

Loi M Bakani: The Online Finance Finder Portal Launch

Speech by Mr Loi M Bakani, Governor of the Bank of Papua New Guinea and Board Chairman of the Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion, at the Online Finance Finder Portal Launch in collaboration with Business Link Pacific (BLP) and Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion, Port Moresby, 11 August 2021.

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Salutations

Ladies and Gentlemen

2. FINANCE FINDER

1) Firstly, let me thank you for the warm welcome and kind courtesies extended and for your presence at this important gathering to launch the online Finance Finder portal, which I understand is the first of its kind in the country.

2) Our appreciation to the Business Link Pacific and Centre for Excellence in Financial Inclusion for making this project launch a success. Let me also thank the financial institutions who took up the invitation to be part of this exciting journey: the commercial banks, micro banks and the finance companies.

3) PNG Financial inclusion strategy and policy identify SME lending as a priority area and have taken steps to assist and promote the lending activities in the last Financial Inclusion strategy 2016–2020.

4) With the intrusion of the pandemic Covid-19, many businesses have adversely been impacted, especially the MSME sector. The situation has also called to utilize technology to access financial services, a shift from the traditional ways of service delivery.

5) Lack of Information is identified as a key problem in having access to financial services for SMEs in Papua New Guinea. The *SME Loan Product Guide* that was developed by CEFI last year was the first step in providing information on SME lending. *Finance Finder* is taking it one step further by providing the information available online. Financial institutions can update the information on a regular basis to provide updated information always.

6) The *Finance Finder* portal serves as a tool for customers, i.e. MSME Owners, to search for the product that meets their requirements or needs in order to grow their businesses. The portal can be accessed through the CEFI website, and linked to the Business Link Pacific's website.

3. OTHER SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT

7) I wish to highlight Two Important development projects which the Bank is developing and will soon to be rolled out:

a) SME Accelerator Program with one of the key outputs being the *Credit Guarantee Facility*. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure the credit risk is shared by the Facility and the participating financial institutions so that the institutions can be encouraged to make loans available to MSMEs. Other components of the program include Financial, Business and market information advisory, innovation hub and strategic partnerships – all mostly to address and enhance demand-side of MSME financial access.

b) Financial Consumer Protection- a project currently in the Bank to improve financial market conduct, to provide financial consumer awareness and address the unregulated lending by loan sharks or money lenders, which is an area of serious concern because of what we observe as unintended consequences of debt traps by borrowers. Also, the combating of money scams using various means of collecting money from the public with promises of high returns.

8) The Bank of Papua New Guinea under the Maya Declaration (which was announce at the Alliance for Financial Inclusion or AFI Global Policy Forum) continues to show its commitment to support the work of financial inclusion and to ensure individuals and businesses have access to financial products and services that meet their needs. The Bank remains committed to working closely with CEFI in advancing our vision of creating financial freedom for all.

9) I look forward to continuing this great working relationship we have with all key stakeholders and I assure you of our continued support to strengthen, diversify and consolidate PNG financial sector through inclusivity. I request other financial institutions to use this platform as a tool to promote their innovative SME lending products.

10) I feel this launching event is an excellent opportunity for the MSME stakeholders to witness this innovative online tool and the products and services it showcases.

11) Thank you once again and I look forward to more engagements, and encourage a more structural approach to advance financial inclusion and access to finance in the country.

Thank you and God Bless you all.