

Access to digital financial services across remote Africa

A biometric smart card will provide access to government assistance and basic financial services to remote communities in sub-Saharan Africa.



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This will give individuals access to digital financial services offline in real-time, even if they lack a formal identity document such as a birth certificate or passport.

Mastercard has partnered with African fintech and Start Path company, Paycode, to provide both company's offerings on one card that will help increase access to critical services and advance economic inclusion.

An estimated five percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa remains financially excluded while close to 30% remain without a form of identification and 60% of the continent has no internet connectivity, leaving these individuals unable to access government assistance and basic financial services.

Onboarding 30-million individuals

The partnership's goal is to onboard 30-million individuals living in remote, unconnected areas of Africa over the next three years, enabling them to access the products and services they need with a community pass biometric smart card that runs on Paycode's EDAPT platform.

Mastercard's community pass platform will be included in Paycode's Electronic Data And Payments Technology platform (EDAPT) that currently provides a secure, biometric identity as well as a digital bank account.

Users will be able to manage day-to-day needs, including paying school fees for children, getting vaccinations for their families, selling goods, and growing their businesses.

To enable this, community pass allows a person's face or palm to be recognised at both online and offline locations, while ensuring best-in-class security of their individual data.

It also leverages consistent technology standards so that an individual can seamlessly access financial, health, agricultural, or aid services across providers, including government disbursements.

"Adding inclusive ID functionality to Paycode biometric smart cards helps reach those currently excluded from critical government programs and ensures we are addressing basic financial needs of a dispersed population," says Ricardo Pareja, SVP, sales & market development, H&D for Mastercard.

Inclusion for prosperity

"As we seek to drive beyond inclusion to fostering prosperity in communities across the globe, a critical focus for Mastercard is to help enable the interoperability and scale of solutions like those provided by Paycode."

Ralph Pecker, CEO at Paycode adds: "We play an important role in last mile delivery and proof of life financial services technology, by providing solutions that bring tremendous growth and financial access offline in real-time to the financial and technology sectors in Africa."

"We believe that shared digital tools and scalable channels can drastically improve the reach and access to services, by reducing the cost to serve those communities as well as improving the effectiveness of service delivery," says Selim Ergoz, vice president, business development - governments at Mastercard.

Last year, Mastercard pledged to connect one-billion people, including five-million micro and small businesses, to the digital economy by 2025. As part of these efforts, the technology company has a direct focus on providing 25-million women entrepreneurs with solutions to grow their businesses.

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