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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		20 October 2008
About the Board	<b>BTN102941.E</b>	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Bhutan: Procedures to follow and documents required to obtain a Bhutanese passport; whether passports are issued from missions abroad (such as from Bhutan's mission in New York) to people living in Bhutan	
Employment		
Legal and Policy	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
References		
Publications	<b>Application procedures and documentation</b>	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	Information regarding the procedures to follow and the documents required to obtain a Bhutanese passport is available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Bhutan at < <a href="http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=36">http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=36</a> >. According to the website, applicants for a passport must go in person to the passport section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bhutan or to a diplomatic mission abroad (Bhutan n.d.a). Applicants for an "ordinary" passport must present the following:	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions	Application form completely filled. ...	
Forms		
Statistics	Passport-size photograph affixed to the application form. The photograph must not be more than six months old, 45 mm x 35 mm with the facial image taking up 70-80% of the photograph, taken with a white background and without border.	
Research		
Research Program		
National Documentation Packages	Fee of Nu. 1000/- [1 Bhutanese Ngultrum = \$0.02 Canadian dollars (Oanda 9 Sept. 2008)].	
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets	A photocopy of citizenship identity card or identity documents issued by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, along with the original documents for verification purposes.	
Responses to Information Requests	Security Clearance Certificate (SCC) from the Royal Bhutan Police. (Bhutan n.d.a)	
Recent Research	Applicants for a new "diplomatic and official" passport are asked to provide the following:	
Media Centre		
News	Application and release form completely filled. ...	
Information Sheets		
Media Relations	Passport-size photograph affixed to the application form. The photograph must not be more than six months old, 45 mm x 35 mm with the facial image taking up 70-80% of the photograph, taken with a white background and without border.	
Transparency		
Completed Access to Information	A photocopy of citizenship identity card issued by the Ministry of Home & Cultural	

## Requests

## Proactive Disclosure

Affairs, along with the original documents for verification purposes.

An official letter of request for issue of passport from the Head of Organization/Department/Ministry concerned, stating the purpose of travel. Where necessary clearance from the Royal Civil Service Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall also be required. (ibid.)

On 3 March 2006, the passport section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began issuing machine readable passports (Bhutan 6 Mar. 2006). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website indicates that the passport section collects applicants' fingerprints the first time that they apply for a machine readable passport and that the passport section reserves the right to request additional supporting documentation (ibid. n.d.a).

### Children's passports

Prior to the introduction of the machine readable passports, children could be included on their parents' passports; however, children must now obtain passports in their own names (ibid n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c). Passports issued before 3 March 2006 remained valid for parents until 31 December 2007 even if children were included, but children had to obtain their own passports (ibid.). To apply for a child's passport (for a person under the age of 18 years), the following documents must be presented:

Passport-size photograph affixed to the application form. The photograph must not be more than six months old, 45 mm x 35 mm with the facial image taking up 70-80% of the photograph, taken with a white background and without border.

Application fee of Nu. 800/-.

A photocopy of birth certificate and identity document issued by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs for newborn up to fourteen years and identity card for fifteen up to eighteen years, along with original documents for verification purposes. This shall not apply to newborn children up to one year of age born to Bhutanese parents in a foreign country. In such cases, the application for a passport shall be submitted to the nearest Bhutanese diplomatic or consular mission along with the copies of the birth certificate and passports of the parents.

A Security Clearance Certificate (SCC) from the Royal Bhutan Police for children age fifteen ... years and above.

Both the parents or the child's legal guardian(s) must be present when applying for a passport. In the absence of one of the parents or guardian(s), then the second parent's or guardian's signed letter of consent [is required for] ... the issuance of passport to the child. Only one parent may apply in the event of having sole custody of the child but legal document referring to the custody must be provided. If both parents are deceased the legal guardianship may apply for the passport for the child.

Documentary evidence of the child's relationship with his/her parents or guardians must be produced in the form of a birth certificate, adoption papers or other documents (Marriage Certificate/Divorce Deed etc.) as may be relevant.

Copy of parents' or guardian's citizenship identity card or identity documents along with the original documents for verification purposes.

Evidence of sole custody must be produced in the event of being a single parent, single guardian or if one of the parents has passed away. (Bhutan n.d.b)

In a telephone conversation with the Research Directorate on 11 September 2008, a representative of the Consulate General of the Kingdom of Bhutan in New

York corroborated the information indicating that security certificates are required for children over 15 years of age.

### **Renewal of passports**

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, the older generation of handwritten passports were renewable until 31 December 2007, but are no longer valid (Bhutan n.d.c). The new machine readable passports are valid for five years and are not renewable (ibid.). An individual whose passport expires must apply for a new one (ibid.).

### **Passports issued at overseas missions**

According to the website, machine readable passports are issued only at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thimphu (ibid.). Overseas applicants may file an application at a Bhutanese diplomatic mission, but the processing time is longer (ibid.). The Ministry is reportedly investigating whether it will be possible to issue machine readable passports abroad in the future (ibid.).

The Representative of the Consulate General of the Kingdom of Bhutan in New York stated that since individuals must apply in person, it is not possible for a person in Bhutan to obtain a passport issued at an overseas mission such as the one in New York (Bhutan 11 Sept. 2008).

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**

Bhutan. 11 September 2008. Consulate General of the Kingdom of Bhutan in New York. Telephone interview with a representative.

\_\_\_\_\_. 6 March 2006. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Notification."  
<<http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=107>> [Accessed 9 Sept. 2008]

\_\_\_\_\_. N.d.a. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "How to Apply for a Passport."  
<<http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=88>> [Accessed 9 Sept. 2008]

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<<http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=89>> [Accessed 9 Sept. 2008]

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<<http://www.mfa.gov.bt/index.php?categoryid=103>> [Accessed 9 Sept. 2008]

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