

## Driving Financial Inclusion in Pakistan



*Raghu Malhotra, Mohamed Qadadeh and Aurangzaib Khan from MasterCard with Naeemudin Khan and Mustafa Hamdani from Bank of Punjab.*

Our mission to drive financial inclusion received a significant boost as we recently entered into a collaboration with the Bank of Punjab in Pakistan to automate and streamline government disbursement, subsidy and assistance programs in the country's Punjab province.

In this first-of-its kind initiative for Pakistan, Bank of Punjab will issue millions of payment cards to citizens, empowering the unbanked population by providing them with access to formal financial services. Pakistan's largest province, Punjab is home to more than 50 percent of the country's population, of which nearly 90 percent is unbanked.

The newly launched platform will support five government programs including pension, payroll, education, micro-lending and healthcare. It will also bring increased transparency and efficiency to key government initiatives.

A key component of this program is the use of biometrics to verify the identity of recipients when using the card at merchants across Pakistan.

"The costs of cash continue to increase, resulting in a negative impact on economies. It is estimated that \$16 trillion is spent in cash every year in black and informal economies around the world – cash that is untaxed and untraceable," explains Raghu Malhotra, division president, MENA. "With this in mind, we are fully supportive of the Government of Punjab's vision to create an inclusive cashless society. The program will drive large scale financial inclusion for the people of Pakistan. We see this initiative as a catalyst to empower the population and help the government to improve transparency and efficiency."