

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

**By**

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## **Abstract of the Thesis**

Human beings in contemporary world are unable to live without communication systems; because people want to share their feelings, emotions, information and attitudes with others. Modern media are an extension of old media. Evolutionary print, radio, and television have come to the world of communication today. The Internet is one of the most important modern medium in this new stage. The Internet was introduced to the world as a result of the new technology. But in this global village internet is a very powerful multifunctional medium for human, social, economic development of the people. The Internet can be used for empowering rural community.

Development is simply a powerful social change towards the kind of social and economic system that a country decides it wants. Most of the countries in the world have conducted various projects which use communication media for national development. Radio, television, satellite, mobile phones, internet and other media are used for development in developed countries as well as in developing countries. Most of the developed countries have used the Internet for their human, social, and economic development, very successfully. The developing countries are also trying to conduct some pilot projects that use the Internet for development of rural community. Government and non governmental organizations are conducting these projects in developing countries. Specially, Latin America, Africa and Asia are main countries conducting these pilot projects. The developing countries have faced some problems in their programs aimed at human, social, economic development of rural community. Due to this reason these countries have lack of motivation to use the Internet.

The internet was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1995 by LEARN (Lanka Experimental Academic and Research Network) in the University of Moratuwa. Professor Saman Amarasinghe and Dr. Govinda Seresthra in the Department of Computer Science at the Cambridge university have conducted a research on 'The internet usage in Sri Lanka'. This report has pointed the lower level of internet usage in Sri Lanka. There are some projects being conducted in Sri Lanka by governmental and non governmental organizations. These projects include; Kotmale Community Radio Internet project, e- Sri Lanka project, Horizon Lanka project, V-

Village project, and Cyber extent project. Above projects are not conducted island wide, but only in special areas.

The research work of this M.Phil dissertation was conducted with special reference to Kotmale Community Radio Internet project. The study wants to find out whether the Kotmale Community Radio Internet project has been a successful in terms of human, social, economic development of rural community or not and also it looks into the limitation and opportunities in the usage of the Internet for development. The samples based on Kotmale Community Radio Internet project. The methods of observation, interviews and questionnaires used to collect data from Nenasala centre, E-tuk tuk project, five villages around Kotmale Community Radio and 'Nimwalalle Nawathana' radio internet programme.

Kotmale community radio station, established in 1989 by the government-run Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) as a low-powered community-based radio service carrying development messages to the rural people. The Internet Project at Kothmale was initiated in 1998 by UNESCO in partnership with a number of Sri Lankan and international agencies, to address 'the digital divide' by piloting a model for rural ICT use. Some of key reasons of internet usage of Sri Lanka, according to the field research on kotmale Community Radio Internet project can be summarized as follow; The higher charges on internet use in the rural sector, the low level of computer literacy in the rural areas, the difficulty of using the English language by the rural community, misunderstanding among rural elders that the children get mislead through the internet, the lack of developed infrastructure in the rural areas, the very low living conditions of the rural community.

The hypothesis of this research has been proven with the conclusions drawn and recommendations in this study. It means there are some problems in internet usage for rural development in Sri Lanka. Because of these problems at present majority of rural people have no motivation to use the Internet. But the Internet can be used for rural development very effectively in Sri Lanka by following the recommendations given in this study.