



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Nigeria: Features of the Nigerian driver's licence; whether the licence has two pictures of the cardholder; whether errors occur on the licence and if so, whether issuing clerks correct them; whether an applicant must have a residence address in the state that is issuing the licence; whether applicants are able to bypass application procedures by paying a bribe to issuing authorities (2004 - 2007)

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Driver's licence features

In 31 March 2005 correspondence to the Research Directorate, a representative of the Lagos State Government Ministry of Transportation indicated that the Nigerian driver's licence includes the following features: class of the licence (i.e., A, B, C, etc.); personal data of applicant, such as name, address, blood group, facial marks, sex, date of birth, height, thumb print and signature; number of replacement cards; place of issue; date of issue; date of expiry; bar code; authorized signature; applicant passport photograph; security features, such as a hologram, coat of arms, seal and "laminated"; and licence number, indicating local government of issue.

The following information is based on samples of driver's licences shown to the Research Directorate during a 25 July 2007 in-person interview with an official at Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa.

The driver's licence is in the form of a card that measures approximately 9.5 centimetres by 6 centimetres (Nigeria 25 July 2007). The card has a laminate coating and has rounded edges (*ibid.*). On the front of the card, the Nigerian coat of arms appears in the background in the centre (*ibid.*). Oval holograms also appear on the card, depending on the angle at which it is hit by the light (*ibid.*).

Across the top of the front of the card is a green stripe, in which the words "Federal Republic of Nigeria" (first line) and "national drivers licence" (second line) appear (*ibid.*). Below the green line is a second stripe, which is either blue, for private driver's licences, or red, for commercial driver's licences (*ibid.*). Within the blue or red stripe appears the driver's licence number to the left, the word "private" or "commercial" in the centre, and the licence class (i.e., A, B, C, etc. up to J) on the right (*ibid.*). According to the Official, "commercial" licences are issued to people who drive commercial vehicles, such as taxis or buses (*ibid.*).

Below the coloured stripes at the top of the driver's licence, the following information can also be found: issuing state of the current licence; issuing state of the holder's first licence; issue date; expiry date; licence holder's name, address, blood group, facial marks, sex, whether he or she wears glasses, date of birth and height (*ibid.*). The number of replacement cards and number of licence renewals is also included with the licence holder's personal information (*ibid.*).

The picture of the licence holder is on the left side of the front of the card and a smaller "ghost" image of the holder is found in the bottom right corner (ibid.). A thumbprint of the licence holder appears above his or her "ghost" image (ibid.).

At the bottom of the card, below the cardholder's picture, is a bar code (ibid.). The date of first issue of the licence is found below this bar code (ibid.). The cardholder's signature appears to the right of the bar code (ibid.). To the right of the signature (and to the left of the cardholder's "ghost" image) is the "authorized signatory" (Nigeria 25 July 2007). Below the "authorized signatory" at the bottom right of the card is the word "endorse" followed by several numbers (e.g., (1), (2), (3), (4), etc.) (ibid.). According to the Official, this refers to the verifications that are completed by the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) office prior to issuing a licence (ibid.).

On the back of the driver's licence, there is a non-magnetic brown strip across the top (ibid.). The back of the licence provides a description of the driver's licence classes (i.e., class "A" through "J"), as well as an index for the acronyms that appear on the front of the card (e.g., "BG: Blood Group") (ibid.).

Errors on driver's licences

According to the Official at the Nigerian High Commission, it is possible for there to be mistakes on the Nigerian driver's licence due to human error (25 July 2007). The Official indicated that in some cases, a licence holder's last name may appear as his or her first name, and first name as last name (Nigeria 25 July 2007). If a person's name is too long to fit on the driver's licence card, an initial may be used for the middle name (ibid.).

The Official indicated that it is possible to have errors on the driver's licence corrected by issuing clerks; however, some licence holders do not bother having errors corrected because it is not important to them (i.e., they are still able to drive in Nigeria regardless of whether there are mistakes on their licence) (ibid.).

Residence address

During the 25 July 2007 in-person interview, the Official at the Nigerian High Commission in Ottawa said that the Nigerian driver's licence can be used anywhere in Nigeria, regardless of the state in which it was issued. Driver's licences are issued by the FRSC, which is a federal organization (Nigeria 25 July 2007). In general, the residential address on the driver's licence is in the state in which the licence was issued (ibid.).

When asked whether a person whose permanent address is in one state (e.g., Lagos State) could apply for or renew a driver's licence in another state (e.g., Edo State), the Official indicated that the applicant could use his or her temporary address in the second state (i.e., Edo State) to apply for or renew the licence (ibid.). The Official noted that otherwise, the applicant may be asked to apply for the licence in the state of his or her permanent address (e.g., Lagos State) (ibid.).

During a 23 July 2007 telephone interview, the Official indicated that it is not necessary to change the residential address on the driver's licence if the licence holder moves (e.g., from Lagos State to Edo State). The licence holder's residential address can be changed when he or she applies to have the licence renewed (Nigeria 23 July 2007). Driver's licence renewals can be completed by mail; however, first applications for a driver's licence must be done in person at an FRSC office in Nigeria (ibid.).

Fraud and corruption

According to a November 2006 report on Nigeria-related financial crime by Chatham House, "Europe's leading foreign policy think-tank" (Chatham House n.d.), the Nigerian driver's licence is a document that is "easily and commonly forged in Nigeria" (ibid. Nov. 2006, 34). The report notes that forged identity documents, such as the driver's licence, are "routinely bought by many Nigerians and expatriates" (ibid., 14).

A 2006 International Organization for Migration (IOM) report indicates that it is "relatively easy" to obtain genuine identity documents using false or incorrect information "as long as one is willing to pay" (IOM 2006, 23). The report also notes that even when corruption is not involved, the quality control of identity documents is "weak" due to inadequacies in the country's public administration (ibid.).

Cited in a 9 July 2007 article in the Lagos-based *Vanguard*, the Corps Marshal of Nigeria's FRSC similarly noted a weakness in the country's public administration, indicating that due to a lack of infrastructure, authorities at the state level (i.e., vehicle inspection officers) are not able to verify the identity of driver's licence applicants. The Corps Marshal stated that

[i]f you go out today to get a driver's licence, for a fee of six thousand naira [approximately CAD 49 (XE.com 24 July 2007)], you get a driver's licence, whether you are blind, lame, deaf. Nobody verifies you. (*Vanguard* 9 July 2007)

According to the October 2004 Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's *Report from a Fact-Finding Trip to Nigeria (Abuja, Kaduna and Lagos)*, Nigeria "struggles" with corruption among its civil servants and has problems with "widespread" forgeries of official identity documents. The report also states that

[o]btaining genuine documents issued correctly, but containing dubious or false information, is comparatively easy in Nigeria. Government authorities seldom have routines for verifying the information going into official documents. Changing names is also a relatively easy procedure, simply done through the publication of an affidavit in a newspaper, and subsequently new official documents can be issued under the new name. (Norway Oct. 2004, 21)

Introduction of National Identity Card

News sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicate that Nigeria has created a new National Identity Card (*Daily Trust* 29 Jan. 2007; *This Day* 22 Mar. 2007; ibid. 8 May 2006). The new identity card apparently incorporates information from several identity documents, including the driver's licence (ibid.; ibid. 22 Mar. 2007). The card could eventually be used as a driver's licence in Nigeria (*Daily Champion* 11 Aug. 2005; *Daily Trust* 29 Jan. 2007). By March 2007, the National Identity Card had been introduced in 24 of Nigeria's 36 states (*This Day* 22 Mar. 2007). Information on the introduction of the identity card in Nigeria's other states could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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