Remarks

by

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at the

Annual Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy Forum 2026

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Annual Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy Forum 2026

Distinguished representatives of Government

Fellow regulators

Leaders of financial institutions and financial technology companies

Development partners

Representatives of consumer organisations, businesses and communities

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

On behalf of the Bank of Uganda, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy Forum 2026. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, fellow financial sector regulators, financial service providers, development partners, and all other stakeholders for your steadfast support and continued collaboration in advancing the financial inclusion in Uganda. Your collective commitment has been instrumental in expanding the level of financial literacy and inclusion.

Our theme, ***"Accelerating Inclusivity and Financial Literacy in Support of the Ten-Fold Growth Strategy"***, underscores our collective responsibility to ensure that financial services empower more Ugandans to participate productively in the economy and benefit from its growth.

For a household, this should mean being able to meet everyday needs, save towards future goals, and withstand unexpected financial shocks. For a farmer, it should mean access to financial services tailored to the agricultural cycle, together with appropriate protection against risk. For a small business, it should mean

access to reliable payment systems, meaningful financial records, and financing that supports investment, growth, and expansion. These are the outcomes that should guide our work and measure our success.

Uganda has made significant progress in advancing financial inclusion. Mobile money, agent banking, and electronic payment services have brought financial services closer to communities and created new opportunities for households and businesses, contributing to an overall financial inclusion rate of 81 per cent, as reported in the FinScope Uganda Survey 2023. Policy reforms, including the National Payment Systems (NPS) Act, Cap. 69, the SACCO Regulations, and the revised Credit Reference Bureau (CRB) Regulations, together with private sector investment and financial literacy initiatives, have further supported this progress. I commend the institutions and individuals whose dedication and efforts have made these achievements possible.

Yet, despite this progress, many Ugandans continue to face significant barriers to meaningful financial inclusion. Financial services may be available, but they are often too costly, difficult to understand, or inadequately tailored to customers' needs. Many individuals use financial accounts primarily to receive and withdraw funds, with limited uptake of savings, insurance, pension, and investment products. Women, young people, rural communities, refugees, and persons with disabilities continue to encounter challenges that require deliberate and targeted interventions. In addition, fraud and unsatisfactory complaint-resolution experiences can erode public trust and confidence in the financial system.

Our task is to deepen financial inclusion so that access translates into sustained usage, sound financial decision-making, and improved livelihoods. Ultimately, this will ensure that Ugandans not only have access to appropriate financial services but also use them effectively to build resilience and enhance their quality of life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Uganda's Ten-Fold Growth Strategy lends even greater urgency to this agenda. Economic transformation requires households that are able to save and invest, enterprises that can access financing for productive activities, and financial services that enable individuals and businesses to manage risk and uncertainty effectively. It requires a financial sector that supports key growth sectors such as agriculture, mineral development, manufacturing, tourism, and information and communication technology, as well as the many small and medium-sized enterprises that supply and serve these sectors.

Inclusive finance can contribute to this transformation by mobilising savings, reducing transaction costs, and enabling viable enterprises to invest, expand, and create employment. Financial literacy reinforces this contribution by equipping individuals and businesses with the knowledge and skills to make informed financial decisions, understand their obligations, and plan effectively for the future. Together, inclusive finance and financial literacy can promote greater participation in the formal economy, enhance productivity, and strengthen economic resilience.

Today's discussions will bring these interconnections into sharper focus through three key thematic areas.

The first is financial literacy and capability. The National Strategy for Financial Literacy III provides a framework for more coordinated action. Its success, however, will depend on how effectively we reach people at critical moments in their financial lives: when a learner first begins managing money, when a worker receives their first salary, when a farmer takes out a loan, or when an entrepreneur is considering an investment in a business. It is at these decision points that financial knowledge is most valuable and can have the greatest impact on financial outcomes.

We need practical financial education delivered through trusted channels and in languages and formats that people can readily understand. Schools, workplaces, community organisations, and digital platforms all have an important role to play. For small businesses, financial education should address practical day-to-day needs, including separating household and business finances, maintaining accurate records, managing cash flow effectively, and understanding the full cost and implications of borrowing.

We must also assess our efforts by the changes they bring about in behaviour and wellbeing. Attendance at a training session is a useful starting point. The stronger test is whether people can apply what they have learnt to save, borrow responsibly, recognise fraud and seek help when things go wrong.

Financial literacy must be underpinned by fair treatment. Providers have a responsibility to explain prices and terms clearly, design appropriate products, and offer accessible complaints and redress mechanisms. An informed consumer should also be a protected consumer.

The second area is digital innovation and inclusive financial infrastructure. Technology offers opportunities to reduce costs, improve service delivery and reach underserved populations. Artificial intelligence can support fraud detection and service provision. Open Banking and Open Finance may create opportunities for customers to benefit from the secure, consent-based sharing of their financial information.

These opportunities require careful attention to safeguards. Customers need to understand how their data are used and how decisions affecting them can be challenged. Privacy, security, fairness and accountability must be considered from the outset. Discussions on virtual assets, stablecoins and tokenisation must likewise examine their implications for consumers, financial integrity and financial stability.

We must also consider who can access and use a new service. People without smartphones, reliable connectivity, digital skills or acceptable forms of identification should remain central to our thinking. Providers should address these practical constraints in product design and service delivery. Regulators, financial institutions, fintechs and telecommunications companies need to work together to ensure that innovation is useful, affordable and trustworthy.

The third area is financing for productive growth and resilience. I encourage financial service providers to examine how their products respond to the needs and circumstances of underserved customers. The basic questions are:

- *Do repayment schedules reflect seasonal incomes?*
- *Are charges clear and affordable?*
- *Can appropriate records and responsible use of data help assess businesses with limited conventional collateral?*
- *Are savings and insurance products suited to people whose incomes are small or irregular?*

Answering these questions requires listening to customers and drawing on evidence. Under the National Financial Inclusion Strategy II (NFIS-II), we need to look beyond account ownership and transaction volumes. We should examine sustained usage, service quality and financial health, as well as whether access to finance is helping enterprises invest, households withstand shocks and underserved groups improve their economic prospects. Better-disaggregated data can help us identify gaps and direct our efforts where they are most needed.

Distinguished guests,
This Forum provides an opportunity to translate shared priorities into coordinated action. I encourage each panel to identify practical measures that institutions can take forward within their respective mandates. By the end of our discussions, let us agree on three to five commitments, identify the responsible institutions, set

initial milestones and establish clear follow-up arrangements through the existing NFIS-II coordination framework.

The perspectives of consumers and underserved communities should shape these commitments. Their experiences can help us understand where our policies and products are working well and where improvements are needed.

Ladies and gentlemen
We are taking a leading role in this area beyond our borders. The Bank of Uganda is taking centre stage in driving financial inclusion across the East African region and beyond. The Bank is scheduled to host two important events:

- The East African Community Monetary Affairs Committee (EAC-MAC) Technical Working Group meeting on financial inclusion, innovation and consumer protection.
- The Bank was elected Vice-Chair of the African Financial Inclusion Policy Initiative (AfPI) for a two-year term in July 2026 in Angola. Accordingly, the Bank will host the AfPI Conference in Uganda in 2029.

The Bank of Uganda remains committed to working with stakeholders to advance a safe, inclusive and efficient financial system.

I thank our partners and the organising committee for making this Forum possible, as well as our moderators and panellists for sharing their expertise.
I wish you constructive discussions and look forward to practical outcomes that strengthen financial capability, expand economic opportunities and support Uganda's socio-economic transformation.

I thank you.

Prof. Augustus Nuwagaba
Deputy Governor