

Retirement Visa: A Need for Incorporation into the Immigration Laws of Ethiopia

Description

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Introduction

A retirement visa is a special type of visa issued by some nations that allows people with adequate financial resources to live in a specific foreign country for an extended period of time. Retirement visas bring several advantages for developing countries like Ethiopia in terms of socio-economic development. Countries that offer retirement visas in one form or another include Costa Rica, Ecuador, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the Philippines, Portugal, Spain, and Thailand. Retirement visas are generally good for at least 12 months, after which they can be renewed if the person still qualifies. In some countries, foreign retirees can also apply for permanent residency and obtain citizenship after they have lived there for a certain number of years.

Retirement Visa Requirements in General

Retirement visas go by different names in different countries, each of which maintains its own rules. In some countries an individual must be over a certain age to qualify for a retirement visa. Others may have no specific age requirement but stipulate that the person be retired and have retirement or pension income. All set a minimum income requirement and some require that applicants deposit funds in a local bank. In many instances, retirement visa holders are not allowed to work in the host country unless they are able to obtain a separate work permit. The visa holder may also be required to purchase health insurance that is valid in that country.

Retirement Visa in Different countries

Countries around the world are looking to attract retirees. Some countries have created visa policies specifically designed for retirees and in some cases offer special benefits and incentives for relocating. The most attractive retirement visas are usually found in South America, although a few Asian countries also offer appealing programs.

1. Colombia

Colombia is quietly becoming an overseas retirement haven. The country's growing American expat numbers are in large part due to its user-friendly retirement visa. The main requirement for Colombia's Retirement Visa is: Proof of monthly income of at least three times Colombia's minimum monthly wage. This changes every year and is about \$800 per month in 2022. As a type of Migrant Visa, the Retirement Visa is available for up to three years. After five years of living in Colombia, you can apply for a resident visa.

2. Indonesia

The Republic of Indonesia offers a retired or senior citizen visa that is good for one year and may be

extended for as many as five additional years. It doesn't specify an age requirement but does require proof of sufficient financial resources in the form of a bank or pension fund statement. In addition, applicants must provide proof that they have health, life, and liability insurance. After living in Indonesia for five consecutive years, visa holders can apply for permanent residency

3. Italy

European countries are among the countries with good retirement visas. About 20 European countries recognize and provide retirement visa programs. Italian retirement visa is known as the Elective Residency Visa, Italy's retirement visa has a high passive income requirement of €31,000 per year minimum. What's more, you can't work while resident with this visa, not even for an overseas employer. After five years of full-time residency in Italy, you can apply for a permanent residence permit. For citizenship, you'll need to live there for 10 years before applying. There's also an Italian language exam to pass. You'll need a B1 level on the Common European Framework for Languages.

4. Portugal

Due to the relatively low cost of living, high quality of healthcare, sunny weather, and tax law, Portugal is a popular destination for retirement in Europe. In order to retire in Portugal (for those who don't have an EU passport) they need to apply for a retirement visa. Portugal has some of the most lenient visa requirements out of EU countries and is often referred to as the gateway to Europe.

i) How to Retire in Portugal

If the applicant for a retirement visa is not an EU citizen, then the applicant will have to apply for a visa to retire in Portugal. Two of the most popular visa routes which allow you to live in Portugal as a retiree are:

1. **The Retirement Visa:** This is a national (residency) visa, issued to non-EU citizens who want to live in Portugal without working, but who have a steady income from pensions, savings, etc.

Document requirements for retirement visa in Portugal: a visa application form, an international passport, two color photos, a health insurance policy, confirmation of no criminal convictions from the applicant country of residence, and confirmation of sufficient means of living.

2. **The Golden Visa:** An investor makes a sufficient donation to the Portuguese economy using one of the several options: fund contribution, business, opening company, science or culture investment sum is €250,000

Portugal golden visa document requirements: an official application form, a valid passport, marriage, divorce and birth certificate, two Passport size photos, medical insurance policy, a certificate of having no previous criminal records, and documents related to investment.

Portugal offered several benefits for those who want to retire in Portugal as compared to other countries. These include: High health care quality, opportunity to get citizenship, good tax system, and free traveling through Europe.

5. Panama Retirement Visa

Panama has become a popular retirement home in recent years due to low government tax and price discounts for foreign guests and retirees. Retiree can choose to enjoy their retirement by the beach, in rural areas, or in one of the cities of Panama. Panama offers foreign retirees one of the best retirement programs in the world. The Panama Pensionado program comes with great benefits for retirees. Foreigners who decide to join the retirement program in Panama need to apply for a retirement visa first.

To be eligible for a retirement visa in Panama, Retiree must have a verifiable minimum monthly income of \$1,000. This could be Social Security or other government retirement funds (military, state retirement, police pension, etc.) or retirement from a private corporation.

Document requirements for retirement visa in panama: Original valid passport, 5 photographs, Health certificate, Police records, Proof of pension or income.

Panama also offers several benefits and advantages for people wants to retire in panama like exemption from import tax for household goods, exemption from import tax to import a new car every two years, and also retiree obtain discounts on things like utility bills, airline tickets, medical fees, and entry fees for movie theaters and cultural and sporting events, etc.

6. Thailand

Foreigners who are over the age of 50 and want to move to Thailand for retirement are eligible to apply for a Thailand Retirement Visa. Even though it is the more commonly used term, the official term for a Thailand "Retirement Visa" is a Category "O" of the Non-Immigrant Visas for Thailand.

Types of Thailand Retirement Visas

There are two types of Thailand retirement visas:

- **O-A visa.** An O-A visa is available for applicants who wish to stay in the country for a maximum of 1 year without the intention of working in Thailand.
- **O-X visa.** An O-X visa is available for applicants who wish to stay in the country for a maximum of 10 years without the intention of working in Thailand. O-X retirement visas are offered only for a limited number of developed countries like Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, USA, Japan, France, Norway, etc.

The financial requirements for a retirement visa in Thailand depend on the type of retirement visa that you will apply for.

Financial requirement for an O-A visa are:

- A security deposit of THB 800,000 in a bank account in Thailand, 2 months before the visa application
- A monthly income of THB 65,000
- A combination of the security deposit and annual income of THB 800,000

On the other hand, the financial requirements for an O-X visa are:

- A security deposit of at least THB 3 million in a bank account in Thailand.
- An annual income of at least THB 1.2 million.

Document requirements for a retirement visa in Thailand include; passport, Completed and signed visa application form, Passport-size picture, Proof you meet the financial, Police Certificate, Health Certificate, etc.

7. Dubai (United Arab Emirate)

The UAE is one of the safest countries, attributed to its effective police and surveillance systems. This makes it an ideal place for retirees seeking a secure and protected living environment.

Retirement planning in Dubai involves careful consideration of financial goals and investment strategies to ensure a secure and comfortable life in this dynamic and cosmopolitan city. Retired individuals over 55 can apply for a UAE 5 year retirement visa if they meet one of the following criteria:

- **Income:** The minimum annual income is AED 180,000 (approximately US\$49,000) or AED 15,000 (US\$4,100) monthly.
- **Savings:** A fixed deposit of AED 1 million (approximately US\$275,000) held for 3 years.
- **Property:** Ownership of a property valued at AED 1 million (US\$275,000).
- **Savings and Property:** The minimum value of AED 1 million comprises a three-year fixed deposit and properties valued at AED 500,000 each.

Document requirements for retirement visa in UAE (Dubai) include:

- Passport, marriage certificate (if applicable), current visa, and Emirates IDs.
- (Income): Proof of income and 6-month bank statement.
- (Savings): a retirement letter and savings letter from a UAE-based bank.
- (Property): Copy of title deed with specified criteria
- (Savings & Property): Copy of title deed and savings letter from a UAE-based bank.

African countries

8. Mauritius

Mauritius has become a popular retirement home in recent years. To retire in Mauritius, Retiree needs to apply for a retirement visa. Mauritius offers Residence Permit as Retired Non-Citizen, a program for foreigners who want to continue their retirement in the territory of Mauritius and make it their second home.

To retire in Mauritius, retirees have to meet the following criteria:

- Retirement age of 50 years or above.
- Transfer a minimum monthly amount of **\$1,500** or an annual transfer of at least **\$18,000** (or the equivalent in a convertible foreign currency) to a local bank account in Mauritius.
- Submit evidence of funds transfer to the Mauritius Economic Development Board.

Documents Required for a Mauritius Retirement Visa include: Mauritius retirement visa application

form, Passport and copies of the bio-data page of the passport, marriage certificate, Photographs, Original residence permit, medical certificate, Police clearance, Means of subsistence and Payment of fee.

The Mauritius Retirement Visa is issued for a minimum period of three years and can be renewed. After ten years of residency, retirees can apply for a residence permit with 20 years validity, which you can renew for another 20 years if you still fulfill the residency requirements.

9. South Africa

A retirement Visa allows for the holder to retire and live in South Africa in a permanent capacity. For immigration to South Africa, under the category of a retirement visa, the criteria is based on the premise that the immigrant is not looking to work, study or carry out their own business. Applications for retired visas under temporary residency can be made for a period of 4 years only. After the 4 years they can be further extended by making an application to home affairs and proving that the criteria are still being met.

To obtain a retired person's visa, one of the main criteria concerns the prospective immigrant's financial status and proving they have sufficient means to support themselves. For temporary residency each applicant must demonstrate that they have: ZAR 37,000 per month, per applicant. This can be in the form of cash/cash equivalents or cash income generated by capital asset(s). The proof of funds can be either of the aforementioned or a combination of both. The Department of Home Affairs tends to accept a total amount available in your bank account covering one for up to 6 months. There is no minimum age restriction to this visa category. The Department of Home Affairs may authorize you to conduct work on your retirement visa under certain terms and conditions deemed suitable by the Department of Home Affairs.

Documents required for a South Africa Retirement Visa include: Either the permanent or temporary residency application form, Valid passport, Medical and radiological reports, Police clearance certificate, and Yellow fever certificate (where applicable).

Pros and Cons of a Retirement Visa

Retirement visas bring several advantages for countries in terms of attracting investors and tourists and generating revenue for the country. In recent years, countries have effectively worked on this program to attract investors and tourists to their countries. Some countries, such as Portugal, divide retirement visas into two categories: one for investors and another for residents. They provide different types of incentives and protection for retirees to attract investors and tourists to their countries. Countries like Dubai are also working on retirement visas to attract tourists to their country and generate revenue from this sector. For developing countries, the recognition of retirement visas plays a significant role in facilitating capital flows, promoting investment, tourism, and mobilizing nation's resources for further economic development. From an individual's perspective, a retirement visa also has several advantages. Retirement visas allow people to stay in a foreign country longer than typical tourist visas. This can be particularly useful to retirees, who may want to sample a country at various times of the year before deciding on moving there permanently. A retirement visa can also be a step toward qualifying for permanent resident status. Retirees can be subject to taxes and may be required to contribute to the country's healthcare and retirement systems.

From an individual's perspective a retirement visa also has its own negative consequences. Moving abroad entailed more than a physical movement from one location to another. Relocation to a foreign destination also involved a psychological transition which affected nearly every aspect of the retired migrant's life. The most difficult challenge encountered by retired migrants was the language barrier. When retired migrants are unable to speak the local language, whether with local residents in a social conversation or with medical providers or nursing care staff in a medical setting, the communication barrier became a source of misunderstandings and mistrust between both parties; this obstacle not only prevented the retired migrants from getting whatever they needed, but further perpetuated unintended and unwanted isolation and loneliness. The state may also face challenges in providing service for this foreign retiree due to language barriers.

Retirement Visa in Ethiopia

Retirement visas bring several advantages for developing countries like Ethiopia in terms of socio-economic development. Visas and other related issues are regulated and governed under immigration laws and regulations issued by the House of Representatives and the Council of Ministers. There are different types of visas under the current existing Ethiopian legal framework, which include diplomatic visas, special visas, business visas, immigrant visas, tourist visas, transit visas, student visas, exit visas, reentry visas, etc. A retirement visa is another type of visa that plays a significant role for developing countries like Ethiopia in attracting foreign investors and professionals in different areas. Retirement visas bring several advantages for Ethiopia's socio-economic development. There are also a lot of foreign nationals who want to retire in Ethiopia for different reasons. However, the current existing Ethiopian immigration proclamation and regulation do not recognize or cover retirement visas.

Comparative Advantages of Retirement in Ethiopia

The common factors that have influenced individuals' decisions to retire abroad included the opportunity to enjoy a warm, pleasant climate which permitted outdoor activities, to explore the cultural and natural attractions which the country offered, and to take advantage of the relatively inexpensive cost of living. Ethiopia is the oldest country in the world, with several historical traces. Retirees are often attracted to Ethiopia for its rich culture, diverse landscapes, and friendly people. Ethiopia is home to some of the world's oldest and most fascinating archaeological sites, making it a great destination for retirees looking to explore the past. Additionally, Ethiopia offers a wide range of outdoor activities, from trekking in the Simien Mountains to bird watching in the Rift Valley. The weather in Ethiopia is generally warm and sunny, with temperatures ranging from the mid-60s to the mid-80s Fahrenheit throughout the year. Life for a retiree in Ethiopia and its surroundings can be quite enjoyable. There are plenty of cultural attractions to explore, such as the ancient churches and monasteries of Lalibela, the rock-hewn churches of Tigray, and the castles of Gondar. There are also plenty of recreational activities to enjoy, such as hiking, bird watching, and exploring the many national parks. For those looking for a more active nightlife, there are plenty of bars and restaurants to explore, as well as traditional music and dance performances.. Ethiopia, in terms of weather conditions, natural resources, and policy perspective, is preferable for retirement.

Legal Status of Retirement Visa under Current Ethiopian Legal Framework

The existence of a comprehensive immigration law is very essential to the national economic and social developments of the country. There are proclamations and regulations that govern immigration

and visa-related areas. Let's consider Ethiopian Immigration Proclamation No. 354/2003. According to this Proclamation, any foreigner who wants to enter Ethiopia shall possess: a valid travel document; a valid entry visa; a valid permanent residence permit; or an identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and a health certificate, as may be necessary. Proclamation No. 354/2003 also listed the types of visas to be issued according to the proclamation and the regulations to be issued by the ministry. Among this list under Article 12(1), these visas are: diplomatic visas, special visas, business visas, immigrant visas, tourist visas, transit visas, student visas, exit visas, and re-entry visas. Retirement visas have not been mentioned, and the list is also not exhaustive. The Proclamation provides that other visas to be prescribed by regulation will be issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Regulations are also issued by the Council of Ministers: namely the Council of Ministers Regulation No. 114/2004 on Immigration. This Regulation is issued in pursuance of Proclamation No. 354/2003. Regulation No. 114/2004 provides detailed content and provides additional types of visas other than those mentioned in Proclamation No. 354/2003. The regulations from Articles 13 to 21 provide different types of visas with different requirements that applicants have to fulfill in order to obtain a visa which is stated as follows.

Types of Visas and their requirement according to Regulation No 114/2004

1. **Diplomatic visas:** Diplomatic visas are issued for ambassadors, diplomatic agents, attachés, and consular representatives who are assigned to foreign embassies, permanent missions, and consular posts in Ethiopia, as stated under Article 14 of the regulation. Diplomatic visas are issued where a diplomatic note from the department of foreign affairs, the embassy or consular posts of the requesting state, or the concerned international or regional organization has been presented.
2. **Service Visa:** Service visas are issued to the following foreigners: permanent employees of foreign embassies, permanent missions, and consular posts in Ethiopia who are holding service passports; members of their families; international civil servants; and foreigners holding service passports as stated under Article 15 of Regulation 114/2004. Service visas are issued only where a diplomatic note from the department of foreign affairs, the embassy or consular post of the requesting state, or the concerned international or regional organization has been presented.
3. **Business visa:** Business visas are issued to foreigners who are coming to Ethiopia for different business activities, like investment. A business visa may be issued for single or multiple entries.
4. **Immigrant Visa:** Immigrant visas are issued to foreigners who have been adopted by Ethiopians or who have valid marriages with Ethiopians and are coming to reside in Ethiopia, as well as to members of their families and family members of foreigners holding permanent resident permits in Ethiopia. Foreigners coming to reside in Ethiopia without either being engaged in any gainful activities or becoming a public burden, as well as members of their families.
5. **Tourist Visa:** Tourist visas are issued to foreigners who are coming to visit Ethiopia. A foreigner holding a tourist or transit visa needs to have a valid travel document, a valid entry visa, a valid permanent residence permit, or an identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A tourist visa may be issued for single or multiple entries. Any foreigner who has entered Ethiopia on a tourist visa is not allowed to work in Ethiopia.
6. **Transit Visa:** A transit visa is issued to a foreigner who is traveling to another country across Ethiopia. A transit visa may be issued for either single or double transit. The requirement to acquire transit is similar to that of a tourist visa.
7. **Student Visa:** A student visa is issued to a foreigner who is coming to Ethiopia for education or training. Prior to the issuance of a student visa, the applicant is required to produce evidence

showing: (a) his admission to an educational or training institution in Ethiopia; and

(b) The financial means to cover his educational and accommodation expenses.

8. **Validity of Visas:** The regulation does not state how to acquire a validity visa; it only states that the validity periods of diplomatic and service visas shall be determined in accordance with directives to be issued by the Ministry.

As we considered above, this regulation does not talk about retirement visas. Retirement Visa is not recognized or covered both under Proclamation No. 354/2003 and Regulation No. 114/2004.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Ethiopian government has taken several social, economic, and legal reforms to attract foreign investors and tourists to the country in order to generate revenue from this sector and bring economic development. The existence of a compressive legal framework that is compatible with the preceding situations is very essential. Retirement visas play a significant role in enhancing the economic development of the country. Several South American and Asian countries recognize retirement visas and generate economic benefit from this sector. In Ethiopia, both Immigration Proclamation No. 354/2003 and Immigration Regulation No. 114/2004 do not recognize or cover retirement visas. Recognition and regulation of retirement visas play an important role in attracting foreign investors and expertise in different professions to Ethiopia. Hence, it's important to revisit our law and recognize and govern retirement visas.

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