

## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES IN REDUCING DIGITAL INEQUALITY IN SRI LANKA'S DISADVANTAGED AREAS

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### **Abstract**

Digital divide persists in Sri Lanka, particularly among marginalized communities that are unable to participate in the digital economy because of low internet penetration, poor information and communication skills, and socio-economic status. The article critically examines the roles of government policies in addressing digital disparity by exploring some of the leading schemes, such as the e-Sri Lanka and the National Digital Economy Strategy 2030. Qualitatively, policy analysis, government reports, and interview observations of the stakeholders were conducted to determine the level at which the digital inclusion schemes are operating. There is evidence to show that government efforts to augment digital infrastructure and capacity building are adversely affected due to the unavailability of affordable internet-enabled devices, local digital content, and poor public exposure to the prospect of online living. The report suggests site-specific digital literacy education, enhancing internet facilities in rural areas, and balancing policy intervention to fill the gap in the digital divide. Solutions include supporting public-private partnerships, creating investments for ICT purchase, and getting digital learning community projects implemented. These are some of the issues that need to be addressed in an attempt to construct equal access to the virtual world and establish sustainable economic and social development among the poor in Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** digital inequality, government policies, rural development, e-Sri Lanka initiative, digital literacy