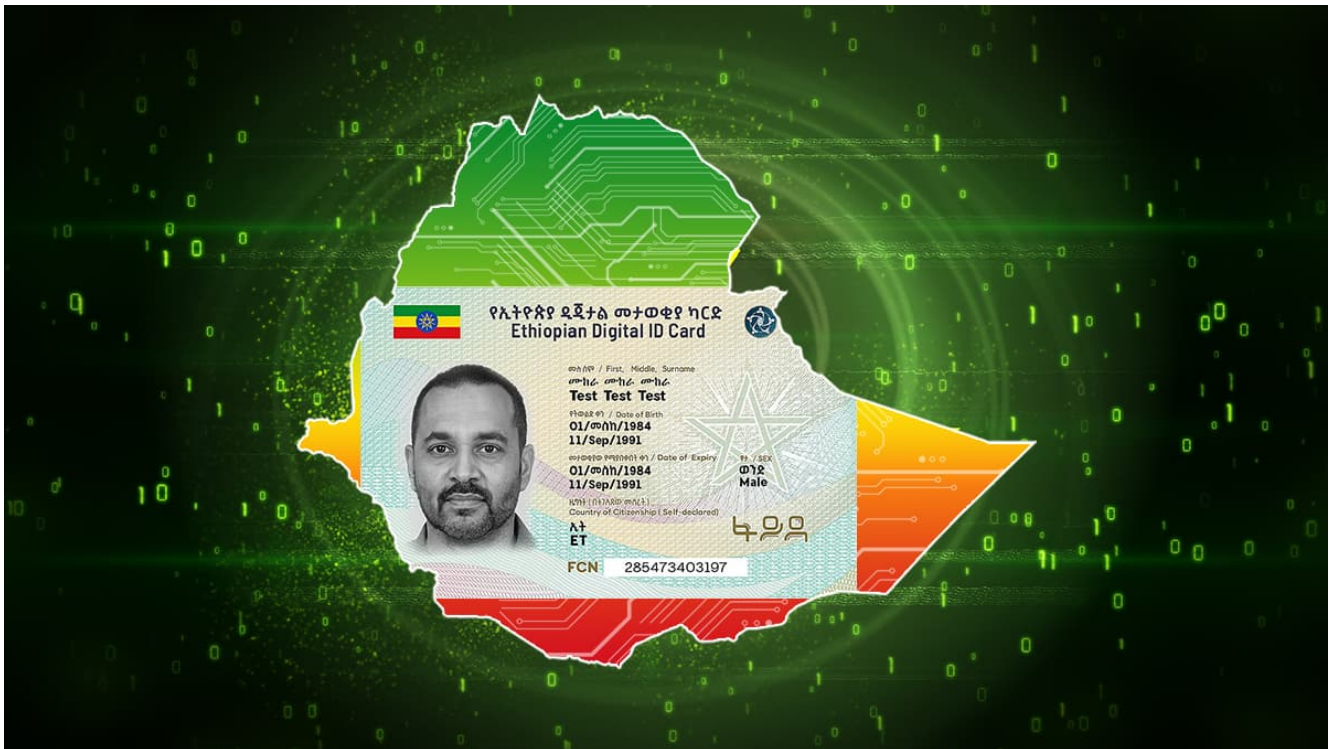# Ethiopia Embarks on Ambitious National ID Project to Transform Public Services

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Ethiopia has undertaken an ambitious project to provide a unique digital identity to all its citizens. The National ID project aims to enroll over 100 million people, making it one of the largest digital ID systems in the world. With support from international partners like the World Bank, Ethiopia is leveraging the latest technologies to build a robust and inclusive foundational ID system that can enable access to essential services for its citizens.

A Reliable ID System is Key for Development

A universal and reliable ID system is crucial for any country's development, enabling planning for public services, increasing efficiency in administration, and promoting inclusive growth. Lack of recognized IDs has been a major impediment preventing poor and marginalized communities in many countries from accessing education, healthcare, social benefits, banking and other services. Ethiopia has a largely rural and dispersed population, with very low levels of birth registration. The introduction of the new digital ID is a major step towards giving all Ethiopians an official identity and a gateway to access public and private services.

To ensure uniqueness, accuracy and security of the new ID system, Ethiopia is incorporating latest technologies including biometrics, machine learning systems and advanced cryptography. The ID system is built on a robust database that will aggregate information from various government databases and legacy civil registration systems. Combining digital and biometric data will help create complete, error-free and up-to-date identity records across the large population.

The new ID system will issue chip-based identity cards with embedded biometrics to all residents in the country. The smart card will store personal information including photographs, fingerprints and iris scans in a highly secure manner. To enroll, existing paper IDs will be verified and digital biometrics captured at registration centers across the country. Advanced facial recognition algorithms will be used to match live photographs during enrolment and authentication. Machine learning systems will help improve efficiency and accuracy in the enrolment process.

Transforming Service Delivery with Digital ID

Ethiopia's new National ID system aims to fundamentally transform governance and public services in the country. The unique ID number will act as a common identifier and facilitate interoperability across different systems, allowing smooth access and availing services to beneficiaries.

Some direct benefits include easier administration of welfare schemes, reducing leakage and duplication. It will improve targeting accuracy for service delivery programs including food ration cards. The ID system is also expected to boost financial inclusion, by enabling more citizens to access banking services and make digital payments. A recognized national ID will improve mobility and access to jobs for urban migrants. Further, the universal ID database will allow better policy formulation and monitoring of development schemes based on real identity records.

Critical Role of Technology Partners

Rolling out and managing a massive ID system for over 100 million residents is technologically complex. Ethiopia is working with experienced international partners who have relevant expertise in designing and delivering such large projects. Global technology and consulting firms like CSM Tech are assisting with comprehensive solutions spanning enrolment systems, database architecture, application processing workflow, and integrations with functional ID usage across public agencies and private sector.

CSM Tech is an **IT consulting & services company** with extensive experience of successfully delivering identity and social welfare projects for governments across emerging economies. At CSM, we have provided holistic technical assistance spanning advisory, design, software solutions and operational support for Ethiopia's National ID system. Local partnerships and context-specific solutions are critical for ensuring sustainability of the ID system and achieving the envisaged benefits over the long-term.

The National ID project is a transformative initiative for Ethiopia to build a digitally enabled and integrated society. The implementation of a robust, inclusive and scalable identification system using latest technology will improve governance efficiencies and broaden access to essential services. It will lead to greater empowerment and social development of communities across the country. The project exemplifies how combining innovation and technology with local context can solve complex development challenges and accelerate growth in emerging economies.

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