RETURN TICKET, ACCOMMODATION BOOKING AND VALID PASSPORT ARE A MUST-HAVE

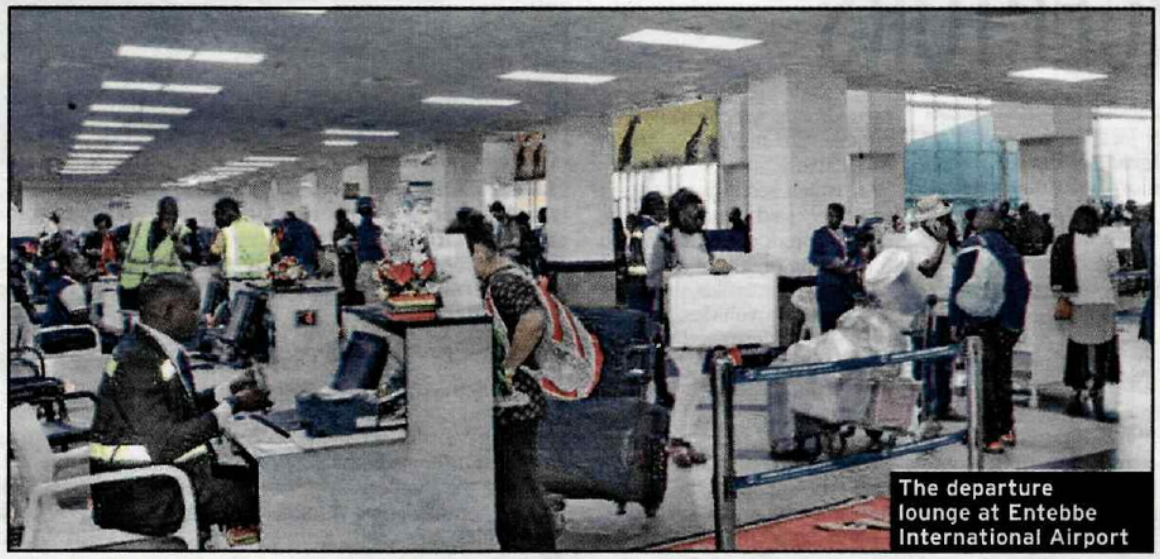
GOVT LISTS 40 VISA-FREE COUNTRIES FOR UGANDANS

By Charles Etukuri

Government has named 40 countries where Ugandan nationals can travel without a visitors' international stay admission (visa).

Simon Mundeyi, the spokesperson of the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration (DCIC) at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, said: "We have had so many people wishing to travel to those visa-free countries and they have always posted very different information, especially on social media. We are here to lay clarification in as far as travelling to visa-free countries is concerned," Mundeyi said.

In the first category involving 36 countries, Mundeyi said Ugandans do not need to apply for visas, but are required to have a return ticket, hotel booking and valid passports to travel there. (See list below)


The departure lounge at Entebbe International Airport

Negotiations with several other countries to allow Ugandan nationals to travel there without the need for a visa are underway.

REQUIREMENTS FOR VISITOR STAY

Mundeyi said on arrival to these countries, "you only need to provide a passport, which must be with at least six months validity. It will be stamped at the entry point and they will give you the number of days you are supposed to stay in that country and that is between one week and 90 days."

Should the traveller want to extend their stay in that country, Mundeyi said they will have to go to the immigrations department and seek an extension.

In the second category involving four countries called visa-nil countries, Mundeyi said a Ugandan national does not have to pay for a visa; they only have to apply for it online before they travel to those countries.

"You visit their online portal and you are required to apply for a visa. These requirements are not as many as in other visa-prone countries. You fulfill these requirements and you are good to go," Mundeyi said, citing Ireland as one of the countries with such requirements.

Mundeyi clarified that travelling to United Arab Emirates without a visa only applies to Ugandan nationals who hold diplomatic and service passports.

"The same applies to Cyprus and South Africa, where Ugandan nationals with diplomatic and service passports can travel freely. We still have a few things to handle with South Africa, and very soon we shall be relaying good news to even Ugandans who hold ordinary passports," he said.

He revealed that the challenge Government is facing with South Africa is "having many Ugandans who have travelled to South Africa illegally without visas, and they have refused to return home. They are over 20,000. We have to first talk to them to return home before we finalise our visa arrangements with the South African government".

TYPES OF UGANDAN PASSPORTS

Mundeyi explained that Uganda currently has five types of passports. "The first type of passport is what we call the ordinary passport and it's blue in colour. That is for every Ugandan out there who qualifies to get one from one day to any age. It contains 48 pages and it is for all citizens irrespective of age or tribe and costs sh250,000. Should you want to get an express passport, you will have to add sh150,000 paid separately from the passport fee. When you are applying, the system will generate the payment details for the passport and if you want express, click on the link and it will generate the payment details for the same. Express passports will be ready two to three days after you have appeared before the DCIC and your details including fingerprints and photo taken," he explained.

Mundeyi said the second set of passports is the service passport. "As the name suggests, it's for people who are serving either in Government and these may include Members of Parliament, members of the permanent commissions like Amnesty Commission, Electoral Commission, heads of Governments departments, and commissioners, among others."

He said the Constitution also empowers the Minister of Internal Affairs to issue service passports to any Ugandan it deems fit. "You can be an ordinary Ugandan without any office but so long as the minister recommends you for a service passport, DCIC will grant you one. That passport costs sh400,000 and contains 64 pages," Mundeyi stated.

The third category, Mundeyi said, is the diplomatic passport. "It's red in colour and contains 64 pages. It costs sh500,000. It's issued to the President, Speaker and his deputy, cabinet ministers, judges, ambassadors and foreign service officers, heads of cultural institutions, chairpersons and deputies of permanent commissions, and permanent secretaries of ministries," he stated.


Mundeyi: DCIC spokesperson

Mundeyi said, "You don't pay for a visa once you have service and diplomatic passports. You are given visa-free treatment. At the airport, you are treated as a Very Important Person and before you travel, you must seek permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that is what we call a diplomatic note or note verbale."

Mundeyi said the fourth category of passports is for refugees and is called a conventional travel document. "This passport is 32 pages. It is blue in colour and only issued to registered refugees under the Office of the Prime Minister. That passport costs sh220,000 and allows the holder to travel everywhere apart from the country of origin. The moment you step in your country of origin, that passport is nullified," he said.

The fifth category, Mundeyi said, is called a certificate of identity. "It is eight pages and it is issued by the Government of Uganda through Ministry of Internal Affairs. It costs sh40,000 and is issued to Ugandans who don't have time and money to apply for the other passports and those who are travelling within the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and Preferential Trade Area member countries," he added.

Countries where Ugandans don't require visa

Antigua and Barbuda	Malawi
Bahamas	Malaysia
Barbados	Malta
Belize	Mauritius
Botswana	Mozambique
Burundi	Rwanda
Comoros	Seychelles
Cyprus	Sierra Leone
Democratic Republic of Congo	Singapore
Eritrea	Solomon Islands
Fiji	South Sudan
Gambia	St Vincent & Grenada
Ghana	Swaziland
Grenada	Tonga
Hong Kong	Trinidad and Tobago
Ireland	United Republic of Tanzania
Jamaica	Vanuatu
Kenya	Zambia
Lesotho	Zimbabwe
Madagascar	

WORK PERMITS

Simon Mundeyi, the spokesperson of the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration (DCIC) at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, said there are currently seven countries in the East African Community: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, DR Congo, South Sudan, Rwanda and Burundi.

"You don't need to pay for work permits in those countries, but you have to apply for it and you must comply with the regulations. I am saying this because we have so many East Africans, who are working in Uganda but don't want to apply for work permits because they think its free movement of labour as enshrined in the protocols of the East Africa Community," Mundeyi stated.

Mundeyi said Ugandans travelling to the Middle East now are required to first get details about their destinations because of the differing requirements."There are some countries where you are supposed to do certain medical tests before you are allowed in like Saudi Arabia so that you are given a clean bill of health before attempting to travel. Otherwise, you are likely to get a problem," he noted.

OTHER DOCUMENTS

Other travel documents are; temporary movement permits and national identity cards (IDs). "A temporary movement permit is one page and is given to members whose countries Uganda shares a land border with. These include Kenya, DR Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan and this costs sh10,000. You go to the border through which you are exiting and get it," said Mundeyi.

For the national IDs, Mundeyi said it is limited to Rwanda and Kenya, but added that Government is negotiating with other countries like Tanzania and South Sudan to also accept Ugandan national IDs.

John Walugembe, the executive director of the Federation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, welcomed the visa-free travel.

"Without movement of people, it becomes difficult to have free movement of goods and services. So, every time there is free movement, it means Ugandans can go and explore other markets, build connections and networks and be able to sell their products," he observed.