



WORLD **PRIVACY** FORUM

World Privacy Forum Commemorates International ID Day 2024

The importance of legal identity for all, via ID systems that do not harm, and cannot be repurposed to cause harm now, or in the future

Pam Dixon
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ID Day 2024 video statement: <https://vimeo.com/worldprivacyforum/identityday2024>

I am Pam Dixon, Founder and Executive Director of the World Privacy Forum. I am here to commemorate International Identity Day 2024. [1] Specifically, the World Privacy Forum is commemorating that legal identity is a public good. Legal identity allows people to access the full realm of social life, including that of travel, education, purchasing a home, crossing borders—even for something as simple as a vacation — which requires a passport, which requires legal identity. The World Privacy Forum affirms that legal identity is a public good.

We also affirm that as we build identity ecosystems, digital and otherwise, that digital ecosystems, digital identity ecosystems, and all identity ecosystems must be built in a way that causes no harm. And further, that these systems cannot be used to cause harm now or in the future.

I'm standing in front of the Buxton Trestle, [2] a beautiful railroad bridge about 100 years old. It's a large architecture that spans quite a long distance across a large ravine. And although 100 years ago it was used for railroads, today the bridge has been repurposed and it is now used for hikers and cyclists to go through the mountains and see the beautiful trees. So that is a very good repurposing.

In the same way, identity systems and ecosystems can and will eventually be repurposed. Let us ensure that as we are working toward the goal that all people can have legal identity, let us make sure and work very hard so that that legal identity cannot ever be used to do harm, and cannot be repurposed to cause or to do harm, ever.

Thank you,
Pam Dixon, Founder and Executive Director
World Privacy Forum

[1] International Identity Day is based on the United Nations' SDG Goal 16.9: "By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration." <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/> ID4Africa, <https://id4africa.com> a prominent NGO working across the African Continent, spearheads International Identity Day efforts globally. See: <https://www.id-day.org>. The World Privacy Forum is a member of the 250+ strong global ID Day Coalition.

[2] The Buxton Trestle is a 100 year old railroad bridge which is 80 ft high and 700 feet long, spanning the Mendenhall Creek Valley in Oregon, U.S. The bridge is famous for its curved architecture and the beauty of its setting. https://www.oregonhikers.org/field_guide/Buxton_Trestle

WPF's related work regarding Identity Systems

WPF has a lengthy record of identity systems work. In the United States, WPF championed solutions for identity theft in the early days, before that crime had the legal or technical solutions of today. In 2005, WPF discovered the crime of medical forms of identity theft and after writing a seminal report on the crime, spent 7 years ensuring that systemic protections for patients were in place, including a long effort to remove SSNs from being printed on the front of benefits cards.

In 2010, Executive Director Pam Dixon conducted extensive field research in India to document and research the Aadhaar identity ecosystem from its earliest days and first enrollees. In 2016, her original field research - the only of its kind that was produced on this system as it was being built - was accepted by Nature Springer, peer reviewed, and published. This work was famously cited in the Indian Supreme Court Aadhaar Judgment, which kept the ID system but overturned its most negative aspects and created substantive legal and technical reforms. Dixon's arguments of Do no Harm and privacy by obscurity were accepted in the dissent of the court and became important ideas in socio-technical aspects of governance, privacy, and policy regarding identity systems and their uses and controls.

WPF is currently working in emerging areas of identity ecosystems, including multiple complex intersections with advanced AI and ML systems. Some of this work is being done through the

NIST Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute Consortium (AISIC), of which World Privacy Forum is a member. <https://www.nist.gov/aisi/artificial-intelligence-safety-institute-consortium-aisic> .