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# Responses to Information Requests

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29 January 2020

### BDI106403.FE

Burundi: Requirements and procedure to obtain or replace a national identity card (carte nationale d'identité, CNI), including age-related restrictions; CNI appearance and security features (2016-January 2020)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

## 1. Requirements to Obtain a CNI

### 1.1 Age

According to Isôko, the information portal on administrative procedures of the Ministry of the Public Service, Labour and Employment of Burundi, the CNI is mandatory for all Burundians aged 16 and older (Burundi n.d.a). In an interview with the Research Directorate, an official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada explained that although the age of majority is 18, the CNI is issued to all Burundians who are at least 16 years old, upon presentation of the required documents (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020). The same source explained that applicants aged 16 and older do not need a driver's licence, an exemption from the governor of the province or legal authorization from either of their parents to obtain a CNI (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

## 1.2 Required Documents

According to the Isôko information portal, the following documents are required to obtain a CNI:

1. A copy or extract of the birth certificate
2. A household composition booklet [1]
3. A receipt confirming payment of file fees
4. Two passport photos [one on the CNI, the other kept on file by the communal office or city hall (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020)]. (Burundi n.d.a)

A World Bank report published in August 2018 on national identity cards in the East African Community explains the following:

[C]itizens need to submit supporting documents such as a birth certificate, two recent passport photos, medical assistance card, and affiliation card for *Mutuelle de la Fonction [p]ublique* (maternal health insurance scheme). No unique ID number is issued to the individual and no central electronic database is kept. (World Bank Aug. 2018, 20, italics in original)

According to another World Bank publication from 2017, “[s]ocial security national institute card[s], employment card[s], court clearance certificate[s], passport[s], driving license[s], military/police card[s] and po[ll]ing cards are also accepted” (World Bank 2017, 5).

## 1.3 Fees

According to the Isôko information portal, the fee for a CNI is 500 Burundian francs [approximately C\$0.35] (Burundi n.d.a).

## 2. Procedure

According to the Isôko information portal and the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, it is possible to obtain a CNI by following these steps:

1. According to the Isôko information portal, the applicant must [translation] “get an application form from the commune” (Burundi n.d.a). According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, applicants born in Bujumbura may also get a form from the commune administrator at city hall (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).
2. The applicant must bring the form to the colline [subdivision] where they live, complete it and have it signed by the chef de colline (Burundi n.d.a) or, if the applicant was born in Bujumbura, by the neighbourhood head at city hall (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).
3. The applicant must go back to the communal office (Burundi n.d.a) or to city hall with the completed file and all other required documents (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

4. According to the Isôko information portal, the applicant must [translation] “pay directly at the communal office when the file is submitted” (Burundi n.d.a). According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, it is also possible to provide a receipt confirming that the file fees have been paid beforehand at a bank, a communal office or city hall (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).
5. The application will be processed on the same day or next day, and the communal office [or city hall (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020)] creates an identification file that remains on site and issues the CNI (Burundi n.d.a; Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

However, according to the World Bank publication from August 2018, the CNI is issued by the police under the Ministry of Interior (World Bank Aug. 2018, 20).

### 3. Replacement

According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the requirements and procedures to replace a lost or stolen CNI are identical to those for the initial application with the additional step of applying for a certificate of loss with the police; the certificate is issued once a report is filed, and the certificate must be submitted to the communal office or city hall with the other required documents and the information from the original CNI (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020). The new CNI issued to the applicant bears the word “duplicata” (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

## 4. CNI Features

### 4.1 Appearance and Contents

According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the CNI is a card that is the length of an A4 page with a width of half an A4 page, which is folded in three, is light blue in colour and is written in Kirundi (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020). A World Bank project appraisal document from 2016 states that the CNI has a black and white photograph of the bearer (World Bank 22 Nov. 2016, 47). According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the photograph can be black and white or colour, and is placed in the inside of the CNI; the source stated that they were unable to confirm at what point colour photographs started being accepted (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020). The only specification related to colour in the section of the Isôko information portal on procedures for obtaining a Burundian passport is that the passport photograph must have a white background (Burundi n.d.b).

Sources state that the following information about the bearer is on the CNI:

- Surname and given name;
- Surname and given name of parents;
- Civil status;
- Occupation;
- Place of residence (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020; World Bank 22 Nov. 2016, 47).

According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, this information appears inside the CNI, in addition to the photograph and signature of the bearer (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the source added that the front of the card bears the card number, official stamp, date and place of issuance and the name of the commune administrator that issued the CNI (Burundi 8 Jan. 2020).

## 4.2 Security Features

According to an assistant to the Minister of the Interior, quoted in a 2013 Xinhua News Agency article, the CNI has [translation] “security deficiencies” and scammers were able to obtain several CNIs without being identified “due to a lack of appropriate technology” (Xinhua News Agency 28 Aug. 2013). An article published by the Burundian media group Iwacu about fraud in the 2015 elections alleges that some individuals, particularly members of the political party in power, had [translation] “four or five identity cards” (Iwacu 11 Aug. 2014). A 2018 article on Publications de presse burundaise (PPB), a Burundian news site, also reports statements from the General Commissioner of the Police for Air, Borders, and Foreigners (Police de l’air, des frontières et des étrangers, PAFE) indicating that [translation] “fraud ... is still an issue” with “classic” CNIs and that biometric CNIs would help “fight” fraud (PPB [May 2018]).

More recent information on CNI security features could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For further information on CNI security features, see Response to Information Request BDI105008 of December 2014.

## 5. Biometric CNIs

According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the biometric CNI was only a pilot project carried out in cooperation with the UNDP and the World Bank, in the capital of Bujumbura (Burundi 8 Jan. 2020). Xinhua News Agency also reported in 2013 that the biometric CNI pilot project would take place in Bujumbura (Xinhua News Agency 28 Aug. 2013). In 2014, the same source reported that, according to the Director General of Territorial Administration (Administration du territoire) in the Ministry of the Interior, 37,725 persons were registered as of 31 December 2013 and 6 million biometric CNIs would be issued up to 15 March 2015 (Xinhua News Agency 3 Jan. 2014). More recent information on how many biometric CNIs were issued could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The 2017 World Bank report states that Burundi launched a pilot project to issue machine-readable CNIs, but that “[t]he current status of this initiative is unclear” (World Bank 2017, 5). According to an

August 2018 report from the same source, as of 2017, “the [g]overnment of Burundi was planning the nationwide rollout of the smartcards with a machine-readable zone” (World Bank Aug. 2018, 20).

The official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada stated that the pilot project period for the biometric CNI is now over (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

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.

## Note

[1] According to the official from the Embassy of Burundi in Canada, the household composition booklet (cahier de ménage) is a document held by the head of the family that certifies family composition (Burundi 7 Jan. 2020).

## References

Burundi. 8 January 2020. Embassy of Burundi in Canada. Correspondence from an official to the Research Directorate.


Burundi. 7 January 2020. Embassy of Burundi in Canada. Interview with an official.


Burundi. N.d.a. Ministère de la Fonction publique, du Travail et de l'Emploi, Isôko - Portail d'informations sur les procédures administratives. “Fichier national de l'identification/carte nationale d'identité.” [Accessed 20 Dec. 2019]

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Xinhua News Agency. 3 January 2014. “Burundi : les cartes d’identité biométriques pourraient être délivrées avant les élections de 2015.” (Factiva) [Accessed 20 Dec. 2019]

Xinhua News Agency. 28 August 2013. “La mairie de Bujumbura désignée pour servir de phasepilote pour la distribution de la CNI biométrique.” (Factiva) [Accessed 20 Dec. 2019]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Burundi – Embassy of Burundi in Brussels.

**Internet sites, including:** Bujumbura – Mairie; Burundi – Commission électorale nationale indépendante, Embassy of Burundi in Brussels, Embassy of Burundi in Canada; ecoi.net; EU – Public Register of Authentic Travel and Identity Documents Online (PRADO); Freedom House; IGIHE; Keesing Technologies – Document Checker; Le Quotidien du peuple; UN – Refworld, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNDP; Voice of America – VOA Afrique.

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