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.

CMR104831.E

Cameroon: Requirements and procedures for obtaining passports in Cameroon and abroad (2013-March 2014)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Passport Formats and Types

A March 2013 document posted on the website of the Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, DC, indicates that Cameroonian citizens may have a “regular or hand-filled, non-machine readable passport [that] is still valid for a few years,” but encourages citizens to obtain a machine-readable passport (Cameroon 5 Mar. 2013).

Cameroonian media sources indicate that the biometric passport was officially introduced in August 2013 (Cameroon Tribune 20 Aug. 2013; Ouest littoral 22 Aug. 2013; Le Soir 23 Aug. 2013). The passport reportedly conforms to the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ibid.; Cameroon Tribune 20 Aug. 2013). The Cameroon Tribune reports that, according to the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic, old format passports that have already been issued will continue to be valid until their expiry date (ibid.).

Sources indicate that the Larue [also known as De La Rue] company is responsible for the printing and production of the passports (ibid.; Le Soir 23 Aug. 2013). Biometric passports can reportedly be produced at a rate of 1,300 a day (ibid.; Le Jour 6 Sept. 2013). However, on 6 September 2013, the Cameroonian newspaper Le Jour reported that passport production had been stopped for five days because the printers had malfunctioned and had yet to be repaired.

Two facsimiles of Cameroonian passports, one issued in 2006, and one issued in August 2013, are attached to this Response.

Sources indicate that, in addition to ordinary passports, Cameroon issues diplomatic passports and service passports (Cameroon Tribune 20 Aug. 2013; Mboa News 8 Jan. 2013).
2. Requirements and Procedures for Obtaining Passports
2.1 Outside Cameroon

According to instructions on the websites of the Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, DC (Cameroon 5 Mar. 2013), and the High Commission of Cameroon in Ottawa (ibid. n.d.a), applicants for a Cameroonian machine-readable passport must provide the following identity documents:

- four passport-sized photographs;
- their original birth certificate;
- their original Cameroonian national identity card;
- their old passport (either a machine-readable version or an older version), or, if the passport has been lost, a police report confirming the loss;
- a marriage certificate, if they are a married woman;
- a document attesting to their residence status in their country of residence.

The high commission in Ottawa specifies that a computerized national identity card is required (ibid.).

The high commission in Ottawa also indicates that applicants must provide

- two photocopies of their consular card, which can be obtained through the high commission;
- their fingerprints and their height, which must be provided in person at the high commission (ibid.).

The embassy in Washington indicates that applicants must also provide

- a photocopy of their US-issued driver's licence or state ID, if available; and
- proof of profession, such as a work ID or student ID, and certification from their school or employer confirming that they are currently employed or enrolled as a student (ibid. 5 Mar. 2013).

The embassy in Washington also provides the following instructions for applicants who do not have an original birth certificate:

If an original birth certificate is not available when preparing a Machine-Readable Passport application, please obtain the following set of documents from the town or city hall of the area where your ORIGINAL BIRTH CERTIFICATE was established, PRIOR TO SUBMITTING THE PASSPORT APPLICATION FILE FOR PROCESSING at the Embassy in Washington, D.C.:

- A Certified True Copy of the Birth Certificate
- A Certificate of Conformity and Existence of the birth certificate: this document shall confirm:
  - on the one hand, that a leaf of the original birth certificate exists in the original birth certificate register where the birth was originally registered, and is available within the archives of the issuing town or city hall,
  - and on the other hand, that the aforementioned certified true copy is identical to the leaf of birth certificate kept in the original birth certificate register.

Also, the set (Certified True Copy + Certificate of Conformity and Existence) must be dated less than 3 months at the time when one submits their passport application in Washington, DC. (ibid.).

The high commission in Ottawa indicates that applications for machine readable passports must be made in person, by appointment with the consular service (ibid. n.d.b). It also notes that applicants who are replacing a lost passport "will be invited to the Mission for an
interview in order to ensure that they are bona fide Cameroon nationals" (ibid.). The embassy in Washington also states that passport applications must be made in person and by appointment (ibid. 5 Mar. 2013). It states that applicants should expect a minimum wait time of one month before receiving their passport, but that the process can take up to five months to be completed (ibid.).

2.2 In Cameroon

The Cameroon Tribune indicates that a biometric passport can be delivered two days after the application is approved (21 Aug. 2013). However, the Cameroonian newspaper Ouest littoral reported in August 2013 that two applicants said they had been waiting one for 45 days and the other for more than a month to receive their biometric passports (22 Aug. 2013). Sources indicate that the passport costs 53,000 Central African francs (XAF) [C$126 (XE 19 Mar. 2014)] (Cameroon Tribune 21 Aug. 2013; Ouest littoral 22 Aug. 2013). Further information on the requirements and procedures for obtaining a passport in Cameroon could not be found 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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References


Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The High Commission of Cameroon in Ottawa did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. Attempts to contact the Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, DC, were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Australia – Refugee Review Tribunal; Avocats sans frontières-Cameroun; Cameroon – Embassy of Cameroon in the Netherlands, Portail du gouvernement, Présidence de la République; Camerounradio.com; ecoi.net; Interpol; *Journal du Cameroun*; Stratfor; United Nations – Refworld; United States – Department of State.

**Attachments**


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