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RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Nigeria: Whether a person can apply for, renew or replace a Nigerian passport while residing in a foreign country and, if so, the procedure and documents required; details regarding the passport photo; whether a woman's married or maiden name appears on the passport; whether the passport indicates that it is new, a replacement or a renewal; whether Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) passports are issued in Nigeria and, if so, since when
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The following information was provided by an officer of the High Commission of Nigeria in Ottawa, in 24 January 2005 correspondence to the Research Directorate.

Nigerians living abroad are expected to direct applications for replacement or renewal of their passports to the nearest Nigerian Embassy, [High Commission or Consulate].

Passports cannot be issued in Nigeria to persons living abroad unless the applicant is in Nigeria at the time of application. In this case, the applicant must be physically present to apply for, and receive the passport.

In Nigeria, [a] live photo of a passport applicant is taken digitally. However, outside the country where Nigerians live in great distances to the capital, pictures are scanned after the applicant has complied with all stipulated conditions.

The same conditions required for obtaining a passport are applied to married women. A married woman may obtain her passport either in her maiden or married name. If she is applying in her married name, she will be required to submit a copy of the marriage certificate or certificate of registration of marriage. The same rules apply to traditional marriage, which is recognized by law.

If a passport is renewed or replaced, there will always be an annotation on the observation page. Only a first passport will not have an annotation.

A passport replaced due to loss of the previous passport may or may not [sic] have an annotation.

ECOWAS passports are issued to all West African citizens, including Nigerians, to facilitate travel [...] within the West African region. The ultimate aim is to use the passport for travel [...] to all countries.

With respect to whether a person can apply for, renew or replace a Nigerian passport while residing in a foreign country, an official of the Canadian High Commission in Ghana corroborated the information provided above (27 Jan. 2005). The official explained that "Nigerians living abroad must have their passports issued by a Nigerian embassy," adding that passports are no longer issued by proxy from a passport office in Nigeria (Canadian High Commission 27 June 2005). As well, it was her understanding that passport photos must be taken at the embassy (ibid).

The official from the Canadian High Commission in Ghana also explained that a woman's married name appears on her passport once she provides a marriage certificate or affidavit to confirm that she is married, regardless of whether it was a civil or traditional marriage (ibid). She also explained that replacement or renewal passports are identified as such (ibid). She added, however, that since there is no national passport database in Nigeria, passport offices have no way to verify whether a passport has previously been issued to the same person (ibid.).

Regarding whether Nigeria issues ECOWAS passports, and if so, since when, the representative from the Canadian High Commission believes that they have been in circulation for the past five years (ibid). Although information confirming the release date of the Nigerian ECOWAS passports could not be found, the Federal Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa reported that the Nigerian version of the passport was presented to President Olusegun Obasanjo in December 2000, during the ECOWAS Summit in Bamako, Mali (2 May 2002). The Federal Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa was to work with the Nigerian Immigration Service towards adopting the passport for use in Nigeria (Nigeria 2 May 2002).

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.

References

Canadian High Commission in Ghana, Accra. 27 January 2005.
Correspondence sent by an official.

Nigeria High Commission, Ottawa. 24 January 2005. Correspondence sent by a consular officer, on behalf of the High Commissioner.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. 2 May 2002. Federal Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa. "Activities of the Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa."
<http://www.nopa.net/Cooperation_and_Integration_in_Africa/messages/7.shtm> [Accessed 4 Feb. 2005]

Xinhua News Agency [Beijing]. 20 May 2002. "Nigeria to Start Issuing ECOWAS Passport on September 1."
<http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-05/20/content_401488.htm> [Accessed 3 Feb. 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

Unsuccessful attempts to contact the Nigeria High Commission, London, and the Embassy of Nigeria, Washington, within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet Sources: AllAfrica.com, *The Guardian* (Lagos), Nigeria Business Info, Nigeria High Commission, UK; Nigeria High Commission; Nigeria Consulate, New York; Nigeria Embassy, Washington; *This Day* (Lagos), *Vanguard* (Lagos).

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