THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control

Public awareness on the e-Immigration and e-Passport Systems: Application Process, Benefits, Challenges and Emerging Issues

UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE

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1.0 Preamble

1.1 Within the last three years, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the guidance of His Excellency the President of Uganda and as part of the wider e-Government agenda, we have embarked on efforts to improve Passport service delivery, immigration and citizenship services through automation.

1.2 Immigration has been seen as a positive factor in the development of Uganda and is at the forefront of Uganda's development thinking and hence various efforts are underway to harness its potential so that migration is managed correctly for it to benefit Uganda, the migrant, the citizens. Hence our duty as Ugandans' is to define and operation responsible service delivery systems that benefit all concerned.

1.3 The Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control is steadily building the momentum to become a model of excellence in the delivery of passport, immigration and citizenship services, it is proving adept in servicing Uganda's current migration needs and will even become a more agile organization to serve the country and its visitors.

1.4 DCIC is galvanizing its efforts by refocusing resources to the frontline by establishing an ICT enabled service delivery platform in order to build its capacity for delivering consistent, continuous high-quality service, laying the necessary groundwork for making necessary changes in it structures for service delivery and building alliances through inter-agency systems integration required to complete the service delivery cycle.

1.5 In this regard, DCIC remains committed to furthering the interoperability and inter-connected service development plan of Government as this is becoming the normal way to provide services for operational delivery. The intent is to do more together, more efficiently and more flexibly.

1.6 Fellow Ugandans, our dear resident foreign nationals and intending visitors to the republic of Uganda, we call upon you, please, embrace the e-Government policy direction and for this reason, we come here today to share with you the milestones thus far put in place in our quest to serve you better while at the same time contribute to the social economic development of Uganda.

1.7 The Ministry of Internal Affairs has many initiatives on e-government across the MDAs, and the services offered by the DCIC (the border management, passport issuance and citizenship) are online. I remember some of you when we were launching the online application of e-passports on 19 December 2019. We have so far issued 83,233 as 27 January, 2019 in just one months compared to the previous monthly statistic of about 15, 000 passports in a similar period in 2018 when we were using manual applications.

1.8 Permit me now to call upon the Director, Citizenship and Immigration Control to come and give you the detailed status of implementation of the different services that we are providing in the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC).

2.0 The e-Passport Service

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The e-Passport was launched on the 9th November 2018 in an effort to migrate from the ordinary Machine-readable passport to the electronically supported MRPS which is a requirement for the ICAO member states like we are. By Mid-2018, more than 150 countries had migrated to this type of technology and we are glad that we have joined the rest of the world.

2.1.2 This provided us an opportunity to review our business processes and have since rolled out a fully automated passport service delivery process which is streamlined for efficiency, effectives and very transparent.

2.1.3 Since its launch, we issued 212,000 passports of which 21,146 have been issued through the fully automated platform recently launch barely a month ago.

2.2 The Benefits;

2.2.1 The e-Passport System has given us an opportunity to totally upgrade the travel document with additional visual and electronic security features to combat identity fraud. We are confident that this is restoring and strengthen the national and International confidence in our passport in accordance to the Passport index ratings.

2.2.2 The e-Passport has provided a platform to build and focus our efforts towards the "smart borders" which are supported by e-MRPs to facilitate smart border control which is efficient and enhances national security. e-Gates have been installed at Entebbe International Airport courtesy of this milestone.

2.2.3 The new e-Passport system offers seamless and hustle-free solutions to serve the huge demand for passports. The systems are efficient as the applicant fills biodata information, pays through a payment framework integrated with URA then schedules to appear for photo and fingerprint capture. This has made it easy, transparent and very accessible. Third parties who have been duping the unsuspecting public have been more or less been eliminated.

2.2.4 The system has capability for a feedback mechanism to passport applicants in cases where the application is not straight forward and additional information is required or when ready for pick up. This has enabled us to meet the expectation of our clients, improve our image and manage performance better.

2.2.5 The turnaround time has been improved and we are revising our passport service charter to a new standard of;

Normal service for Ordinary/service /Diplomatic Passport   *2-3days*
Express Service   *1-2 day*

2.2.6 The new system provided us an opportunity to clean up the system by eliminating forgery. The "appear" is being strictly enforced and adhered to, something that was previously difficult to enforce under the old dispensation where we were using files.

Requirement to Appear in Person

The general public is hereby informed that it is a legal requirement that passport applicants while lodging an application and receiving a passport shall appear in person. This is an opportunity we have fully embraced through the e-Passport dispensation which requires that the facial and fingerprint of the applicant be captured. For non-appear, mobile kits will be provided soon and they will be enrolled at their locations. This category includes those who are sick and bedridden.

2.2.7 Finally, the e-Passport system is now integrated with other databases like National Identification Register (NIR), and Uganda Revenue Authority's e-TAX System.

2.3 Opportunities

2.3.1 We have issued a statement previously that the old MRPs will only continue to be valid up to the 15th January 2021. Our forecasts for passport service demand indicates many people coming to renew towards the deadline. Approximately one (1) million Ugandans hold the old MRPs and we have so far issued 212,600 e-MRPS, leaving us with an estimated 787,400 e-MRPs to be issued between today and the 15th January 2021.

2.3.2 In order to manage this demand as we continue to restore public confidence in the quality of our services, we are reviewing workforce employment plans, contingent arrangements for work in shifts being drawn, arrangements for overtime payments and working on Saturday to deliver passports are all measures we are planning to adopt.

2.3.3 For Ugandans in the diaspora, special considerations have been put in place.

2.4 The Passport Service Centers

The passport system is centrally managed and printing of passports is only done in Kampala. However, we are scheduled to open enrolment Centers as follows;

No.	Region/Mission	Projected Date
1.	Mbale	
2.	Mbarara	
3.	Gulu	
4.	London	
5.	Washington	
6.	Pretoria	
7.	Copenhagen	
9.	Abu Dhabi	
10.	Ottawa	

3.0 The e-Immigration System

3.1 e-Immigration System Overview

3.1.1 As part of our objective to provide legal and orderly migration, we are obligated to put in place mechanisms and systems for efficient and effective border control and management.

3.1.2 The Uganda citizenship and Immigration Control Act prohibits requires that a foreign national to possess a valid entry visa, pass or permit for them to enter or stay in the republic of Uganda.

3.1.3 In light of the above, DCIC has an obligation to put in place systems for the regulation, control and management of migration of foreign nationals in Uganda.

3.1.4 In 2014, the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC) embarked on the development of an e-visa, e-Permit and Border Management System to address challenges in manual immigration management, fraud and delayed service delivery.

3.1.5 This system has been in operation since 2016 and has incrementally evolved into a seamless online process at www.visas.immigration.go.ug through which foreign nationals can apply/renew/extend/review/appeal for; entry Visas, Students passes, Dependent passes, Work Permits, Certificates of Residence and Uganda citizenship in order to secure the right immigration status documentation for the said facilities.

3.1.6 The new e-Visa/Permit/Pass System has greatly improved the turnaround time in the issuance of our facilities which will in turn boost Uganda's tourism potential, facilitate regional and international trade which will eventually improve Uganda's image.

3.1.7 The online e-Visa System is geographically spread to about 17 missions abroad (Washington, Pretoria, Canberra, London, Paris, Ankara, Beijing, Riyadh, Abuja, Guangzhou, Ottawa, brussels, Addis Ababa,) where visas can be personalized before boarding or the visitor may choose to only apply online and only come to any of our ports of entry with a travel authorization.

3.1.8 Aware that not all our visitors are tech-savvy, this e-visa system has an in-built Visa on Arrival module which requires that foreign nationals who travel to points of entry without a visa or travel authorization are required to pay at a bank before they proceed for immigration formalities.

3.1.9 These e-Immigration System has capability for;
a) Online payment and URA integration for all the payable immigration facilities;
b) Online processing across all levels with options to defer in case the application is not complete.;
c) Online tracking of applications at all levels;

d) Border management including self-service e-Gates at Entebbe International Airport to fast track trusted passenger crossing;
e) Stop list or tracking of wanted persons;
f) Immigration law enforcement services;
g) Visa on arrival payment and management;
h) *The system is specifically designed to deal with our visa accountability challenges. The data analysis capabilities of the system enable DCIC sort out the outstanding challenge of migration data analysis to inform decision-making.*

3.2 Reason for automation

3.2.1 National Security: Partial security is NO security.

Border automation will achieve visibility and accountability of whoever is entering and exiting our border at any time.

3.2.2 NTR Collection

With the new automated system, we expect to triple our NTR collection to double from an estimated 200 Bn to over 400 Bn

Additionally, we have integrated payment of all e-Immigration services to Uganda Revenue Authority's e-TAX System. This means no services can be processed within the e-Immigration system without payment confirmation from URA. This has sorted the forgery of manual payment receipts a challenge that we recently had to deal with.

3.2.3 Current Limitation with Operations of the e-Immigration System

a. There is less awareness of the system due to low publicity;
b. Fake Websites;
c. At times, we face network failures, which makes operations hard at the Points of Entry (PoE) where uptime is required to be at 100%;

4.0 Inspection of illegal Immigrants
Our new system now creates alerts to the department of inspection and legal services upon expiry of the facilities to enable the Directorate's Inspection team to follow up whoever has over stayed in Uganda.

5.0 Conclusion

Our full automation efforts are geared towards improving service delivery, transparency, accountability and enhancing professionalism. Now the Pearl of Africa is more accessible for those seeking to travel to Uganda and the migration service decisions are more predictable to facilitate and lower the cost of doing business in Uganda.

For God and My country.

Hon. Obiga Kania (MP)
MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS