

APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS

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By Nelson Kiva

Ugandans in the Diaspora have protested the many requirements for dual citizenship, especially the need for mental status certificates.

Before the 2009 Dual Citizenship Law came into force, Ugandans who acquired citizenship of other countries lost Ugandan citizenship, since there was no enabling legal framework for its citizens to hold dual citizenship.

The Government agencies co-ordinated by the Office of the President on Diaspora Affairs, have since embarked on mobilising them for dual citizenship and other requirements, such as national identity cards.

On top of a medical report of sanity of the applicant, the requirements include filling the dual citizenship application form and have it commissioned or notarised by a High Court judge or notary public, a covering letter addressed to the chairperson of the national citizenship and immigration board, a letter from a sponsor who should be a citizen of Uganda by birth and a letter of good conduct from the home country or Interpol.

Others are evidence that the applicant was formerly a Ugandan citizen (only applicable to Ugandans in the diaspora), proof that the applicant has been granted citizenship by registration, evidence that another country other than Uganda allows dual citizenship and evidence that the applicant or his/her parents or grandparents have ever resided in Uganda for at least 10 years.

Naiga Bukenya is a Ugandan with United Kingdom citizenship living in Manchester and was among the over 200 that graced the first Uganda Diaspora Awareness two-day workshop at Pearl of Africa Hotel in Kampala. The requirement that she proves her sanity before she is given dual citizenship left her in shock.

"What you need to prove is, are you previously a Ugandan, which can be done by presenting your old Ugandan passport, issued by the



Florence Kiremera (second-left) with David Kiggundu (left) Eva Mulyanti (centre), Yvonne Kiggundu from London and Barbara Kakoma (right) from Boston, who are Ugandans living abroad. They had just received their certificates of dual citizenship at the Pearl of Africa Hotel, in Kampala yesterday. Photo by Kennedy Oryema

Ugandans in the diaspora protest mental checkup

Government with evidence that you were," she said.

"Secondly, if you have citizenship of another country and can be proved by producing a certificate of citizenship or passport of that country, I feel they are enough, other than demanding for a mental status certificate or letter from village authority well knowing that the person does not live in Uganda."

Naiga added that the information on the requirements for dual citizenship provided by different government agencies on their websites was contradictory.

"For example, the information on the

Ministry of Internal Affairs website was different from the one on the papers you get from the directorate of immigration. The directorate indicates payment of \$400 for dual citizenship, while the Uganda Revenue Authority website says \$500," she said.

She also demanded for answers as to why Ugandan embassies abroad were not issuing dual citizenship certificates.

The special presidential assistant on diaspora affairs, Florence Kiremerwa, said: "Asking a lot of requirements left some of them traumatised because they expected to expressly get the certificates."

REVENUE BROUGHT IN

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"I have co-ordinated workshops in the diaspora and the directorate of immigration was able to offer dual citizenship in one day and our people in the diaspora expected the same other than being tossed around. They are paying us a lot of money, which is revenue to the Government. We need to respect them," she stated.

Charles Obwatum, an immigration officer at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, said: "There are a number of requirements for dual citizenship, among which include, evidence that the person is Ugandan who is mentally sound because citizenship is a national matter."

He said there was omission on the charges: "Ugandans have to pay for \$400, while the \$500 is for foreigners."

Records from Bank of Uganda indicate that in 2016, Ugandans in the diaspora brought into the country more than \$1.2b (about sh4.3 trillion), up from \$1b (sh3.6 trillion) in 2015.