

## ID4Africa's 10th Annual General Meeting enters a new phase of growth and maturity: A perspective from Civil Society



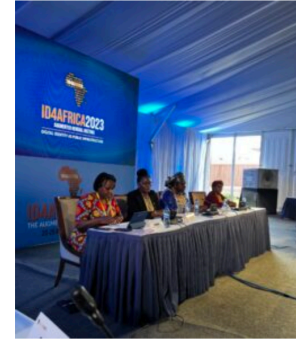
RADPA 2019



State of ID4Africa Movement  
Keynote, 2023



ID4Africa General Assembly 2023



Workshop of African DPAs, 2023

### **Pam Dixon, Executive Director, World Privacy Forum 16 May 2024**

ID4Africa celebrates its 10th Annual General Meeting this year in Cape Town, South Africa with a program that pushes against multiple boundaries and achieves a new breadth and greater inclusion of diverse stakeholders. ID4Africa's AGM is easily the most significant identity conference in the world at this point. There are multiple reasons for this; an important one is that the knowledge content at ID4Africa is not replicated anywhere else. In the past, this knowledge base has been focused primarily around government stakeholders. This year, this roster will now carefully expand to civil society organizations that have been deeply involved with African ID systems to gather additional perspectives and foster cooperative dialogue.

Regarding the knowledge base at the AGM, the capstone each year is the State of the ID4Africa Movement Address, presented by ID4Africa Executive Chairman Dr. Joseph Atick. As anyone who has attended my presentations on digital identity and my CMU identity courses over this past year knows, at the 2023 AGM Dr. Atick gave a remarkable address on Africa's identity journey and the identity verification ecosystem. It was the best presentation I have seen regarding identity ecosystems, and among the best talks I have heard, period. In this presentation, Dr. Atick laid out what turned out to be an extraordinary distillation of what he called the "four platforms of identity." It is one of those distillations that is so clear, that in retrospect, it appears as if the knowledge was obvious all along.

The reality is that Dr. Atick's presentation contained an elegance of thought that required a lifetime of deep knowledge combined with a synthesis borne of extended international field experience. I've not seen anything approaching it at any identity conference. If you haven't seen this talk yet, you can view it here. It is a must-see; even if you know a lot about identity systems, you are likely to gain new insights. This is the kind of knowledge content I have come to expect at the AGM, and it is invaluable. You will be able to view Dr. Atick's 2024 keynote on the state of identity in Africa live on YouTube 21 May 8:30 AM UTC/GMT +2: ID4Africa 2024: Opening Plenary Sessions PS0 & PS1

Regarding ID4Africa's evolution, the conference has grown substantially in size and importance, and the content and the dialogue among stakeholders has also matured along

with this growth. In its earliest years, ID4Africa focused on the complex technical and policy issues facing African identity authorities. The early focus on government stakeholders proved to be the right approach, and has facilitated a much healthier African ID ecosystem at the regional and national levels. In 2019, at ID4Africa's 5-year mark, the purview of the AGM expanded to include African Data Protection Authorities (DPAs) in an invitation-only side event. The idea was to hear inputs directly from the Data Protection Authorities as important and newer stakeholders in African ID ecosystems, accomplished in a Chatham House context to encourage open dialogue.

At the time, this expansion was a bold move — privacy legislation in Africa was not nearly as well developed in 2019 as it is today. ID4Africa invited the World Privacy Forum to serve as a rapporteur for the 2019 event; it was an historic first meeting of African Data Protection Authorities regarding the status and response to identity systems, and it was also my first interaction with the AGM in person. It was a groundbreaking meeting, and it profoundly shaped my understanding of data protection in the developing world. I wrote a rapporteur's report of the proceedings of this event, which gives the flavor of this event and traces the key conversations. (English version: Roundtable of African Data Protection Authorities: Status and response to privacy risks in identity systems | Français: Table Ronde des autorités Africaines de protection des données: Situation et réaction aux risques d'atteinte à la vie privée dans les systèmes d'identité )

In 2023, ID4Africa deepened its engagement with African DPAs by holding a full workshop led by Immaculate Kassait, DPA of Kenya, and joined by additional African DPAs. This workshop was officially part of the AGM (not a side meeting) and was open to any of the conference stakeholders who wanted to attend. (Workshop 4: Privacy and Data Protection in Identification Systems.) The conversation at the workshop turned out to be consequential; it was among the earliest conversations of African DPAs about the rise of Artificial Intelligence, and a seed was planted regarding the need for the involvement of DPAs in the AI conversation as well as the ID conversation. You can see a distillation and recap of our conversation here, with DPA Immaculate Kassait of Kenya and DPA Stella Alibateese from Uganda. The online version of the event provides a good sense of the type of discussion and dialogue that took place. (The DPA conversation begins at 1:57:00) I am pleased to report that the discussions at the 2023 ID4Africa DPA workshop have produced good outcomes over the year.

This year, ID4Africa has taken another important evolutionary step forward. For the first time, ID4Africa has invited leading civil society organizations to take the plenary stage at the 2024 AGM as full stakeholders in the identity dialogue. The civil society session is Part II of a plenary series called the Guardrails Trilogy. While civil society has attended ID4Africa throughout its history, as a collective group civil society has not been featured in a dedicated plenary session before. The assignment for civil society this year is to articulate the varied functions and roles of civil society as key stakeholders relative to the African identity ecosystems and ID authorities, among other stakeholders. It is my personal hope that this important opportunity will foster an ongoing and mutually respectful dialogue that forms the necessary foundation for undertaking a relationship of trust between all of the stakeholders. This is set to be a groundbreaking conversation, and is the first of its kind at the African regional level with all or most African Identity Authorities present, along with DPAs.

I am pleased to be representing the World Privacy Forum as a speaker in the civil society plenary. I will be discussing World Privacy Forum's extensive research and work on privacy, governance, identity ecosystems, and AI impacts as well as the importance of a matured dialogue that is collaborative and respectful of all viewpoints. There is a great art to pressing for change while also being empirically sound and honoring other points of view. I am also

delighted to be participating in what will now be the second full AGM workshop led by African data protection authorities this year.

If you are not going to be in South Africa for the 2024 AGM, I encourage you to take advantage of the [YouTube livestream of the major aspects](#) of the conference. I will be posting updates throughout the AGM via the WPF website and on LinkedIn. There is a vibrancy to seeing this particular conference live; it is very much worth the effort. Not to be missed is Dr. Atick's State of African ID Systems Address, which will be [livecast 21 May at 8:30 am SAST or UTC/GMT +2 hours](#).

### **Details:**

ID4Africa 2024 AGM: [Live on YouTube beginning 21 May at 8:30 am SAST or UTC/GMT +2 hours](#).

Also see the [AGM 2024 website](#) and [program](#).

Generally, see ID4Africa's YouTube channel for other updates, [@ID4Africa media](#)

WPF will be updating its [web site](#) and [LinkedIn page](#) with updates.

If you missed the 2023 talk by Dr. Atick on the four identity platforms, do take a look. It is here: [Ep. 39: ID4Africa 2023: The Identity Verification Ecosystem](#)

If you missed the 2023 recap of the African Data Protection Authorities' Workshop, you can see it [here](#) and listen in on some of the earliest conversations about the intersections of ID, AI, and African DPAs: [EP 43: ID4Africa 2023 Plenary Impressions & Reports on Policy, Legal frameworks, and Data Protection](#). (Begin at 1:57:00 )

### **WPF's work on identity ecosystems:**

WPF has conducted extensive research on identity ecosystems in the developed and the developing world, including a year of fieldwork in India researching and documenting India's Aadhaar ID system. The ensuing report on Aadhaar was peer reviewed and published in Springer Nature. This work has been cited multiple times in the landmark Supreme Court of India's Aadhaar decision, one which required substantial changes to the Aadhaar system, greatly improving it. WPF has many additional data visualizations on ID ecosystems and other materials on ID available on its website. (Browse our ID materials by category: [ID Ecosystem](#), [Identity](#), [Identity Theft](#), [ID Cards](#) and [Medical ID Theft](#) categories.)