



THE E-REGISTRATION MANDATE FOR MIGRANTS IN NIGERIA

Introduction

The movement of people across borders, legally or illegally, brings about talent exchange, population growth, cultural diversity, security challenges among others. Migration has been the result of interstate treaties such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty, the East African Community (EAC) Treaty, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Treaty among others, which promote the freedom of movement of people and goods across the geographical boundaries of member states. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), effective from 30th May 2019, also promotes the free movement of people and goods across Africa. This regional integration will cause increased incidences of migration in and out of countries in Africa.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa with a population of over 200 million people has put in place a database system to manage migrants within the country before the implementation of the operational phase of the AfCFTA which is to commence in 2020.

In July 2019, the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) issued guidelines compelling the registration of all migrants in Nigeria on or before 11th January 2020. With this registration system in place, the migrant population in the country can be accurately measured and a data bank for migrants will be kept.

The latter will be a useful tool in addressing security challenges within the country in light of recurring terrorism, kidnapping, herdsman attack and other vices in the country.

Eligibility for Registration

Persons who are eligible for this exercise are non-citizens of Nigeria who are aged eighteen (18) years and above and who are resident in Nigeria. Also, visitors who intend to stay in Nigeria for a period exceeding ninety (90) days are to register. These persons have been classified into the following categories:

- i. Employed migrants;
- ii. Students;
- iii. Self-employed;
- iv. Spouse of a Nigerian; and
- v. Dependants.

Registration Procedure

The registration can be carried out at the Migrant Registration Centres in designated NIS offices across the country. The registration centres within Lagos State are at the NIS Lagos Command, Alagbon Close, Ikoyi and the NIS Zonal Headquarters, Ikeja.

Migrants are to go to the centres to pick up an E-Migrant Registration Form and to schedule a date for a biometric capture exercise.

The documents to be presented at any of the Centres are as follows:

Expatriates:

- An introduction letter from their employer
- Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card (CERPAC)
- International Passport

ECOWAS Citizens:

- Country National Identity Card
- Consulate Card
- International Passport
- Ecowas Travelling Certificate

Non-ECOWAS Citizens:

- Country National Identity Card
- International Passport

A slip with the details of the information of the migrant will be issued at the end of the exercise.

The registration is free and must be done on or before 11th January 2020.

Penalty for Non-Compliance

The penalty for non-compliance is imprisonment for a term of three years, or a fine of Five Hundred Thousand Naira (N500,000.00), or both. Migrants who do not comply also face the risk of deportation to their countries of origin.

Conclusion

Poor record-keeping and record doctoring have been a major challenge in the accurate determination of the Nigerian population (for both citizens and non-citizens). With an impending population explosion caused by Africa's regional integration, proper documentation of migrants into the country becomes a necessity.

Data collated from the registration exercise will be used to generate insights on the country's population growth, the evolution of the country's labour market, the integration of these migrants, and the influence of migration on various sectors of the country's economy. These insights can be used to drive public policy on migration. Also, data gotten from the exercise can be used to tackle the security challenges within the country.

It is heart-warming to know the NIS is living up to its statutory responsibility of documenting aliens and non-Nigerians within or entering Nigeria through any of the entry points (airports, land or sea borders).

DISCLAIMER: This article is only intended to provide general information on the subject matter and does not by itself create a client/attorney relationship between readers and our Law Firm or serve as legal advice. Readers should seek specialist legal advice when the need arises.



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