Meeting Report

Summary Report: Innovation Café on AI & IoT

12 February 2025

Suva, Fiji

Prepared by: ITU Area Office for South Asia and Innovation Centre, Delhi

Innovation Café Report: Insights, Collaboration, and Next Steps

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Background

The **Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development** is established to respond to significant unmet needs of ITU Membership in innovation, as articulated in the Kigali Action Plan adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 (WTDC-22) and the Outcomes of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 (PP-22).

As one of the vehicles of the Alliance, Digital Transformation Lab (DT Lab) contributes to developing frameworks and methodologies, providing technical assistance, and supporting capacity building of Membership to enhance local capabilities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

As part of this effort, the framework for the Innovation Cafe has been developed through the DT Lab, offering a dynamic approach to facilitating ecosystem-driven collaboration, capacity building and problem solving.

Introduction

The ITU Innovation Café is a structured platform for co-creation, knowledge exchange, and collaborative problem-solving to address diverse digital transformation challenges and opportunities, democratising innovation practices and enabling ecosystem-driven approaches and strategic partnerships. As an extension of ITU s commitment to innovation, the Café provides a participatory environment where policymakers, industry leaders, academia, entrepreneurs, and innovators come together to brainstorm, share insights, and develop actionable solutions.

In an era of rapid technological transformation, bridging gaps between different sectors and aligning resources is essential for shaping resilient digital innovation ecosystems. The Innovation Café, thus, plays a pivotal role in making innovation accessible to ITU Members by:

- Facilitating strategic dialogues that translate ideas into tangible outcomes.
- Enabling knowledge sharing to enhance impact.
- Strengthening partnerships through collaborative innovation.
- Leveraging ITU s Innovation methodologies to build capacities and unlock new opportunities.

As part of its comprehensive suite of innovation frameworks and tools, ITU employs structured methodologies to assess, strengthen, and accelerate digital ecosystems. Each Innovation Café is uniquely designed to leverage a context-specific tool, grounded in an established framework, ensuring that discussions are focussed, actionable, and aligned with regional priorities.

Workshop Overview

The Innovation Cafes were launched for the first time during the Digital Transformation Workshop for the Pacific member states that took place in Fiji from 12-14 February 2025. With the presence of 11 member states, representing industry, academia and international organisations, the workshop presented a good opportunity for its pilot engagement.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) have the potential to drive economic and social transformation in the Pacific. These technologies can support education, healthcare, governance, and climate resilience, addressing some of the region s most pressing challenges.

However, the Pacific faces unique barriers, including limited infrastructure, funding constraints, and a shortage of skilled professionals. With many remote and dispersed communities, digital solutions must be adapted to local realities. Understanding how AI and IoT can be harnessed effectively in this context is key to unlocking new opportunities and ensuring that technological advancements benefit all.

The Innovation Café on AI and IoT focused on understanding the needs of the member states, existing gaps related to emerging technologies and how ITU can support Membership in addressing these gaps via partnership with the stakeholders.

Stakeholder Involvement

The Innovation Café was attended by 11 Pacific member states including Fiji, PNG, FSM, Nauru, Kiribati, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Australia. Other participants included donors such as World Bank, EU, Asian Development Bank, UNCDF, PITA and the Pacific Disability Forum, and UN organisations including UNDP, UNESCO, ILO, FAO, UNOHCHR,

UNODC, UNICEF and UNOPS among others. Prof Chaklam Silpasuwanchai from AIT Bangkok served as an AI expert throughout the iCafe.

Following a multistakeholder approach is essential to ensure that AI solutions are ethical, inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with national and global priorities. By involving governments, industry, academia, civil society, and the public, countries can create AI policies and technologies that maximize benefits while minimizing risks. This multistakeholder approach at the Innovation Café enriched the discussions and helped ensure more holistic and representative outcomes.

Co-Creation Findings, Outcomes and Key Takeaways

Leveraging ITU s framework on digital innovation ecosystems and guided by its Initiative Development tool, the Innovation Café on 'AI and IoT Opportunities in the Pacific' used Mentimeter as a participatory engagement tool to gather participants perspectives and insights.

The following key questions framed the co-creation discussions:

Q1. Based on the presentation from AIT, which of the emerging technologies are you interested in exploring further?

Q2. What are the biggest challenges or opportunities in the Pacific that AI and IoT could help address?

Q3. Who needs to be involved to make AI and IoT solutions successful in the Pacific?

Q4. What solutions (products or services) could be developed to meet the needs of users in the Pacific?

Q5. If AI & IoT solutions are effectively implemented, how will the Pacific ecosystem be transformed?

Q6. What existing national, regional or global AI & IoT use cases could inform our approach?

Key Insights from the co-creation activity:

- One of the countries pointed out that the Pacific region remains focused on addressing telecommunications challenges, which directly impact AI adoption. This requires dialogue around regulatory roles, as AI is internet-based, increasing the urgency for structured governance.

- One of the countries raised concerns about AI models being trained on external datasets, questioning the relevance of these models for local contexts.

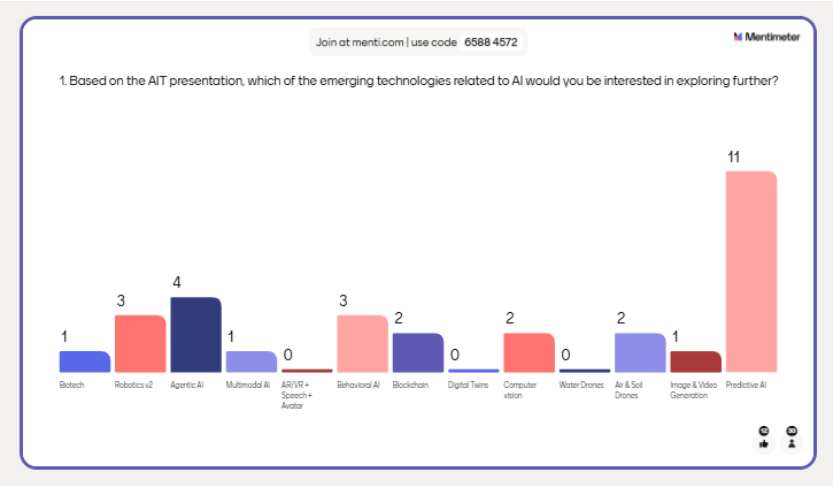
- Several practical AI applications were identified. Participants voted depending upon their interest in different used of AI. 9 voted for healthcare, 15 in skills and education, 11 in early warning systems for climate change, and 7 in digital agriculture.

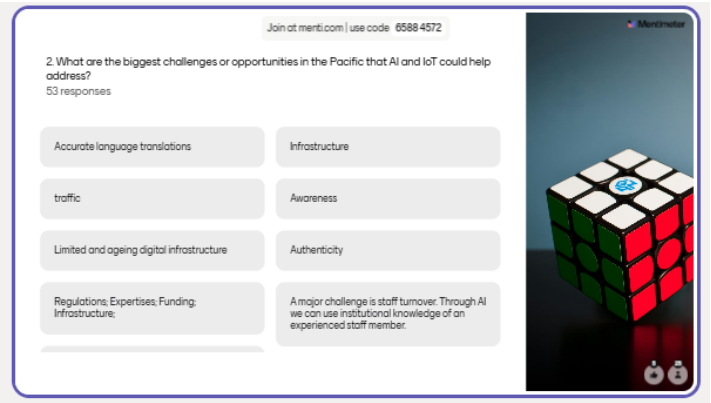
- The member states asked for assistance from ITU on AI regulations and governance.

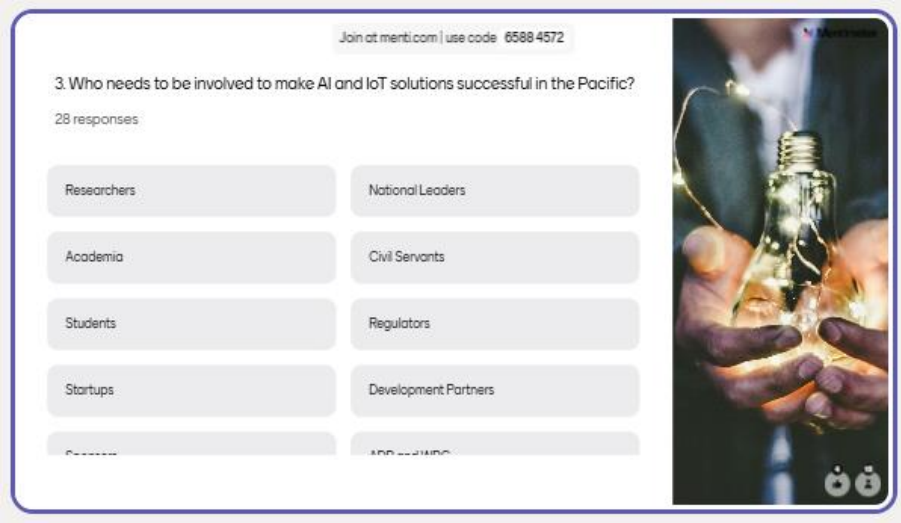
- Prof. Chaklam advocated for AI pilots to be conducted within regulated environments under expert guidance before scaling, which would require additional regulatory considerations. The importance of community involvement in AI system design was emphasized, ensuring that those impacted by AI contribute to both its input and output.

- One of the attendees highlighted the need for social stability in AI adoption, while another stressed the necessity for greater regional collaboration in the Pacific, particularly in addressing cybercrime.

- One of the member states raised an ethical dilemma, questioning whether AI should be introduced if it fundamentally alters a community's way of life.




Join at menti.com | use code 6588 4572
2. What are the biggest challenges or opportunities in the Pacific that AI and IoT could help address?
53 responses
Accurate language translations
Infrastructure
traffic
Awareness
Limited and ageing digital infrastructure
Authenticity
Regulations; Expertises; Funding; Infrastructure;
A major challenge is staff turnover. Through AI we can use institutional knowledge of an experienced staff member.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3. Who needs to be involved to make AI and IoT solutions successful in the Pacific?
28 responses
Researchers
National Leaders
Academia
Civil Servants
Students
Regulators
Startups
Development Partners


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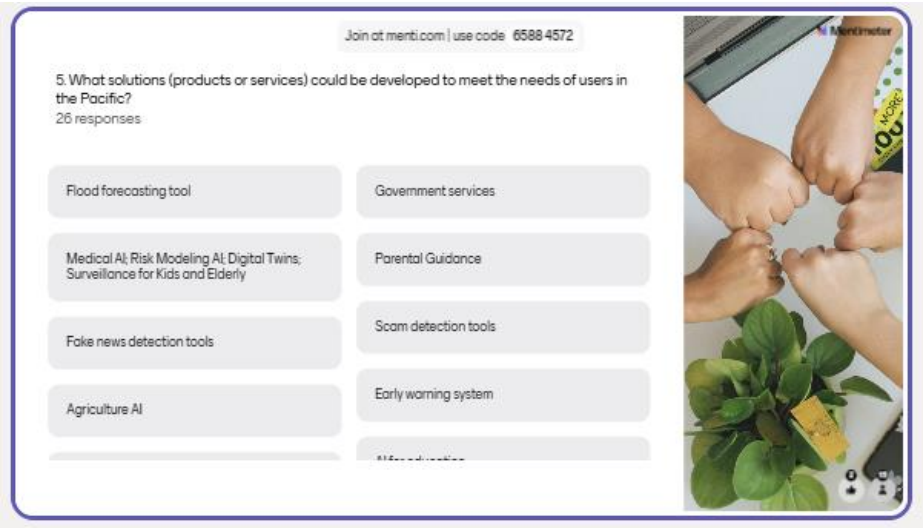
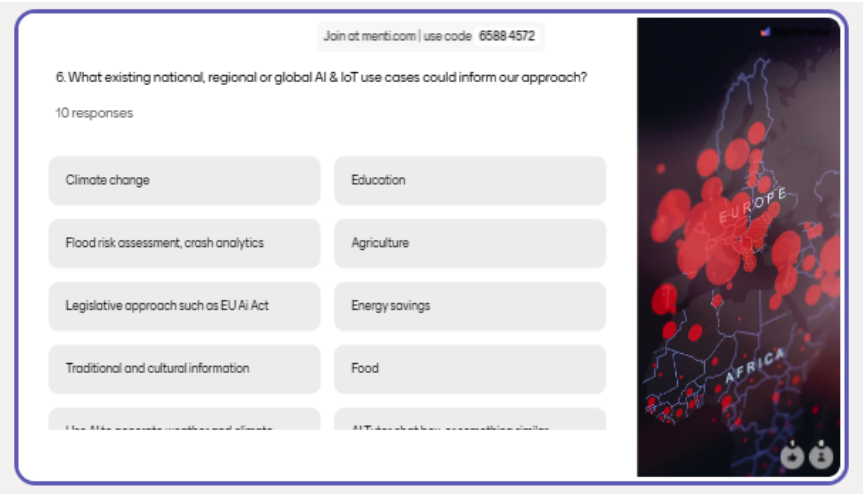
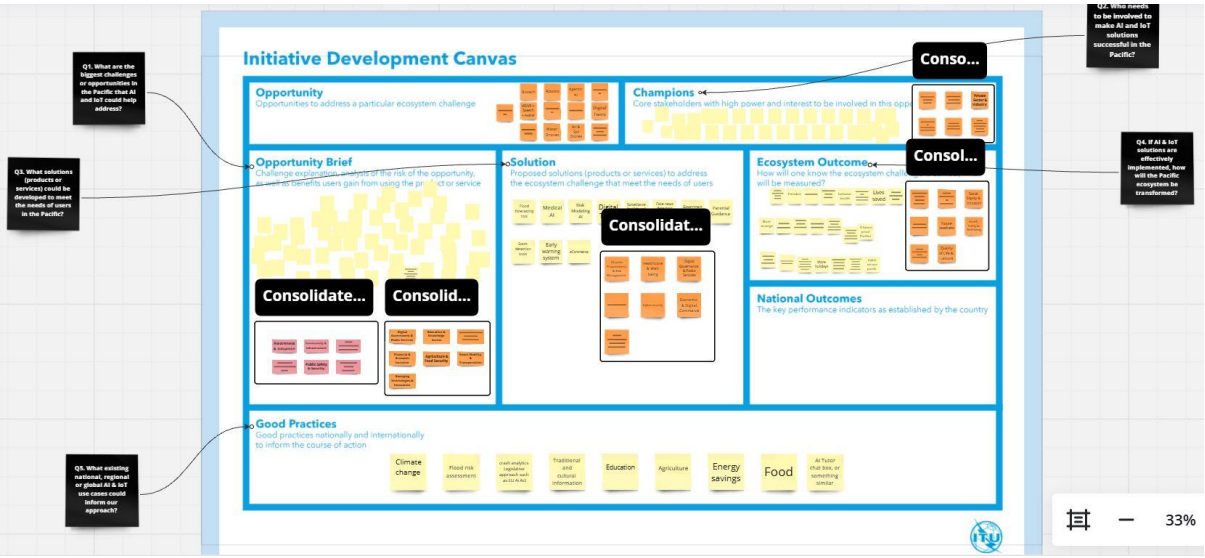
4. If AI & IoT solutions are effectively implemented, how will the Pacific ecosystem be transformed?
28 responses
Efficient government service delivery
No one will be left behind!
Paradise
Inclusive health
modernized
Contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.
Lives saved
A more connected Pacific





In this context, thus, the Initiative Development Canvas served as the key tool to structure and guide the development of AI and IoT solutions in the Pacific. This tool provided a structured approach to identifying key challenges, engaging relevant stakeholders, defining the importance of opportunities, envisioning impact, and mapping solutions that align with national priorities.



Next Steps

- Organise a knowledge tour on AI & IoT for the Pacific member states through the Innovation Centre in Delhi, focusing on AI ethics, governance, regulatory and policy aspects.
- Assist Fiji in designing and implementing a pilot on AI, in Rotuma island.
- Assist other member states to launch pilot projects to explore AI applications in healthcare, education, and agriculture tailored to the needs of the Pacific region.