



Welcome to the Reserve Bank of Fiji's Public Awareness column. Over the next few weeks we will cover a series of articles on financial inclusion, as a lead up to the Reserve Bank of Fiji co-hosting the annual Alliance for Financial Inclusion Global Policy Forum in September.

Geospatial Mapping for Financial Inclusion

Policy makers rely on quality information to make important decisions. Financial inclusion has now become an important subject matter to them because it contributes directly to economic growth. It assists in poverty alleviation, creates income generation and employment opportunities. It enables the provision of access to financial products and services by communities that are financially excluded. It encourages micro entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprise development thus impacting the real economy.

A milestone achievement of Fiji's first medium term strategy for financial inclusion 2010-2014 was the production of a financial inclusion map. The purpose of the map is to show the locations of available financial services or access points in Fiji.

A comprehensive map will make the 'invisible' market visible and identify opportunities for financial institutions, government and other stakeholders to provide financial services and economic planning to the underserved areas.

A financial inclusion map can measure the progress of accessibility of financial services by tracking the location or points of representation of these services over time in a systematic manner and this can be utilised to enhance the consistency and accuracy of implementing financial inclusion policies. It can also be broadened to map the varying existing potential economic activities throughout the country.

Collaboration and partnership amongst stakeholders is crucial to the success of Financial Inclusion mapping. No institution can make this happen alone. The mapping exercise is a result of collaborative efforts of the National Financial Inclusion Taskforce, the Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF), Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS). The RBF has been working closely with the South Pacific Community a regional body that works with island countries in the region through the provision of technical support. One of their objectives is to help member's better access data-based approaches to what is being done.

Regular meetings and workshops with stakeholders are held to ensure the quality of data is not compromised. The current map contains information from the Commercial Banks; Credit Institutions; Insurance Companies; Microfinance Institutions; Mobile Network Operators; and Telecommunications Ltd. Other providers that would be considered for inclusion in the future are Credit Unions and Co-operatives.

To begin understanding the financial inclusion landscape in Fiji, 6,102 points of customer access to financial services provided by the commercial banks, licensed



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credit institutions, life insurers, microfinance institutions, mobile money agents and mobile network coverage by the two operators was mapped.

The Financial Inclusion map visualises common financial access points at provincial level and also pulls together detailed location data from the main providers in the market to enable users to zoom in from a broad look of the country to a more granular view of the local landscape.

The opportunity was captured with the available technology in order to achieve the objective set. The software used for this exercise is MapInfo – GIS software. One can zoom in to street level or where access points are located. When one clicks on a particular access point, a toolbox pops up giving details relating to that particular access point such as type of access point (e.g bank branch, MNO agent, insurer), institution, location, population size in the area, etc. Relevant information continues to be loaded onto the toolbox.

Previously information was located in silos thus making it difficult to analyse appropriate solution for the excluded sector. Mapping of financial access points, network coverage and socio-economic information allows one to see a complete picture of accessibility. The invisible market becomes visible and the challenges it faces in terms of products and services are recognised through the eyes of Geospatial Mapping.

Being able to visualise data information at a national level on locations of various financial access points, combined with socioeconomic information such as population density, employment, gender and ethnicity, will allow for rich analysis that will contribute to enhancing the understanding of Fiji's financial inclusion challenges.

This map will help those from the public and private sector to better understand the developments and dynamism of the broader financial landscape to develop appropriate policy strategies and products as well as delivery channels to remote areas.

The map can be accessed on the RBF Website www.rbf.gov.fj under the Financial Inclusion page or the NFIT Website www.nfitfiji.com under the Statistics page.