



NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY (NIA)

NIA Reacts to Prof. Ransford Gyampo's Comment

The attention of the National Identification Authority (NIA) has been drawn to a Facebook post by Prof. Yaw Ransford Gyampo on 25th February 2023. The NIA notes with regret that the post, which went viral, contains outright falsehoods, misinformation, mischaracterizations and unsubstantiated claims. NIA's initial inclination was to ignore the post as reflecting Prof. Gyampo's inadequate appreciation of the issues about which he wrote. However, given the danger of some members of the public being misinformed, misled and/or adversely influenced by the contents of the post, NIA considers it necessary and appropriate to respond to the said post, notwithstanding the passage of time, as follows in order to address the mischief and set the records straight:

1. Alleged Mistrust Between the Main Opposition Party and NIA

Prof. Gyampo advances a number of reasons in support of his contention that the time is not ripe for the Electoral Commission to prescribe the Ghana Card as the source document for the registration of voters for the 2024 elections. Notably, he contends that ***“both NIA and EC suffers (sic) from a serious trust deficit from the main opposition party”***. We assume that the reference to “the main opposition party” is to the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Beyond the bare assertion, Prof. provides no evidence of the ***“serious trust deficit”*** that allegedly exists between NIA and NDC. Professors have a professional duty to be current in their assertions, and to provide the evidentiary bases for them. This is particularly so when a commentary concerns existing relationships between individuals or groups. False and misleading characterization of current relationships can create needless tension or exacerbate conflict in society. While Gyampo's ***opinion*** might reflect the truth in the past, there is no reasonable basis today for the assertion that there is a “serious trust deficit” between NIA and NDC. Here's why:

- a. Beginning in 2018, NIA embarked on a comprehensive stakeholder engagement to build or deepen trust and to enlist the support of all segments of society for its work. This included dialogue with all major political parties, several state institutions and key influencers in Ghanaian society. One key outcome of this process was the unqualified endorsement of NIA's work by all

former living Presidents of Ghana and their public registration for the Ghana Card.

- b. On the occasion of his registration for the Ghana Card in June 2018, late President Jerry John Rawlings, Founder of the NDC, publicly acknowledged the importance of the work of NIA, praised its current leadership for its sterling performance. He also congratulated NIA and its technical partner, Identity Management Systems II Ltd., for their splendid innovations in the nation's identity management system, and called on all Ghanaians to register for the Ghana Card.
- c. Similarly, on Tuesday, 9th July 2019, former President John Dramani Mahama and Mrs. Lordina Mahama, their household and office staff, and some leading members of the NDC including Dr. Omane Boamah, registered for the Ghana Card at the President's East Cantonments office. At the end of the exercise, President Mahama urged all Ghanaians to "go out there and register for the Ghana Card". The former President and his NDC colleagues were most cordial in their reception of the NIA team that carried out the exercise.
- d. On Saturday, 25th February 2023, a leading member of the NDC, Dr. Dominic Ayine, MP for Bolgatanga East Constituency and former Deputy Attorney General stated as follows on JoyNews Newsfile:

"NDC is fully in support of the NIA as an institution. We believe in the work that they are doing. We believe in the integrity of the Ghana Card. ... I myself have tested the system before, I walked in, I just put my fingerprint to the system, and I came out only once. So we believe in the Ghana Card system. ... And I must say that the current Administration at NIA has done a fantastic job, we must be honest about that and to praise them for the good work they are doing. So we think they can deliver a clean society with the Ghana Card, and we think they can deliver a clean election with the Ghana Card. ..."

NIA finds the foregoing statements as constituting a solid and unequivocal endorsement of the work, competence and integrity of NIA by the NDC. Any trust deficits in the relationship between NIA and NDC have dissipated and thawed. Simply put, there is no mistrust between the two entities. Some individual NDC members have genuine questions of fairness and inclusivity; these concerns do not reflect mistrust, and are being addressed. It is fair to suppose that most members of the NDC leadership, past and present, understand that the National Identification System (NIS) Project is an evolving one, and that the NIA leadership is actuated by proper motives and considerations.

Changes in perception favouring NIA at present may be largely due to the growing body of empirical evidence that allays the fears and concerns of those NDC members who were suspicious of the NIA leadership under an NPP Government. NIA has undertaken stakeholder engagements with all political parties at different stages of its work, and dutifully responded to each and every single invitation from Parliament to brief it on the progress of the NIS Project. We believe that the interactions and information shared have contributed immensely to the improvement of relations between NIA and NDC. In short, NIA disagrees that there is “a serious trust deficit from the NDC” toward NIA.

2. *Alleged Bureaucratic Bottlenecks and Payment of GHc250.00*

In the said Facebook post, Prof. Gyampo also claims that ***“to avoid bureaucratic bottlenecks, one must pay 250 cedis to be able to procure a Ghana Card, a move that undermines the concept of Universal Adult Suffrage”***. This is wholly incorrect. There is no “bureaucratic bottleneck” in the NIA registration process. The process flow for the entire registration, from arrival before a Registration Official to completion and departure with the Ghana Card, has been designed to take no more than 30 minutes; this duration applies whether one registers at a Premium Centre where fees are charged or at an NIA Regional or District Office where no fees are charged. The difference is that the Premium Service operates on an appointment system hence there are usually no long queues. The current fee for Premium Service, as approved by Parliament, is GHc280.00, but not GHc250.00 as stated by Prof. Gyampo.

3. *Alleged Adverse Impact of Premium Service on Principle of Universal Adult Suffrage*

Contrary to Prof. Gyampo’s assertion, NIA’s Premium Registration service does not undermine the principle of Universal Adult Suffrage. How could it, when it co-exists with the free registration service at all 16 Regional and 276 District Offices of NIA nationwide? How could it, when it constitutes an *additional* facility to enable citizens willing to pay a fee prescribed by Parliament to register for the Ghana Card in relative comfort? It must be emphasized that both Premium Service and the fees have been approved by Parliament and passed into law. The Premium Service is not compulsory neither is it a substitute for the regular service. Around the world, premium services exist, alongside regular services, to afford additional opportunities for those seeking such services in relative comfort and convenience at a fee. There is nothing discriminatory about that.

NIA’s Premium Service is universal, non-discriminatory and available to any Ghanaian willing to access it by booking an appointment on-line, paying the stipulated fees and attending at a selected Premium Centre at the appointed time to be registered. Since the mid-February 2023, three additional Premium Centres have been opened at the NIA Regional Offices in Koforidua, Kumasi and Takoradi, to operate alongside those at the NIA Headquarters and Cal Bank Head Office in Accra.

Since July 2021, the Premium Service has run alongside the **continuous registration service** which commenced in November 2021 at all NIA's 276 District Offices and 16 Regional Offices. NIA is unaware of any instance where a Ghanaian has been denied the right to register for the Ghana Card at any NIA office because the person was required to pay a fee of GHc250.00; such a requirement would be contrary to law, policy and practice. In short, Prof. Gyampo is completely wrong in his comments about NIA's Premium Services. NIA wishes to assure the general public that its free registration services will continue to be available at its Regional and District offices nationwide.

4. *Alleged Partisan Allocation of Registration Equipment*

Prof. Gyampo also asserts in his Facebook post under reference that ***“there are allegations that the distribution of equipment for the production of the Ghana Cards is skewed to favor the strongholds of the ruling party and to the disadvantage of the opposition”***. This is a most scurrilous, astonishing and false allegation, and published by a professor of political science, it is all the more damning and concerning!

The publication of this bare statement, without any evidentiary support, amounts to idle rumor-mongering. Such conduct is unbecoming of a professor who must, instead, manifest a commitment to sharing information that is sound and based on accessible and/or testable research. It is never sufficient to publish a bare allegation, simply because one has become aware of it, or dreamt it! A person minded to publish such a conflict-laden allegation bears a duty of proof and circumspection.

Prof. Gyampo insists that his comments are grounded in research he has conducted and he therefore advises NIA to humbly accept the findings and implications of his research and address the identified concerns. NIA has no reasonable basis to accept Prof. Gyampo's claim. In the circumstances, NIA respectfully challenges Prof. Gyampo to take out of the realm of conjecture his allegations and so-called research findings and conclusions, by publishing the relevant details of his research within the next 24 hours. This will permit an objective assessment of the nature, purpose, scope and method(s) of the research, as well as the facticity and soundness of his findings and conclusions.

NIA categorically denies that it has ever allocated pristine or functional registration equipment to NPP's political strongholds and defective equipment to NDC's strongholds, or that it has ever engaged in any conduct similar to the allegation. The NIA respectfully invites the general public to disregard the allegation with the contempt it deserves. NIA assures the general public that it will continue to discharge its statutory mandate with integrity and act with fairness and respect toward all segments of the Ghanaian society.

5. *False Claims and Exaggerations About NIA Registration Figures*

In the impugned Facebook post, Prof. Gyampo asserts that ***“as of 2020, there were about 17 million people captured by the NIA. Out of this number, a huge percentage***

are minors and foreigners". These statements are patently false. First, by 31st December 2020, the total number of Ghanaians aged 15 years and above "captured by NIA" was 15,361,378 – a figure nowhere near the region of "17 million" that Prof. Gyampo states. Either plain ignorance or excessive exaggeration is the mother of this embarrassing error.

Second, the total number of minors (persons under 18 years old) captured in the NIA database as at 31st December 2020 was 187,083. Surely, this is a paltry amount relative to 15,361,378, and does not constitute "a huge percentage" of the more than 15 million persons registered by the said date! The tendency to exaggerate is rather uncanny and concerning. Indeed, as at 19th February 2023, the total number of Ghanaians under 18 years old enrolled in the NIR is **390,313**, while the number aged 18 years and above in the NIR is **16.9 million**.

Third, there is no truth in Prof. Gyampo's assertion that "**a huge percentage**" of persons in the NIS database are foreigners. Under the Foreigner Identification System (FIMS) Project under which qualified foreigners in Ghana are registered, the total number of foreigners captured in the FIMS database as at 31st December 2020 was 133,774. Thus, Prof. Gyampo's allegation is wholly baseless and must be disregarded as idle prattle or malicious exaggeration.

6. Alleged Lack of Adequate Resources to Print Cards of Over 3.5 Million Registered Persons

Finally, Prof. Gyampo asserts that a key challenge facing NIA is "***its reported lack of adequate resources to function well in printing the cards of over 3.5 million people who are already registered...***". This is not true. NIA does not have a backlog of over 3.5 million cards to print, and it has never stated anywhere that it does. On the contrary, what NIA has stated is that it has **3.5 million blank cards** in a bonded warehouse and that it will be able to print the backlog of **541,529** cards accumulated since July 2022, once the cards are released by Cal Bank. For the avoidance of doubt, NIA has not stated that the cards of 3.5 million registered persons are yet to be printed. What NIA has stated to Parliament and Ghanaians at large is that it has a backlog of **541,529** cards to print.

Thus, nowhere has NIA ever reported that it lacks the resources to print the cards of "over 3.5 million people who are already registered". Prof. Gyampo got his facts wrong, probably due to inadequate attention to details or an inadequate appreciation of the facts and issues of concern to him.

Objective observers of the identity management ecosystem and the digitalization process in Ghana, including credible and impartial civil society organizations, recognize and appreciate NIA's stellar performance since 2017. Thus, on 9th December 2021, the **Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)**, the local chapter of the worldwide anti-corruption agency, Transparency International, awarded NIA the **Most Efficient Public Service**

Delivery institution in Ghana for the year 2021. In a citation accompanying the award, GII applauded and celebrated the Management and Staff of the National Identification Authority (NIA) for ***“revamping the NIS project and ensuring accessibility to the registration process”***.

In these circumstances, NIA’s confidence and “eloquent defense” of its track record are well-founded and legitimate, and will continue. NIA is encouraged by the recognition of its work by objective analysts, both individual and corporate. NIA is also grateful for the thoughtful, candid and constructive criticisms from segments of the general public, as such viewpoints have helped shape NIA’s performance to date.

Corporate Affairs

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