d.h). Once the applicant has completed their online application, they must bring a printed copy of their signed application form, including their acknowledgment slip and receipt, to an embassy (ibid.) or high commission (ibid. n.d.e) for further processing.

The High Commission's website notes that once the passport application is completed, the applicant receives their payment confirmation receipt, including an appointment date (ibid. n.d.h). The same source notes that e-passport applicants must appear in person in order to provide their biometric information (ibid.).

The High Commission's website indicates the following requirements [also applicable for standard e-passport renewals (Nigeria n.d.h)] for obtaining a standard e-passport from the High Commission:

1. Passport Application form to be completed online
2. Payment slip
3. Acknowledgement slip
4. Expired Nigerian Passport
5. Photocopy of Applicant's data page of Nigerian Passport
6. Two current passport-size photographs preferable with white background
7. Processing fee of thirty dollars (\$30) in money order or cashier check payable to the Nigeria High Commission Ottawa. (Nigeria n.d.h).

The website further indicates that to pick up their passport, applicants are required to present their pick-up slip and their expired Nigerian passport (ibid.). Information on passport processing times and whether or not passports are made within or outside of Canada could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4. ECOWAS Travel Certificates

The website of the NIS indicates that Nigeria issues ECOWAS travel certificates to all Nigerian nationals [2] (Nigeria n.d.d). The same source indicates that the ECOWAS travel certificate serves as a "recognized travel document" valid for travel within the 16 ECOWAS member countries, and as an identity document (ibid.).

The website of the NIS indicates that the following is required to obtain an ECOWAS travel certificate:

- Duly completed application form
- Three (3) recent coloured (4x4) passport photographs
- Evidence of age (birth certificate or statutory declaration of age)
- Letter of introduction from Employer (for salaried workers only)
- Letter of confirmation of Nigerian Citizenship from applicant's Local Government Chairman
- Students and Trainee applicants shall obtain letters of introduction from the heads of their institutions accepting Immigration Responsibility (IR)
- Any other document which might be required by any locality as evidence of Nigerian Citizenship. (ibid.)

Nigerian ECOWAS travel certificates are valid for two years, at which point they are renewable "for a further period of two (2) years" (ibid.). The certificate is "issued at the Service Headquarters, 36 State Commands, FCT office as well as all immigration offices in the 774 local governments of the Federation" (Nigeria n.d.c). Information on the physical characteristics of the ECOWAS travel certificate and on processing times could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] ECOWAS is a treaty that "foster[s] the economic integration and shared development of [the] West African sub-region" (Nigeria n.d.c).

[2] ECOWAS travel certificates are available to all nationals of countries that are signatories to the ECOWAS treaty (Nigeria n.d.d).

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Canada – Canada Border Services Agency; Nigeria – Consulate General of Nigeria, New York, High Commission, Ottawa.

Internet sites, including: All Africa; ecoi.net; Edison TD; Factiva; *The Guardian*; Nigeria – Consulate General of Nigeria in New York, Embassy in Washington, DC, Embassy in Rome, Italy; United Nations – Refworld; Voice of Nigeria.

Attachments

1. European Union (EU). N.d. Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online (PRADO). "Document: NGA-AO-02001." <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/prado/EN/3642/index.html>> [Accessed 27 July 2015]

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