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NIGERIA: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY CARD (NIC), INCLUDING ROLL-OUT OF THE NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (NIN); REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES TO OBTAIN A NIN AND NIC; APPEARANCE AND SECURITY FEATURES; PREVALENCE OF FRAUDULENT NICS (2016-NOVEMBER 2018)

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1. Overview

Sources note that there have been difficulties in implementing a national ID card system in Nigeria (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33; *Premium Times* 29 Aug. 2014). According to sources, the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) is responsible for the Nigerian national identity database (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.34), national identity cards (NIC or e-ID) (US n.d.), and the NIN (Legit.ng 20 Apr. 2017).

Sources state that the NIMC was established in 2007 (Nigeria n.d.a; Legit.ng 20 Apr. 2017), but only became "fully operational" in 2012 (Legit.ng 20 Apr. 2017). According to a Country Information Report produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, in September 2014, Nigeria launched an NIC which "is currently undergoing a trial and is several years from full implementation" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33). According to the US Department of State's Reciprocity Schedule for Nigeria, the NIC is "[a]vailable, but not widely used" (US n.d.).

According to the online Nigerian newspaper Punch, the NIMC "has said that it cannot produce [NIC]s for everyone who enrolled," adding that the NICs, are prepared on a first-come-first-served basis, and that those that "are ready are mainly for people who enrolled in 2012 and 2013" (Punch 24 Apr. 2018). Similarly, in a February 2018 information session, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) officers working at the High Commission of Canada to Nigeria in Lagos stated that, although the Nigerian NIC program was started several years ago, "most people do not have a [NIC]," but instead have been issued temporary ones (Canada 14 Feb. 2018). The same source listed loss of NICs by government officials and a short supply of NICs as reasons explaining their unavailability (Canada 14 Feb. 2018).

1.1 Significance of the NIN Compared to the NIC

The NIMC website states that an individual's "NIN, [c]ard and/or [b]iometrics can be used" to prove identity, "with or without a physical ID card" (Nigeria n.d.a). The Nigerian newspaper *Premium Times* reports that, according to an NIMC spokesperson, the NIN "is the unique identifier and most important token issued by the Commission and not the physical e-ID Card" (*Premium Times* 2 Apr. 2018).

Sources report that the NIMC's Director General indicated that the NIMC would focus on the issuance of the NIN, rather than the issuance of NICs, for the next three to five years (ITEdgeNews 17 July 2018; Punch 24 Apr. 2018). In an interview with ITEdgeNews, a Nigerian technology and business magazine with online and print versions, the NIMC director-general explained that "a physical card can be discarded," but that the "number is for life" (ITEdgeNews 17 July 2018). In August 2017, Nigerian news site The Eagle Online reported that, according to the senior special assistant to the President "on Information Communications Technology," only 5 million people had been enrolled by the NIMC over the 2 previous years and that the Nigerian government was working on capturing the information of 180 million people "over the next 3 years" with the assistance of the World Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (The Eagle Online 2 Aug. 2017). Sources report that, as of April 2018, approximately 30 million people have been enrolled by the NIMC (ITEdgeNews 17 July 2018; Punch 24 Apr. 2018).

2. NIN

Sources indicate that the NIN is a set of 11 numbers randomly assigned to an individual after enrolment into the national identity database (*Premium Times* 2 Apr. 2018; Nigeria n.d.b); the NINs are unique and may never be reassigned or used by another person (Nigeria n.d.b). According to the NIMC, the NIN is used "to tie all records about an individual in the [national identity database]," and the data collected for enrolment for an NIN is "used to cross-check existing data in the [n]ational [i]dentity [d]atabase to confirm that there is no previous entry of the same data" (Nigeria n.d.b).

According to the NIMC, the NIN is intended to be used "for all transactions in Nigeria requiring identity verification" and the NIMC is working with the different responsible agencies across Nigeria to harmonize and integrate the data and coordinate activities (Nigeria n.d.b). *Premium Times* reports that, according to a spokesperson for the NIMC, the NIN is "verifiable through the NIMC Verification Service (NVS) portal made available to institutions and organisations upon request" (*Premium Times* 2 Apr. 2018).

2.1 Eligibility and Enrolment

The NIMC indicates that enrolment for the NIN is mandatory for all citizens and legal residents, who are all eligible for the NIN from birth (Nigeria n.d.b). Legit.ng reports that it has been mandatory to enroll since January 2017 (Legit.ng 20 Apr. 2017). However, the US Reciprocity Schedule for Nigeria states, without providing further details, that although "[a]ll Nigerians should have a national identification number[,] ... registration for this number is rarely completed" (US n.d.).

The NIMC states that enrolment for a NIN "consists of the recording of an individual's demographic data and capture of the ten (10) fingerprints, head-to-shoulder facial picture and digital signature" (Nigeria n.d.b). The Australian report adds that an iris scan is also performed (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33).

The NIMC website states the following regarding information provided during enrolment: "[b]e sure you provide the right information about yourself while your data is captured during enrolment for your NIN [as] that will be the information legally identifying you for life whenever your NIN is used" (Nigeria n.d.c). During the information session with the IRCC officials based at the Canadian High Commission in Lagos, it was similarly stated that the biometric component of the enrolment process involves "self-reporting" and therefore what is being done during biometric capture "is establishing whatever is said at that moment to be true and capturing it, but ... we still can't verify that that is, in fact, the truth. [Those enrolling] can say anything at that moment" (Canada 14 Feb. 2018).

The NIMC website explains that it is possible to pre-enrol online for the NIN, in which case the applicant is handed a "summary sheet that has a 2D [b]arcode," and the applicant can also download and prefill an application form (Nigeria n.d.d). The same source adds that enrolment is only completed when an applicant's biometric data, including fingerprints, headshot photograph and signature, is captured by an enrolment officer at an NIMC enrolment centre (Nigeria n.d.d). Sources note that enrolment for the NIN is free (Nigeria n.d.e; US n.d.).

2.1.1 Enrolment for Those 16 Years of Age and Older

The NIMC states that an applicant must provide a bank verification number (BVN), "if they have one," as well as any of the following required original and valid supporting documents:

1. Old National [ID] Card
2. Driver's License
3. Voter's card (Temporary or Permanent)
4. Nigerian [i]nternational passport
5. Certificate of origin
6. Attestation letter from a prominent ruler in your community
7. Birth certificate
8. Declaration of age

9. Attestation letter from religious/traditional leader
10. [National Health Insurance Scheme, NHIS] ID card
11. Government staff [ID] card
12. Registered/recognized private organization staff [ID] card
13. School ID [c]ard private/[p]ublic. (Nigeria n.d.e)

The NIMC website also provides the following details regarding the process for capturing the data of applicants who are 16 years of age and older:

- Applicant walks into the enrolment [c]entre with a supporting document.
- Applicant will be verified to ascertain if he/she has ever enrolled using the NIN verification portal.
- Applicant will be issued an enrolment form to fill [out] if he/she has not enrolled before. O[r] the printed [b]arcode slip will be collected if the applicant had pre-enrolled earlier using the pre-enrolment service.
- Applicant's forms will be vetted by a[n] NIMC [o]fficial to crosscheck the information [provided] on the form against the supporting document provided and to check for errors/mistake [on] the form. Note: applicants who cannot read nor write should be accompanied by a literate individual who can do the form filling for [them].
- Applicant's pre-filled information will be inputted on the NIMC [s]oftware by a[n] NIMC enrolment officer or the [b]arcode slip will be scanned by the NIMC enrolment officer to populate all the required field[s].
- The enrolment officer will ask the applicant to double check his/her information for errors using the applicant monitor.
- If the applicant is satisfied with his/her demographic information, the biometrics (ten finger[p]rints and facial image) of the applicant will be capture[d] subsequently.
- After completing the enrolment, a [t]ransaction ID [s]lip will be issued to the applicant as [evidence] of the transaction. However, the [t]ransaction slip does not confer the right to a [NIN]. The applicant will be requested to come back for the NIN within 2-7 working days, as it is subjected to availability of network, authentication and verification.
- A [NIN] [s]lip is issued to the applicants after processing.
- The [n]ational e-ID [c]ard will be [i]ssued to applicant[s] within 12[] months after [i]ssuance of [the] NIN[,] barring any unforeseen circumstances. (Nigeria n.d.e)

2.1.2 Enrolment for Minors 15 Years of Age and Younger

The NIMC provides the following mandatory requirements for the enrolment of minors, from the age of 0 to 15 years, at an NIMC enrolment centre:

1. Parent/Guardian's [NIN] [s]lip (father, mother or guardian's NIN) [must] be provided.
2. Supporting documents and evidence of proof as the [g]uardian [of] the minor (if [g]uardian's NIN is used).
3. Registered [b]irth [c]ertificate/Statutory [a]ge [d]eclaration.
4. All minors [must] be accompanied by at least one of the parents or a [g]uardian. (Nigeria n.d.f)

According to the same source, the following are acceptable supporting documents, which must be "original and valid":

1. Birth certificate
2. Declaration of age
3. School ID Card private/[p]ublic
4. NHIS ID card
5. Nigerian passport
6. Attestation letter from a prominent ruler in the community
7. Attestation letter from religious/traditional leader. (Nigeria n.d.f)

According to the NIMC, the process for capturing the information of minors is the same as the one for adults who are 16 years old or above, with the exception that parents or guardians must accompany the underage applicant and are responsible for verifying the information (Nigeria n.d.f).

2.2 Ability to Retrieve NIN

According to its website, the NIMC uses an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) service which enables the retrieval of a forgotten NIN using a mobile phone, if it was the phone used when enrolling, or by inputting "registered details" if using a different phone (Nigeria n.d.g). The NIMC indicates that "this service is now available on all mobile networks in Nigeria" and that it costs 20 Nigerian naira (NGN) (approximately C\$0.07) (Nigeria n.d.g).

3. NIC

According to the NIMC, the NIC is a chip-based card with multiple functions, given as a "token" upon successful enrolment or registration into the National Identity System (Nigeria n.d.h). The NIMC states that "[m]inors are not issued ... [NICs] until they attain the age of 16" (Nigeria n.d.b). The same source adds that for minors previously registered in the national identity system and who hold a NIN, "[a] text message will automatically be sent to the [a]pplicant, [p]arent or guardian to come for update when they become 16[]years" old (Nigeria n.d.f).

According to the NIMC, most information provided during the enrolment process, such as the next of kin or the parentage of the holder, is only available in the national identity database and is not present on the card; other information, such as the address and the NIN of the holder, is "protected by higher levels of access control" (Nigeria n.d.i).

A sample of a NIC, with descriptions of its features, is attached to this Response.

3.1 Requirements and Procedures to Obtain a NIC

According to the NIMC, "[t]o qualify for a [n]ational e-ID [c]ard, you must first be enrolled and have a [NIN]," and be a Nigerian or legal resident 16 years of age or older (Nigeria n.d.j). The US Reciprocity Schedule adds that to obtain a card, one must "[r]egister at the approved centers set up by the [NIMC]" (US n.d.). Sources state that there is no fee to acquire an NIC (Nigeria n.d.a; US n.d.).

According to the NIMC, "only those who have received [a short message service, SMS] can come forward to collect their [c]ards as directed in the SMS" (Nigeria n.d.j). Sources report that it is possible to check the status of a card on the NIMC website (Legit.ng 31 May 2018; *Premium Times* 2 Apr. 2018; Nigeria n.d.j). Sources note that the card cannot be collected by a proxy since only the applicant can collect the card in person (Nigeria n.d.j; Finelib.com n.d.).

Premium Times reports that, according to an NIMC spokesperson, "Nigerians and legal residents who relocated from where they enrolled [may] visit any NIMC office closest to them to request, fill [out] and submit a card transfer form to the state coordinator for processing" (*Premium Times* 2 Apr. 2018).

The NIMC indicates that the requirements and procedure to collect and activate the NIC are as follows:

Requirements for the National e-ID Card [C]ollection and [A]ctivation

- Customer receives [a] [b]atch ID [n]umber via SMS.
- Applicants must have a 4 digit secret pin (only known to them) for the e-ID [c]ard activation.
- Applicant's fingerprints will be used for activation (for applicants with fingers only).

Process of Card Activation

- Card [o]wners walk into the NIMC [c]ard collection [c]entre and present the text message or email printouts received from NIMC with the batch ID.
- The Card Operations Support Officer uses the batch ID extracted from the [c]ard [o]wner's SMS in order to sort out his/her [c]ard.
- The Activation Officer[,] after sorting the [c]ard[,] gives the [c]ard [o]wner the e-ID [c]ard to confirm his/her [n]ames and [a]ddress on the [c]ard [e]nvelope.
- Following the [c]ard [o]wner's confirmation, the [c]ard [o]wner is advised to open the card envelope, bring out the e-ID Card, and verify the [n]ames, [d]ate of [b]irth and [i]mage on the face of the e-ID [c]ard before [a]ctivation is done.
- If the [c]ard [o]wner is satisfied with the information on the e-ID [c]ard, the Activation officer collects the e-ID [c]ard from the [c]ard owner for a Match-on-Card (MOC) [v]erification.
- After the [MOC] verification, the Activation Officer then [a]ctivates the [e]lectronic [p]ublic [k]ey [i]nfrastructure (ePKI), [e]lectronic ID (eID), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) [a]pplet and Europay-MasterCard-Visa (EMV) [a]pplet [u]sing a four digit password created by the [c]ard [o]wners (and only known to the card owner).
- The [n]ational e-ID [c]ard will be returned to the [c]ard owner after the completion of activation. (Nigeria n.d.j)

3.2 Renewal and Replacement of NICs

According to the NIMC, applicants who renew their NICs must submit the expired NIC and fill in a "[c]ard renewal form" (Nigeria n.d.j). The same source indicates that a fee of 2,500 NGN [approximately C\$9] for renewal is pending approval and that it can take 1 to 3 months after the request is successfully submitted to be issued the new NIC (Nigeria n.d.k).

The NIMC website provides the following information regarding the replacement of a card:

General Requirements for Card Replacement

1. Applicant must provide his/her [NIN].
2. Duly filled [out] [c]ard replacement form.

Conditions for Card Replacement

- Loss
- Damage
- Theft
- Change/[m]odification of [r]ecord

In the Case of Loss

An applicant will be required to provide the following:

1. Police report (recent)
2. Court affidavit for loss of documents
3. Evidence of payment (...2,500 [NGN])
4. NIN for verification

In the Case of Damage

An applicant will be required to provide the following:

1. Evidence of the damaged [n]ational e-ID [c]ard
2. Evidence of payment (... 2,500 [NGN])

In the Case of Theft

An applicant will be required to provide the following:

1. Police report (recent)
2. Court affidavit for loss of documents
3. Evidence of payment (... 2,500 [NGN])
4. NIN for verification

In the Case of Change/Modification of Record

An applicant will be required to provide the [t]ransaction slip issued after modification was done.

Service Fee: ... 2,500 [NGN]

Timeline: 1-2 months after successfully submitting replacement request. (Nigeria n.d.l)

3.3 Functions of the Card

According to the Australian report, the e-ID card "is [eventually] intended to harmonise all national identity databases including drivers' licences, voter registration, health, tax, and [n]ational [p]ension [c]ommission, into a single 'shared' services platform" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33).

Sources explain that in addition to being used for identification, the NIC can also be used to access financial services (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.34; Legit.ng 31 May 2018). Legit.ng states that the card can be used at any automated teller machine (ATM) that has a MasterCard logo (Legit.ng 31 May 2018). The NIMC explains that "MasterCard will only be available on the first 13 million [c]ards," adding that this function is optional and that applicants may decline to activate it (Nigeria n.d.i).

Sources note that the NIC is also planned to be used and to "eventually act as a travel document between [Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS] countries" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33; Nigeria n.d.i). Legit.ng similarly states that the NIC is intended planned to be used as an alternative to a passport in the West African sub-region (Legit.ng 31 May 2018).

The NIMC explains that when collected, the card has five active "applets" out of 13 present on the card (Nigeria n.d.h). The NIMC provides the following explanation for the different functions of the card:

1. **Electronic Identity (e-ID)**
This is the simplest but major function of the National e-ID [c]ard as it contains key information of the applicant or [c]ard holder recorded in the [d]atabase. Information such as the [NIN], the [c]ardholder/applicant's address, name and other details are stored here and securely locked away and can [only] be read by authorised terminals or [c]ard [a]cceptance [d]evices (CADs).
...
2. **Payment - Europay MasterCard & Visa (EMV)**
This payment [f]unction enables the [n]ational e-ID [c]ard to be used as a tool for making payments for goods and services in any part of the world.
...
3. **Match-on-Card (MoC)**
The card has your 10 fingerprints taken at the point of registration [into] the [n]ational [i]dentity [d]atabase safely stored away on it. No unauthorised person can access them.
...
4. **Electronic Public Key Infrastructure (ePKI) - Security**
This function facilitates secure communication between persons, users and devices. ePKI as it is called helps in building trust for transactions as well as ensuring confidentiality of business transactions such as e-commerce, internet banking and business emails. With the ePKI function on the [n]ational e-ID [c]ard, electronic signature can be duly applied to sign binding contracts, applications, documents, online identification and at vending/ATM[s].

5. **International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) - Travel**

The [n]ational e-ID [c]ard is also a travel document and conforms to such standards as the ICAO just like the International Passport. This function on the [c]ard provides future functionality for anyone who may wish to embark on cross border migration such as regional travel within West Africa and[/]or other consenting [c]ountries where a visa is not required. (Nigeria n.d.h)

The NIMC states that the functions of the remaining eight applets present on the card "are to be implemented in subsequent phases" (Nigeria n.d.h).

4. **Mandatory Use of NIN and e-ID Card**

In an article on its website, the NIMC states that the use of the NIN is to "become mandatory as from September 1, 2015, for all transactions offered by applicable government institutions" (Nigeria n.d.m). The NIMC website states that the NIN is "set to be used" in "any other transactions [the] NIMC may so prescribe and list in the Federal Government Gazette" (Nigeria n.d.b). Sources report that regulations on the Mandatory Use of the National Identification Number Regulations were published in the official government gazette in 2017 (ITEdgeNews 17 July 2018; Oserogho & Associates 8 Jan. 2018). According to Lagos-based law firm Oserogho & Associates,

[t]he NIN Regulations 2017 [make] it mandatory for every person to indicate his or her [NIN] on a wide range of transactional documents; from the enjoyment of hospitality services; to the execution of any contract including tenancy and any transfer of any interest in land; to health/medical care services, the purchase of any motorised vehicle, aircraft, ship or boat; the purchase of any travel tickets; insurance transactions; shares or equities; employment contracts; internal and external examinations; admissions into any primary, secondary or tertiary schools; membership of any professional body; registration and post-registration activities at the Corporate Affairs Commission ("CAC").

Other activities and transactions in which a[n] NIN must be disclosed include the filing of civil, criminal and arbitration processes; import and export activities; the purchase and registration of mobile phones SIM cards, with other communication devices; the issuance of [b]irth [c]ertificates, [d]river's [l]icenses, [v]oter's [r]egistration, [t]ax [i]dentification [c]ards; the operation of [b]ank accounts, purchase and sale of foreign exchange currencies; loan documentation; probate transactions; etc. (Oserogho & Associates 8 Jan. 2018)

However, according to ITEdgeNews, the director general of the NIMC stated in July 2018 that the NIMC would begin enforcement of the mandatory use of the NIN "a later date" for certain transactions, although a "gradual acceptance" of the NIN is increasing the number of enrolments, noting as examples that "organisations like the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) ... have all made the NIN a mandatory requirement for service delivery," and that "[o]thers are expected to follow suit" (ITEdgeNews 17 July 2018).

According to the Australian report, "Nigerians who do not have an e[-]ID card by 2019 will be unable to vote or use other government services" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.33). The Cable reports that the director general of the NIMC stated that "the mandatory use of the [NIN] will begin in January 2019," following the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria's approval "of the new Digital Identity Ecosystem [that] will bring into full force the implementation of the provisions of the NIMC Act 23, 2007, which include the enforcement of the mandatory use of the [NIN] and the application of appropriate sanctions and penalties on defaulters" (The Cable 19 Sept. 2018).

In an undated article on its website, the NIMC reports that the FRSC announced that the NIN has been made "mandatory for processing and issuance of the National Driver's license" (Nigeria n.d.n). In an April 2018 article, the Nigerian news site The Cable states that the FRSC said it will "ensure that henceforth" applicants to the national driver's licence "produce their NIN at registration points" (The Cable 13 Apr. 2018).

For information on the mandatory use of the NIN for obtaining passports, see Response to Information Request NGA106186 of November 2018.

5. Prevalence of Fraud

According to the Australian country information report, "Nigeria experiences high rates of document fraud. Most documents, from birth certificates to diplomas, can be falsified and procured" (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.37). The same source adds that it is reportedly "neither difficult nor expensive to obtain" documents such as marriage certificates, birth certificates, age declarations, or letter of identification from local governments (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.38). The IRCC officials from the Canadian High Commission in Lagos similarly stated that there is "pervasive fraud and absence of verification options" in Nigeria (Canada 14 Feb. 2018). The same source added:

When it comes to identity and supporting documents, civil documents, primary documents or secondary documents, ... they are impossible to verify with any confidence. As a whole, there's little weight placed on official documents from West Africa. It's relatively easy for anyone to obtain an official document given the state of record-keeping and level of corruption in the region. (Canada 14 Feb. 2018)

The IRCC officials also stated that "almost everything that's possible to be fraudulent can be fraudulent" in Nigeria and that most identity documents are "unverifiable" (Canada 14 Feb. 2018).

The Australian report provides the following on the Nigerian government's response to fraud:

The Nigeria Police Force has established a Special Fraud Unit and the Penal Code and the Criminal Code address fraud and the falsification of documents. DFAT understands the Special Fraud Unit actively investigates and prosecutes suspects but very few cases have thus far resulted in convictions. The [National Immigration Service] has a forensic laboratory for the examination of travel documents and monetary instruments. (Australia 9 Mar. 2018, para. 5.37)

On a page on its website entitled "Fraud Alert," the NIMC issues cautions and warnings, including the following:

Beware of [f]raudsters posing as [NIMC] [a]gents or [s]taff. Do not pay money to anyone offering to help you speed up the NIN enrolment process or get the [n]ational e-ID card for you. You have to enrol and collect your card, when it is ready, yourself. (Nigeria n.d.o)

A separate page on the NIMC website states the following:

Once you enrol and your [NIN] is presented to you, the Automated Biometric Information System (ABIS) will store all your information supplied and **any attempt to enrol again by the same person will be detected and this a punishable offence.** (Nigeria n.d.p, emphasis in original)

For further information on the prevalence of fraudulent documents in Nigeria, including NICs, see Response to Information Request NGA106159 of August 2018.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.