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Nigeria: Passport issuance procedures within Nigeria
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In a 27 July 2005 personal interview with the Research Directorate, a minister from the Nigeria High Commission in Ottawa provided the following information with regard to passport issuance procedures within Nigeria:

Documents provided for issuance of passports are the same for all states. Applicants must provide a Birth Certificate or Age Declaration, a National Identity Card or Letter of Identification from the local government of origin. However, the National Identity Card, which was recently introduced, is still not widely used because only a small percentage of the population has it.

Married women do not need the written consent of their husbands to apply for a passport and must provide a copy of their marriage certificate if they want their married name reflected in their passports. Only women need to submit a copy of their marriage certificate because the marriage certificate will indicate their married and maiden names.

If the applicant is under the age of majority, he or she must provide the same documents as above plus a letter of consent from their father or both their father and mother. In the case where the father is deceased a letter of consent from the mother will suffice.

Applications in Nigeria must be made in person. A passport photo will be taken at the time of application.

The applicant must retrieve the passport in person, although exceptions to this requirement can be made, when adequate arrangements and authority are in place, for example in the case of young children, the elderly, or disabled people.

The minister also provided the following information on birth certificates and declaration of age:

Notes on birth certificates

Birth certificates in Nigeria are not as sacrosanct as they are in Canada due to the different level of development and awareness. However, this situation is slowly changing. As people begin to acquire birth certificates from the National Population Commission, it is not uncommon to see that their recorded year of birth is much earlier than the issuance date shown on the birth certificates. The National Population Commission is the Agency of government responsible for issuance of birth certificates. It is also empowered to issue birth certificates based on affidavits from authorized institutions for persons without a proper record of birth.

Notes on declaration of age

Declaration of age is usually made in a court of law or before a commissioner for oaths to document the birth of an individual. It usually takes place long after a person's birth, which was initially undocumented. In order to receive a declaration of age, a person is required to have his or her parent or a close relative who was aware of the birth of the applicant, sign an affidavit confirming the identity of the applicant and his or her date and place of birth (Nigeria 27 July 2005).

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, women do not legally require the permission of a male relative to obtain a passport (28 Feb. 2005).

In an interview with representatives of the Danish Immigration Service and the British Home Office during their joint fact-finding mission to Nigeria, Nick Newman of the Visa Section at the British High Commission in Abuja said that Nigerian passports are issued at offices in each state and are usually processed within a few days of the application being made but may take as long as three weeks (Denmark, Jan. 2005, 67).

Canada's Deputy High Commission in Lagos explained in correspondence to the Research Directorate that although the Passport Office has advised them that identification is required when individuals apply for a passport, the Commission's Nigerian staff argue that this is not true (Canada 26 July 2005). According to the Nigerian staff at the Canadian High Commission, Nigerians need only complete a form conveying very basic information, pay a fee and sit for a photo; "[n]ot one piece of identification is required" (ibid.).

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.

References

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Nigeria. 27 July 2005. Nigeria High Commission, Ottawa. Personal interview with a minister.

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