



2 November 2023

Danish National ID Centre

Birkerød Kongevej 2
DK-3460 Birkerød
Denmark

Phone +45 61 98 39 00
Email nidc@nidc.dk
Website www.nidc.dk

Ghana: The Ghana Card

Introduction

The following note describes the procedure of civil registration and issuance procedure of the Ghanaian ID card also known as Ghana Card.

The note is based on information obtained during meetings in March 2018 and December 2021 with the Ghanaian National Identification Authority (NIA), the organisation responsible for the Ghana Card project.

The National Identification Authority (NIA)

NIA was established in 2006 with the purpose of managing the National Identification System (NIS). But it was not until the introduction of the National Identity Register Act of 2008, which gave the necessary legal authorisation to collect personal and biometric data, that NIA became fully operational. Besides issuing and promoting the Ghana Card, NIA is responsible for collecting, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating personal data, while ensuring the accuracy, integrity and security of the data. NIA maintains a national database.¹ The national database contains digital copies of all breeder documents, such as the Certified Copy of Entry in register of Births, in addition to the personal and biometric data. NIA updates the database by deleting records, when people pass away or if someone renounce their Ghanaian citizenship. NIA has a backup of their servers with all the registrations in real time at a secure location.²

The Ghana Card project

The first Ghana ID cards were issued in 1973 in selected border regions, but the project was cancelled after three years due to logistic and financial issues.³ With the establishment of NIA, the Ghana Card project became a priority once again and in 2013, NIA issued one million Ghana Cards in a new version.⁴

¹ Official website of the NIA A, year of issue n/a.

² National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

³ Official website of the NIA A, year of issue n/a.

⁴ National Identification Authority, NIA Head Office, Accra, March 2018.

According to the World Bank, there have been multiple different electronic identification systems in Ghana, which have led to inefficiencies and challenges with authentication and verification. The Ghana Card is meant to be the one ID card to use for the Ghanaian population, whether going to insurance companies, banks, government authorities, social services, etc. The newest 2018 version of the Ghana Card makes it possible to travel inside the ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States).⁵ Thereby, the Ghana Card is supposed to replace the different kinds of ID cards that are currently being used in Ghana.⁶

Every Ghanaian citizens in Ghana and abroad must register for the Ghana Card. Foreigners residing in Ghana (excluding diplomats) must also apply for the Ghana Card. The Ghana Card is valid for 10 years and is free of charge for first time issuance.⁷

Children from birth to the age of 10 years receive a 2D barcode card (from the 2013 Ghana Card stock). At age 10, they will receive a new 2D barcode card with their biometrics updated. From 15 years and above they will receive the new 2018 Ghana Card with chip module.⁸

Registration

It is mandatory by law that every Ghanaian should register for the 2018 Ghana Card, also if one has an older version of the Ghana Card. There are 276 district and 16 regional offices throughout Ghana where one can register.⁹ All applicants must appear in person to apply for a Ghana Card.¹⁰ To apply for the Ghana Card the following documentation is required: 1) passport or 2) birth certificate or CCERB. A digital address code, which is a 'GPS address' showing the home address, is also needed for registration.¹¹

If someone does not possess the required documents, the applicant must provide a relative who can vouch for them under oath. Lawyers can vouch for people who do not have relatives. NIA keeps a record of the people who have vouched under oath for others and their PIN is linked to the person they vouched for. According to NIA, there are certain consequences for vouching for non-relatives and non-Ghanaians.¹²

The caseworker conducting the registration at the offices throughout Ghana will be identifiable by a specific number attached to the registration file. From that

⁵ World Bank, 26 September 2013, pp. 31, 61; National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

⁶ National Identification Authority, Accra, March 2018.

⁷ National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021; Official website of the NIA C, year of issue n/a.

⁸ National Identification Authority, Accra, March 2018.

⁹ National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

¹⁰ Official website of the NIA B, year of issue n/a.

¹¹ National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

¹² National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

number the caseworker can be held responsible if it turns out that false information has been registered. Thereby, NIA aims to ensure the integrity of the registration procedure.¹³

During the registration process, both biographic as well as biometric data are registered. The biometrics captured at the registration includes fingerprints of all ten fingers, facial photo showing the ears, and iris scan. Currently, the iris scans are only stored and not actively used. Biometrics are captured from age 6, which is the time when a child can have the ID card issued. Before age six, the child's biographics are linked to the mother's.¹⁴

Issuance of the Ghana Card

There are three types of issuance, instant issuance being the most common procedure. Instant issuance means that the applicant will receive his or her new Ghana Card on the spot shortly after registration. In rural and semi-rural areas, the lack of data connection makes instant issuance impossible. In this case, the cards are printed overnight. This is called deferred printing. The third type is called centralised printing.

In 2022, NIA plans to start registering children under the age of 15. In the more distant future, overseas residents will be able to apply for the Ghana Card at missions abroad. NIA will set up registration centres at the embassies, so Ghanaians abroad can register for a Ghana Card.

¹³ National Identification Authority, Accra, March 2018; National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

¹⁴ National Identification Authority, Accra, December 2021.

References

Oral sources

National Identification Authority (March 2018): Interviewed in Accra, Ghana.

National Identification Authority (December 2021): Interviewed in Accra, Ghana.

Written sources

Official website of the NIA A (year of issue not available): <https://nia.gov.gh/our-history/>, retrieved 5 August 2022.

Official website of the NIA B (year of issue not available): <https://nia.gov.gh/faqs/>, retrieved 5 August 2022.

Official website of the NIA C (year of issue not available), <https://nia.gov.gh/registration-process/>, retrieved 5 August 2022.

World Bank (26 September 2013): eTransform Ghana Project, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/233911468253466632/pdf/802930PAD0REVI00Box379839B00PUB-LIC0.pdf>, retrieved 5 August 2022.