

Luke Forau: Inclusive digital economy - stocktake 2025

Keynote address by Mr Luke Forau, Governor of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, at the workshop "Inclusive digital economy - stocktake 2025", Honiara, 8 April 2025.

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Esteemed colleagues, valued members of our community, ladies and gentlemen.

It's great to be here and thank you for being present this morning for this important event.

From where I stand, we all have a shared vision, a vision that is rooted in inclusivity, empowerment, and the promise of a brighter future for every individuals in Solomon Islands.

We are on the brink of transformative change, driven by the Inclusive Digital Economy. On top of that is the impetus that financial inclusion is the backbone of this transformation. Once every one has access to and use affordable financial services /products, then it demonstrates that Financial inclusion is a beacon of hope that illuminates a path towards a more equitable and prosperous society.

In an age where technology is reshaping our world, the Inclusive Digital Economy serves as a vital compass, guiding us toward a digital economy that leaves no one behind. Importantly, the digital economy is no longer a future aspiration; it is a reality. It recognizes that every individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, deserves access to the opportunities that the digital world offers. By measuring our progress, identifying gaps, and fostering collaboration, we can ensure that the benefits of digital innovation reach every corner of our beloved islands in the nine provinces.

At the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, we are dedicated to promoting and facilitating financial inclusion across our islands. The Central Bank plays a crucial role in this transformative journey. Financial system development remains at the heart of our efforts to build a resilient, connected, and inclusive Solomon Islands.

By promoting policies that enhance access to financial services, we empower individuals and businesses alike, enabling them to participate fully in the economy. This is not just about banking; it's about building a foundation for sustainable growth, ensuring that every citizen has the tools they need to thrive.

Imagine a young entrepreneur in Honiara, bursting with ideas but lacking access to capital. Or a farmer in a remote village, seeking to sell their produce in markets far away. With the Central Bank's commitment to fostering an inclusive financial ecosystem, these dreams can become reality. Through innovative solutions like mobile banking, digital payments, and microfinance, we are breaking down barriers and creating pathways for success.

As our NFIS3 comes to end this year, CBSI is pleased to see real progress in Financial Inclusion in the Solomon Islands, especially the:

- Go live of The Automated Transfer System (ATS) for payments, making transactions automatic, faster and safer.
- Introduction of Digital Financial Services (DFS) like M-SELEN, lumiCash, EziPei, Accountplan, and Aelan Digital are expanding access, particularly for rural and underserved population.

- Establishment of the CBSI Regulatory Sandbox for innovations in fintech, with several promising solution.

But this journey is not solely the responsibility of the Central Bank. It requires collaboration-partnerships between government, private sector, civil society, development partners and each of you in this room.

For example:

For the Private sector; Your innovation can drive progress. For Government agencies; Your policies shape the country's enabling environment. For Development partners; Your support bridges critical gaps.

Together, we can cultivate an environment where technology and finance work hand in hand to uplift every member of our community.

Despite the progress made, there is serious gaps existing in the area of digital financial literacy, especially in the rural areas. Without digital financial literacy, even the most advanced system will fail to reach their potential.

That is why we continue to call upon stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, the Churches and others to support our efforts to introduce financial literacy into the main national syllabus.

At this juncture, we would like to thank UNCDF and UNDP for their continued support to help spread financial literacy as wide as possible to rural areas.

We must continue to advocate for digital financial literacy, ensuring that our people are equipped with the skills they need to navigate this new landscape. Education is the key that unlocks doors, and it is our collective duty to provide that key to everyone.

Consider the implications of financial literacy in our communities. A young woman in a rural village who understands how to use mobile banking can send money to her family or invest in her small business, creating a ripple effect of economic growth. An aspiring entrepreneur who is knowledgeable about online payment systems can reach customers beyond their local

market, expanding their reach and impact. When we empower our citizens with digital financial skills, we are igniting a spark of innovation and entrepreneurship that can transform lives.

Imagine workshops in our communities, where individuals learn not only how to use digital platforms but also how to make informed financial decisions. Picture families sitting together, discussing budgeting, savings, and investments, all empowered by the knowledge that they can control their financial destinies. This is the kind of transformation we can achieve when we prioritize digital financial literacy.

And please do understand that financial literacy is not static; it is an ongoing journey. As technology evolves, so too must our understanding of it. We must commit to continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that our citizens are equipped to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of the digital age. Importantly, let's create a future where financial literacy is not just a privilege but a right.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we embrace the IDES, let us remember that our goal extends beyond mere statistics and metrics. It is about transforming lives, fostering resilience, and building a society where every individual can contribute to and benefit from the digital economy. It is about creating a future where our children can dream without limits, knowing that they have the support of a robust, inclusive financial system.

Let me call upon each of you to be champions of this vision. Share the message of the

Inclusive Digital Economy in your communities, advocate for those who may feel voiceless, and work tirelessly to ensure that inclusivity is at the forefront of our digital transformation. Together, we can cultivate a culture of innovation and collaboration that uplifts every citizen of the Solomon Islands.

As we look ahead, let us focus on three priorities:

1. Continue to expand and deepen Financial Inclusion through affordable, digital and user-friendly solutions, making sure no community is left behind.
2. Strengthening Consumer Protection and safeguards, as adoption grows.
3. Support entrepreneurs and businesses to thrive in the Digital Economy, for sustained economic growth.

Let us seize this moment, harness the power of the digital economy, and pave the way for a future that is bright, inclusive, and filled with endless possibilities. Together, we can make the Solomon Islands a shining example of what can be achieved when we prioritize inclusion and empower every individual to thrive.

Finally, I'd like to once again thank UNCDF, UNDP, other donor partners and the Ministry of communications for your continuous support in this space. We hope to continue this partnership until every individuals in Solomon Islands have access to and use some form of financial services that improves their standards of living.
Thank you.