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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

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

Burundi: The requirements and procedures for obtaining a biometric passport, from within Burundi or from abroad; description of biometric passports [BDI104777.FE]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Requirements and Procedures for Obtaining a Biometric Passport

According to the website of the Embassy of Burundi in France, Burundi introduced the new biometric passport through Ministerial Order No. 215/224 (*Ordonnance ministérielle no 215/224*) of 2 March 2011 (Burundi n.d.a). According to a news release of 14 August 2012 issued by the Embassy of Burundi in the United Kingdom, the government of Burundi issues only biometric passports.

Sources state that the procedures for obtaining a biometric passport must be done in person (ibid. 26 Feb. 2014; ibid. 14 Aug. 2012). According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada in 28 February 2014 correspondence with the Research Directorate, it is not possible to apply by proxy. In addition, sources state that the procedure includes taking the applicants' fingerprints (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014; ibid. 26 Feb. 2014).

According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the Ministry of Public Security (Ministère de la Sécurité publique) is responsible for issuing the biometric passports, and the Police for Air, Borders and Foreigners (Police de l'Air, des Frontières et des Étrangers, PAFE) is responsible for processing passport applications (28 Feb. 2014). Sources state that biometric passports must be obtained at the PAFE office in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi (Burundi 26 Feb. 2014; ibid. 14 Aug. 2012).

In a 26 February 2014 telephone interview, the Chancery Assistant (visa, passport and laissez-passer service) of the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium stated that, to obtain a biometric passport, the applicant must present his or her birth certificate (*acte de naissance*) (Burundi 26 Feb. 2014). If the applicant does not have a birth certificate, he or she can present an attestation of birth (*attestation de naissance*, also known as a *certificat de naissance*), and one of the following two documents: their national identity card (*carte nationale d'identité*, CNI), or their old passport (ibid.). The Chancery Assistant stated that, if the applicant has only an attestation of birth, the PAFE can verify his or her identity by asking questions (ibid.). The Chancery Assistant added that, if the PAFE has doubts about the applicant's identity, it can also call witnesses who can attest to the applicant's identity (ibid.). However, the Embassy of Burundi in Canada provided different information about the documents to provide when applying (28 Feb. 2014). According to the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the following documents must be provided in order to obtain the Burundian biometric passport:

- two passport photos;
- a photocopy of the national identity card [the CNI (Burundi 10 Mar. 2014)];

- old passport (if the applicant has one);
- complete attestation of identity; and
- attestation of birth (for applicants born before 1980), or an extract of the birth certificate (for applicants born after 1980) (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014).

In a 10 March 2014 telephone interview, the Second Counsellor at the Embassy of Burundi in Canada stated that employees of the government of Burundi must submit an attestation of service (*attestation de service*), in addition to the other documents required to obtain the biometric passport.

According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, if the applicant does not have these documents, they cannot obtain a passport (28 Feb. 2014).

The Chancery Assistant at the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium stated that an applicant who is a minor must submit their birth certificate, as well as their father's passport and their father's legal authorization stating that the minor applicant has his permission to apply for a passport (Burundi 27 Feb. 2014). The Chancery Assistant stated that minor applicants who live with their mother must submit their birth certificate, their mother's passport, their mother's legal authorization, as well as a [translation] "household composition" document (*composition de ménage*), an official document that proves that the mother is the head of the family, or a certificate of divorce to show that the mother is the head of the family (ibid.).

According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, minors under 16 years of age must submit two passport photos, an extract of their birth certificate and, if they are not accompanied by their parents, a parental attestation (28 Feb. 2014). The Second Counsellor at the Embassy of Burundi in Canada explained that the parental attestation is a document that allows minors under 16 years of age to carry out the application process without being accompanied by their parents (10 Mar. 2014).

Sources indicate that the fee for obtaining the biometric passport is 235,000 Burundian francs (BIF) [C\$167 (XE 17 Feb. 2014)] and that the processing time is a maximum of one week (Burundi 28 Feb. 2014; ibid.; 26 Feb. 2014). However, a 25 June 2013 news release from the Ministry of Public Security of Burundi states that the passport can be obtained in two days.

1.1 Possibility of Obtaining a Biometric Passport from Outside Burundi

The Chancery Assistant at the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium stated that the procedure for obtaining a biometric passport must be carried out in Burundi and that Burundi's embassies and consulates are not authorized to process applications for the biometric passport (26 Feb. 2014). An undated news release from Embassy of Burundi in Germany states that, until further notice, passports will be issued in Burundi (n.d.d).

The Chancery Assistant noted that the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium had, one time only, in August 2013, as a test, carried out the procedures for issuing biometric passports (26 Feb. 2014). The Chancery Assistant added that a team from Burundi was on hand for that test but that it was [translation] "exceptional" (ibid.). Along the same lines, the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada indicates that, if biometric passports were to be processed abroad, a PAFE team would go for a certain period of time to carry out the procedure (28 Feb. 2014).

1.2 Requirements and Procedures for Obtaining a Biometric Passport During the August 2013 Test at the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium

A news release on the website of the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium states that, between 13 and 23 August 2013, Burundians living in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and elsewhere in Europe could register with the embassy in Brussels to obtain a biometric passport (Burundi 27 June 2013).

The following documents were required to obtain a regular biometric passport at the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium:

- a photocopy of the national identity card (upon presentation of the original);
- an attestation of recognition [of Burundian nationality (Burundi 19 Mar. 2014)] issued by the embassy of Burundi in the applicant's country of residence;
- a consular card issued by the embassy of Burundi in the country of residence;
- a photocopy of the old, expired digital passport for those who had one (upon presentation of the original);
- a passport photo; and
- the full address of place of residence (ibid. 27 June 2013).

In the case of an application made for a minor, the following documents were required:

- a photocopy of the extract of the birth certificate (upon presentation of the original);
- an attestation of recognition or a consular card issued by the embassy of Burundi in the country of residence;
- a passport photo;
- a photocopy of the expired digital passport for those who had one (upon presentation of the original);
- photocopies of the parents' identity documents; and
- the full address of the place of residence (ibid.).

Applicants under 16 years of age had to be accompanied by one of their parents, who had to show identification (ibid.).

The fee for a biometric regular passport was 235,000 BIF (ibid.). Applicants who chose to have their passport delivered to their homes were charged a postage fee of 10 euros (EUR) [C\$15 (XE 18 Feb. 2014a)] (Burundi 27 June 2013).

The Embassy of Burundi in Belgium added that to obtain a biometric diplomatic passport, in addition to the documents required to obtain a biometric regular passport, applicants had to present a note verbale from the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Coopération internationale) (ibid.).

The fee for a biometric diplomatic passport was 135,000 BIF [C\$97 (XE 18 Feb. 2014b)]. Applicants who chose to have their passport delivered to their home were charged a postage fee of 10 EUR (Burundi 27 June 2013).

According to the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium, in order to obtain a biometric service passport, in addition to the documents required for a biometric regular passport, applicants must present an attestation of recognition of the function that entitles them to this type of passport, issued by the embassy of Burundi in their country of residence, on the recommendation of the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (ibid.).

The fee for a biometric service passport was 135,000 BIF (ibid.). Applicants who chose to have their passports delivered to their homes were charged a postage fee of 10 EUR (ibid.).

The news release issued by the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium states that incomplete applications for biometric passports will not be processed (ibid.).

2. Characteristics of the Biometric Passport

According to the Chancery Assistant at the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium, the biometric passport is a 30-page document on blue paper (Burundi 26 Feb. 2014). The Chancery Assistant added that the passport is [translation] "the regular size, like all the other passports, and is the same size as the Belgian passport" (ibid.).

Sources indicate that the first page of the passport (the page after the cover page) bears, in capital letters and in three languages, Kirundi, French and English, the name of the country (REPUBLIKA Y'UBURUNDI; REPUBLIQUE DU BURUNDI; REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI) and the word "passport" (IGITABU C'INZIRA, PASSEPORT, PASSPORT) (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014; ibid. 27 Feb. 2014). According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the crest of Burundi appears between the name of the country and the word "passport" (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014). The national flag also appears on that page (ibid.). The Chancery Assistant stated that Burundi's crest and an outline of the country's geographic shape also appear on the first page (ibid. 27 Feb. 2014).

The Chancery Assistant added that the second page of the passport is [translation] "strong, resistant and stiffer than the others" and that it contains a black-and-white photo of the bearer and the same photo in miniature with the passport number appearing on the photo (ibid.). Between the two photos, the following 14 pieces of information are provided about the bearer (ibid.):

- type of passport (regular, service, diplomatic)
- country code (BDI)
- passport number (composed of seven digits and preceded by one of the following abbreviations: OP (for regular passports), SP (for service passports) or DP (for diplomatic passports))
- family name
- given name
- nationality (UMURUNDI)
- date of birth
- personal identity number
- sex (M or F)

- place of birth (commune and province, side by side, with no space between them)
- date of issue
- issuing authority (PAFE)
- passport validity (five years from date of issue)
- signature of the bearer (ibid. 26 Feb. 2014)

3. Validity of Non-biometric Passports

According to the Chancery Assistant of the Embassy of Burundi in Belgium, non-biometric passports will remain valid until the expiry date that appears in them (Burundi 26 Feb. 2014). According to the information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, there is no specific date by which Burundians must replace their regular passports with biometric passports (ibid. 28 Feb. 2014). In addition, according to information provided by the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, since the introduction of the biometric passport, [translation] "anyone who is in Burundi must travel with this passport" (ibid.). The Chancery Assistant stated that a Burundian living abroad can return to Burundi with their old passport, as long as it has not expired, but they will not be able to leave Burundi without replacing it with a biometric passport (ibid. 26 Feb. 2014).

3.1 Burundians Living Outside Burundi

The Chancery Assistant explained that if a Burundian living abroad wants to return to Burundi but his or her non-biometric passport has expired, the person must obtain a *laissez-passer*, in lieu of a passport, from the embassy of Burundi in the country of residence (ibid.). This *laissez-passer*, which costs 10 EUR, will enable the person to return to Burundi (ibid.).

A news release posted on the Burundian government's Internet portal following the meeting of the country's Council of Ministers (Conseil des ministres), which took place on 10 and 11 October 2012, states that the proposal for a two-year non-renewable extension of the digital passports of Burundians living abroad was accepted (ibid. n.d.c.). According to the news release, this extension will enable Burundian nationals abroad who have not yet obtained a biometric passport to return to the country to apply for one (ibid.).

The website of the Embassy of Burundi in France states that passports bearing a digital image that have not yet expired will remain valid until their expiry date (Burundi n.d.a). An extension of passport validity may be granted to diplomats, to their families and to Burundian students who were already outside the country on 2 March 2011 (the date the biometric passport was introduced) and who have not yet returned to Burundi (ibid.). To be granted this extension, bearers must submit a substantiated ("*motivée*") application for extension to the office of the Burundian Ministry of Public Security, who will then decide on the necessity and the length of the extension (ibid.).

3.2 Emergency Travel Document

According to a news release dated 14 August 2012 and posted on the website of the Embassy of Burundi in the United Kingdom, Burundians who are living abroad and who do not have a valid passport can apply for an Emergency Travel Document, which will enable them to return to Burundi (ibid. 14 Aug. 2012). To apply, applicants must go to the embassy in person (ibid.). Additional information in this regard could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

4. Biometric Laissez-passer

On 31 March 2011, the Burundian minister of public security announced the introduction of a biometric *laissez-passer* (Burundi n.d.b). The purpose of this *laissez-passer*, which is valid for one year, was to allow individuals who did not have the means to obtain a biometric passport to still be able to leave Burundi and travel abroad (ibid.). The Chancery Assistant pointed out that this *laissez-passer* allows Burundians to leave Burundi only to travel to countries that are members of the East African Community [Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda] (Burundi 19 Mar. 2014).

According to Ministerial Order No. 215/224 of 2 March 2011, the fee for a *laissez-passer* in lieu of biometric passport is 30,000 BIF [C\$21 (XE 19 Feb. 2014a)] (Burundi 2 Mar. 2011). Other sources also mention a *laissez-passer* in lieu of passport, but indicate that the fee is 35,000 BIF [C\$25 (XE 19 Feb. 2014b)] (PANAPress 5 Mar. 2011; RTNB 5 Mar. 2011). According to a news release issued on 25 June 2013 by the Burundian Ministry of Public Security, the *laissez-passer* can be obtained in two days (Burundi 25 June 2013).

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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful: Burundi – embassies in France and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité publique.

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