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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Nigeria: Passports, including whether the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) name appears on them; the content, appearance, and security features of passports; requirements and procedures for obtaining a passport locally and from abroad; ECOWAS travel books (2020–February 2022) [NGA200931.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

1.1 ECOWAS

ECOWAS, a regional organization promoting economic integration and cooperation in West Africa (ECOWAS n.d.a), indicates that the Protocol on Free Movement, Right of Residence and Establishment was signed by its 15 member states [1] and allows "ECOWAS citizens [to] travel without visas within the region"; it has resulted in the issuance of travel documents by all member states through their respective immigration and consular government entities (ECOWAS n.d.b). Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reports that while ECOWAS nationals "are generally able" to move freely through ECOWAS country airports without "significant processing delays," the "reliability and efficiency of passport processing at land borders is more variable," especially since ECOWAS nationals continue to need entry visas at land borders (Australia 3 Dec. 2020, para. 3.17).

1.2 Nigeria-Issued ECOWAS Passports

Sources report that Nigeria issues ordinary [standard], diplomatic, and official [service] passports (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.a; US n.d.). According to the EU's Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online (PRADO), the latest iteration of the passports was first issued on 29 April 2019 (EU 21 Feb. 2022). Samples of passports indicate that ECOWAS is printed on the front cover of the ordinary, diplomatic, and official passports issued since 2007 (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.a), and on the version issued since 29 April 2019 (EU 21 Feb. 2022). An August 2012 article by *Vanguard*, a newspaper in Nigeria, reported that Nigeria had started to issue "only electronic passport[s] for new passport applications" (*Vanguard* 30 Aug. 2012). A presentation on Nigerian passports by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), given at a 2015 conference organized by the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) (UN 2015), notes that Nigeria's electronic passport is "officially known as the 'ECOWAS Harmonized Electronic Smart Passport'" (Nigeria Nov. 2015, 5).

The US Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs' Reciprocity Schedule for Nigeria notes that the "Pilgrims Passport" and "Seaman's Book" are additionally available to citizens and that all passports are issued by the NIS (US n.d.).

1.3 Passport Application Backlog

According to sources, a scarcity of the booklets used to produce passports led to a delay in passport issuance (TheCable 1 Jan. 2022; NAN 3 Jan. 2022) in 2021 (NAN 3 Jan. 2022). Sources state that all new passport applications were suspended between 17 May and 1 June 2021 to clear the existing application backlog (*Business Day* 18 May 2021; NAN 18 May 2021). According to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), an English-language news agency of the Nigerian federal government, as of May 2021 the total number of applications in the backlog was 136,364, including 17,906 applications from outside Nigeria and 118,458 domestic applications (NAN 18 May 2021).

NAN indicates that the NIS office in Ikoyi district in Lagos city "extended its working days to include Saturdays and Sundays" to process backlog applications (NAN 26 Sept. 2021). *Vanguard* reports that a "Special Task Force Team" was deployed to the Ikoyi office to help clear the backlog and that the acting Comptroller-General of the NIS ordered all backlog to be cleared within a week (*Vanguard* 25 Sept. 2021). However, according to other sources, accessing passports continues to be

"challeng[ing]" (TheCable 1 Jan. 2022) or "difficul[t]" (NAN 3 Jan. 2022). For instance, NAN notes that in December 2021, 1.5 million Nigerians living in Europe needed passports, according to the Italy Chapter of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation Europe (NIDOE) [2] (NAN 25 Dec. 2021). According to media sources, Nigerians in Germany protested over delays in obtaining passports (NAN 3 Jan. 2022; Newsbreak.ng 12 Nov. 2021). TheCable, an online Nigerian newspaper, reports that the NIS announced in January 2022 that the delays in issuing passports would be cleared by March 2022 (TheCable 16 Feb. 2022). Further information on the status of the passport backlog could not be found among sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Ordinary Passport

2.1 Content and Appearance

According to the PRADO, the Nigerian ordinary passport, first issued on 29 April 2019, is a booklet measuring 88 by 125 mm (EU 1 July 2021a). Sources indicate that there is a 64-page version with a validity period of 10 years (Pulse.ng 17 Jan. 2019; NAN 3 Jan. 2022) or either 5 or 10 years (EU 1 July 2021a). The same sources note that another version of the ordinary passport has a validity period of 5 years and contains 34 pages (EU 1 July 2021a) or 32 pages (NAN 3 Jan. 2022; Pulse.ng 17 Jan. 2019). According to the PRADO, the ordinary passport has a green cover, which is flexible and made of plastic (EU 1 July 2021a).

The information in the following paragraph is based on a sample of an ordinary passport available on the PRADO website:

The outside front cover contains the following:

- "Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)" is printed across the top.
- The ECOWAS logo, which includes a map of the African continent, is printed in the centre.
- "Federal Republic of Nigeria" followed by "Passport" are printed below the ECOWAS logo.
- All of the above are printed in gold colour using hot foil stamping.

The outside back cover features the coat of arms of Nigeria in gold colour. The biodata page includes the following fields: type; country code; passport number; surname; given names; nationality; previous passport; date of birth; NIN [National Identification Number]; sex; place of birth; date of issue; [issuing] authority; date of expiry; and holder's signature (EU 1 July 2021a).

Sources indicate that ordinary passport first issued in 2007 (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.a) is a 32-page booklet with a validity period of 5 years (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.b). The same sources note that the biodata page includes the same fields as the 2019 version, except a personal number is listed instead of the NIN and the field for previous passport information is not included (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.b). According to passport samples provided by the same sources, the front and back covers contain the same texts and logos as the 2019 version (EU 21 Feb. 2022; Keesing Technologies n.d.b). A sample of an ordinary passport first issued in 2007 is available on the PRADO website (EU 1 July 2021b).

2.2 Security Features

According to the NIS, the 2019 version of the passport contains polycarbonate technology (Nigeria n.d.a). The same source further states that other "benefits" of the new passport include an automated issuance process "to bring about transparency" and an "Electronic Document Management System" to "[e]liminate human interference" (Nigeria n.d.a). PRADO notes that the security features on the biodata page of the passport include the following:

- UV features including "substrate without optical brighteners," "fluorescent overprint (invisible under normal light)," and "fluorescent ink"
- Optically variable devices (OVDs) including a "[d]iffractive [i]dentification [d]evice" (DID) and "variable laser imaging" (CLI/MLI)
- Printing techniques (EU 1 July 2021a).

According to an opinion piece in *Vanguard* by Dapo Bruce, a Lagos-based public commentator, the passport that was first issued in 2007 includes biometric information encoded in chips embedded within the passport (Bruce 10 Oct. 2021).

3. Diplomatic and Service Passports

3.1 Content and Appearance

The PRADO indicates that the Nigerian diplomatic passport is a red booklet measuring 88 by 125 mm, includes 34 pages, and is valid for 5 years (EU 1 July 2021c). According to a sample diplomatic passport on the PRADO website, the outer front cover features the same texts and logo as the

ordinary passport, except "Diplomatic Passport" is printed instead of only "Passport" (EU 1 July 2021c).

The PRADO website indicates that the service passport includes the same measurements and number of pages as a diplomatic passport (EU 1 July 2021d). According to a sample service passport on the same website, the outer front cover is blue and contains the same texts and logo as the ordinary and diplomatic passports, except the words "Official Passport" are printed (EU 1 July 2021d).

3.2 Security Features

According to PRADO, the security features of both a diplomatic passport (EU 1 July 2021c) and a service passport (EU 1 July 2021d) include UV features, printing techniques, and OVD features (EU 1 July 2021c; EU 1 July 2021d).

4. Passport Requirements and Procedures Within Nigeria

4.1 Ordinary Passport

The US Reciprocity Schedule notes that individuals within Nigeria can submit their application and supporting documentation to a passport office (US n.d.). The same source adds that the fee for domestic applications of the 32-page passport is 8,750 Nigerian naira (NGN) [C\$27] for individuals aged 17 and under or aged 60 and over, and 15,000 NGN [C\$46] for individuals aged between 18 and 59 (US n.d.).

The NIS website notes the following procedure for first-time passport applicants:

- Complete the online passport application form, make payment and obtain an "[a]pplication ID and [r]eference [n]umber."
- Print the online guarantor's form using the application ID and reference number and have it signed by a guarantor or commissioner for oaths in a "competent court."
- Submit the completed passport application form along with other required documents in person at the passport office selected during the online payment process for further processing (Nigeria n.d.b).

The same source notes that applicants must appear in person at the immigration office to have their photograph and biometric data recorded (Nigeria n.d.b). According to the same website, the procedure to renew a passport is the same as a first-time application, except that the applicant is not required to submit a guarantor's form or have their photograph and biometric data captured unless their current passport is more than six months [expired] (Nigeria n.d.c). The NIS website also indicates that the procedure to replace a lost passport is the same as renewing a passport (Nigeria n.d.d).

Sources state that the Nigerian government announced that beginning 8 June 2021, the timeline for processing an application would be six weeks (BBC 1 June 2021; *The Nigerian Observer* 8 July 2021). Information on the implementation of this timeline could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

4.1.1 Documentation Required for a New Application

The NIS provides the following list of supporting documentation required for a new passport application for an individual who acquired Nigerian citizenship by birth:

Adult (18 years and above)

- Letter of identification from [the] Local Government/State of origin or residence or National Identity Card [or] [l]etter of introduction for employees of government as a Nigerian citizen stating [their] [s]ervice [n]umber, [l]ength of [s]ervice and [d]esignation/[r]ank. The letter must be accompanied with a valid staff identity card.
- Completed passport application form and 2 passport sized photographs (passport photographs endorsed at the back by the [g]uarantor).
- Completed [g]uarantors' form duly signed by a [c]ommissioner for [o]aths attached with [a p]hotocopy of [the d]ata page of [the g]uarantor's Nigerian e-Passport and one passport sized photograph of the [g]uarantor.
- Marriage certificate, where applicable.
- Birth Certificate (certificate issued by the National Population Commission shall be required from applicants whose date of birth is with effect from Dec 1992) or Age Declaration attached with one passport-sized photograph and duly endorsed by a [c]ommissioner for [o]aths.
- Acknowledgement [s]lip and [e]vidence of [p]ayment.

Minor (under 18 years of age)

- Completed passport application form attached with 1 passport sized photograph of minor to be endorsed on the reverse side by the consenting parent(s).
- Evidence of Nigerian citizenship of parent(s).
- Birth certificate (certificate must be issued by the National Population Commission for minors born within Nigeria).
- Letter of consent from either parent.
- Acknowledgement [s]lip and [e]vidence of [p]ayment.

Court [o]rder and [l]etter of approval from State Ministry of Women and Child Development (This [r]equirement is strictly for adopted child[ren]). (Nigeria n.d.e, bold in original)

In the case of a naturalized citizen applying for a new passport, the NIS requires a "Certificate of Naturalization duly issued by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" as the form of identification rather than the local government-issued letter or national identity card (Nigeria n.d.f).

4.1.2 Documentation Required for Renewing a Passport and Replacing a Lost Passport

According to the NIS, the following supporting documents are required to renew a passport:

- Application form
- Passport
- Photocopy of the passport data page
- Acknowledgement slip and proof of payment (Nigeria n.d.g).

To renew an unexpired passport, the same source indicates that in addition to the above documents, "[e]vidence" of the applicant's maiden name is also required; if the passport expiry date is over six months away, a reason for renewing the passport should be provided (Nigeria n.d.g).

According to the NIS website, the following documents are required to replace a lost passport:

- Application form, describing how and where the passport was lost
- Extract of the police report
- Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment
- Fire service report for passports lost due to fire (Nigeria n.d.h).

4.2 Diplomatic and Service Passports

The US Reciprocity Schedule states that the diplomatic and official passports are obtained free of charge (US n.d.).

According to the NIS website, Nigerian diplomats and other senior government officials are eligible for diplomatic passports "as may be approved by the President," and must present the following documents in order to apply:

- "Letter of application / introduction from the [a]pplicant's [o]rganization"
- Two passport photographs
- Latest letter of promotion or letter of appointment
- Photocopy of valid official identity card
- Proof of age
- Certificate of return from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), if the applicant is an elected official (Nigeria n.d.i).

The same source further indicates that officials eligible for the official passport, which include senior government, military and security services officials, officers on peacekeeping missions, traditional rulers, and executives of government-owned banks and universities, are required to provide the same documents as those required for the diplomatic passport (Nigeria n.d.j).

5. Passport Requirements and Procedures Abroad

5.1 Ordinary Passport

According to the NIS, applications for passports may be initiated from abroad on the NIS website by filling out the online form, selecting the nearest mission in the applicant's processing country, choosing a payment method and making payment, booking and appearing at an appointment to record the applicant's biometric data, and awaiting SMS notification from the processing mission to collect the passport (Nigeria n.d.k).

Sources provide the following passport fees for applications filed from abroad [at all Nigerian missions (Nigeria n.d.l)]:

Booklet Type	Age 0 – 17	Age 18 – 59	Age 60 and over
32 pages	US\$65	US\$94	US\$65
64 pages	US\$125	US\$125	US\$125

(Nigeria n.d.l; US n.d.)

The US Reciprocity Schedule lists the same required documents for applications submitted to passport offices in Nigeria as those submitted to embassies or high commissions abroad (US n.d.).

The NIS states that individuals applying from outside of Nigeria to replace their lost passport should submit their application at the nearest embassy, high commission, or consulate (Nigeria n.d.d). The US Reciprocity Schedule indicates that a police report is required in the case of a lost passport (US n.d.).

5.2 Diplomatic and Service Passports

Information on the requirements and procedures for obtaining a diplomatic or service passport abroad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. ECOWAS Travel Certificate

According to sources, the ECOWAS Travel Certificate is issued to citizens of ECOWAS countries for travel "within" the sub-region (US n.d.; Nigeria n.d.m). The NIS website indicates that the certificate is proof of ECOWAS citizenship, can be held by the bearer "concurrently with the National Passport," and is valid for two years (Nigeria n.d.m).

6.1 Content, Appearance, and Security Features

Information on the content, appearance, and security features of a Nigeria-issued ECOWAS Travel Certificate could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6.2 ECOWAS Travel Certificate Procedures Within Nigeria

The information in the following paragraph is available on the NIS website:

The ECOWAS Travel Certificate is issued at the "Service Headquarters, 36 State Commands, the [Federal Capital Territory (FCT)] office, and all 774 local [i]mmigration offices" in the country. The supporting documents required for an application include the following:

- Completed application form
- Three "recent" 4 x 4 cm coloured passport photographs
- "Evidence of age (birth certificate or statutory declaration of age)"
- Letter of introduction from the employer (for salaried workers only)
- Letter of confirmation of Nigerian citizenship from the applicant's Local Government Chairman
- Letter of introduction from the head of the educational institutions accepting "Immigration Responsibility" (for students and trainees)
- "Any other document which might be required by any locality as evidence of Nigerian Citizenship" (Nigeria n.d.m).

6.3 ECOWAS Travel Certificate Procedures Abroad

An application form for an applicant outside of Nigeria to obtain a new ECOWAS Travel Certificate is available on the NIS website; this application form includes fields for personal information, residential address, business address, physical details, next of kin, address of next of kin, particulars of other travel documents, and ECOWAS Travel Certificate processing country and office (Nigeria n.d.n). The same website also has an application form to renew the ECOWAS Travel Certificate, which includes the same information fields as the application for a new certificate as well as fields for details about the previous ECOWAS Travel Certificate (Nigeria n.d.o). The NIS website states that the application fee is 2,600 NGN [C\$8] and lists the following required documents for new applications made from abroad:

- Two copies of a "recent" passport photograph
- Letter of identification from Local Government Area or State Liaison Office
- "Birth certificate/Age declaration"

- Guarantor's form sworn before a commissioner of Oaths/Magistrate/High Court judge and a photocopy of the data page of the passport, driver's license or National Identity Card of the guarantor
- Father's letter of consent for minors under 16 years (for applicants with a single [mother], the mother's letter of consent is accepted)
- Marriage certificate, if applicable
- Proof of application fee payment
- Completed and signed application form (Nigeria n.d.p).

The same source indicates that the following documents are required to renew the ECOWAS Travel Certificate:

- Original copy of the previous ECOWAS Travel Certificate
- Proof of application fee payment of 1,300 NGN [C\$4]
- Completed and signed application form (Nigeria n.d.p).

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] The 15 ECOWAS member states are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo (ECOWAS n.d.a).

[2] According to News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation Europe (NIDOE) is "the European arm of a global Nigerian diaspora network, established in year 2000 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo" (NAN 25 Dec. 2021).

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ecoi.net summary:



Query response on
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