



.US, Spain, China, South Africa hostile

At a time human rights have become the focus of global discussion, Ghanaians seeking visas to some countries are given hostile reception while they await their interview sessions.

A visit by the Finder newspaper to a number of Embassies showed the plight of applicants. There was a lack of shelter and minimum provision of chairs. The embassies and High Commissions visited were those of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and South Africa.

Most applicants The Finder met at the US Embassy yesterday morning were seen waiting under trees and sitting on rocks. This situation has led to an individual hiring out seats on a pay-as-you-sit basis.

The individual who gave her name as Sara provided applicants with plastic chairs and charged them 60 pesewas an hour. A student-applicant who gave his name as Justice told The Finder that he arrived at the Embassy at about 10:20am but was expected to go in for his interview at 1pm.

"I have paid a visa fee of US\$140 and therefore expected to be served well but as you can see, I am sitting on a rock and this is where I am going to sit till 1pm; can you imagine the discomfort?" he asked.

A family of four, who patronized Sara's plastic chair services, said they agreed to pay GH¢2.40 for every hour that they sat on the chairs.

They said it was their second visit to the embassy, adding that the situation was no different even in the interview area. "There is a bold inscription that reads that the room accommodates only 150 people but the last time we were there, there were not less than 300 people in there and some of us had to stand for almost three hours before getting a seat," the family head said.

Another applicant, Helena, who said she came from Sunyani in the Brong Ahafo Region, said even though her appointment time was 1pm, she had to get to Accra early so that should make the appointment. Distance is the only reason why I have to sit on these rocks till 1pm," she said.

Added to the predicament of these applicants is the fact that they were all at the mercy of the weather, whether they sat on rocks or on Sara's pay-as-you-sit chairs. "Can you imagine what will happen to us and the documents in our possession if it starts raining right now?" Sam, another applicant-in-waiting asked.

Hell at embassies in Ghana

Source: the-finder

Tuesday, 13 December 2011 22:23 - Last Updated Tuesday, 13 December 2011 22:31

At the Spanish embassy, the situation was not different as visa applicants had to queue to enter the embassy.

Anybody who has passed by the visa section of the Spanish embassy on the Airport-37 Road, almost opposite the Airport Police Station, on the morning of a working day, cannot fail to notice the pathetic scene. 'I have been here since morning and the situation is terrible for me; I have been standing in this sun and what I don't know is if I will be given the visa in the first place', a visa applicant said.

At the French embassy, visa applicants sit outside under the barest cover and still at the mercy of the sun, a situation that cannot be said to be comfortable.

"I wonder if this is what these people go through when they are applying for visas to come to Ghana", an applicant at the French embassy asked.

Another mission that is not doing enough for its applicants is the High commission of the Republic of South Africa. Most applicants that The Finder saw were standing in the sun as they waited for their turns to pass through the gate.

A visit to the visa section of the High Commission of the United Kingdom, one of the most patronized in the country, showed that there were enough seats for applicants, with some empty seats evident.

The German embassy visa section is another place where applicants appear to be treated with dignity as they are given comfortable places to sit while waiting to enter the main visa building. Applicants appear protected from the vagaries of the weather.

At the Italian embassy a make-shift shed with wooden chairs have been provided for visa applicants.