Rapporteur Notes IGF Session: #290 “Sovereignty and Interoperable Digital Identity in DLDCs”

Co -Hosts: **African ICT Alliance & Sustainable and Interoperable Digital Identity (SIDI) HUB**
Key Theme: Digital Trust and Resilience
Time: Wednesday, 25 June 2025 from 9:00 - 10:30 am Lillestrøm time

Location: NOVA Spektrum, Workshop Room 6, Hall C

Executive Summary

Key Takeaway 1: **Multistakeholder Efforts Help Bridge the Digital Divide**

Digital identity is foundational for inclusion and development, serving as a gateway to essential services such as banking, education, healthcare, and mobility. Without recognized identities, individuals remain digitally invisible and economically marginalized. By enabling early enrollment such as Nigeria’s issuance of NIN at birth, countries can ensure long-term inclusion and establish robust citizen registries. Identity is also central to bridging Africa’s digital divide and achieving inclusive digital transformation across sectors. Successes in digital identity are not evenly distributed across countries or regions, so sharing best practices from leading countries, leading regions, and leading multistakeholder projects like the Sustainable and Interoperable Digital Identity (SIDI) Hub can help close the gaps so all jurisdictions and their residents benefit.

Key Takeaway 2: **Interoperability is Vital, but not Inevitable**

For the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to succeed, cross-border interoperability of digital identities is vital. Seamless identity verification across borders will facilitate the free movement of people, goods, and services, which are key to digital trade. Digital identity systems must therefore be embedded in AfCFTA’s digital trade protocols. Successful national models like Nigeria’s integrated NIN ecosystem and Benin’s “It’s Me” biometric ID card, which is interoperable within the ECOWAS region, demonstrate what is possible and should be adapted and scaled regionally. Similarly, lessons can also be gleaned from outside Africa, such as from the Nordic and Baltic states’ collaboration (Nobid project), the EU’s eIDAS 2.0 (the European Digital Identity Wallet), and Japan’s bilateral relationships within and beyond Asia. Interoperability of digital identity within a country, region, or globally is not inevitable. It will require consistent, concentrated effort by stakeholders within jurisdictions and across jurisdictions to realize sustainable, and scalable outcomes.

Key Takeaway 3: **Collaboration to Enable Digital Sovereignty**

Digital identity systems must preserve national sovereignty. Countries must retain data sovereignty through strong data protection laws, trust frameworks, and regulatory alignment. Political will and institutional commitment, such as Nigeria’s high-level support for universal enrollment, are essential to sustain momentum and implementation. However, disparities in digital readiness across African countries mean that support must be tailored to each state’s level of infrastructure and policy maturity. Cybersecurity and digital monitoring infrastructure (such as certification capabilities) must be prioritized to ensure resilience. Sustained progress will rely on multistakeholder collaboration among governments, private sector actors, civil society, technical community, and international partners. This collaboration can be achieved through mechanisms like ECOWAS, the African Union, Smart Africa, and multistakeholder projects like SIDI Hub.

Session Call to Action #1: **Regional Pilots for Interoperability**

To accelerate cross-border digital identity integration in Africa, countries should begin by implementing regional interoperability pilots between states with advanced systems, such as the pilots between Nigeria and Cameroon or Benin and Ghana. These pilots will provide practical insights into cross-border

functionality and help identify legal, technical, or user-experience gaps. Pragmatic proof of concepts (POCs) can help ensure champion use cases are delivered that empower people and deliver playbooks for expansion within and across regions.

Session Call to Action #2: **Aligning Policies and Technical Standards**

African governments must also develop national policies that leverage international standards to enable interoperability while respecting national sovereignty. This includes mapping trust frameworks (or legal and policy stacks) and ensuring compatibility with regional and global identity protocols. In parallel, investments in cryptographic infrastructure are critical to maintaining the integrity, privacy, and authenticity of digital credentials. To ensure the technical backbone of digital identity systems is robust, states should support technical workstreams focused on the development of open standards, digital wallet systems, and trusted identity frameworks that can work across borders.

Session Call to Action #3: **Adopt a Public-Private and Whole-of-Society Approach**

Lastly, driving success in digital identity adoption requires strong collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders to localize solutions and test innovations through practical pilots. Public trust and engagement are equally vital, so governments should promote awareness through education campaigns, explaining the benefits, rights, and protections associated with digital IDs. Finally, to encourage widespread use, link digital identity to real-life incentives, such as access to student transport discounts (e.g. Japan), health services (e.g. Nigeria), or mobile banking (e.g. SIDI Hub Champion use case to “open a bank account”), making digital ID a valuable and relevant tool in citizens’ daily lives.

(See the full list of Take-aways and Action Points in Appendix 2.)

Detailed Session Rapporteur Notes

Moderator introduction (Gail Hodges).

- The moderator Gail Hodges, Executive Director of the OpenID Foundation welcomed the audience to the Sovereignty and Interoperable Digital Identity in DLDCs Workshop here at the UN IGF in Lillestom, Norway.
- OIDF is a global open standards body that serves billions of users and millions of developers with identity standards. Gail is also Co-Organizer of SIDI hub, one of the cohosts of the workshop alongside the AfICTA. Introduced by the IGF MAG, we found our two organizations have a lot in common, and real potential synergies
- The moderator introduced the panel experts:
    a. Debora Comparin, Technical Director, Secure Identity Alliance, Co-founder of the SIDI Hub

    b. Naohiro Fujie, Chair OpenID Foundation Japan

    c. Tor Alvik, Fagdirektor, Agency for Public Management and eGovernment, Norway

    d. Dr. Jimson Olufuye, CEO Kontemporay Konsulting, Foundation Chair, chair of the Advisory Council, AfICTA

    e. Dr. Kossi Amessinou, Private Sector Monitoring and Support, Ministry of the Economy and Finances, Benin

    f. Director General and CEO National Identity Management Commission NIMCI Nigeria Abisoye Coker-Adusote

    g. Moderator online- Stephanie de Labriolle, Executive Director, Secure Identity Alliance

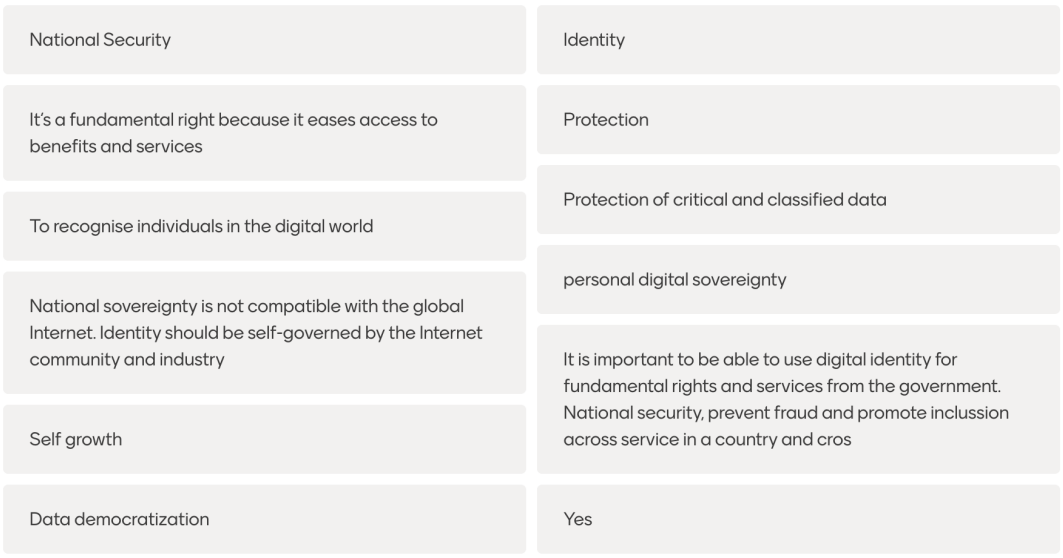
    h. Rapporteurs online - Mr. Kayode Oyeyemi, AfICTA Snr. Programme Officer and Ms. Rachael Shitanda, AfICTA Deputy Chair

We have three objectives for our workshop session today.

1) Our first is to surface different viewpoints on sovereignty and interoperable digital identity and DICDs, why it's important, where we are seeing successes and how to bring that to all countries.
2) We will also explore how policymakers can leverage examples and shared experiences of successful interoperable identity implementations to inform and support identity interoperability in Africa in order to enhance economic activity and promote regional integration.
3) We also will get into what practical steps we can take as a community during our intersessional work before the next IGF and we will look at how the tools of SIDI Hub, the sustainable and interoperable digital identity project, and how how those tools can help in the context of the African free trade area proposal and ensuring that those tools are safeguarding national sovereignty.

The moderator asked the audience (in person and online) why they chose to attend the session, why Sovereignty is important to them? This elicited a range of responses around security and national security objectives, recognizing individuals in a digital world, protection of data and privacy, fundamental rights of users, recognizing personal digital sovereignty.

- Why is "Sovereignty in Interoperable Digital Identity" Important to You? (Your comments are anonymous) 12 12



AfICTA Expert Panelist session

- Moderator: I'd like to introduce Dr. Jimson Olufuye, the CEO of contemporary consulting, founder and foundation chair to the advisory council of AfCFTA, Dr. Jimson. Can you kindly introduce yourself, and elaborate what AfICTA does, and its roles in WSIS, IGF, EC and the Global Digital Compact?
- Dr Jimson Olufuye:
    - Good morning, everyone on site and online. It is a pleasure to have you all here.
    - My name again is Jimson Olufuye, CEO of contemporary consulting Nigeria to data centers security integration and research. I'm also the chair of the advisory council of the Africa ICT alliance AfCFTA.
    - AfCFTA is a concerned private sector alliance association of companies and individual professional stakeholders across Africa. We started off in 2012 with six countries in Africa. Today we're in 43 African countries.
    - Our vision is to fulfill the promise of the digital age for everyone in Africa.
        - As a matter of fact, AfCFTA is one of the outcomes of the WSIS.
        - We fully engaged with our governments across Africa, engage with Uneca, Au, Africa union, also engaged for science technological development WC WSIS.
    - WSIS is about a people-centered information society wherein everyone benefits from the great infrastructure we have in ICT. And we know that today ICT rules everything on the Internet basically. And so we are fully committed to ensuring that Africa takes its rightful place in terms of sovereignty, in terms of protection of its assets. Asset in terms of identity. And this lies where WSIS action Line 8 talking about cultural identity, other WSIS action lines about cybersecurity, about cooperation, collaboration, and about common purpose for development, sustainable development goal aligns to this work.
    - As we know, this is IGF, an outcome of the WSIS, and we also know about the Global Digital Compact. The Global Digital Compact is also an outcome of WSIS because when the enhanced cooperation failed in quotes and January 2018 by July the secretary general launched the high-level panel on digital interdependence, digital

cooperation, led by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma. That led to the Summit of the Future last year. Last September 22nd, leaders met together and agreed to the Summit of the Future which has five Global Digital Compact outcomes. Five objectives:

- The first objectives are about closing the digital divide, and we know identity is critical to closing the digital divide, because if you cannot identify anybody, it means the person does not really exist, and we're talking about inclusivity. We are talking about multistakeholder. We are talking about nobody being left behind. So objective one talks about bridging all the divides so that we can achieve the sustainable development goal, and, of course, objective two is also there about ensuring everybody benefits from the digital economy.

- Objectives No. 3. & Objective No. 4 talking about data governance, and also AI, data is king. Data matters a lot and identity matters a lot.
- We're really proud to be associated there with SIDI Hub.. We are grateful to the MAG. They have brought us together. I trust it's going to be an enriching relationship. And also we can see we have in this panel the government of Benin and government of Nigeria by Dr. Abisoye Coker-Adusote. So this is collaboration that affect us and we are proud of it. We want to continue to enrich it going forward.

- Now, when we talk about sovereignty, about laws, appropriate laws that guide data. Data of your citizens, protection of your data, this is very important. In Nigeria we are one of the data controllers so we know the importance of data, the need to protect it, and so we believe that sovereignty matters a lot.
- We need to ensure that our people trust us, that is to trust the leadership, government, and also they can have liberty to conduct businesses, enjoy government services in terms of health, commerce, travel integration generally.
- So in summary, we are fully invested, that is AfCFTA and our members, AfCFTA in collaboration with all our government agencies across America so we can all fulfill the vision of WSIS, the expectation of GDC, and the hope for every African.
- Thank you very much.

Moderator: Thank you so much, Dr. Jimson. Just to kind of quote you back to say that identity is critical to closing the digital divide is clearly a key theme for what brings us together today and which I think has brought many of our audience to this particular conversation. We certainly don't wish to see anyone be left behind. So thank you very much for those comments.

Dr. Kossi Amessinou (Benin)

Moderator: Dr Kossi Amessinou, welcome again. Please elaborate on what you see from Benin perspective and what you hope to see emerge in Benin and Africa.

Dr. Kossi Amessinou:

- I'm from the Ministry of Economy and Finance in Benan. I was director of the SET development ministry before the ministry of economy. Today I'm working to support the monitoring of the private sector process in the ministry of economy.
- We are talking about identity today. When we are talking about identity, interoperability of digital identity is a challenge for us. This challenge is shared by all community ecosystems today.
- Document, for example, particularly digital identity can cover the benefits to a country such as good governance, balancing special plan identification, financing increasing to provide to

people, we can take care of this very well, better social protection can be done when we take care of identity very well.

- We've provided a card in Benin on a platform called “C’est moi” (It’s me”) where we achieve interoperability.

In this platform we have one key called FID for each person in Benin.

- With that key you have -- you can have two kinds of cards. You have one card called “C’est Moi” (“it’s me”) Everyone can have it for free. We can also have biometric cards provided to do all kinds of activities and also travel anywhere in the space, do your business without Visa process.
- When we talk about digital, we know that it's important to talk also about the challenge of security. Security because identity has an impact on our global digital economy and environment locally.
- It's important for us that digital identification can reflect the legal identity of people. If we don't have the legal identity of people, it's very difficult for us to know who is outside the information we have online.
- In Benin we see the achievement of the project.
    - The government alone provides personal identification for each person in Benin.
    - The project today government facilitates e-commerce, work on securing digital ecosystem.
    - In Benin today people can have one space where we can provide -- we can receive their card.
    - We also decided that any African can enter Benin without a Visa today.
        - For that we need to have people who are coming for us receive some ID when entering the country.
        - When you travel, we can identify you by your Visa process for free, Visa is for free.
        - You can enter -- we can identify you from that.
        - But also this, received by people, can help them to pay for a sim card, to help them to go to hospital and identify them – they have all the services available.
        - My colleague use it, for example, to go to Ghana. You can check it. You can control the QR code on it and know all your identification.
        - We are looking for this kind of process for all of Africa. If it's possible for the African Union, for example, to work -- to let all African people have ID across Africa before the end of 2026, for example, we will have the possibility for each African to enter Benin without a visa process. This would be very good and we are looking also that's the Africa we want\went.
        - It's important for us today to work on the challenge of security. This challenge for this report on -- in the process Benin works on digital space monitoring every day we monitor digital space to see what level security challenge you have today.
        - Thank you very much.

Moderator:

- Thank you so much Doctor Kossi.
- What I heard at the end the same card really bringing to life for individuals within Benin how to access their sim card, how to access their healthcare services, how to allow that movement of people across jurisdictions like in Ghana and that serving as a model for what could happen more broadly within Africa and obviously then by extension the rest of the world.
- You know, part of our conversation between AfCFTA and SIDI Hub. Really important for that financial inclusion and also bringing to life the importance of that foundational civil registry

capability that countries have to empower their residents and empower the movement of people. So thank you for those thoughtful comments.

Moderator: I'd now like to move on to director general Abisoye Coker-Adusote from the Nigerian government and the lead for NIMC. DG Abisoye, may I ask you to kindly introduce yourself and your role with NIMC and to elaborate on what Nigeria is doing on digital -- on both identity civil registry, digital identity, your work within Africa, and your thoughts about global interoperability of digital identity?

Director General Abisoye-odusote (Nigerian Government, NIMC)

Abisoye Coker-Adusote:

- Good morning, everyone. I am Director General Abisoye Coker-Adusote, Director of the National Identity Commission.
- Just to quickly give you summary update on what Nigeria has been able to achieve so far with NIMC. I can shed more light on the tangible progress which has been made in establishing foundational identity which not only supports national development but is increasingly interoperable across the sectors and bodies.
- So this system that we have designed powers key priorities around social protection, reform, financial inclusion, and digital public services.
- We have successfully integrated the national identity number with the bank verification number which means that every single person that is classified as banked in the population has an account tied to their NIN. We have also been able to achieve that linkage with national population commission which means that every citizen is now able to get issued a name.
- Initially it used to be from the age of 16 but now it's from birth. We were able to do that collaboration successfully with UNICEF and the national population commission.
- What we also are doing at the moment is the first of its kind in Nigeria which is the biometric enabled sensors, where we sort of ensure that we don't have duplicates in terms of collecting information.
- They can rely on the NIN to be able to identify the identity of the voting population in Nigeria. We have also been able to ensure that the children enrolling in school can definitely get access to education using the NIN.
- There are a lot of government programs we're working on, one is providing credit access to Nigerians and ensuring they are being verified. We've also done another partnership with SMEDAN, small medium enterprises in Nigeria where we're able to ensure that MSMEs will have been granted loans or given grants able to verify their identity through the NIN.
- For the joint admissions board which is the examination that you have to sit to be able to go into a higher institution for -- you know, to pursue your further education, you must -- your name is required at that instance.
- We have a lot of different use cases across agencies where your NIN is required to be able to access any loans or further your education or to be able to pay your taxes, and the list is endless.
- Also, we have partnered with the “now fund”, which gives student loans. So youth that want to be in higher education also, so first of its kind in Nigeria, student loan service.
- We're very proud of Mr. President for able to bring this vision to life and you need your NIN so we can avoid duplication of identity, prevent identity fraud. And I mean that's what the beauty of the NIN does. It's not just a number that just sits there, but it's a number that enables you to access different services across government and also the private sector.
- So regarding private sector we also have health insurance. We have banks. We have Fintechs, manufacturing companies, so many use cases around the use of the NIN.

- Another thing that we have been able to do successfully to ensure continued integration and harmonization of all the sectorial IDs across the ministries departments and agencies.
- One thing that Nigeria is very lucky about is that we have the government has the political will. So we have a president who understands the importance of identity, and so that gives us support -- it puts us at an advantage of getting a lot of these things done.
- Regarding cross border interoperability, I want to speak on something. So we had the west -- the first west African economic summit, which was held a week ago.
- The focus of that summit was about digital trade across the west African region and we had quite a few of the presidents turn up from the event and one thing was key: That you definitely need digital identity, which is a catalyst for driving digital trade, because with the discussions around the free movement of people across borders, free movement of people and goods and services across borders and it's extremely important for us to note how major digital identity is in advancing the cause of digital trade.
- And we had a lot of conversations and something stood out to me. It was very obvious we need to meet each country's state at their level of readiness. So there are countries that do not have simple digital infrastructure. There's no data connectivity or they have very little energy, there's very little or no digital literacy, awareness created. So the list is endless and for us to be able to identify what the barriers are in each of these countries and identify the issues.
- If you look at the institutional frameworks we have and also legal frameworks, data protection for example in Nigeria went live in May of '23, however, it does restrict cross border interoperability. Which means within your state, your country state you're able to carry out, you know, your transactions, but then when it comes to cross border, there's nothing that points to that there.
- So I believe that we need to sort of have a regional agreement based on data sovereignty and trust that would sort of allow, you know, data protection acts across each region, allow the modification of their acts to be able to reflect cross border interoperabilities.
- I think it's very key because everyone's obviously worried about data, you know, protecting, you know, the citizen's data and also ensuring safety of their data and there are also issues around cybersecurity threats.
- So I'm sure I think this happened a week and a half or two weeks ago where we all witnessed 60 billion passports data breach globally. I mean, we had people like Apple, Google all affected. So I think that's a real concern for everyone. It's a huge problem. So we need to ensure that we reflect on this, but at the same time, we've got AfCFTA working, we've also got the African union digital operability framework they've put together. That needs to be adopted.
- I believe that also regarding cross border interoperability, you must incorporate digital identity in payment design. It's extremely important.
    - Nigeria has been able to achieve that. We have the Nigerian bank settlement system called NIBS where they have just successfully launched the national payment stock which is part of the digital public infrastructure approach that we have in Nigeria. That's been integrated into a national identity management system and that's -- that allows for cross border interoperability.
    - We also have the Fintechs that have also allowed applications across borders.
    - We also need to focus on the digital identity things and meet states at the point of readiness for them.
- I also personally feel that with states that have already made a lot of progress like Nigeria, we can definitely have a period mechanism where we run out a pilot for -- a test pilot for the digital identity cross border interoperability where we say -- we pick two member states and then say, okay, let's run out this pilot. So we may do Uganda and Kenya or Nigeria and Cameroon or Nigeria any of the border countries I think that would help a great deal.

- Trust frameworks are very key for interoperability IDs across borders, ethical standards for cross border data sharing, safeguarding sovereignty by ensuring ID photo respect national laws. We all have different laws. Also political will is very important. I can't stress that enough because there are governments in Africa that have a lot of setbacks. There's political instability, conflicts in their areas. So there needs to be a lot that needs to be done across border
- Speaking to sustainable interoperable digital identity tools and AfCFTA.
    - AfCFTA I think if we leverage the AfCFTA Phase III and digital trade protocol, I think it would help us a great deal to be able to integrate digital identity standards into the e-commerce and digital trade protocol.

I think I'm going to stop there for now. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you so much for those comments just to kind of recap a few messages I heard come up is meeting states where they are, recognizing that many jurisdictions have gaps. The importance of the regional agreements that are already emerging both within ECOWAS as well as broadly across the African union. The many use cases that Nigeria, for example, has already brought to life for your residents and the potential, you know, for that to continue to expand within Nigeria but within those regional structures but also more broadly for Africans to benefit and that pivotal role that digital identity place in that transition. Thank you for that offer. Maybe we'll hold you to it of reaching out the hand to your border countries and setting up those implementations that bring to life your cross border references. Wonderful examples and great work happening there.

SIDI Hub Expert speakers

Debora Comparin (CTO, Secure Identity Alliance)

SIA is a global non-profit organization whose members together serve billions of users with secure identity credentials, systems and solutions. Debora is also Co-Organizer of SIDI hub, one of the cohosts of the workshop, working in partnership with the AfICTA. Introduced by the IGF MAG, we found our two organizations have a lot in common, and real potential synergies.

Moderator: I'd now like to transition to our next panel of speakers on the SIDI Hub side. I think we have some slides from Debora Comparin. We can get those ready for her comments. Debora Comparin could you kindly introduce yourself and the roles you're playing in progressing digital identity and elaborate on SIDI Hub what it's seeking to accomplish and how it's going about delivering on its goals.

Debora:

- Good morning, everyone. It's -- first of all, it's really a pleasure to be with you all today and speaking about definitely my favorite topic that is digital identity. It's really a passion of mine. I have been working on this for the past five years and what I can say about myself when I -- to introduce me is that I contribute to standardization work. So essentially it means collaborating with the ecosystem and developing technical standards. So technical specifications that can help interoperability. But how hard can it be?
- So we have heard a lot this morning about the benefits and the social impact that digital identity infrastructure has. I was thinking five years ago when I decided to enter into this space of digital identity completely unknown to me and I was wondering how hard can it be, right? Like to just build such digital identity infrastructure. And the answer is varied. I'm still here and still a lot of work that needs to be done. So let me put that into perspective for a minute before I talk about SIDI Hub.
- When we are talking about building a digital infrastructure it would be very nice to go back to the digital documents and reflect on the properties of these physical documents that we want

to digitalize. And it would be fantastic to maintain some of those properties. So this also is a complexity of the exercise.

- First of all, when you all arrive here, you probably show some form of document. So the first step is to digitalize this piece of paper or plastic.
- The second step that we ignore because we do it every day is when I prove my identity I just hand it over to someone. So we need to be able to build these rails to hand this digital version of documents over to someone in the Web.
- Also, there's some form of integrity. So when I show you my passport, well, there's a lot of nice feature in here that you can check and say, well, it has not been tampered with. I cannot just create one at my home. It should be exactly the same thing for a digital version of this.
- Finally, when I use it, my government doesn't know what I'm doing. It doesn't know when I access here IGF this morning and I gave my passport, my ID card, they cannot track my actions and my whereabouts, and I think this is also a very important property that we should keep in mind and maintain in the digital domain.
- You can also see that this is my document. So I'm the rightful owner of this document. I can't just pass it over to Gail Hodges and she just easily use it. So that's the same thing that we should -- all these properties should be maintained.

- And it's very hard.
  - There's a lot of intelligent cryptography definitely behind this to make it happen and a lot of technical work. We are not there yet.
  - There's also trust that needs to happen. It's not just about technology. It's really about collaboration. Because these documents, the digital form, they have to cross borders.
  - So it's not just valued in my country, it's everywhere I go. I should be valid and understood and trusted et cetera.
- And this is exactly why we created SIDI Hub because we understood the difficulty of doing this and we absolutely wanted to maintain these properties that I have been through with you because it is about safeguards as well.
- It is about preserving privacy and maintaining the security of citizens in the digital and real world. And we collectively at SIDI Hub thought that it is about collaboration. There's not a single organization or individual or right mind in the world that can do it on their own.
- We pull together an ecosystem of private sector, public sector, government, research institute, standard bodies to collaborate and make this reality -- make this vision a reality. This is what SIDI Hub is about and as you can see I'm also very proud of this. It's a new initiative we started one year and a half ago but a lot of work has been done and so I will share with you a couple of slides so that you get a sense of what we have achieved together and what still remains to be done. And you're most welcome to join us and to contribute.
- First of all, I heard DG Abisoye when she said meet countries where they are. That's absolutely right. This is absolutely the approach of SIDI Hub. We don't have the arrogance of thinking that we are just going to sit where and define what's going to happen, how will this digital identify infrastructure be built and just go off and share our vision with the world. It's really about hearing people. Hearing about what are the difficulties locally in the different countries and that's what we've done.
- The very first year we spent our time traveling extensively, all of us, and hearing about the different perspectives from countries and difficulties. So these are what you see here in the slide some of the summits in different contents we have done in 18 months. We've collected all the feedback and the different perspectives and reports that you can go to the SIDI Hub website and you can download. I'm not here to -- I don't have the time unfortunately to get into all the details but indeed there is a very different level of maturity in different regions but

also different needs so collectively in all these different summits and in conference participations we have heard inputs.

- We have been engaging with over 45 countries. So this is absolutely massive work and this is what informs the road map and the development of SIDI Hub moving forward.
- I'm going to spend a few minutes to go through some of what I think are the most important working groups. So concrete deliverables that we are carrying forward as we speak right now. All this work is live and ongoing.
    - First of all, use cases. So when we talk about such a complex digital identity infrastructure we need to go back to the user story. What is this for? So we have studied different use cases and because it's important again to listen to what is important we have prioritized. Out of all the discussions we have selected for the different countries and different research institutes and multi stakeholders engagement that we had was the most relevant. This is what on the screen essentially are the top three selected by the community.
    - So the use cases are:
        - Education
        - Refugees
        - Opening a bank account
    - We studied how digital identity is relevant in each of these use annals.
- Then policy.
    - Again, it's not just about technology rails and digitalization and cryptography and all the tools you can come up with.
    - It's really down to sovereignty of the country and the local rules and regulations that determine how digital identity should be used. So these countries have different perspectives.
    - So we have started a study of different legal -- different regulations and policy at country level. So we're starting over ten countries and we are compiling all these regulations and deriving from it how can we achieve interoperability while respecting the local decisions? This is very important. We are -- again, we are not here to impose anything. We're here to listen, to understand, and to build rails and to make sure this digital identity gets done while respecting local regulation.
    - And finally, there's technology this is really about all the tools that I mentioned earlier, how to get this done. It's very much technical work. So I will not dig into the details now but this is what I wanted to share with you today and most of all, if there's one thing that you can can retain by my speech is that you're most welcome to contribute. It's really important that we all work together this infrastructure benefits all of us individually first as citizens of a country. So I think this is a very important message to take home. So your involvement, whether you are a cryptographer or engineer or policymaker or a researcher, it's very important. Thank you.

Moderator: I think your message is to just explain in clear language the transition from physical documents into digital versions of those documents and the importance of maintaining the properties of what residents and what people expect from their digital identity credentials without sacrificing the trust or giving away more information than they need to and doing so in a way that can be secure and trusted and using some fancy cryptography behind the scenes but at the end of the day, it's around those simple user experiences, like those champion use cases you gave around education, opening a bank account, and managing the experiences for displaced people. Those are really important, but the safeguards that we put around that is going to take a lot of engagement and your key message to make sure the

community felt welcome to participate in the SIDI Hub work because it's going to take a very broad community of subject matter experts and those willing to put the time in to solve for making this cross border interoperability a reality. So thank you so much

Naohiro Fujie (Chair OpenID Foundation Japan)

- I'm now going to turn to Naohiro Fujie, the chair of the OpenID Japan who's also been very actively involved in hosting on the SIDI Hub in Tokyo and works very closely with the Japanese government on this transition from physical identity credentials to digital identity credentials. So please, Naohiro Fujie could you share on your experience and that of the Japanese government and their work with the European Union and SIDI Hub on cross border interoperability?

Naohiro Fujie:

- Good morning, everyone. I am Naohiro Fujie from the OpenID Foundation Japan as a chair and also I'm a working group cochair of OpenID global which is focusing on identity verification, called eKYC and Identity Assurance Working Group and also I support the Japanese government and the educational institute in Japan to digitalize their certificate or IDs. So that's my role in Japan. Today I express my opinion on how to digitalize identities and how to have interoperability within a country, international and global.
- As you know Japan is an island nation and there's no land border with any other countries. We have over 120 million population in Japan and we have our own economic sphere in our country. So not everyone understands the importance of interoperability with other countries so far, but I think that the idea of starting from small to achieve larger is very important in the context of interoperability especially in Japan.
- The most important thing for each country is to define their own standard in accordance with their own law and regulations while keeping global standards in mind, and then by utilizing standard technology like bridge between other countries to achieve globally interoperable world.
- Today we will talk about Japan in three aspects:
    - Education
    - National ID as Gail mentioned earlier
    - The third one is cross border, including SIDI Hub and similar activities.
- Education
    - As I mentioned, to start from small is quite important for us, especially in Japan I guess.
    - So we started to define our architecture framework for digital credential with Keio University, one of the biggest university in Japan to digitalize identities and certificates.
    - The reason why I said digitalization, currently especially educational certificates in Japan are almost all paper based.
    - So we have to digitalize first with considering how to manage these credentials in a digital manner.
    - We started to define the management policies of each type of credentials in the education world with KEIO.
    - This paper is already on the Internet but so far it is only in Japanese, so we are trying to translate into English now.
- For example, we are firstly classifying current paper based credentials usage into original, copy, delivered. We must use the original passport on immigration, but in some scenarios, we can use a copy of the passport for identity verification. We discussed whether these scenarios can be applied to digital credentials or not.

- In the Digital world, there's no difference of bitstring between copy and original. But, in some cases we create delivered credentials from original ones. So we consider the difference between a digital copy and a delivered credential in the digital world.
- So we are classified into three types of credentials.
    - First one the original
    - The second one is duplicate. It means digital copy of the original.
    - And the third one is derived credential.
- So we came to the conclusion that defining a management policy for each type of credential is required to manage them.

Education

- We started to work with the National Institute of Informatics, NII, which is under the Ministry of Education in Japan. They are an educational institute in collaboration with many universities right now. They operate an academic federation called Gakunin in Japan. It focuses on identity federation between universities which has interoperability with other countries, like in the EU or African countries and they are using the SAML protocol right now. So we have to move them to the next step of technology, like how to use that protocol with digital credentials, by defining a new trust framework adopting a new model of the identity world.
- Also I would love to explain about the government led initiative on the project in Japan. This is quite an interesting project.
- Moving into this scenario, I think the most important thing for Japan right now is to achieve a situation where the digital credential is being used domestically (because Japanese people do not use digital credentials right now, because we have only paper based credentials now). It's important for students to have experience of using a digital based credential.
- So the challenge in this project is to utilize (1) the National ID card as well as (2) an enrollment certificate that the university issued to the student. (3) present them to the railway service so the student can get a discount ticket to ride a train. This is the demonstration use case they tried.
- From your left side, a student starts to plan a trip to somewhere, and the student try to buy a discount ticket for students, and to buy the ticket from the railways company, the student have to present that he or she is a student using a credential issued to the student as well as the student have to be verified by the national ID issued by the Japan government. And after that, he or she can get a discount and go anywhere. And it's a good way to give some experience to students to utilize digital based credentials.

- And also, yeah, this is quite big news, especially for Japanese people.
    - Just yesterday, the Japanese government announced they started issuing the national ID card on the Apple wallet. Over 60 percent of Japanese nationals use iPhones. So it's a significant step forward in digitalizing national IDs.
- In addition, we have some initiatives with other countries such as the EU.
    - We have the EU-Japan Digital Partnership Council focusing on how to make interoperable digital identities between the two areas.
    - We have another private-based partnership with Asian countries.
    - As I mentioned, these initiatives in Japan are small steps to achieve a big goal. Thank you very much.

Moderator:

- Thank you so much, I think starting with the joke of an island nation not having direct borders but in practice residents of Japan conduct their daily living across borders and have cross border transactions.

Moderator:

- It's wonderful to see the leadership role that Japan is taking on the standards as well as on some of those complex interoperability conversations and work with the EU and with other

Asian countries which echoes what we heard earlier from our colleagues here in their African jurisdictions and regions which are seeking to do the same thing and that example of something that seems simple, like a discount for a railway ticket for a student but which actually requires complex digital use cases transforming national ID credential to a digital format, a university credential to a digital format and then bringing that to a national railway in order to realize something like that discount. Many of us have been fortunate to be poor students at one point or another and so we know that that will motivate the students but bringing it to life is very complex so thank you for your work and driving innovation with the Japanese government and other partners.

Tor Alvik (Norway Government)

- Moderator: I'd now like to ask Tor Alvik working with the Norwegian government as a subdirector on this digital transformation in a Norwegian context can you kindly introduce yourself and share some of the work that Norway has been doing with the Baltic States for regional development as well as your work with Europe and more broadly.

Tor Alvik

- Thank you and good morning. My name is Tor Alvik and I work for the digital agency. This is an entity that tries to build common components, bridging both cross border interoperability but also for how we deal with providing services to the public and then private sector in Norway.
- We are one of a group of Nordic Baltic countries. We are quite similar in both legislation, in population, and in the way people live very similar countries. So when you came to the airport in Norway maybe yesterday or the day before, if you pay close attention you will often hear the tourists say, oh, it's so nice in Sweden, but it's the wrong country. This is actually Norway. And so how can interoperability with digital ID across borders in a region like this be hard? Well, what we found out is it is very hard.
- But if you look at some other figures, you can see that we have a high level of mobility in the region. A lot of people have -- are moving, settling in different countries, working in another country than they live. We have a great mobility of students and our workforce. This, of course, makes it very important to also have digital services that function cross border. In our region we have a very well developed system for digital identity. It covers for most of the countries more than 90 percent of the population on high security level and almost all services are already digitalized so you can carry out almost every aspect of your life in a digital way.
- So then when we started looking at how we can make this work cross border, this was a work that was started in relation to the cooperation between the different governments in the region. We have a longstanding cooperation between the administrations in the Nordic countries dating back to the 1950s, but if you look at that, it was not until 2017 that we actually broad end that cooperation to also deal with ICT and digital services and cross border issues.
- Very early in that work it was identified that getting digital ID to work interoperability cross border was one of the main issues that needed to be solved to provide cross border services to people. What has been important for us in our work is the link between us as technicians and working on the solution and having disclosed link to the politician side and decision makers. That has been -- made it able for us to address central problems and also foster the up-tick of this solution cross border. We established a project working project where we work together with the different agencies in the different countries. We are working together since 2018 and some of the main focus in our cooperation is, one, making sure each country actually have EID system that we recognize cross border. Since we all are members of EU or closely linked to it, we build on the regulation, but just to motivate our politicians and get

understanding that you need to adopt these systems so they actually can be recognized even though we have the legal foundation in place took time and has been quite challenging. We are also working, and I will come back to that, with some fundamental challenges in how to recognize our citizens across border. We build and work with the service provision working with service providers exploring different use stories and how they function cross border. We find that many of these services are quite a hindrance to people and need to be addressed at the service level. It is not enough to actually build a digital ID. You have to assign the whole user story so it actually fit cross border context.

- And we also together with all our other member states in the EU, we also are preparing on the upcoming changes in EIDAS which would be of course digital wallets and the use of credentials and new models for data sharing.
- When we looked at identity in our countries, one of our main observations is that it is not enough to have a functioning digital identity. You need a system where this functions just as well in the physical world as in the digital world. There is a very close link to our core identity which is in our countries of course in our population registers but can of course be in other systems.
- The documents that both are the basis for the digital identity how you use these documents when issuing digital identity making sure that we don't duplicate having biometric verifications of people immigrating and coming to our country. And then you have the issuing process and the use of both digital identity and how. You need this same level of security both in the physical and digital world. This is not that easy to achieve and also especially challenging when it comes to cross border identity. So here is an example from one of my colleagues. Helsing is in the audience. He can give you much more insight into our cross border integration. This is what happens when you try and use a digital identity and try to access service in our different countries. We have build digital identity layers. You can comment and say hi how are you and then it gets a lot more quiet because then we have to link you to our national identity systems. Like all of us we have a long life. Some of our rights and services might date back 20, 30 years. For instance, you can have pension rights in other country which need to access much later. So this linkage of identity you are coming from one country to the identity you have in the country providing the service is one of the main challenges we actually focus. We can get the digital identity to function and understand but trying to address this is something we are now trying to work on and I think this is also maybe something that can be taken away from our work to focus on those aspects very early not just digital identity this is simplification for the usage for doing this kind of identity matching steps. As you can see it's rather complex and when you delve into the details it gets even worse and then you have all the registrations where you lack data and so on. So this can be quite a challenge. So I'm looking forward to discussion afterwards and hear your insights on what we have done and what can be taken away from that.
- Thank you very much.

Moderator Gail Hodges:

- Thank you so much, Tor Alvik. It is wonderful to have your personal leadership of the work in Norway which many in the rest of the world have observed the work in Norway and Baltics to achieve your EID goals and to elaborate the work with EIDS and digital ID program which you're adjacent to but which your residents are obviously moving across borders with not only your Baltic States but European partners as well.
- Thank you for your leadership role in that work and bringing to life those use cases forest dents and other Europeans.
- I think there are many lessons for the rest of the world and I too look forward to the next stage of our discussion here to get feedback from our online participants and those in the audience.

First Policy Question for Q&A

- Moderator: We are going to bring back up the Mentimeter poll where we'll progress to the next slide.
- Moderator: If you have not already grabbed the QR code to answer the first question, please do take a picture of that QR code so you can participate in the live survey that we're going to conduct. We're going to go through a series of questions and the first couple are policy related. I'll put Dr. Jimson and Deborah on guard that they'll speak to the first one while our audience is going to participate in the next confers.
- We wanted to discuss, what practical steps can be taken during this intersessional IGF period and the next one around how to use things like the SIDI Hub tools that we heard Deborah elaborating on both the technical tools for interoperability, trust framework mapping, the work on champion use cases in order to achieve the goals of the African free trade around lifting up the broader population and making sure that sovereignty is respected. So this is an ambitious goal and one that I know DGAbisoye a few weeks ago discussing how these tools can be used but it's an important question, right? How could we actually progress this work together. Then our audience will be chiming in. Some of them are already saying champion use cases but let me turn first to Dr. Jimson to see if you have any thoughts on next steps we could take, concrete work we could do together.

Jimson Olufuye (or actions in Intercessional period):

- You can only manage a process. There's need to constitute maybe working group so we could actually identify the gaps that we have across sub region and region, identify the safe guards to parameters in a framework, regard to whether the system is open source to determine the interoperability criteria and to ensure that, for example, the net statement is really incorporated in what is being done. Talking about Net Munda bringing all the private sector along with the government, civil society and even the youth around the table to discuss the benefits and use cases and the end goal. So build the trust.
- So I believe AfCFTA, of course, as we have been doing, engaging with the EU, for example, with UNECA, a number of Africa framework in place really help us identify where we are. We have seen Nigeria, talked about the maturity level and as well about African countries.
- There is a desire that we can work together. As we work together we need to ensure that stakeholders are in the room so we can have the optimal outcome at the end of the game so going forward I think a partnership can really be a community working group to work out these parameters and to look at the standards, be sure that we're in sync going forward. Thank you.

Moderator Gail Hodges: Thank you. So the multistakeholder participation including the youth, you know, calling that out is very important.

Moderator: Deborah, any additional comments to add what we might do on the intersessional period?

Debora Comparin:

Yes. Two comments on my end.

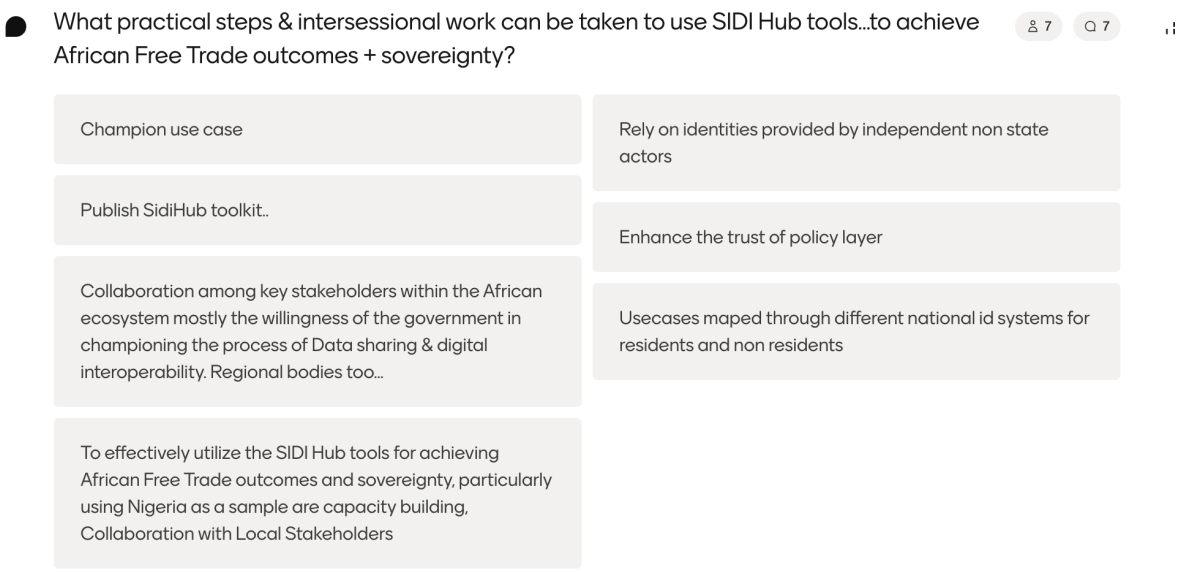
- The first one, I think talking about policy, it's very relevant to map the different regulation legislation that underpin digital identity in different countries, so when we talk about cross border. It's a work that we have started, we are conducting with the collaboration of universities as well in SIDI Hub. Just to give you an example why that is important.
- A country is sovereign on deciding how the national identity, the rules applying to how the national identity ecosystem in a certain country for citizens and residents. So when an identity cross border digitally, how do you know you can trust there a digital form of identity?

So that's trust, it's jargon is level of assurance, but it's basically very complicated word to say that how do you know that that identity was properly given to the right person in the other country? And that actually that identity is -- belongs to the rightful owner. So not miss matched passing on to somebody else.

- It's really about how are the rules set up to make sure that that identity was dig tammized and these rules believe it or not are different in different countries. And if you don't trust whatever you receive in the digital form then there's no value, right? You can have it digitalized but then there's absolutely no usage for it.
- So I think it's very important we do this work and it's not just a research work of mapping the differences in rules; it's really about turning this into something actionable.
- So how can we transform these values into code and map it in laws into something that can be used together with the digital identity that is past.
- So how can you describe the process to obtain these digital identities so that the other country can decide if to trust it or not? So this is all tools that underpin the work of cross border interoperability.
- So I think that's a very important piece of work that needs to continue, and I would say more should be completed before the next IGF. So to show actually some concrete results. And together with this POC, proof of concept. I absolutely agree with some of the comments.
- I think we need to start getting things done. So it shouldn't just be research and thinking and technology but it should actually be implemented and tested in the field so now I agree that we can start small.
- We don't need to have a big bang. We can actually take baby steps and have two or three countries get together and SIDI would be a most -- I think most helpful in this concept of setting up a proof of concept and testing the technologies and tools we are developing to make sure that that this could work or improve and from their scale globally this infrastructure.

Moderator Gail Hodges: Thank you, Debora.

- I think that bias to action characterizes everyone on the panel, to do concrete work that is actionable in this intersessional period. We are already seeing and we can build on the early work in Nigeria, with Benin, Norway and Japan and many others.
- Hands-on work happening within jurisdictions and region, but continuing to progress that through these forums of AfICTA and SIDI Hub is critical. We've got some good notes on the page where people have had a chance to look at the question and respond online.



Second policy issue:

Moderator: I'd like to jump to the second policy question, and then turn to a couple of the questions that Stephanie's captured from the online audience.

- For our interactive topic, and I'm going to call DB Abisoy, Dr. Kossi and Dr. Alvik: how can policymakers leverage shared experiences of successful interoperable digital identity for African regional benefit? There are these emerging use cases, are there these emerging policies and best practices? How can we put that to work for the African region? So I'll come first to Dr. Kossi to see if you have any additional comments to make on this point?

- Dr. Kossi: Thank you, moderator. IDs are very important but security of the data is very, very important. We need to work very well in security issue.
- The second data center, where will we put our data? Where do you have it? Is it in Africa? Outside Africa? It's important to have our data inside Africa. That is very important.

Moderator Gail Hodges: Thank you. Anything to add to the importance of data, security, and preserving data within Africa?

- Abisoye Coker-Adusote: I think it's important to note that we need to ensure that there's regional cooperation regarding interoperability. We need to ensure that the frameworks are developed and taken into consideration like Rebecca had mentioned earlier about the identity -- on the line identity laws in the country and developing one that's accept to believe all for everyone to be able to start off. And I think she also mentioned about the actionable steps. I think that's very important. So look at countries that have matured on the identity level from Ghana, Rwanda, Nigeria, we need to ensure that we take those countries and then you know run a pilot for cross border interoperability. Once we're looking at meeting the other country states at their level of readiness to help them scale up. Also learn from Nigeria also to see how to achieve this and they can also learn from India with others to see how they can scale up. What we've also done in Nigeria outside of the EI card which you're all aware of is we had recently launched the authentication application which allows for safeguarding of your digital identity and also has the wallet component to it where you're able to have all your digital IDs on one application so you can then and also allow use sharing. With all of this in place so much to learn from Nigeria and also we need to share that information and champion the direction of this. One is to recognize cross border interoperability cross border and not just technical one. It's very important to see the whole of government approach and government owns this drive. A lot of collaboration has been done with Ward bank on the ID part of things in terms of advancing the cause of the name enrollment so capacity building getting the front end partners to go to the local community level to round up. The president is giving us a mandate that by December we must have everybody enrolled in the country. We are like moving at light speed at the moment to get that done. We anticipate 95 percent of the population should be enrolled by then but what we're doing at the moment is ensure those that are enrolled are able to use their ID to access all the government services they need to access. From an African perspective a lot of the country states are usually very protective of data. We like to own things, keep them. How do you sort of view an enabling trust across the region? It means you can still use this data but you still have some level of control over that data and this is where data sovereignty comes into play.
- Just to sort of round up what we basically need is just political will, long-term regional commitment, purely mechanisms across board for us to be able to adopt that model and I think that the public sector and private sector must continue to work together to be able to drive the adoption of the after framework, the African union framework and must continue to go. It's continuous work in progress.

- Thank you.

Moderator Gail Hodges:
Thank you so much. There's a lot of ground cover between you and Dr. Kossi. Let me see if we have additional comments from Tor Alvik. It's very skiting to hear all the data that comes from Africa. I also in the last years have been working with large case pilots needing up to the new regulation. I see this as a helpful tool when trying to explore both the governance side and also technical sides of different use stories. For instance we have been working on digital driver's license, payments, education and so on and this combination of practical work and also policymaking and governance analyzes in regard of those stories has been very helpful when we have been trying to understand the legacy side of the new regulations. So maybe that is something that also could be looked into if that could be used also as a tool other places.

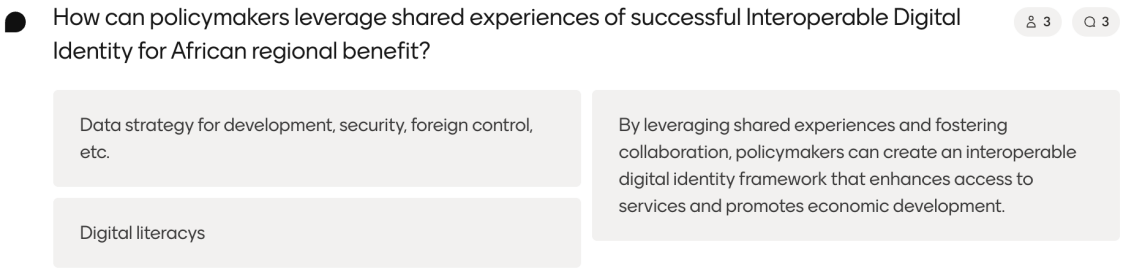
Moderator: Gail Hodges: So user stories absolutely brings to life the technology to make sure it's applicable.

- Tor Alvik: It is the only way you can make these things understandable. Talking about standards and cryptography, decision makers often have a very blank face after two minutes.

Gail Hodges: Absolutely. If you have any comments to add please in one moment I'm going to recap what I see on the screen a few of the messages from the online audience on data strategy for development, leveraging these shared experiences and fostering collaboration and digital literacy also important themes. So any additional comments on your side, Naohiro Fujie?

- Naohiro Fujie: It's exciting to hear about Africa in a way that experiences me. As I mentioned earlier, it's very important not only to focus on technology but also to focus on governance or trust framework. Because in many cases, every country has its regulations and rules, butin some cases, they must be changed to archieve interoperability with other countries. It's important for us to collaborate with every country's government to achieve this. n fact, SIDI Hub has partnerships with every country's government. Therefore, everyone should have a good relationship with every government.

Moderator Gail Hodges: It's a lot to do, right? What's already in place is not yet fit for purpose to achieve interoperability. So changes within existing rules and policies will be necessary to truly achieve the interoperability, whether that's regional in Africa or whether that's global context, I would assume.



Questions from online.

Moderator: Stephanie, would you like to direct the questions from online to the audience?

- Stephanie Delabriolle: Yes. So from those questions because I know we don't have much time, there's actually two themes. One is actually linked to what we've just discussed, questions like “is it federated, centralized?” And then the word of, you know, the way you digitalize, is it leading to some kind of -- there's a question for the technical people here to explain, you know, this is not the case as SIDI is not prescribing any model as we said and second one is it is very important because I think so there was comments made before on a question how to ensure that the digital divide is bridged when currently Africa has deep rural population then escalating cost of Internet and information, you know, while we are all looking into energy transition as well. So I would say there's two themes in the three questions.

Gail Hodges: I might start on that one myself, because as you said SIDI Hub we are not opinionated on the appropriate architecture for any individual country and so each is going to apply their own values and policies to what architecture they prefer and some might lean towards centralized, some might lean towards federated, some might have centralized today and evolve towards something more decentralized. I think it's an evolving approach. I see Dr. Jimson has a comment to make on that point.

- Dr. Jimson: Thank you, Gail. These are very good questions. I think it is ideal that's what we use in Nigeria and through API you can connect to databases. So even across borders countries can keep their data locally and through API you can share this specific data categories agreed upon based on policy framework. Somebody also asked question about affordability. We need to encourage the operators to be concerned about this. Also need to given centives and also we need to increase the purchasing power of the people so that more -- everybody can be incorporated in the digital age.
- Thank you very much.

Gail Hodges: Thank you so much.Any additional comments on federated versus centralized models? Okay, not hearing any. I do think that there's -- there may be comments on surveillance and the desire in I think many jurisdictions to avert surveillance of citizens using digital identity infrastructure. Would any of you like to comment on the risks of surveillance and how you might reflect on that challenge? Tor?

- Tor Alvik: It is an interesting topic, one we are now facing when we are trying to work with the digital wallets, which are coming next. Those are by design very user centric. You share all your credentials directly between the user and the service provider and where do you want to use it. For us that raises questions. That protects the citizens very well but on the other side you also need to tactical misuse and fraud and how you can build a model that takes both of these things into consideration is a topic I think needs quite a lot of discussion.

- Debora Comparin: One point on surveillance because I saw some previous comments. Surveillance can come from both the government and the private sector. So both need to be addressed and monitored and especially in this digital identity field where we have both private and public sector involved then makes room for reflection. So it's -- I think it's again like I mentioned earlier, it's one property we want to maintain of the physical document when we move to digital real and I would say that digital identity crowd and SIDI Hub is very much hard at work to make sure that, you know, we put safeguards in progress but this is also engagement with civil society is absolutely important in this work.

Moderator Gail Hodges: Thank you so much. I'd like to hit that last question on the digital divide and perhaps some of our AfCFTA representatives might speak to that because obviously one would need to have a device, Wifi access, broadband infrastructure to take advantage of digital identity and

interoperability. A lot of foundation capabilities that would be important. Any comments on bridging the digital divide and what can and will be an ongoing challenge?

- Abisoye Coker-Adusote: Thank you for that question. We got in the digital divide. I think that that can be easily breached if you create a lot of awareness because as it stands those that have mobile phones still are not a hundred percent digital. And they don't understand the implications of digital identity. So I would say that digital identity is a brilliant concept. It does make life easier, but at the same time you need to obviously safeguard the individual's rights, the citizens rights. So we need to make sure that the laws enacted definitely safeguards all their rights. What we've done in Nigeria is to do a few things. The Federal Government is considering flooding the market with very basic mobile phones so that it's extremely affordable and the average Nigerian can use this phone. Another thing we're doing with the enrollment drive this year is that we are opening accounts and wallets for all the people that don't down bank. As we go out to enroll people we ensure we open wallets with them so they're able to participate in government intervention programs and not be shrewd at all. So that would help the government a great deal to ensure financial inclusion to help to bridge the digital divide. So we're doing a lot of media awareness on digital literacy. With authentication application we want to ensure that people understand the value of having the digital wallet so you're able to use this application. This is how you can protect your data yourself. So for you to log in, it is biometric enabled. You have to obviously use your biometrics to log into the application.
- Thank you.

Moderator Gail Hodges: Thank you so much for the panel for their research discussion today. I know we're very much at time. So thank you for the thoughtful contributions and we will be sharing the report from this event with the IGF staff and there will be, I believe, a recording of this session as well to share with your colleagues.

- Thank you again.
- [APPLAUSE]

Appendix 1: Long List of Takeaways:

Digital Identity Is Foundational for Inclusion and Development: Without recognized digital identities, individuals are excluded from critical services like banking, education, healthcare, and mobility. Identity is central to bridging Africa's digital divide.

Interoperability Is Essential for Regional Integration under AfCFTA: Cross-border interoperability of digital identities is necessary to enable free movement of people, goods, and services across Africa, as envisioned by the AfCFTA.

National Sovereignty Must Be Preserved through Legal and Technical Safeguards: Countries must retain digital sovereignty, which requires robust data protection laws, trust frameworks, and respect for national legislation in any shared system.

Successful Models Exist and Should Be Scaled Regionally: Nigeria's integration of the NIN into national systems and Benin's "It's Me" card linked to ECOWAS are leading examples that can serve as blueprints for other countries.

Early Identity Enrollment (e.g., NIN at Birth) Promotes Long-Term Inclusion: Enabling digital identification from birth helps eliminate gaps in access to public services and builds a more comprehensive national database from early stages.

Political Will and Institutional Commitment Are Critical Enablers: Strong government backing as seen in Nigeria is crucial for scaling digital identity systems and achieving interoperability.

Digital Identity Must Be Embedded in AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocols: For digital commerce and mobility to thrive across borders, digital ID systems must be part of AfCFTA's operational and legal architecture.

Cybersecurity and Monitoring Infrastructure Are Non-Negotiable: Continuous monitoring, cybersecurity readiness, and resilience planning are essential to protect digital identity systems from breaches and misuse.

Not All Countries Are Equally Read, so Support Must Be Tailored: Differences in infrastructure, energy, legal frameworks, and political stability must be considered. Countries must be met at their level of readiness with appropriate support.

Collaboration Is Key: Multi-stakeholder partnerships involving governments, private sector, civil society, and international organizations are necessary for scaling secure, inclusive digital identity systems across Africa.

User-Centric Use Cases Are Key: Use cases like education, refugee support, and financial access help focus digital identity efforts on real-world needs.

Respect for Sovereignty: A recurring theme was the importance of aligning with local laws and cultural expectations while building globally interoperable systems.

Appendix 2: Long list of Action Points

Implement Regional Interoperability Pilots: Initiate test pilots between countries with strong digital identity systems (e.g., Nigeria–Cameroon or Benin–Ghana) to assess cross-border functionality.

Leverage Existing Regional ID Systems: Scale successful national models like Benin's biometric card and Nigeria's NIN integration across ECOWAS and eventually AU member states.

Institutionalize Cybersecurity Monitoring: Establish or empower national agencies to monitor identity-related digital threats and ensure system integrity.

Adopt Identity-at-Birth Systems: Promote issuance of digital IDs at birth across African countries to ensure universal inclusion from early childhood.

Develop National Policies that align local legal frameworks with international interoperability standards.

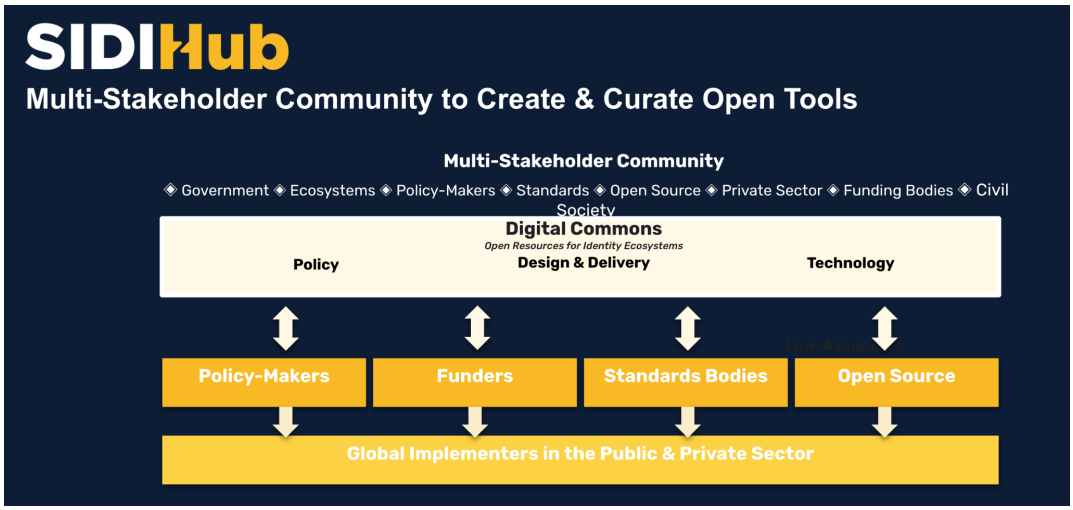
Invest in Cryptographic Infrastructure to maintain integrity, privacy, and authenticity of digital credentials.

Support Technical Workstreams on standards and specification development, particularly around wallet models and digital trust frameworks.

Foster Government-Academic Partnerships to pilot innovations and localize implementations.

Promote User Awareness and Adoption of digital identity solutions, especially through practical incentives like transport discounts.

Appendix 3. SIDI Hub background slide



Appendix 3: Session Description on IGF Website www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2025-ws-290-sovereignty-and-interoperable-digital-identity-in-dldcs

This session will explore how the evolving techniques and frameworks developed for interoperable digital identity systems can also serve as strategic tools for reinforcing national sovereignty in the digital age. As Africa moves forward with the ambitious African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), there is a growing need for systems that enable secure, seamless cross-border identification and verification.

Yet, this push for integration raises critical concerns about sovereignty, particularly around data governance, control over digital infrastructure, and the preservation of DLDCs autonomy in shaping identity frameworks. The workshop will examine how countries can leverage existing technical standards and governance mechanisms for digital identity, not only to foster interoperability and inclusion, but also to embed safeguards that uphold sovereign control over citizen data and national security interests.

By unpacking real-world examples and lessons learned from regional and continental digital ID initiatives, participants will critically assess how interoperability and sovereignty can coexist and even reinforce each other. The session will also look into how DLDCs can collaboratively define standards, policies, and trust frameworks that reflect shared values, while respecting each country's unique legal, cultural, and political contexts.