



**FREE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON**

# **Digitization and Bridging the Digital Divide in the Covid-19 Era**

**THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION  
ADVOCACY CENTRE**

**August 26, 2020**

*Live From LONDON*

UK time, 12 Noon to 14:00 Hrs

**An Online Participative Conference For Central Bankers and Other Financial Services Regulators and Supervisors, Ministries of Finance Professionals, Access to Finance Professionals, Commercial and Microfinance Bankers, Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), NBFIs, MFIs, FINTECH Companies, MSME Consultants, Technology Companies, Impact Investors, Development Professionals, Insurers and Other Stakeholders, as Appropriate**

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## **THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION ADVOCACY CENTRE**

### **FINANCIAL INCLUSION ADVOCACY CENTRE**

The Financial Inclusion Advocacy Centre (FIAC), UK is an international action-oriented and practice-based think-tank geared toward promoting sustained financial inclusion (including for all types of MSMEs) and responsible microfinance. The Financial Inclusion Advocacy Centre's mission is to build the institutional strength and outreach of the inclusive finance sector, by providing a full range of high-quality, best-practice technical inputs and support to all industry stakeholders including MSMEs, small holder agriculture and allied producers, in a sustainable and demand-driven manner. As an independent support centre, FIAC is committed to promoting innovations, transparency, and enhanced access/outreach especially to the poor and thereby contributing to United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG # 1) and its sub-goals, which include achieving 100% financial inclusion by 2030 across the globe.

FIAC, UK has already SUCCESSFULLY held three virtual conferences in June and July, 2020 so far:

- ▶ Financial Inclusion in the COVID Era (June 8, 2020)
- ▶ MSME Development in the COVID Era (June 25, 2020)
- ▶ Delinquency Management in the COVID Era (July 8, 2020)

A fourth virtual conference on "Agriculture Value Chain Finance in the COVID Era" is forthcoming on July 30, 2020. A fifth one on "Governance at Central Banks, Banks, NBFIs, FINTECHs, MFIs and Cooperatives in the COVID Era" is being held on August 19, 2020. Participant feedback on these FIAC virtual conferences have been extremely positive with regard to delivery of presentations, outputs provided and also relevance and utility of recommendations. The key outputs provided included Conference Theme Paper, Power Point Presentation (s) and Audio of the Key Presentation. Comments received from participants include the following: "very incisive analysis and presentation", "excellent presentation and discussion", "fantastic program", "insightful presentation and paper", "very well organized program" and so on.

### **BACKGROUND**

Digitization can play a crucial role during the COVID-19 era as noted in the earlier workshops and FinTechs can play an enabling role in promoting access to finance in a meaningful and strong manner, especially for low income people and all kinds of MSMEs. For that to happen, however the digital divide has to be bridged and the digital ecosystem and infrastructure have to be strengthened. The world development report (WDR, 2016) talks of a global digital divide of almost 60%. Possibly, the digital divide may be lower today but many people are still left out of the digitization ambit as demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis. The key question here therefore is how to enable these potential users to cross barriers imposed by literacy and language and make better use of digital technology to conduct financial transactions?

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That said, what can governments, central banks, banks, NBFIs, MFIs, FinTechs, cooperatives and other financial institutions do to ensure greater digitization on the ground? What specific steps can they take in real time to bridge the digital gap? One key action by all these stakeholders, especially during the COVID-19 crisis and thereafter, is to ensure that essential ecosystem and infrastructure for digitization exist and are used at the level of banks, NBFIs, MFIs, FinTechs, cooperatives and other stakeholders during and after the COVID-19 crisis .

### SESSION PLAN

It is in this context that a FREE virtual conference—“DIGITIZATION AND BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN THE COVID-19 ERA”—is being organized by the Financial Inclusion Advocacy Centre (FIAC), UK on August 26, 2020 with participants from all over the world encompassing all stakeholders. The conference will explore several themes including the following:

- ▶ What are the key aspects that need the immediate attention of governments, central banks, banks, NBFIs, MFIs, FinTechs, cooperatives and other financial institutions to ensure greater digitization in the COVID-19 era and thereafter?
- ▶ How can these be implemented in real time on the ground by the aforementioned stakeholders concerned, especially during and after the COVID-19 era so as to bridge the digital gap?
- ▶ What mechanisms are necessary along with incentives for smooth and seamless implementation of these digitization mechanisms at central banks, banks, NBFIs, MFIs, FinTechs, cooperatives and other financial institutions?
- ▶ The format of the virtual conference will include presentation(s), discussions and wrap-up.

Takeaway (s):

- ▶ Conceptual Paper on "Digitization and Bridging the Digital Divide" in the COVID-19 era and thereafter,
- ▶ A compendium of research with available links on "Digitization and Bridging the Digital Divide" in the COVID-19 era and thereafter,
- ▶ Conference presentation (power point),
- ▶ Podcast (audio) of conference presentation,
- ▶ Free digital copy of forthcoming book written by Ramesh S Arunachalam, “COVID-19: IMPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION, MSME DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE”.

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## **FACILITATORS**

RAMESH S ARUNACHALAM is author of 12 critically acclaimed books. Apart from being an author, Ramesh provides strategic advice on a wide variety of Financial Sector, Financial Inclusion and Economic Development issues. He has worked in over 314 assignments with multi-laterals, governments, private sector, Banks, NBFCs, regulators, supervisors, MFIs and other stakeholders in 31 countries across 5 continents and 640 districts of India during the last 31 years. Specifically, Ramesh has worked extensively with MSMEs in Asia and Africa and has also participated in MSME policy work in Africa and Asia with governments and other stakeholders (including national and international MSME development agencies). Ramesh's forthcoming book, "COVID-19: IMPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION, MSME DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE" is due for a worldwide release on July 31, 2020. It has one chapter EXCLUSIVELY devoted to bridging the digital divide at central banks, banks and alternative financial institutions during the COVID-19 era.

GODFREY LORD KWESI CRENTSIL is a MICROFINANCE, MSME AND AGRICULTURAL FINANCE expert with over 15 years' experience in microfinance development and supervision. Trained and practiced extensively in most African and European countries as well as the MENA region.

## **APPLICATION**

The application deadline for this free conference is August 22, 2020. Please note that we do select applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Nevertheless, we will try to form a group of participants with complementary experiences and backgrounds. The number of participants is limited to 50.

## **REGISTRATION**

Please fill the attached registration form and send to [info@financialinclusionadvocacy.org](mailto:info@financialinclusionadvocacy.org). Once accepted, the Zoom registration details will be sent to you.

## **DEADLINE**

Registration forms should be submitted (latest) by August, 22, 2020. Late applications will be accepted, subject to availability of place in the conference.



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<b>E-Mail</b>	
<b>Academic Qualification</b>	

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