

Call for Participation on ID4Africa LiveCast:

Making the Invisibles, Visible: A Spotlight on Inclusion

Sept 16, 2020 14h30 CET

We believe the greatest challenge for identity in Africa right now is not interoperability, standards or even trust. The biggest challenge we face is achieving inclusion – getting everyone enrolled and onboarded into an identity system, so that they are visible and can receive their fair share of benefits and services. This goal has become even more urgent in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as the public health challenges and economic woes are pressuring governments to deploy social safety nets, health, and labor programs to contain the pandemic and help restart their economies—all requiring inclusive identification of the population.

What makes this subject complex is the fact that there is not one single reason why people continue to be excluded. In fact, even when people are not excluded from ID systems, they could be excluded from services because of a variety of ID-related issues (authentication failures, difficult KYC or unrealistic eligibility standards, etc.).

In addition, the impact of ID exclusion can manifest itself differently in varied sectors of society and could be entangled with deeper cultural and societal challenges. For example, those affecting women, marginalized groups, minorities, the poor, the nomads, the remotely inaccessible, and those that lack documentation from birth.

Certainly, to attract mass enrollment, identity systems must be empowering and useful (*demand-side*), they should be accessible, and free (*supply-side*). That said, the development of these systems is challenged by a *chicken-and-egg* paradox. Governments may face the challenge where without requiring ID for services there is insufficient demand to acquire it. On the other hand, one cannot mandate IDs without seriously disrupting provisioning, at least until coverage is high.

Building supply for ID systems can also be costly for governments and cannot be done independent of an economic plan where a clear ROI could be expected within a reasonable amount of time. This requires identification and development of priority applications and services from the start, which is not a simple task in the context of developmental economics. It challenges the country's planning, operational, technical and legal capacities, and has in the past slowed down the emergence of the supply side of ID systems.

Even in the best of all worlds, where supply and demand are, in principle, sufficiently well established, it appears that the inclusion challenge could linger. The populations need to be educated about their rights and the opportunities that ID systems could open for them. This requires well designed and executed non-politicized outreach and mobilization campaigns that implicate civil society and even the private sector. These campaigns need to target and accompany people from the other side of the

exclusion divide with a value proposition, and with incentives that are adapted to the current realities and needs of those that remain invisible.

Finally, it is also clear that in many cases, a game-changing approach to onboarding may be required. This could leverage a new technological platform or a widely available capability—such as mobile platforms coupled with biometrics for self-enrollment, and data analytics for screening and vetting.

All in all this is a rich and complex system that merits deeper reflection and collaborations among the various stakeholders in the identity ecosystems.

ID4Africa intends to dedicate an upcoming LiveCast episode to this important topic. We are looking for experts, who have informed views on the subject of inclusion, to join a panel moderated by the ID4Africa Executive Chairman, Dr. Joseph Atick. The objective is to provide concrete guidance to governments about policies, approaches and technologies that have been shown to be successful in boosting enrollments or that are promising game-changers in that regard.

If you are an identity stakeholder with experience or ideas on how to make identity systems more inclusive, provide us with a synopsis about what you can speak about. This is likely to be a panel where you will be given the opportunity to present briefly some prepared remarks and then engage in a discussion. The panel will be a mix of government, industry and development agencies.

This session will be run on September 16, 2020 as part of ID4Africa's commemoration of International Identity Day.

The panel will feature participation from Economist Alan Gelb, from the Center for Global Development, and Barry Cooper, from CENFRI in South Africa.