

eID card breaks down barrier of financial inclusion

The pilot programme of the MasterCard-branded National eID card was launched on 28 August in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.



In the pilot phase, the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) will issue MasterCard-branded identity cards with electronic payments functionality to 13 million Nigerians. This initiative is the largest roll-out of a biometric-based verification card with an electronic payment solution in the country and the broadest financial inclusion programme in Africa.

The eID card forms a key component of the Nigerian Identity Management System, deployed by NIMC as part of its mandate to create, maintain and operate the country's first central National Identity Database and provide proof of identity to Nigerians 16 years and older.

With 13 applications, including MasterCard's prepaid payment technology and Cryptovision's biometric identification technology, the eID card will provide millions of Nigerians - the majority of whom have never had access to a banking product - with the security, convenience and reliability of electronic payments.

Easy interaction

At a celebratory event held in Abuja, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said: "I am happy that this important milestone of the roll-out of the National Identity Management System has been realised today. I am impressed with the quality of the eID card and the work of the corporate partners that made it possible. I commend especially MasterCard, and Access Bank Plc, as well as the Commission for achieving a world-class product."

"The National eID programme enables us to create an optimised common platform for Nigerian citizens to easily interact with the various government agencies and to transact electronically," says Barr. Chris Onyemenam, CEO of NIMC. "There are many use cases for the card, including the potential to use it as an international travel document, which will have significant implications for border control in Nigeria and West Africa."

"In close collaboration with both the public and private sectors to achieve the full potential of this program, NIMC is focused on inclusive citizenship, more effective governance, and the creation of a cashless economy, all of which will stimulate economic growth, investment and trade," he adds.

A game changer

"This is a memorable occasion for MasterCard as we witness the start of a financial inclusion programme that is unprecedented in scale and scope," says Daniel Monehin, division president of sub-Saharan Africa, MasterCard. "Combining an identity card with MasterCard's prepaid payment capability creates a game changer as it breaks down one of the most significant barriers to financial inclusion - proof of identity - while simultaneously enabling Nigerians to access the global economy."

He said the broader economic impact of the card will be felt as the previously unbanked and under-banked are able to gain access to the mainstream economy, and the visibility of their assets allows them to build a financial history and establish credit-worthiness with financial institutions.

Upon completion of the pilot programme, NIMC plans to introduce more than 100 million cards to Nigeria's 167 million citizens.

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