



## **MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

**DATE:26<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

## **INTERVENTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS TO IMPROVE DELIVERY OF IMMIGRATION SERVICES**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is mandated to ensure Internal security, keeping of law and Order and ensuring Citizenship Identification, protection and preservation. Today, this accountability statement will focus on the various interventions undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure a sustained and effective service delivery of Immigration Services to the people of Uganda and those who visit and or immigrate to Uganda.

In the last 4 years of our Government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has taken several important steps in improving the systems for the delivery of immigration services in the country as follows;

- a) Enhancement of the e-Immigration System to facilitate the application of various immigration services which include; Visas, Work Permits and Passes, Certificates of Residence, grant of Uganda Citizenship and border management services. The e-Immigration system is currently deployed at our Regions of Mbarara, Jinja, Mbale, Gulu, Uganda Missions abroad including Washington, London, Ottawa, Paris, Brussels, Copenhagen, Canberra, Ankara, Beijing, Berlin, Mogadishu, Pretoria, Abuja, New Delhi, Guangzhou and Riyadh.

- b) The e-Immigration Border Management System has enabled us to offer seamless border control services at Entebbe International Airport which has now adopted the use of e-Gates for our trusted travelers. Efforts to roll out full automation of our borders are in progress.
- c) The e-Immigration System has also enhanced our capabilities for post entry migration management through offering real time notification of expired immigration facilities such as visas, work permits and passes to our legal and inspection teams.
- d) The Ministry has also undertaken system integrations with various MDAs such as Uganda Revenue Authority, National Identification and Registration Authority and National Social Security Fund to improve accountability and leverage from other system gains;
- e) The introduction of the Electronic Passport System as a measure to conform to the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Authority, improve our Passport system integrity and the security features of the Passport. Indeed, from the onset, the Electronic Passport system efficiency gains were visible as the turnaround time was reduced from 21 working days to 2-4 days to process and issue a Passport.

## **2.0 Status of Passport Management;**

The introduction of the Electronic Passport System is one of the most successful citizen-centric activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. With globalization and stability in the country, the number of Uganda citizens travelling abroad for tourism, business, conferences, jobs, and education, has increased rapidly.

As a result, over the years, we have seen a growth in the demand for Passports. The growth in demand has also attributed to the need to replace the old Passport with the Electronic Passport as a deadline for validity of the old Passport which was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and has been extended to 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

You will recall that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, worldwide travel restrictions were imposed in March up to July. And whereas we had

lockdown, we accumulated backlog on the on-line system because people continued to apply without being served.

After about 6 months of lockdown, there was a gradual easing of restrictions at work places and our operations resumed but only at 30% capacity due to the Standard Operating Procedures set by Government to curb the spread of Covid-19. In October 2020, Entebbe International Airport and land borders were opened and this marked a new demand phase for our Passport services.

In effect, the pandemic created a hangover for our services which led to an increase in demand for our Passport services. Due to job losses, many Ugandans are opting to take up employment services abroad and this has brought pressure on the service from 1000 Passports to 2100 Passports daily.

Labor export resumed in December 2020 and to-date, the number of domestic workers cleared has been increasing as illustrated by Statistics obtained from the Ministry of Gender and Social Development as follows;

Period	Labor Export	Passport Issued
December 2020	491	14,166
January 2021	2708	11,625
February 2021	5256	14,244
March	8666	22,210
April	-	18,894 to-date

From the statistics above, the current increased demand for the Passports appears to be largely attributed to the high demand for Uganda’s labor by the Arab countries. In light of the above, we are experiencing large crowds at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and this is also due to the mandatory requirement for every Passport applicant to appear in order to have their biometrics captured for Passport processing. This means that at any given day, the Ministry is accommodating more than 4000 people, most of whom are seeking the Passport service.

**3.0 The Interventions**

- a) Passport enrolment services have been decentralized to regional centres to ease service delivery. On the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Mbarara Regional Immigration Office operationalized the Passport enrolment system and its operations are being ramped up to ease the pressure at the Ministry headquarters. Mbale and Gulu will be operational by the end of May and June 2021 respectively;
- b) Re-instated full scale operations by implementing a two (2) shift system at the Ministry Headquarters for the Passport section which runs from 07:00 Hrs to 19.00 Hrs each day of the week.
- c) The Passport application portals and scheduler system has been configured to avail the time slots on any given day of the week as mentioned above;
- d) We have increased our daily enrolment rates to match the 2100 applications received daily, and the entire production line leading to Passport issuance has been doubled to enable production and issuance of at least 2000 Passports daily;
- e) We also commit to our clients a service standard of 2 days for express applicants and not more than 4 days for normal applicants to receive their Passports from the date of enrolment;
- f) Together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, we have met the Executive Committee of the External Labor Recruiting Agencies, to understand their operations and agreed on modalities to serve Ugandans better;
- g) The Ministry will soon operationalize Kampala Regional Office which will be a Passport Collection Centre to ease the congestion problem currently being experienced at the Ministry Headquarters. The Ministry Headquarters will be preserved for only those seeking to be enrolled for issuance of Passports;
- h) Procurement is in progress to increase equipment infrastructure capacity that will match the projected demand rates especially as we near the new deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 for the old Machine Readable

Passport that we communicated to the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The Ministry appeals to the general public to adhere to the Passport application procedures in place especially appearing at enrolment centres only at scheduled dates and time. Applications are made strictly online at [www.passports.go.ug](http://www.passports.go.ug);

We wish to remind you that the deadline for using the old Machine Readable Passports is 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and all citizens are therefore encouraged to replace their old Passports with the new international Electronic Passport.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs hereby takes this opportunity to re-assure the public and all our stakeholders of its commitment and continued readiness to serve efficiently.

For any clarification on this matter, please contact our Public Relations Office on telephones: 0800199003/0800199004 or email: info@mia.go.ug.

For God and My Country

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