

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.

23 June 2011

UGA103762.E

Uganda: Requirements and procedures to obtain a driver's permit; information on the physical description of the driver's permit, including what information appears on it; whether a third party can replace a lost or expired driver's permit on behalf of the permit holder, or whether the permit holder must appear in person to renew or replace the driver's permit Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Procedures to obtain a driver's permit

In order to obtain a Ugandan driver's permit, individuals must go to both the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and to Face Technologies (*The Observer* 3 Sept. 2009; *New Vision* 12 July 2009; Uganda n.d.). Face Technologies is a South African company under contract with the Ugandan Ministry of Works and Transport "to design, print and supply computerised driving permits" (*New Vision* 16 June 2009; *The Observer* 21 June 2009). Media sources are inconsistent in the information they provide on when Face Technologies was contracted to issue driver's permits (*Daily Mirror* 25 June 2009; *The Observer* 21 June 2009; *New Vision* 16 June 2009; UGPulse 12 Mar. 2009; *New Vision* 8 Mar. 2009). The earliest year given among the sources consulted is 2003 (*Daily Mirror* 25 June 2009; *The Observer* 21 June 2009; *New Vision* 16 June 2009), and the latest is 2008 (*New Vision* 29 Mar. 2010). An article by the Ugandan daily newspaper *New Vision* quotes the Director of Transport at the Ministry of Works as saying that "the company's contract is being renewed every two years until it recovers its initial investment" (*New Vision* 16 June 2009).

According to media sources, as of July 2009, Face Technologies had offices in Kampala, Jinja, Mbale, Mbarara, Gulu and Fort Portal (*New Vision* 12 July 2009; *The Observer* 17 June 2009). However, a 17 June 2009 article from Ugandan daily *The Observer* notes that "Face Technologies was supposed to establish operations in at least 26 URA centres in various parts of the country," rather than just the six in which they were located. Information on whether other offices have been opened since July 2009 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to a URA brochure, which outlines the steps to obtain a driving permit, an applicant must be 18 years old and over to acquire a driving permit (Uganda n.d.). The brochure explains that before applying for a full driver's permit, applicants must acquire a learner's permit, which necessitates obtaining medical certification (ibid.). A learner's permit is valid for a renewable three-month period (ibid.). After completing driving lessons, the individual must take a driving test at a Police Inspectorate of Vehicles driving test office (ibid.). Successful completion of the driving test leads to a full driver's permit, which is valid for one or three years, depending on the fees paid (ibid.). The permit can also be renewed for one or three years after expiry (ibid.).

The brochure explains that 12 different classes of driver's permit exist, including some for commercial purposes (ibid.). Notably, the Group A class is used for motorcycles and the Group B class is used for "passenger vehicles up to 7 people and goods vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes" (ibid.). A *New Vision* article explains that, as well as being used for dual-purpose vehicles, Class B is used for beginners while noting that previously Class E and CM designations were used for beginners (29 Mar. 2010).

The brochure explains that once an individual has successfully completed the driving test, a Certificate of Competence will be sent to an appropriate URA licensing office (Uganda n.d.). To obtain a new full driver's permit, the individual must go to the URA licensing office and fill-out an application form and a medical form (ibid.). Information on what information is required on the forms could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate (ibid.).

According to the brochure, a medical examination is unnecessary if it was already taken during the learning period (ibid.). Fees must be paid at a designated bank and proof of payment, along with the completed forms and the learner's

permit, must be submitted to a tax payer service desk at a URA licensing office (ibid.). The applicant then goes to Face Technologies to obtain his or her computerized permit after paying the company a fee (ibid.).

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by an official at the Canadian High Commission in Kenya, the Canadian diplomatic mission responsible for Uganda, the official stated that

[o]ne must appear in person to have a photo, signature and fingerprints captured. On the first issuance, the permit owner must appear in person to sign for it and collect it. Issuance is done within 3 weeks after capturing the necessary info on [the] applicant. (Canada 17 June 2011)

Procedure to renew or replace a driver's permit

In an interview with the Research Directorate, an official at the Ugandan High Commission in Ottawa stated that an individual would need to go in person to replace or renew his or her permit (1 June 2011). However, the official at the Canadian High Commission in Kenya stated that while the applicant must ideally be in Uganda, "exceptions are made on a case by case basis" (Canada 17 June 2011). The URA brochure further states that an expired permit may be renewed for one to three years at any URA licensing office (Uganda n.d.). An application for a new permit must be made if a permit is not renewed within five years of being issued or renewed (ibid; *New Vision* 29 Mar. 2010).

According to the brochure, the same steps required to obtain a full driver's permit are necessary to renew a permit (Uganda n.d.). The same procedure also applies when obtaining a duplicate of a lost or defaced card (ibid.). However, a police report and a copy of a notice placed in a newspaper at least two weeks prior to the request, as well as an application form to obtain a replacement permit, must also be presented (ibid.).

According to the Canadian official "[the] applicant is expected to appear in person to sign and collect the permit although exceptions are made, depending on applicants' circumstances, to have someone else collect the permit". The permit is issued within three weeks, the official explained (ibid.). The official added that while a third party can replace or renew a permit on someone else's behalf in exceptional circumstances, the renewal application must be filled out by the permit holder (ibid.). The official also noted that "no new photos are taken even when one is renewing a permit after 3 yrs" (ibid.).

Renewal and conversion of cancelled version of driver's permit

According to media reports, the government stopped using an older version of the driver's permit as of August 2009 (*The Observer* 3 Sept. 2009; *New Vision* 8 Mar. 2009). *The Observer* describes the older permit as a "booklet" (*The Observer* 3 Sept. 2009).

A *New Vision* article states that "[t]he mandatory acquisition, renewal and conversion of driving permits under the Traffic and Road Safety Act of 1998 is leaving many applicants frustrated due to lack of clear steps to follow" and that "applicants for both new computerised permits and those seeking to convert the old ones are still ignorant on what is required of them" (29 Mar. 2010). It noted that permits "that had been issued in 2005 were to be renewed for three years," which means that paper driver's permits would no longer be converted by the end of 2010 (*New Vision* 29 Mar. 2010). *The Observer* reports that, despite the fact that authorities had said that it would be possible to renew or convert older driver's permits, police were issuing fines to individuals driving without the computerized permits (3 Sept. 2009).

According to *The Observer*, Face Technologies was largely the cause of delays in obtaining the computerized permits because of excessive processing times (*The Observer* 3 Sept. 2009). *New Vision* also notes that "[a]pplicants have fallen prey to fraudsters by paying for the renewal of paper driving permits with Uganda Revenue Authority only to find that they are either expired or forged" (29 Mar. 2010). Other media reports also note the existence of forged driving permits (UGPulse 12 Mar. 2009; *New Vision* 8 Mar. 2009).

Description of a driver's permit

According to the Canadian official, the current driver's permit has been in use since 2005 (Canada 17 June 2011). The Uganda High Commission official stated that this driver's permit is similar in shape and size to a business card and is laminated (Uganda 1 June 2011). It should display the name and photograph of the bearer, the date of issue, the permit class, the expiry date, the bearer's birth date and a barcode number (ibid.). According to the Canadian official, other information indicated on the permit includes the issuing authority, restrictions concerning the driver and vehicle, the permit class and the date the permit was first issued (Canada 17 June 2011). In addition, the official stated that an ID number that contains the owner's date of birth is also present (ibid.). More precisely, the official added: "the first 6 digits of the ID number on the driver's license are the two digits of the year of birth, followed by the two digits for the month and two digits of the day of birth" (ibid.).

The Canadian official also provided a detailed description of the driver's permit (Canada 17 June 2011). The official stated that the permit is laminated and displays a second holographic photograph (ibid.). In addition,

[s]everal yellow/gold circles are imbedded in the paper background with the word "Uganda" written within the top edge of each circle, which can be seen by titling the permit slightly away from you. The word "Uganda" runs vertically in blue and red intervals - blue running up and red down. These can be seen under florescent light. On the right hand dark yellow circle there is an image that looks like the head of the crested crane - the national symbol of Uganda. (ibid.)

However, according to *The Observer*, "a closer scrutiny of the samples of the driving permits made in Uganda show a very basic job with mere lamination of paper," rather than the use of biometric and smart card technology (3 Sept. 2009). *The Observer* adds that the newer cards have also been forged (*The Observer* 3 Sept. 2009). Information

corroborating the allegations that the new format of driver's permit has been forged was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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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UGPulse. 12 March 2009. "Uganda People News: Police Arrests Drivers with Forged Permits." <<http://www.ugpulse.com/articles/daily/news.asp?about=Police+arrests+drivers+with+forged+permits+&ID=8769>> [Accessed 31 May 2011]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Canada Border Services Agency was unable to provide information for this Response.

Internet Sites, including: allAfrica.com; Automobile Association of Uganda; documentchecker; *The East African*; European Country of Origin Information Network; *East African Business Week*; Face Technologies; Factiva; Parliament of Uganda; *Sunrise*; Uganda Driving Standard Agency; Uganda Revenue Agency; Uganda - Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ministry of Works and Transport; Uganda Online; United Nations Refworld.

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