

Responses to Information Requests - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Nigeria: Requirements and procedures to obtain an ePassport within the country and from abroad, including collection and verification of biometrics; appearance and security features; prevalence of fraudulent passports (2016-November 2018)

1. Overview

According to a country information report on Nigeria by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, "Nigeria rolled out ePassports in 2011 to reduce passport fraud" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.35). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources indicate that passports are issued by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.35; US n.d.). The NIS website indicates that diplomatic (with a red cover), official (with a blue cover) and standard (with a green cover) passports are available (Nigeria n.d.a). Sources also mention the existence of a "machine readable seaman's passport (MRP)" (Finelib.com n.d.) or a "Seaman's Book" (US n.d.). Sources indicate that an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Travel Certificate is also available, for travel between those states (US n.d.; Nigeria n.d.b). Without providing further details, the NIS website also mentions that a "pilgrims passport," the colour of which varies from year to year, is also available (Nigeria n.d.a). The US Reciprocity Schedule for Nigeria states that Nigerians who lose their passport abroad can be issued an Emergency Travel Certificate "for the purposes of traveling back to Nigeria" (US n.d.).

2. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a Passport in Nigeria

2.1 Application Requirements for Adults

The NIS website indicates the following application requirements in order to obtain a standard passport for Nigerian adults (18 years of age and above), and who are citizens by birth:

1. Letter of identification from [l]ocal [g]overnment/[s]tate of origin or residence or National Identity Card [or a] [l]etter of introduction for employees of government as a Nigerian citizen stating [the] [s]ervice [n]umber, [the] [l]ength of [s]ervice and [the] [d]esignation/[r]ank. The letter must be accompanied with a valid staff identity card;
2. Completed passport application form and 2 passport[-]sized photographs (passport photographs endorsed at the back by the [g]uarantor);
3. Completed [g]uarantors' form duly signed by a Commissioner for Oaths attached with [the] [p]hotocopy of [d]ata page of [the] [g]uarantor's Nigerian ePassport and one passport[-]sized photograph of the [g]uarantor;

4. Marriage certificate, where applicable;
5. Birth [c]ertificate (certificate issued by the National Population Commission shall be required from applicants whose date of birth is with effect from Dec[ember] 1992) or [an] [a]ge [d]eclaration attached with one passport-sized photograph and duly endorsed by a Commissioner for Oaths[;]
6. Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment. (Nigeria n.d.c)

The DFAT of Australia report states that a driver's license may also be provided as an alternative to a national identity card (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.36). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the DFAT of Australian report, the guarantor's form must be "witnessed" by a commissioner of oaths (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.36). The US Reciprocity Schedule adds that the guarantor's form may also be "sworn to" before a Magistrate or High Court Judge (US n.d.). According to passport application guidelines available on the application portal of the NIS, a guarantor must also attach a photocopy of the data page from a Nigerian standard passport and a driving license or a national identity card (Nigeria n.d.d).

The NIS website indicates that in case of citizenship by naturalization or citizenship by registration, a certificate of naturalization, or a certificate of registration, is used as identification (Nigeria n.d.c).

2.2 Application Requirements for Minors

The NIS website provides the following application requirements for minors under 18 years of age:

1. Completed passport application form attached with 1 passport[-]sized photograph of [the] minor to be endorsed on the reverse side by the consenting parent/s;
2. Evidence of Nigerian citizenship of parent/s;
3. Birth certificate (certificate must be issued by the National Population Commission for minors born within Nigeria);
4. Letter of consent from either parent;
5. Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment. (Nigeria n.d.c)

The Australian report states that the letter of consent "for minors under 16 years" must come from the father and be signed by both parents (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.36). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The NIS website also adds that in the case of an adopted child, a court order and letter of approval from the State Ministry of Women and Child Development must also be provided (Nigeria n.d.c).

2.3 Fees

According to the NIS website, the fee for a 32-page passport booklet is of 15,000

Nigerian naira (NGN) [approximately C\$54] for passport holders between the ages of 18 and 59 years of age, of 8,750 NGN for passport holders under the age of 18 or who are 60 years of age or above, and 20,000 NGN for a 64-page passport booklet (Nigeria n.d.c). An "address verification fee" of 2,000 NGN is also added for all categories (Nigeria n.d.c).

The NIS website indicates that the fees are the same for renewing or replacing a damaged passport in each category, but that the fee to replace a lost passport is 20,000 NGN, plus the 2,000 NGN address verification fee across all categories (Nigeria n.d.c).

2.4 Procedures to Apply for a Passport in Nigeria

The Australian Country Information report indicates that it is possible to apply for a Nigerian passport either online or in person, but adds that "[a]ll applicants are required to attend an interview at a local NIS office in their state" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.36). The NIS website specifies that "[a]pplicants are required to appear at [the] chosen Immigration Office for photograph and biometric data capturing" (Nigeria n.d.c).

The NIS website provides the following steps to be taken to apply for a passport:

1. Complete passport application form online, make payment and obtain [an] [a]pplication ID and [a] [r]eference [n]umber. ...
2. Print out [the] [g]uarantor's form (using [the] [a]pplication ID and [the] [r]eference number) to be signed by a guarantor and commissioner of oath in a competent court...
3. Submit completed passport application form with other requirements [as detailed above] in person at [the] passport office selected during [the] online payment process for further processing. (Nigeria n.d.c)

2.5 Renewal and Replacement of Passports

The information in the following two paragraphs is available on the NIS website:

When renewing a passport whose validity has expired, or to have a passport reissued when it has exhausted its visa pages, it is necessary to provide an application letter, the passport booklet, a photocopy of the data page of the passport and an "[a]cknowledgment slip" and proof of payment. If the passport is not expired and still valid for more than six months, the applicant must also provide the reason or reasons for the renewal.

When replacing a damaged passport, the application letter must state the circumstances of the damage and a sworn affidavit from a Magistrate or High Court must also be provided. In the case of the loss of a passport, the applicant must provide an application letter stating the circumstances and place of loss, an extract of a police report on the loss, a sworn affidavit from a Magistrate or High Court on the loss and a passport photo. A fire service report is mandatory if the loss was due to a fire.

The NIS website adds that to renew or replace a passport, the applicant must complete the application online, make a payment and "obtain [an] [a]pplication ID and [a] [r]eference," following which an application letter must be submitted, in person, along with the documents detailed above based on the situation, "at the passport office chosen during [the] online application" (Nigeria n.d.c). The same source adds that "[a]pplicants are require[d] to appear at [the] chosen Immigration Office for photograph and biometric data capturing if [the] current passport is more than six (6) months old" (Nigeria n.d.c).

2.6 Processing Time

The NIS website states that the "passport application processing timeline" for a new passport is "48 hours after the enrolment of [b]iometric [d]ata" (Nigeria n.d.c). For the re-issue of a passport in situations such as the renewal or replacement of a passport, the application processing timeline is 72 hours after the enrolment of biometric data (Nigeria n.d.c). The NIS website adds that depending of the situation, the processing time after the receipt of an application may be 5 or 10 working days (Nigeria n.d.c).

Information on whether the processing times are respected could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a Passport from Abroad

3.1 General Requirements and Procedures

The NIS website states that Nigerians abroad must submit their passport applications at the nearest Nigerian embassy, consulate or high commission (Nigeria n.d.c). The website of the Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa specifies that an application for a first issue, renewal or replacement of a passport, as well as payment, is done through the NIS website, and follows the same general procedures as for application submitted to the NIS within Nigeria (as detailed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 above) (Nigeria n.d.e). This same information is also provided on the website of the Nigerian Embassy in Washington DC (Nigeria n.d.f)

The website of the High Commission provides the following requirements for a first-time application for an e-Passport:

- Passport [a]pplication form to be completed online and printed out
- Payment [s]lip print out upon completion of [the] form online
- Acknowledgement [s]lip print out
- Photocopy of birth certificate from National Population Commission in Nigeria
- Photocopy of [the] [l]ocal [g]overnment identification [l]etter
- Two current passport-size photographs with white background. (Nigeria n.d.e)

The High Commission website also specifies that "the Machine Readable Passport (MRP)," described as "the old Nigerian Passport[,] is not acceptable as replacement or alternative for the [b]irth [c]ertificate and [the] [l]ocal [g]overnment [i]dentification [l]etter" (Nigeria n.d.e).

The High Commission website further explains that

[a]ll passport applicants are required to be physically present on the appointment date specified on the payment confirmation receipt. If the applicant cannot be present on the appointment day, the applicant may reschedule another appointment. Applicants will only be able to reschedule the appointment after the initial appointment day has passed. (Nigeria n.d.e)

The High Commission states that a police report and the number of the lost passport are requirements in the case of the replacement of a lost passport through the High Commission (Nigeria n.d.e). The High Commission adds that the person applying for the replacement of a lost passport "will be required to appear in person for biometric [capture]" (Nigeria n.d.e).

3.2 Passport Applications for Minors

The High Commission in Ottawa provides the following requirements for persons under the age of 18 who apply for an e-passport at the High Commission:

- Completed online application
- Acknowledgment [s]lip
- Payment [s]lip
- Copy of [the] child's birth certificate
- Letter of [c]onsent jointly signed by [the] child's both parents must be typed
- Photocopies of the parents' passports data page. One of the passport data pages must be a Nigerian [p]assport.
- Additional documents for single parents (proof of custody of the child/children)
- Child's current two passport-size photographs preferably with white background (Nigeria n.d.e)

The High Commission adds that the "[a]pplicant will be required to appear in person for biometric [capture]" (Nigeria n.d.e). In an answer to a frequently asked question on its website, the High Commission of Nigeria in London specifies that "because no passport is processed by proxy," even a baby must be present to apply for a passport (Nigeria n.d.g.).

3.3 Passport Applications for Persons Born in Canada

The High Commission in Ottawa indicates that the following specific documents are required for passport applications in the case of children born in Canada:

- Birth [c]ertificate and [s]tatement of [b]irth indicating the name(s) of the Nigerian parent(s)
- ...
- Letter of consent from the parent(s) stating support/approval of the application
- Photocopy of the data page of valid Nigerian [p]assport(s) of the Nigerian parent(s)
- Two (2) self-addressed return mailing envelopes. (Nigeria n.d.h)

3.4 Requirements for Collecting Passports at the High

Commission in Ottawa

The High Commission in Ottawa indicates that "an [a]pplicant will be required to present [the] pick-up slip and the expired Nigerian [p]assport before receiving the E-Passport" (Nigeria n.d.e). The same source states that a third party can collect the passport if the proxy presents a letter of authorization signed by the applicant and a valid ID card along with the pick-up slip and the expired passport (Nigeria n.d.e).

3.5 Fees

According to the NIS, the fees at all embassies, consulates and high commissions for a 32-page passport booklet is of US\$94 for passport holders between the ages of 18 and 59 years of age, US\$65 for passport holders under the age of 18 or of 60 years of age and above, and US\$125 for a 64-page passport booklet (Nigeria n.d.d). However, the website of the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, DC states that it charges passport fees of US\$106 for passport holders between the ages of 18 and 59 years of age and US\$77 for passport holders under the age of 18 or who are 60 years old and above (Nigeria n.d.f). The Nigerian Embassy in the US adds that it charges a penalty fee of US\$350, payable to the Embassy of Nigeria, to replace a lost passport (Nigeria n.d.f).

The NIS website explains that the "address verification and delivery charge" is only charged for passport applications within Nigeria (Nigeria n.d.b).

4. Appearance and Security Features

According to the Australia Country Information report, "the ePassport has an embedded microchip that stores the personal information of the holder" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.35). The High Commission of Nigeria in the UK states that the validity of the passport is of 5 years (Nigeria n.d.e).

Further information on the security features and appearance of the ePassport could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5. Mandatory Use of National Identification Number (NIN) for Passport Applications

For information on the NIN, see Response to Information Request NGA106187 of November 2018.

Sources report that, in August 2017, the NIS announced that from 1 January 2018, it would be necessary to provide a NIN to obtain or renew a passport (TheCable 1 Aug. 2017; Daily Post 1 Aug. 2017; The Eagle Online 2 Aug. 2017). Sources explain that the intent of using the NIN to obtain a passport was to harmonize the NIN and passport numbers, so that biometric information would not need to be collected both from the National Identification Management Commission (NIMC) and the NIS (TheCable 1 Aug. 2017; Daily Post 1 Aug. 2017; The Eagle Online 2 Aug. 2017). The Nigerian online newspaper the Daily Post explains that this condition would also apply to individuals residing outside of Nigeria (Daily Post 1 Aug. 2017).

However, Nigerian news sources report that the NIS comptroller general announced, in April 2018, that passports will "no longer" be issued without the NIN (TheCable 24 April 2018; Pulse 24 Apr. 2018). Other sources report that in September 2018, the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria decided that "enforcement" of the mandatory use of the NIN will begin in January 2019 (TheCable 19 Sept. 2018; *Daily Trust* 24 Sept. 2018). An editorial by the Nigerian newspaper *Daily Trust* states that this mandatory enforcement of the use of the NIN starting in January 2019 is "unrealistic" given the insufficient financial resources and the lack of enrolment centres throughout Nigeria (*Daily Trust* 24 Sept. 2018).

Further information on the implementation of the mandatory use of the NIN could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. Prevalence of Fraudulent Passports

The Australia Country Information report states that it is reportedly

neither difficult nor expensive to obtain a fraudulent driver's licence or other documents that can be used to obtain a genuine passport (marriage certificate, birth certificate or age declaration, letter of identification from an individual's local government etc.). Corruption at local NIS offices also enables the fraudulent production of genuine passports. (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.38)

Further information on the prevalence of fraudulent passports could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

For information on the prevalence of fraudulent documents in Nigeria, including passports, see Response to Information Request NGA106159 of August 2018.

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: Nigeria – Embassy in Washington, DC, High Commission in Ottawa, National Identity Management Commission, Nigeria Immigration Service.

Internet sites, including: Africa Independent Television; AllAfrica; BBC; ecoi.net; Economic Community of West African States; EU – Public Register of Travel and Identity Documents Online; Factiva; *The Guardian* (Nigeria); International Civil Aviation Organization; Keesing Reference Systems; KPMG; LawNigeria.com; Lawyard; Legit; *The Nation*; Nigerian Bulletin; Nigerian Monitor; NigeriaWorld; Nocs Consults; UN – Refworld; *Vanguard*.