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A DIGITAL ID HANDBOOK

**Strategies for Navigating Electronic
Identification Systems**



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Identification Systems**

A People's Guide To Tech
In collaboration with The Engine Room

A Digital ID Handbook:
Strategies for Navigating Electronic Identification Systems
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DIGITAL ID TAKES ON THE WORLD

From Kenya to Turkey, part of the reason why digital ID systems are increasing in popularity is because the forces fueling their global adoption stretch beyond borders:

International Goals - One of the 2015 international goals that the United Nations has adopted is to provide legal identity for all people by 2030. For many countries, Digital ID has been the solution, made even more possible by the willingness of the World Bank to fund digital ID systems in places like Nigeria.

Technological Advancement - We live in a digital age, and governments are becoming just as fluent as everyday people in gaining information through devices and screens. In the global South especially, digital ID systems are seen as a solution to corruption, inefficiency, and security threats. Creating them taps into the powerful (if unproven) assumption that technological solutions can quickly change deeply-rooted social practices.

Profit Motives - Some estimates say that the identity verification market is set to double from \$7.6 billion in 2020 to \$15.8 billion in 2025. There's a lot of money to be made in the field—not to mention lots of data to gather—which is why so many companies have jumped into the game. In Zimbabwe, a 2018 proposed partnership with Chinese artificial intelligence corporation CloudWalk Technology was intended to allow the company to have access to a database of Zimbabwean faces which they could then use to improve the accuracy of their facial recognition technology. When corporate interests meet mandatory state data collection without data privacy laws, corporations nearly always stand to gain.

Covid-19 - Though the Covid-19 pandemic has been differently felt in different parts of the world, the reduction in in-person gathering has strengthened the push for digitized systems overall. In the US, vaccine passports have emerged as a limited case of sector-specific digital ID. Vaccination passports are used to confirm whether residents are vaccinated, have recovered from Covid-19, have received booster jabs, **or have tested negative for the virus.**

The table below goes over some of the issues of access present in Indonesia, Jamaica, Pakistan, and Uganda’s digital ID systems.

Indonesia

Those registering need to have a family card, which in practice means that women need the permission of their husbands to access services.

Victims of violence who move from one place to another struggle to provide enough documentation to verify their identity.

Disabled people have also struggled with barriers to obtainment.

Indigenous minority communities in Indonesia with faiths other than Muslim, Christian, and Hindu need a declaration from an official organization representing their community even though not all indigenous communities are organized in such a way. An indigenous rights advocate estimated that over 1 million people from these communities don't have an e-ID card for this reason.

Jamaica

NIDS enrollment process requires providing extensive information, and if an applicant cannot provide one or more of the needed pieces of information, the authority is empowered to decline enrollment.

A Constitutional Court found that the NIDS process was intrusive.

Pakistan

NADRA is the oldest system of these four, and the most embedded in everyday life. Supposedly registration in the system is voluntary, but because it is widely required for civic life it is essentially mandatory.

The system is patrilineal, so it ties women’s citizenship to their male relatives and makes women reliant upon these men. Currently an estimated 12.48 million women lack an ID card (CNIC).

Though trans and khawaja sira¹³ people have the right to self-identify on their identity cards, they still face discrimination in their interpersonal interactions with bureaucrats at registration offices.

Ethnic minorities have been discriminated against through NADRA. Afghan refugees were previously subject to a parallel system of identification, and have only recently been able to register for an identity card. Those with complex identities, like migrants, have reported issues of not having their citizenship status recognized.

Uganda

Across the board, interviewees and focus group participants indicated that the implementation of the digital ID system in Uganda worsened issues of access to social services like healthcare and banking access. Registration materials are available only in English, and not in any local language. Six years into implementation, it is estimated that up to one-third of Uganda’s adult population still lacks a national ID card.

The system is heavily centralized. There are no NIRA regional offices. Digital ID matters are handled by desks in select districts located within local authorities’ offices. This requires people to travel long distances both to register and to collect their ID cards.¹⁴

Errors in the registration process have also left some elderly people excluded from essential social welfare programmes.

13 Khawaja Sira is an umbrella term used to describe local gender-variant identities in Pakistan. Given the legacy of colonialism in the country, many of the terminologies used globally (eg. transgender) do not map onto local manifestations of gender and sexuality..

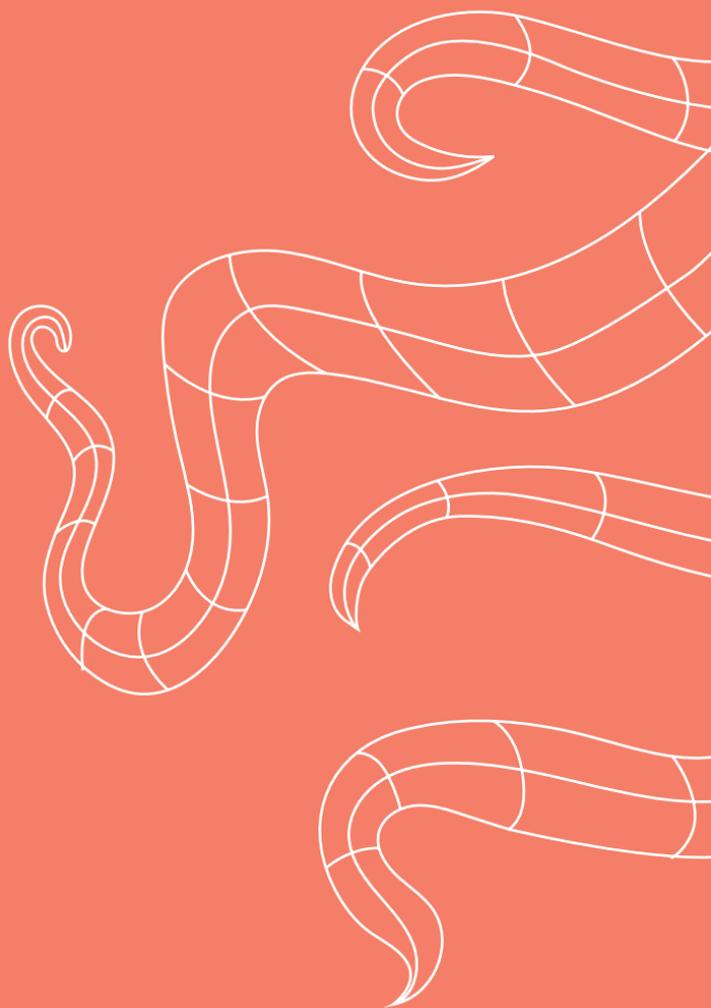
14 Tsui and Perosa, *Digital IDs*, 2022.

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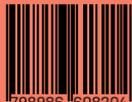
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