

# **Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Centering Safeguards in Uganda's Digital Transformation Dialogue Report**

March 6th, 2025  
KAMPALA.

*Convened by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), in partnership with  
NAMATI – Kenya and the DPI Safeguards Initiative, jointly stewarded by the United  
Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Office of Digital and Emerging  
Technologies.*



## **1. Executive Summary**

On 6th March 2025, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) in partnership with Namati and the DPI Safeguards Initiative, jointly stewarded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Office of Digital and Emerging Technologies organized a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Centering Safeguards in Uganda's Digital Transformation on Thursday 6th March, 2025 from 8.00am to 1pm at Four Points by Sheraton.

The event brought together over 60 representatives from government including the representatives from Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Office of the Prime Minister, National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), National Information Technology Authority (NITA), Data Protection Office, Uganda Human Rights Commission etc. The dialogue was also attended by civil society representatives, academia, media representatives and development partners to address the challenges and opportunities presented by Uganda's digital transformation with a keen focus on the adoption of human rights safeguards in the implementation of DPI in Uganda.

## **Key Takeaways;**

- Uganda's digital future hinges on an inclusive, rights-based approach.
- Investment in Digital Public Infrastructure must be accompanied by strong legal and regulatory safeguards to ensure accessibility, transparency and protection of human rights.
- The adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) presents vast opportunities for public service efficiency and achievement of development outcomes but also risks including exclusion and privacy violations if not properly implemented with human rights safeguards in place.
- Marginalized groups remain at risk of exclusion from DPI initiatives, highlighting the need for to strengthen inclusive policy implementation.
- The Universal DPI Safeguards Framework provides a roadmap for the adoption of safe and inclusive DPI infrastructure and all stakeholders need to be brought on board.
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration, including government agencies, CSOs, and development partners, is crucial for the implementation of safe and inclusive DPI at the national level.
- Uganda's Vision 2040 and National Development Plan III recognize ICT as a vehicle for inclusive development, making digital safeguards a priority.
- It is critical to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance transparency, and ensure continuous stakeholder engagement.

## **2. Background**

Digital transformation is quickly influencing governance, economic activities, and access to social services in Uganda. With the launch of the [Digital Transformation Roadmap](#) in April 2023, Uganda has committed to advancing digital infrastructure and connectivity, promoting cyber security, data protection and privacy, amongst other priorities.

Uganda has enacted key legislation including the data protection and privacy act and the Registration of Persons Act, amongst others. The national digital ID system “*Ndaga Muntu*” adopted in 2015, digital payment and data exchanges systems also present an

opportunity to revolutionize public services delivery while empowering citizens. Currently at least 62 public entities including Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and 73 private entities have access and utilise national digital identity databases for various services through NITA's government wide integration platform [UGHub](#).

While these advancements offer significant opportunities for efficiency, inclusion, and economic growth, they also present risks such as digital exclusion, privacy violations, and cybersecurity threats. Without appropriate safeguards, vulnerable populations risk being further marginalized, and human rights could be compromised. For instance [only about two thirds of the adult population possess a digital identity](#), which is a foundational tool for implementing digital public infrastructure.

In 2024, The United Nations adopted the [Universal DPI Safeguards Framework: A Guide to Building Safe and Inclusive DPI for Societies](#), to guide the deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). The framework highlights key safeguards to be undertaken by responsible authorities including CSOs, Government and Private actors throughout the DPI lifecycle including conception, strategy and design, development, deployment, and operations and maintenance.

### **3. The Multi Stakeholder Dialogue**

#### **Opening Addresses**

The dialogue commenced with an opening address by **Ms. Saphina Nakulima the Programs director, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights - ISER**, who emphasized the importance of human rights considerations in digital transformation including the adoption of safe and inclusive DPI.



*Ms Saphina Nakulima delivers the opening remarks at the multi stakeholder dialogue*

**Mr. Michael Otero, the Commissioner, E-services - Ministry of ICT and National Guidance** in his **opening address** highlighted the government's commitment to inclusive digital innovation. Uganda has developed several digital transformation policies and plans to update laws in response to emerging challenges like AI and cybersecurity threats. Uganda's National Backbone Infrastructure (NBI) has reduced internet costs by 50%, expanding access to 42 districts. The National Data Centre and UGHub integrate 116 government and private agencies, streamlining service delivery. Vision 2040 and NDP III position ICT as a pillar for inclusive economic growth.

*"The government of Uganda recognizes ICT as a vehicle for inclusive and sustainable development in Uganda Vision 2040 and National Development Plan IV" – Mr. Otero concluded.*



*Mr. Otero speaking at the multi-stakeholder dialogue*

## **The Universal DPI Safeguards Framework: A Guide to Safe and Inclusive Digital Transformation**

Ms. Raja Chandrasekharan provided an overview of the Universal DPI Safeguards Framework, underscoring its role in ensuring that digital transformation does not exacerbate inequalities but instead promotes inclusion and security for all users.

In her presentation, Raja highlighted that DPI provides great opportunities but must be implemented correctly. According to the DPI Safeguards framework, there are three core pillars of DPI-based digital transformation; **Inclusion** – Ensuring accessibility for all, including marginalized communities, **Technology** – Developing secure and user-friendly systems and **Governance** – Establishing clear policies and regulations.

She also highlighted that the risks of poor implementation include: safety threats to individuals, exclusion of vulnerable populations and structural vulnerabilities within society.





*Ms. Raja Chandrasekharan, DPI Safeguards Advisor, UNDP making her presentation at the dialogue*

### **Panel Discussion: *Digital Transformation and Human Rights: Balancing Innovation and Safeguards***

A panel discussion explored the intersection of digital transformation and human rights. Panelists included Tonny Bbosa (Manager, Government Systems, NITA Uganda), Ms. Rosemary Kitembo (Executive Director, NIRA) Kenneth Muhangi (Lecturer, Uganda Christian University). Elizabeth Atori (Program Manager, ISER) moderated the panel discussion.

Ms. Rosemary highlighted the need to ensure all persons have identity and expand awareness within the community and for communities to become proactive in leading dialogue towards safeguards in the national digital ID system. She noted that NIRA is committed to cover the 40% adult population that is not currently registered with the upcoming mass enrollment program now scheduled for April, 2025 and encouraged all participants to participate in the process.



*Ms Rosemary Kisembo – ED, NIRA speaking during the panel discussion*

Mr. Kenneth Muhangi a Lecturer at the Uganda Christian University Law School and Managing Partner at KTA Advocates noted that data is the new gold, and very critical to the functioning of all services. He urged the concerned stakeholders to ensure sensitization of all Ugandans about data protection. He highlighted some of the laws Uganda has enacted on digitalization including the Data Protection and Privacy Act, The NITA-U ( National Data Bank) Regulations 2019, the Registration of Persons Act, among others and above all, the Constitution, which is the supreme law of Uganda.





*Mr Kenneth Muhangi, the Managing Partner at KTA Advocates and lecturer at the UCU Law School*

Mr. Tonny Bbosa highlighted the fact that the government is prioritizing automation of services. A key example being the UG hub digital platform accessible to government and private actors. He spotlighted that challenges persist around useability, digital distrust, illiteracy and need for more coordinated efforts.

Tonny Bbosa also noted that whereas many government services are now automated but the challenge remains with usability. He gave the example of land searches that can now be done online with the automated land registration system but statistics shows that many people still prefer physical searches at the land registries.



*Mr. Tonny Bbosa speaking during the panel discussion*

Key takeaways from the panel discussion;

- The necessity of embedding rights-based safeguards in DPI development. Mr. Kenneth Muhangi noted the DPI Safeguards Framework brings out best practices that the government can utilize to improve digital public services. 'It is good that we now have many e-services, but we need to simplify them to make them user-friendly for all Ugandans,' he noted.
- The scope of coverage of the current national digital ID systems and risks. Responding to the question of struggles of children born of the victims of Lord Resistance Army (LRA) war in northern Uganda in registration for the digital national Id, Ms. Rosemary Kisembo, noted NIRA is working with the Acholi paramount chieftdom on a special registration process for such children.
- The need to strengthen data protection mechanisms across the data exchange platforms. *'We (NIRA) are the custodians of the country's data; we have the largest data in the country and in the region so we realize the amount of responsibility we have with having that data,'* Ms. Rosemary Kisembo noted.

**Mr. Aguma Basil, the Assistant Commissioner - Strategic Coordination at Office of the Prime Minister** gave remarks after the panel discussion. His remarks highlighted that digital transformation must be grounded in human rights, ensuring access to essential services. He noted that so far e-government initiatives have helped register refugees and other vulnerable groups and he recommended continued engagement with all stakeholders.

A plenary session followed, allowing participants to share insights and raise concerns regarding digital rights, the digital national Id, data protection, centering women in the digital ecosystem, ensuring equity and citizen participation in Uganda's digital transformation journey.

#### **4. Lessons from Kenya's DPI Journey**

Mr. Mustafa Mahmoud, Co-director, Namati Kenya presented Kenya's experience in DPI implementation, shedding light on best practices, challenges, and stakeholder engagement strategies that Uganda could adopt. He emphasized the importance of independent oversight in digital governance in digital ID adoption and what opportunities exist for public and CSO participation in DPI policymaking to enhance effectiveness.



*Mr. Mustafa Mahmoud, Co-director, Namati Kenya making a presentation at the dialogue*

## 6. Closing Remarks

Mr. Bernard Mujuni, the Commissioner - Equity and Rights at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development delivered the closing remarks. He thanked ISER for convening the multi-stakeholder dialogue. He reaffirmed the commitment by the ministry to adopt safe and inclusive digitalisation to ensure socio-economic justice. He noted that the government together with partners will be commencing processes for developing community social registries as tools for social inclusion.

## 7. Next Steps and Call to Action

In conclusion, the dialogue echoed the need for a multi-stakeholder approach in Uganda's digital transformation to build a more inclusive, secure, and rights-centered public digital infrastructure ecosystem.

Key recommendations from the dialogue include;

- Strengthening legal and policy frameworks to ensure robust safeguards for DPI in Uganda. The government should expand national digital ID programs to reach the 40% of adults without national IDs and strengthen birth registration systems to ensure all children are registered. Additionally, the government needs to introduce gender-sensitive and context informed identification registration policies. All stakeholders need to contribute to inclusive digital literacy programs, especially for marginalized groups.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in Uganda's digital ID system. The government should strengthen **data protection mechanisms** across the National digital ID system, UGHub and other digital platforms.
- Fostering cross-sector collaboration to tackle digital exclusion and promote inclusive access for all. All stakeholders including government, CSOs and communities have fundamental roles to play throughout the adoption and implementation of digital public infrastructure.
- Ensuring continuous stakeholder engagement to ensure participatory and rights-based in digital policy-making.