

**The scope of Internet in empowering a rural community.
(A communication study of Kotmale Community Radio Internet project)**

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ABSTRACT

The present day society has entered in to an information and communication age. Advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has created a close union between media and the globalization process, paving the way for the concept of Information Society. The Internet is a one of the modern communication medium in this information society. At the turn of the 21st century, the Internet plays an important role in rural development. Thus, many countries trying to improve rural development activities are focusing on the access to the Internet. Some of the governmental and non-governmental organizations are conducting Internet-based projects for rural people, especially in developing countries because the majorities in those countries are kept away from the modern information technology due to the digital divide. Also there are some Internet based projects in Sri Lanka for rural development. This paper, reviewed documented and non-documented evidence of the use of the Internet for rural development with the discussion of the digital divide in Sri Lanka and documented the adoption and sophistication of the Internet among Sri Lankan citizens. There are many issues that restrict the use of the Internet in Sri Lanka. Because rural population is completely persuaded to use the Internet. Thus, there exists discrimination in the use of the Internet between the urban and rural communities. However many ICT projects used for development initiatives have failed in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, this paper evidenced the use of the Internet by Sri Lankans in the development context and provided both issues and possible strategic solutions at policy planning level.

Key words: *The Internet, Rural Development, Empowerment, Digital Divide, Sri Lanka*