

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa



State of Digital ID and AI in Africa

Survey by ECA conducted on 22nd/May/2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Continental Interventions on Digital ID 02 Institutional Learnings and Trends in Digital Identity

| | Technical Trends: |
|----|--------------------------|
| 03 | AI and Use Cases |
| | for Digital ID in |
| | Africa |

04 Law Reform and Digital ID Trends



Participants



Lawyers specializing in technology law, privacy law, intellectual property law, and human rights law



Grassroots organizations, community-based initiatives, and advocacy groups that focus on digital inclusion, social justice, and the impact of AI on marginalized communities.



NGOs

NGOs operating in Africa that focus on digital rights, privacy, data protection, and human rights advocacy.

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Part A: Continental Interventions on Digital ID



The Malabo Convention on cyber security and protection of Personal Data is one of the most well-known regional agreements that touches of aspects relating to Digital ID.

Our survey quizzed individuals working in the legal sectors, civil society organizations as well as non-governmental bodies.

Despite its popularity, none of the respondents thought that the Malabo Convention has been effective in promoting effective data protection frameworks for data protection and privacy on the continent.

93%

of respondents

believe that regional implementation of digital ID systems can enhance access to services and promote integration 41.5%

of respondents

identified data privacy concerns and a lack of cooperation among AU members as the main obstacles to a crossborder digital ID 95%

of participants

agree that regional initiatives like AfCFTA are essential in pushing for the adoption and effectiveness of digital ID in Africa

Part B: Institutional Learnings and Trends in Digital ID

Current status of transition from conventional to digital ID systems



About One in four participants say they are not sure of the status of transition in their country. 78%

73%

0%

100%

believe that the establishment of dedicated institutions has/will positively impact digital ID rollout

are familiar with the role of data protection regulators in the context of Digital ID systems

see monitoring compliance of data protection laws as a benefit of having data protection regulators

agree it is important for regulators to be funded and to have autonomy

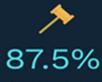
Part C: Technical Trends in AI and Use Cases for Digital ID in Africa



Part D: Law Reform and Digital ID Trends



want to see more inclusion for marginalized groups



have experienced recent legal developments in data protection in their country

Major challenges to implementing Digital ID in Africa

33%

Inadequate laws and regulations on data protection/privacy

> aligning existing legal frameworks with technological developments

> > limited resources and capacity of regulatory bodies

