

# Mastercard empowering communities through digital transformation

*During the recent Uganda Bankers Association (UBA) Annual Bankers Conference, Senior Vice President and Country Manager for East Africa & Indian Ocean Islands at Mastercard, Mr Shehryar Ali, spoke to Daily Monitor's Ismail Musa Ladu, about why a partnership with the Uganda Bankers Association (UBA) is ideal.*

## **Mastercard has been sponsoring the Uganda Bankers Association (UBA) Annual Bankers Conference for the last 7 years. Why is this important for Mastercard?**

The UBA is a strategic organisation that unites key players in the banking industry. Bringing together a fraternity of bankers to discuss critical issues is commendable, as it allows for the resolution of real-life problems and the strategic prioritisation of industry matters to ensure timely solutions. We are proud to sponsor the UBA Annual Bankers Conference and are committed to supporting this partnership for the long term.

## **Speak to the 7th Annual Bankers' Conference theme: Navigating the future of banking: ESG, Sustainability, and Digital Transformation.**

Navigating the future of banking through ESG, sustainability, and digital transformation is crucial at this juncture. Our partners recognise the importance of integrating ESG into their strategies. Mastercard provides various avenues for our partners to integrate ESG, one of them is the global Priceless Planet Coalition (PPC).

The Coalition is an initiative aimed at uniting corporate sustainability efforts and restoring 100 million trees worldwide to combat climate change and support environmental conservation. As part of the coalition, Mastercard collaborates with major entities such as Citibank, Barclays, American Airlines, Unilever, and seven organizations in East Africa, including Salaam Bank, NMB Bank Plc and Paramount Bank, all of whom are actively pursuing ESG agendas. In Tanzania, we are collaborating with Selcom to help consumers understand the carbon footprint of their purchases through our Carbon Calculator.

This initiative allows users to track their monthly carbon footprint across various spending categories and make informed adjustments for a positive environmental impact.

Additionally, Mastercard East Africa boasts a team of over 60 percent women, highlighting our commitment to diversity. This diversity strengthens our strategies by ensuring diverse perspectives are included. As part of our global goal to bring one billion people into the digital economy by 2025, women

play a crucial role. We are proud to announce that we have surpassed our initial goal of bringing 25 million women entrepreneurs into the digital economy. We have achieved a remarkable milestone of providing solutions to 37 million women entrepreneurs, helping them grow their businesses and exceeding our target ahead of schedule.

Uganda has significantly contributed to this success, particularly in the farming and SME sectors. Our Community Pass platform has been instrumental in these efforts.

## **What is your plan for Uganda going forward?**

We are committed to being closer to our customers than ever before, enabling us to offer tailored solutions designed for the continent—African solutions for African needs.

We are committed to engaging in discussions and initiatives that lower the cost of doing business across the sector, wherever we can make an impact. We believe it's essential to level the playing field to foster the growth of digitisation.

In line with our commitment to provide localised solutions, we are excited to share our plans to officially open a new office in Uganda later this year. This expansion will bring us closer to our customers, allowing us to align our strategic priorities and technology more effectively to address local issues.

## **What is the new alliance you have with AfDB and how will it impact Uganda?**

Mastercard and the African Development Bank Group (AfDB) recently launched the Mobilizing Access to the Digital Economy (MADE) Alliance: Africa initiative to ensure no one is left behind in the digital revolution, targeting digital access for 100 million individuals and businesses across the continent.

The agricultural sector and inclusivity are central to this initiative, with a pilot program supporting at least three million farmers in Kenya, Tanzania, and Nigeria. By partnering with local banks, the program will provide digital identities and access to high-quality seeds and agricultural supplies. The Alliance plans to expand to Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, and other regions



*Shehryar Ali, Senior Vice President and Country Manager for East Africa & Indian Ocean Islands at Mastercard, speaking during the recent UBA Annual Bankers Conference in Kampala, Uganda.*



**We have achieved a remarkable milestone of providing solutions to 37 million women entrepreneurs, helping them grow their businesses and exceeding our target ahead of schedule.**

across the continent.

AfDB will invest \$300 million in Africa, focusing on digitizing agricultural value chains with an emphasis on women and youth.

Uganda is already ahead with 1.3 million farmers digitized on Mastercard's Community Pass platform, which improves service delivery and access to essential services. The platform collaborates with Equity Group, DfCU, and Rabobank Partnerships to address agricultural value chain needs.

The MADE Alliance: Africa will provide financial support, technical know-how, and skill set development—key areas of support that farmers need. Our solutions are inclusive, with offline capabilities that store transactions until connectivity is restored, ensuring continuity.

## **Mastercard has implemented the Community Pass platform in Uganda. Could you elaborate on the scaling plan that Mastercard has in place for this initiative?**

Our Community Pass platform is designed to be a real problem solver, ensuring sustainability. With the app and digital chip card, we enable financial inclusion and digital transformation for players in the agri-value chain, facilitating transactions for farmers even offline. This eliminates delays in accessing inputs, fertilizers, seeds, and other essentials.

We also provide access to a marketplace with competitive prices, addressing connectivity and electricity issues, and benefiting farmers in rural areas. With digital payment records, farmers can use their transaction history for credit references at banks, improving their financial standing.

Community Pass is expanding rapidly, with nearly 5 million users across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and India. We want to grow this further and are targeting reaching 30 million Community Pass users globally by 2027.