

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

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.

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Philippines: The biometric passport, including its appearance and stored biometric data; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric passport within the Philippines; whether it can be replaced and renewed from abroad, including requirements and procedures

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Background

Sources indicate that the Philippines issued its first biometric passport, also known as an electronic passport or ePassport, in August 2009 (Philippines 6 Feb. 2011; *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 11 Aug. 2009). An August 2009 article in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* newspaper indicates that the first recipient of an electronic passport was the President of the Philippines and that a wider distribution of these passports was to be carried out over the following three months (ibid). However, the identity-document checking service operated by Keesing Reference Systems indicates that the ePassport was first issued in 2010 (Keesing n.d.a). Likewise, information posted on the websites of the embassies of the Philippines in three different countries indicates that they began accepting applications for electronic passports during 2010, in June 2010 in Washington, DC (Philippines 17 June 2010), in July 2010 in London (ibid. n.d.d), and in August 2010 in Ottawa (ibid. 22 Jan. 2013).

2. Validity

The biometric passport is valid for five years (ibid. 15 Apr. 2010; Keesing n.d.a). Sources also indicate that passports issued before the introduction of the biometric passport could still be used until they expire (Philippines 6 Feb. 2011; GMA News 11 Sept. 2009).

3. Appearance of Biometric Passports

An image of the cover of the Philippine electronic passport from the website of the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa is attached to this Response. (Philippines 22 Jan. 2013). According to the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC, the ePassport logo found on the cover of the passport is an internationally recognized symbol for an electronic passport (ibid. 6 Feb. 2011).

Keesing Reference Systems' document-checker service provides the following details on the features of the biometric passport issued by the Philippines (Keesing n.d.a):

- The date of expiry is listed on page 2 of the passport, the biodata page.
- The booklet measures 125 x 88 mm (4.9 x 3.5 in.) and has 44 pages.
- Page 2 has a clear holographic laminate that does not cover the whole page and is not sewn in.
- A photo is integrated and is repeated in microtext on the right side of the same page.
- The numbering consists of 7 digits preceded by 2 letters and which is displayed in laser print on page 2.
- The numbering is also laser perforated from page 3 to the back cover, and is both printed and in barcode on the back cover.

The document checker service also indicates that the passport's bio data page displays the name, gender, date of birth, place of birth, nationality and signature of the bearer, as well as the date of issue and the expiry date of the

passport, the place where the passport was issued and the issuing country and authority (ibid. [n.d.b](#)).

4. Stored Biometric Data

The website of the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC, states that

[the] Philippine ePassport ... contains an integrated photograph of the holder, a digitized secondary photo, and an electronic print of the holder's signature. It also features overt and hidden security features such as Invisible Personal Information (IPI), letterscreen, microprinting, and UV reactive ink, among others. (Philippines 6 Feb. 2011)

According to sources, the electronic passport includes a microchip that stores security features and personal data (ibid. 6 Feb. 2011; GMA News 11 Sept. 2009; *Philippine Daily Inquirer* 11 Aug. 2009). The Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC, indicates that the chip holds the photograph and personal information, including fingerprints, of the bearer, (Philippines 6 Feb. 2011). According to the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the chip "is fully interoperable which means that the chip can be read by border control officials in other countries using a passport chip reader" (11 Aug. 2009). According to the Embassy in Washington, the ePassport also has a machine readable zone, which can be read manually (Philippines 6 Feb. 2011).

5. Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a Biometric Passport within the Philippines

5.1 General Requirements

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) operates a passport application appointment system that allows for applicants to schedule a time, by phone or online, to appear in person so that the personal data and image of the applicant is captured (ibid. [n.d.e](#)). The applicant must present a completed application form, which may be downloaded from the DFA website (ibid.). As a verification of identity, it is necessary to present at least one government-issued picture identity document such as a driver's license, or other picture ID document such as an old employment or alumni card, and at least three other supporting documents from a list of accepted documents such as a voter ID, land title, income tax return or police clearance (ibid. [n.d.a](#)). The DFA also states that the applicant must also present a birth certificate issued by the National Statistics Office (NSO) or a certified copy issued by a Local Civil Registrar and authenticated by the NSO (ibid.). The DFA adds that a "Transcribed Birth Certificate from the LCR is required when entries in NSO Birth Certificate are blurred or unreadable" and that a Report of Birth must be "duly authenticated by [the] NSO if born abroad" (ibid.).

5.2 Service Locations

Sources indicate that those wishing to obtain a passport may apply at several offices located in the Metropolitan Manila area or at regional offices located throughout the country (GMA News 11 [Jan.](#) 2013; Philippines 12 Aug. 2012). Sources also indicate that, as of January 2013, regional consular offices were in the process of being transferred to new locations in shopping malls in order to provide better service delivery (GMA News 22 Aug. 2012; Philippines 21 June 2012).

In addition, the DFA also announced that it would no longer allow travel agencies to offer expedited passport application services, starting 31 December 2012 (GMA News 22 Aug. 2012; Philippines 12 Aug. 2012). However, this was delayed to 20 June 2013 to allow travel agencies to adapt to the change (ibid. 11 [Jan.](#) 2013). According to a DFA official, by paying extra fees to travel agencies some applicants could benefit from "special benefits" such as guaranteed same-day processing and dedicated express lanes, while those applying at DFA offices needed to queue for hours, with some arriving as early as midnight (ibid. 12 Aug. 2012).

5.3 Requirements for Married Women

The DFA states that married women applying for a passport must also provide a Marriage Contract or a certified and authenticated copy of a Marriage Contract issued by the NSO or a Local Civil Registrar (ibid. [n.d.a](#)). The DFA adds that a "[t]ranscribed Marriage Contract from the LCR is required when entries in NSO Marriage Contract are blurred or unreadable" and that "Report of Marriage duly authenticated by NSO" is necessary if married abroad (ibid.).

5.4 Requirements for Muslim Applicants

The DFA indicates that Muslim applicants must also provide a certificate of Tribal Affiliation from the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (ibid.). The DFA adds that converts who wish to use their Muslim name must provide an annotated birth certificate that bears the Muslim name and a certificate of conversion issued by the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos or Office on Muslim Affairs (ibid.).

5.5 Requirements for Minors

In the case of minors applying for passports, the DFA specifies the following additional general requirements:

- Personal appearance of either parent (if minor is a legitimate child) / of mother (if minor is an illegitimate child)

...

- Document of identity with photo, if minor is 8-17 years old (for first time and renewal applicant) such as School ID or Form 137 with readable dry seal
- For minor applicants who never attended school, a Notarized Affidavit of Explanation executed by either parent (if minor is a legitimate child) / by mother (if minor is an illegitimate child) detailing the reasons why the child is not in school, is required
- Marriage Certificate of minor's parents duly authenticated by NSO
- Notarized Affidavit of Support and Consent to travel from either parent (if minor is a legitimate child) / from mother (if minor is an illegitimate child)
- Original and photocopy of valid passport of the person traveling with the minor
- Photocopy of valid passport of either parent (if minor is a legitimate child) / of mother (if minor is an illegitimate child) or identification documents [...] (Philippines n.d.a)

The DFA website also provides details of other specific requirements for minors in various special situations, such as orphans or illegitimate children acknowledged by their fathers (ibid.).

5.6 Other Specific Requirements

The DFA website also provides details of specific requirements for passport applications in various other circumstances, such when there is no birth record, the applicant is the spouse of a foreign national, the applicant is an alien who has acquired Filipino citizenship or has a foreign sounding name, and for applicants with dual citizenship (ibid.)

6. Renewal of Passports Within the Philippines

When renewing a passport, the DFA requires an applicant to make a personal appearance during a confirmed appointment and to bring his or her most recent expiring or expired passport, as well as valid picture ID documents and documents in support of the applicant's identity taken from approved lists (ibid. n.d.b)

Depending on the type of passport being renewed, it may be necessary to also present the applicant's birth certificate, authenticated copy of his or her birth certificate or other proof of birth, as well as copies of pages from the previous passport (ibid.). In the case of the renewal of an electronic passport it is only necessary to present the original passport and copies of the first and last pages of the passport (ibid.).

7. Replacement of Passports Within the Philippines

In the case of a lost passport, an individual must make a personal appearance and submit the same documents as if making a passport application for the first time (Philippines n.d.c). In addition, the individual must present a Notarized Affidavit of Loss that details when, where and how the passport was lost, provide a police report if the passport is still valid and a photocopy of the passport's first page if possible (ibid.).

If a lost passport is found again, a passport is mutilated or damaged, or if the applicant has been issued a travel document, the applicant must submit a notarized affidavit describing the circumstances of these events and provide copies of the first and last pages of the passport, if possible (ibid.)

8. Renewal and Replacement of Passports from Outside the Philippines

It is possible to renew or replace a passport from outside the Philippines (ibid. 22 Jan. 2013; ibid. n.d.d.; ibid. n.d.f; ibid. n.d.g) The requirements and procedures to obtain, renew and replace a passport are the same as within the Philippines, with an applicant needing to make a personal appearance at an embassy or consulate of the country with similar documents required as within the Philippines (Philippines 22 Jan. 2013; ibid. n.d.d.; ibid. n.d.f; ibid. n.d.g). The Philippine Embassy in Ottawa indicates that an applicant in Canada must also present a copy of their Canadian immigration record (22 Jan. 2013). The Philippine Embassy in Washington, DC, similarly states that proof that an application for foreign citizenship, such as a resident alien card, must also be provided (n.d.f)

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

Internet Sites, including: Australia – Refugee Review Tribunal; eoi.net; Factiva; *Philippines Today*; *The Philippine Star*; Philippines – Embassy of the Philippines in Singapore, Teleserv; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld.

Attachment

Philippines. 22 January 2013. Philippine Embassy in Ottawa. "Passport Information." <http://philembassy.ca/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=81> [Accessed 22 Mar. 2013]

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