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Nigeria: Issuance and appearance of the Nigerian Birth Certificate

Introduction

This note describes the legislative framework of birth registration as well as issuance of the two types of documents used to certify births in Nigeria; the birth certificate and the attestation of birth.

This note is based on open source information as well as information gathered during a mission to Abuja conducted by the Danish National ID Centre in November and December 2018.

Legislative framework of birth registration

The legal framework of birth registration was last updated in 1992 with the Compulsory Registration Act. Since then, the responsibility of birth registration in Nigeria has been placed with the National Population Commission (NPC).¹

Nigeria operates with two types of documents in regard to birth registration; a certificate of birth and an attestation of birth. The certificate of birth is issued to Nigerian citizens under the age of 18, whereas applicants above 18 years of age are issued an attestation of birth.² The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada describes an attestation of birth as a legal document supporting the authenticity of an age declaration.³

Issuance of the birth certificate

Across Nigeria's 36 federal states as well as the Federal Capital territory, the NPC runs more than 4,000 registration centers.⁴

¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2 November 2020.

² Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 5 August 2011.

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, April 2021; Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

Registering a childbirth within six months following the birth is free of charge. However, if the child is older than six months but below the age of 18, the fee for registration is 200 Nigerian Naira (0.5 USD in April 2021 exchange rate prices) according to NPC.⁵ According to Landinfo, the legal timeframe for registering children is 60 days.⁶ According to Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, the website of the NPC notes that a birth certificate for children up to 18 years of age is "absolutely free of charge". However, media sources report that although birth certificates are supposed to be free of charge, applicants are being charged for birth certificates and that the fees charged "vary" depending on the child's age and the "urgency" of the certificate.⁷

When a child is not born at a health institution, the parents are required to register the birth at the local registration center. They must fill out a Live Birth Registration Form containing information about the birth, the child, the parents and the informant. It is a requirement to bring an informant to the registration center, whereas it is not mandatory to bring the child for the registration though the child's presence is preferred.⁸

However, if the child is born at a health institution, the doctor automatically issues a paper slip confirming the birth, which the parents must provide to the registration center when officially registering the birth.⁹

NPC also registers still births. A Still Birth Registration Form has to be filled out, but they do not issue a certificate.¹⁰

⁵ Representatives of the competent Nigerian Authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

⁶ Landinfo, 19 October 2012, p. 10.

⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2 November 2020.

⁸ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

⁹ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁰ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

Form B.2

Caution: Any person who (1) Falsifies any of the particular on this certificate or (2) uses a falsified certificate as true knowing it to be false is liable to prosecution

ORIGINAL

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION

Certificate of Birth A18 25226772

Issued under the births and Deaths Etc. (Compulsory Registration) Decree No. 69 of 1992

Registration Centre _____

Town/Village _____

L.G.A _____

State _____

Volume _____ **Year** _____ **Entry No.** _____

This is certify that the birth, details of which are recorded herein has been registered on _____

Day _____ **Month** _____ **Year** _____ **at this registration centre** _____

1. **Full Name:** _____
 (Surname first) (In block letters)

2. **Sex:** _____

3. **Date of Birth:** _____
Day _____ **Month** _____ **Year** _____

4. **Place of Birth:** _____
Town/Village _____

5. **Full name of Father:** _____
 (Surname first) (In block letters)

6. **Full name of Mother:** _____
 (Surname first) (In block letters)

Place of Issue: _____

Name of Registrar _____

Date: _____

Signature of Registrar _____

NATIONAL REGISTRATION PROGRAMME

Image 1: Sample of a birth certificate. (NIDC reference material)

Issuance of the attestation of birth

Applicants above the age of 18 who wish to register their birth cannot be issued a certificate of birth, but must apply for an attestation of birth. Before applying for an attestation of birth at the NPC registration center, the applicant must obtain a declaration of age from the court.¹¹ Declarations of age are produced on individual state level and thus, there is no set national fee for the document. It can take a couple of days to get a stamped declaration of age from the High Court.¹²

When applying for an attestation of birth a form (Form A), is to be filled out containing personal information such as date and place of birth as well as information about the applicant's family. The fee for an attestation of birth is 7,000 Nigerian Naira (17 USD in April 2021 exchange rate prices).¹³

Applications by proxy

When an application for an attestation of birth is handed in by a proxy applicant, the proxy must fill out a Proxy Form and submit two passport pictures of the owner of the document, along with a single passport photo of the proxy applicant. One of the passport photos of the holder is attached to the attestation of birth, while the other one is kept at the NPC registration center in a hardcopy archive along with a duplicate of the document that is issued.¹⁴ The NPC staff places a stamp on the set of documents (the original certificate and the picture of the holder) so half of the stamp covers the attestation of birth and the other half covers the picture of the holder.¹⁵ According to Nigerian regulation, it should not be possible to have sworn affidavits issued by proxy. Therefore, the owner of a sworn affidavit should have been in Nigeria on the day of issuance.¹⁶

Reissuance and record keeping

When the NPC staff fills out the birth certificate, they automatically fill out a duplicate as well. The local registration center keeps the duplicate of all registrations conducted at the office.¹⁷ According to representatives of the Nigerian authorities in Abuja, all birth certificates should look alike as they are printed at the same location.¹⁸ However, according to the U.S. country reciprocity schedule, multiple versions of this form are issued.¹⁹

When losing a document, the holder must go to the office that issued the lost document and state the serial number of the document to the staff. The NPC employees will either issue a new document or give the holder an official letter to prove that the document has been lost.²⁰

¹¹ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹² Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 5 August 2011.

¹³ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁴ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁵ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 5 August 2011.

¹⁷ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁸ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, 6 March 2024

²⁰ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018.

The registration centres are expected to send their data to the federal NPC headquarters in Abuja once a month, who in turn is required to send two monthly reports on national birth registration to UNICEF.²¹ According to Landinfo, seven NPC Data Processing Centres have been established across Nigeria where the data are registered electronically. This data cannot be accessed by the employees at the registration centres.²²

²¹ Representatives of the competent Nigerian authorities, Abuja, December 2018; Landinfo, 19 October 2012, p. 9.

²² Landinfo, 19 October 2012, p. 9.

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