

Govt. Notice No. 375



**DIRECTIVES FOR LINKING NATIONAL
IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (NIN) TO BANK
ACCOUNTS AND MOBILE WALLETS**

AUGUST , 2025

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1. Authority

These directives are issued pursuant to Section 53(1) of the Banking Act 2019, Section 53 of the Other Financial Services Act 2001 and the Bank of Sierra Leone notice dated 15 July 2025, all financial institutions and mobile money operators are required to verify and link the NIN to all bank accounts and mobile wallets.

2. Purpose

These directives are issued to standardize the process of linking the National Identification Number (NIN), as issued by the National Civil Registration Authority (NCRA), to bank accounts and mobile wallets across all financial institutions and mobile money operators. This is to enhance Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance, strengthen the integrity of the financial system, and support financial inclusion.

3. Application

These directives shall apply to the institutions listed below:

- (i) Commercial Banks
- (ii) Community Banks
- (iii) Financial Services Association
- (iv) Mobile Money Operators
- (v) Deposit-taking Microfinance Institutions
- (vi) Credit-only Microfinance Institutions
- (vii) Any other institution deemed fit by the Bank of Sierra Leone

4. Objectives

- (i) Verify the true identity of all customers
- (ii) Eliminate duplicate and fraudulent accounts
- (iii) Facilitate access to credit and other financial services
- (iv) Eliminate predatory borrowers in the financial system
- (v) Support national planning and economic development

5. Mandatory Requirements

5.1. Customer Accounts

- (i) Existing Customers: All banks shall obtain and link the NIN to all existing individual accounts by 31 December 2025.
- (ii) New Customers: Effective immediately, no new individual account shall be opened without a valid NIN.

- (iii) Resident Non-Citizens account holders shall provide their non-citizen national identity card issued by NCRA.

5.2. Account Restrictions

- Accounts without a linked NIN by the deadline shall be **flagged for restriction, with no debit or credit permitted until compliance is met.**

6. Implementation Steps

6.1. Data Collection

- (i) Banks shall request a copy of the National ID card and verify the NIN.
- (ii) Where possible, implement digital channels (USSD, online banking, mobile apps) for customer self-submission.
- (iii) Verification done via USSD, shall be subjected to an in-person verification at a later date.

6.2. Verification

- (i) Banks shall verify the NIN through the National Identity Database managed by NCRA.
- (ii) API integration or web-based solutions with NCRA systems is encouraged for real-time verification.

6.3. Record Update

- Once verified, the customer profile shall be updated in the bank's **Core Banking System (CBS)** with the NIN and a copy of the National Identity Card shall be in the customer's file.

7. Special Categories

7.1. Minors

- For accounts held in trust for minors, the NIN of the **parent or guardian** shall be provided.

7.2. Non-Citizens

- Non-citizens who are not resident in Sierra Leone shall provide their **passport details** for account opening and may be exempted from the NIN requirement.

8. Customer Communication

- Banks shall undertake **public awareness campaigns** to educate customers on:
 - (i) The requirement to link NIN to their bank accounts
 - (ii) Deadlines and procedures
 - (iii) Consequences of non-compliance

9. Reporting

- (i) Institutions shall submit monthly progress reports to the Banking Supervision Department using the prescribed format below.
- (ii) Reports should include:
 - (a) Number of accounts linked vs. total accounts
 - (b) Number of accounts pending
 - (c) Challenges encountered

10. Data Privacy & Protection

- (i) All NIN information collected shall be treated as confidential and used solely for regulatory and operational purposes.
- (ii) Banks shall comply with section 118 of the Banking Act 2019 and ensure secure storage, encryption, and access control mechanisms.

11. Enforcement & Sanctions

Non-compliance with these directives shall attract regulatory sanctions as prescribed in the Banking Act 2019 or Other Financial Services Act 2001 where applicable.

12. Review and Updates

These directives shall be subject to periodic review based on feedback, emerging risks, and technological developments.

*Banking Supervision Department
Bank of Sierra Leone
August 2025*