

# FG launches Nigeria Visa Policy 2020

KPMG in Nigeria

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On Tuesday, 4 February 2020, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, officially launched the new Nigeria Visa Policy 2020 (NVP 2020) as the new guidelines for entry and exit of migrants. The NVP 2020 is geared towards attainment of the Federal Government's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) and adoption of Security, Economy and Transparency (SET) as the government's policy thrust on ERGP. The NVP 2020 should enhance the ease of doing business in Nigeria, boost tourism, address current immigration-related challenges, and expand opportunities regarding bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries.

The NVP 2020 expands the classes of visa from six (6) to seventy-nine (79) to accommodate additional travel requirements for expatriates intending to travel to Nigeria. The NVP 2020 classifies travelers to Nigeria into two broad categories: **Visa Free / Exemption** and **Visa Mandatory**.

## 1. Highlights of visa categorization

### 1.1. The Visa Free / Exemption Category

This category of travelers can access 4 classes of visa namely: F1A, F1B, F1C and F1D.

- **F1A** is for citizens of member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) who do not need to obtain a Nigerian visa to enter the country based on ECOWAS free movement protocol. However, these travelers must have valid travel documents, enter through a recognized entry port and must not be in the category of prohibited immigrants. Also, a residence permit must be obtained from the Nigeria Immigration Service to establish a business or for employment purposes.
- **F1B** is for citizens of Cameroon and Chad whose governments have Visa Abolition Agreements with Nigeria. They can travel to Nigeria for a maximum of 90 days (not for employment or business) without obtaining a visa based on bilateral agreement. However, they must obtain relevant visa for employment or business purposes.

- **F1C** is for holders of official travel documents from some international organisations with visa waiver based on certain entry conditions. These organisations are the United Nations, African Union Commission, ECOWAS Commission and African Development Bank. Travelers in this category must possess an official travel document and the permitted duration of stay in Nigeria is a maximum of 90 days, and only for single entry purpose.
- **F1D** is for holders of Diplomatic and / or Official passport from selected countries based on bilateral / multilateral agreement on the principle of reciprocity and certain entry conditions. Based on the NVP 2020, the following 13 countries come under this category: Brazil, China, Cuba, Kenya, Namibia, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Africa, Singapore, Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey and Venezuela. Qualifying citizens of these countries can enter Nigeria visa-free for a maximum of 90 days and for single entry visits only. However, the visa-free entry is not valid for employment purpose.

### 1.2. The Visa Mandatory Category

Travelers under the visa mandatory category can access any of the other 75 visa classes and types, which are further categorized as **Short Visit Visas (SVV)**, **Temporary Residence Visas (TRV)** and **Permanent Residence Visas (PRV)**.

- The **SVV** allows travelers to visit Nigeria for a period not exceeding three months (90 days). It consists of 24 visa classes ranging from F2A for non-accredited diplomats to F9A for Nigerians in Diaspora who intend to visit Nigeria, but do not hold Nigerian passports.
- The **TRV** grants residence to individuals for a period not exceeding two years. It consists of 36 visa classes and these range from R1A for accredited diplomats to R11 for Temporary Work Permit holders with multiple entry visa within six months.

- The **PRV** confers a permanent residence status on certain classes of individuals. It consists of 15 visa classes, such as the N1A (for foreigners who are spouses of Nigerian citizens), N6D (for parents aged 65 years and above and who are dependents of Permanent Residence visa holders), investors, highly skilled immigrants or retirees, who may want to relocate to Nigeria.

All classes of visas: SVV, TRV and PRV, including those available on the visa on arrival and e-visa channels can be processed and obtained at the Nigerian diplomatic missions (Embassies, Consulates, and High Commissions) and through designated Visa Application Centers (VACs). According to the NVP 2020, travelers would be required to submit themselves for biometric data capture at all Nigerian missions and VACs before issuance of the relevant visas.

## 2. Key take-aways from NVP 2020

### i. **Expansion of visa classifications to cover a wide range of travel purposes**

The NVP 2020 caters for a wide range of travel purposes previously generalized under transit, tourism, business, and work. For instance, business travelers can now apply for and obtain different classes of business visas that confer varying degrees of benefits based on the specific purpose of travel.

Also, visitors intending to visit for various reasons such as tourism, medical and religious purposes, visiting of family and friends, journalism, clergy related activities, sporting event, etc., can now get specific visas suitable for their exact purposes of visit. This delineation of visa classes is beneficial to the country in terms of profiling of visitors and data analytics on the demography of foreigners attracted to the country.

### ii. **Introduction of the electronic visa (e-Visa)**

The NVP 2020 introduces the electronic visa (e-Visa) as a separate channel for processing and obtaining Nigerian visas alongside the existing ones: Visa on Arrival and visas at the Nigerian diplomatic missions abroad.

The e-Visa is only available in the category of SVV to travelers intending to visit Nigeria for a period not exceeding three months. Travelers are expected to apply online and obtain a travel authorization letter online before embarking on their trip to Nigeria.

The e-Visa spans a wide range of visa classes, such as transit, business, tourism, journalism, medical tourism, religious tourism, sport, entertainment, study tour, academic exchange programme, international cultural exchange, humanitarian services, emergency relief work, International Non-Government Organizations (INGO) and national Non-Government Organizations (NGO work), and visits by Nigerians in diaspora holding passports of other countries.

### iii. **Clarification on eligibility and requirements for visa on arrival (VoA)**

Under the new visa regime, VoA would be made available to holders of passports of African Union member states for short visits and citizens of all countries for tourism, business, or emergency relief work purposes. Also, Nigerians in diaspora with dual citizenships, infants born abroad and Nigerians (who have renounced their citizenship) would be able to access the VoA facility.

Consequently, prior approval letter is no longer a requirement as the VoA would be issued to eligible travelers upon arrival at Nigerian ports of entry. However, they would still be required to make payment online via the Nigeria Immigration Service website [www.immigration.gov.ng](http://www.immigration.gov.ng), and undergo a biometric registration at the airport before visas are issued to them.

It is important to note that the VoA is not available at land borders, as it is only issued at the various international airports in Nigeria.

### iv. **Creation of permanent residence visa category**

The NVP 2020 has made provision for various categories of individuals to obtain Permanent Residence in Nigeria for a minimum period of 5 years. These include spouses of Nigerian citizens, Nigerians by birth who have renounced their Nigerian citizenship, and investors with evidence of importation and retention of a minimum capital of US\$250,000.

### v. **Re-classification of the Temporary Work Permit (TWP) and Subject to Regularization (STR) visa**

The NVP 2020 has resulted in the reclassification of the TWP and STR to suit the specific intricacies of employment and residence of expatriates in Nigeria.

The TWP is now divided into single entry visa for 90 days and multiple entry for 180 days:

- **Temporary Work Permit Visa – F8A:** This is a single-entry visa and can only be issued at the Nigerian diplomatic missions. Issuance of the visa is subject to a prior visa authority letter from the Comptroller General of Immigration. F8A allows experts invited by corporate bodies for the purpose of providing specialized skills services, such as installation of machinery, training, etc., to enter and stay in Nigeria for up to 90 days. TWP-F8A visitors are not permitted to take up permanent employment or residence in Nigeria.
- **Temporary Work Permit (6 Months) Visa – R11:** This is a multiple-entry visa available only at Nigerian diplomatic missions. It is issued to experts invited by corporate bodies for the purpose of providing specialized services, such as installation of machinery, training, etc. and allows them to stay in the country for a non-renewable period of 6 months. TWP-R11 visitors are permitted to pick up temporary employment in the country.

This revision to the TWP visa offers opportunities to corporate bodies to temporarily engage foreign experts on special projects that would require the experts to visit Nigeria many times within a short period.

The STR visa has been renamed as a Temporary Residence Visa and split into several classes ranging from the R2A, which caters for expatriates intending to pick up employment in Nigeria, to the R2E, which accommodates the dependents of expatriates who are aged 65 years and above. In the past, dependent expatriates were issued the same class of visa – STR visa, as the principal expatriates who are employed in Nigeria.

### 3. Conclusion

The NVP 2020 is a welcome development as it is designed to improve the business environment, attract foreign direct investment and boost tourism without compromising national security. Given the many types of visas available, it is important that intending visitors to the country understand the nature of each visa category and apply for the right type of visa to avoid problems on arrival.

It is expected that the government, through the relevant ministries and agencies, would put measures in place to ensure the full implementation of the policy. The plan to leverage technology in the migration space, such as the electronic visa for short-term visitors, is commendable and is in line with global best practices.

It is, however, imperative for the government to address the lingering challenges being faced by intending visitors who need to make online payments for their visas. The earlier this issue is resolved, the easier it will be to ensure the smooth issuance of the e-visa and other relevant visas.

Adequate mechanism should be put in place to prevent abuse of the new visa categories and ensure that only deserving individuals who meet the specified requirements are issued the appropriate visas to enter the country.

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