Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's Refworld website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the Knowledge and Information Management Unit.

UGA105378.E

Uganda: Prevalence of fraudulent documents, including identity cards and passports (2014-December 2015)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Passports

Daily Monitor, a Ugandan-based newspaper, reports that Ugandan passports have "long been subjected to abuse" (22 June 2013). A communications officer at the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated, in a response published in the Daily Monitor, that "[f]or a while, Ugandans have decried the poor service delivery at the Directorate of Immigration [which includes] stolen visa money, missing/stolen passports, [and] passport forgeries" (27 Mar. 2014).

The Africa Report, a weekly newsmagazine based in France, quotes a Uganda Police spokesperson as saying that some passports "including those of VIPs were being forged" (10 Oct. 2013). New Vision, a government-owned newspaper, also reports that "a good number of diplomatic passports [have] mysteriously [gone] missing" (1 Dec. 2014). Daily Monitor quotes the former Minister of Internal Affairs as stating that "Uganda's diplomatic passports were 'being abused by criminals'" (23 Oct. 2014). The same article indicates that legislators on the Public Accounts Committee have said that "officials have failed to prevent diplomatic passports falling into the hands of wrong elements," despite earlier promises by the former Minister to fix the problem (ibid.). The Daily Monitor further notes that Uganda's diplomatic passports "have been found in possession of drug dealers" (ibid.).

In July 2014, sources report that the Minister of Internal Affairs received a report about corruption and mismanagement at the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (UGO News 1 July 2014; Business Week 13 July 2014). Business Week indicates that the report "is looking at the high levels of corruption, mismanagement and incompetence by some top immigration officers leading to the issuance of Ugandan citizenship documents like passports to foreigners" (ibid.). Daily Monitor states that a report of the Auditor General "noted serious leakages at the Passport Control Office [and that] passports dummies worth more than 48 million Ugandan Shillings (UGX) [approximately C$19,791] disappeared through unclear circumstances" (23 Oct. 2014). Sources indicate that Ugandan officials demand bribes in order to obtain a passport (The Africa Report 10 Oct. 2013; Daily Monitor 25 Jan. 2015).

Sources report that Ugandan passports have been issued fraudulently to foreigners (New Vision 1 Dec. 2014; Daily Monitor 27 Mar. 2014). Sources report the case of a local artist's Nigerian boyfriend who managed to acquire a Ugandan passport under another name (Daily Monitor 21 Feb. 2015; New Vision 9 Nov. 2014) in 2011 and renew it in 2013 (ibid.). New Vision, reports that after an investigation into the case, authorities found that the immigration office did not have a file on the Nigerian person and that there was very little information about him, despite the fact that immigration officers are supposed to keep information on every applicant (ibid.). The Daily Monitor also reports a case in which three people from the Democratic Republic of
Congo (DRC) moved to Uganda and acquired Ugandan diplomatic passports, allegedly with the help of a former Ugandan ambassador to the DRC (ibid. 22 June 2013).

New Vision reports on the arrest and detention of two Indian nationals in Kampala who were fraudulently processing Ugandan passports, student passes, work permits, and certificates of residence (New Vision 9 Mar. 2015). The article points out that authorities found the suspects in possession of authentic passports of Ugandans and genuine application forms, and that there was a poster indicating that they would “facilitate the processing and issuance of Ugandan passports” within 10 days at a fee of 235,000 UGX [approximately C$97], in comparison to the government’s rate of 120,000 UGX [approximately C$49] (ibid.).

2. Identity Cards and Other Documents

The website of the Uganda Police indicates that "[t]he problem of document fraud has been serious over the years" (Uganda 17 Dec. 2013). It indicates that fraudsters from universities around Kampala and alongside Nasser and Nkrumah roads produce “fake cheques, land title deeds, currency, academic certificates, identity cards, licenses, and official receipts” (ibid.). The Daily Monitor similarly reports that "[s]everal centres" along Nasser and Nkrumah roads in Kampala “are famous for originating all sorts of fake documents that include, among others, academic certificates ranging from bachelor’s degrees, diplomas, and of recent, PhDs” (Daily Monitor 9 Mar. 2013). The article also reports that people buy “hundreds” of identification cards at a cost between 300 UGX [approximately C$0.12] and 1,000 UGX [approximately C$0.41] and then sell them in their communities at “profitable rates” for 3,000 UGX [approximately C$1.24] to 20,000 UGX [approximately C$8.25], where a stamp by the local council confirms that the person is a citizen of Uganda or a resident in that area (ibid.). Uganda Radio Network (URN), a news network based in Uganda, reports on the detention of a businessman from Mbale who was in possession of a fake ID card (URN 21 May 2014). According to the businessman, "many people in his zone are in possession of fake ID cards" (ibid.). Further and corroborating information about this case could not be found 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.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Interpol and four criminal lawyers based in Uganda.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica; Anti Corruption Coalition Uganda; British Bradcasting Corporation; ecoi.net; News24; The Independent; The Observer; Transparency International; Uganda – gov.ug, Parliament of Uganda, State House Uganda; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Department of State, Embassy in Kampala.

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