



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Africa Digital Identity Landscape: **Key** **Findings**

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Overview

- Countries in Africa are progressively restructuring their civil registration systems in a bid to meet the pressure of effective delivery of services such as security and sustainability of programs to their citizenry.
- As a result, many states in the continent have prioritized digital 'solutions' to facilitate the restructuring of their civil registries.
- This increase in the deployment and use of digital technologies/solutions in Africa is running concurrently with attempts to establish and improve national identification and registration systems across the region.

Types of Identity Systems in Africa

The Identity ecosystem in Africa is comprised of government and private sector identity systems that together make a comprehensive framework. It may be broadly categorized into:

Foundational ID



Local ID

systems which rely on basic societal structures of identification.



National ID

systems that utilize specific institutions for registration at national level.

Digital ID

- Uses digital technology throughout the identity lifecycle.
- Technology extends to data capture, validation, storage, and transfer; credential management; and identity verification and authentication.
- Examples of Digital ID include Kenya's Huduma Namba and South Africa's Smart ID Card

Emerging Trends in Africa's Digital ID Frameworks

Legal and Regulatory regime:

Countries are gradually creating and adopting versatile (international) laws, regulations and institutional frameworks. Laws and Regulations on Digital ID are fast being shaped by issues such as the impact on the right to privacy, safety concerns and the right to access government services.



Institutional Frameworks

Institutions governing operations associated with Digital ID in Africa are also growing in number as countries look to build capacity



Social Inclusion

Countries are adopting a multi approach to address the exclusion of certain segments of the population such as marginalized groups.



Push for interoperability

which is critical for digital ID as it relates to other spheres of government such as immigration and security.



Phased Transition

which has been adopted by states including merger of registration information into single use and access points.



African Perspective on Digital ID

01

Issues of exclusion of certain segments of the community have been extensively litigated upon in Africa with the courts directing that identity should be approached in an inclusive manner.

02

Regional Legislation: The Malabo Convention that provides a benchmark for states to develop a blueprint for cybersecurity and data protection. It aims to unify and regularize standards of data protection and enforcement of the right to privacy in Africa.

03

Several East and West African states have adopted a compulsory approach to the adoption of digital ID e.g. some governments have linked digital ID with government services.

04

Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement that aims to use digital ID systems to establish a single market across the continent.

Sample Analysis: Country Mapping of Digital Identity Landscape in Africa

Country	Digital ID	Roll-Out	Supporting Legislation(s)
Kenya	National Integrated Identity Management System (Huduma Namba)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Order (Executive Order No.1 of 2018) Statute Law (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2018 Huduma Namba Regulations (Registration of Persons (NIIMS) Rules, 2020 Data Protection Act, 2019
Nigeria	National Identification Number (NIN)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act of 2007
South Africa	Smart ID Card	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification Act, 1997 Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act 49, 2003) (ID Act) Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA)
Morocco	National e-ID Card	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decree 2.20.521
Uganda	National ID/ National Identification Number (NIN)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of Person's Act (ROPA)

What Africa Needs to Prioritize to Make Digital ID a Success



Access to Digital ID Systems: Governments should take an inclusive approach to digital ID and reconsider mandatory requirement for its registration as there is a risk of further excluding already marginalized groups.



Linkage with National Authorities: Harnessing the full benefits of digital ID mean that it has to be tied to national authorities such as tax and security agencies



Standardization of legal frameworks: African states need to refine their legal systems to respond to challenges such as breaches in data protection compliance frameworks, cybersecurity risks and incidences and violation of human rights.



Ensure Interoperability of Digital ID systems across the African states.

Moving Forward...



Trust is key for development of digital ID systems.



Policy, legislative, and regulatory amendments are required for the harmonization of digital ID in African countries.



Establishment of a continental policy direction regarding digital ID is required.



More research is required by African states to determine the right/useful features of a Digital ID.



Governments must ensure that digital ID responds to the needs of the people but conforms to international standards.

