



Tele-centre and e-village experiences in Sri Lanka

Issues and challenges

Chanuka Wattegama

Programme Specialist ICT4D

Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Asia Pacific Regional Centre, Colombo

chanuka.wattegama@undp.org

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Agenda

1. Sri Lanka at a glance
2. Internet in Sri Lanka
3. Bridging the information gap
4. E-Sri Lanka programme
5. Tele-centres in Sri Lanka
6. E-village case study
7. Conclusion – Points to ponder

Sri Lanka at a glance - Smiles

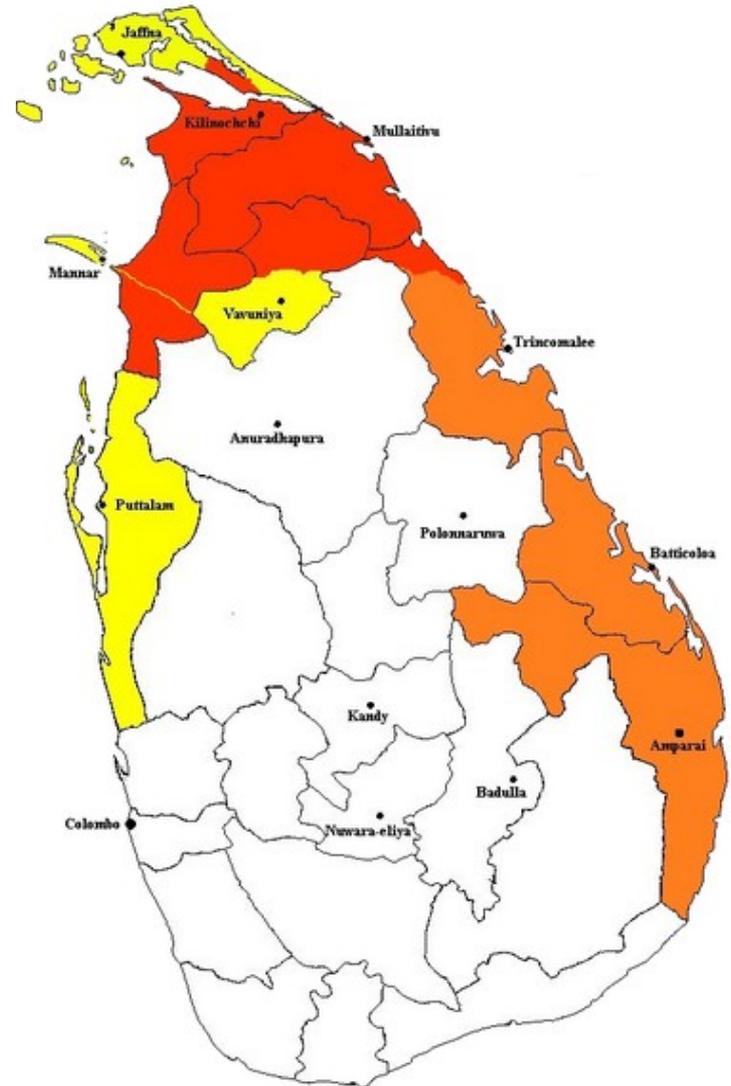
- ❑ Area 65,610 km²
- ❑ **Population 20 million**
- ❑ Multi ethnic society 74% Sinhalese, 18% Tamils, 7% Muslims
- ❑ **Literacy Rate – All 93%, Female – 91%**
- ❑ Poverty –
 - Below US\$ 1 per day 6%
 - Below US\$ 2 per day 45%
- ❑ **Employment – 31% Agriculture, 24% industry, 45% Services**
- ❑ Human Development Index – 0.73 (South Asia 0.56)
- ❑ **93% of households has access to safe drinking water**
- ❑ 75% households has electricity, 80% Radios, 70% TVs
- ❑ **There is a school for every 6 sq km – pupil to teacher ratio 21:1**
- ❑ The second most affected country by 2004 tsunami, Now recovering gradually



Sri Lanka at a glance - Tears

Country is burdened with a 23 year old civil war...

- ❑ More than 65,000 people have died during the last 23 years
- ❑ **1/10th of the land governed by rebels**
- ❑ 2.5 million population in the conflict zones
- ❑ **4 year old ceasefire in cross roads**
- ❑ No visible change in near future
- ❑ **Tension in the other areas as well**
- ❑ Badly affected all kinds of development
- ❑ **Socio economic development extremely low in the conflict zone**

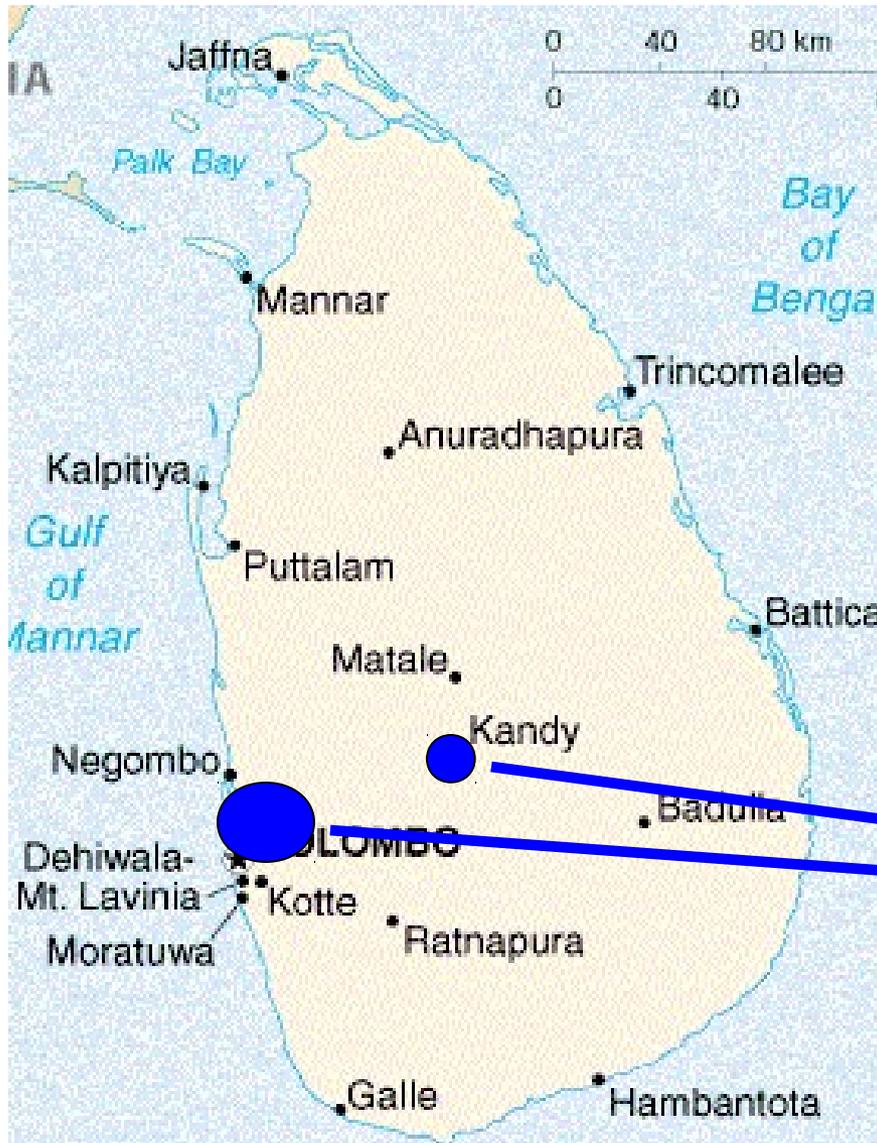




Internet in Sri Lanka

- ❑ Commercial and unrestricted Internet access started in 1995
- ❑ **First South Asian Country to provide commercial Internet services**
- ❑ All ISPs were private players (> 25 now)
- ❑ **No state control over ISPs; SLTRC only regulates**
- ❑ Initial costs were extremely high (US\$ 300 one time fee, US\$ 15 per hr during peak and US\$ 10 during off peak periods)
- ❑ **Low PC ownership; low teledensity, poor telecom facilities etc have hampered the Internet penetration**
- ❑ Less local content
- ❑ **Rural penetration was almost nil for about 5 years**

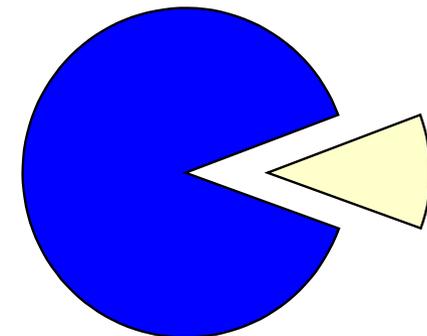
Way to go...



- ❑ Rural penetration levels still hardly satisfactory
- ❑ Due to several reasons
- ❑ Govt. and NGO efforts are underway to overcome these issues

Internet Traffic on an average working day

Colombo and Kandy : **89%**



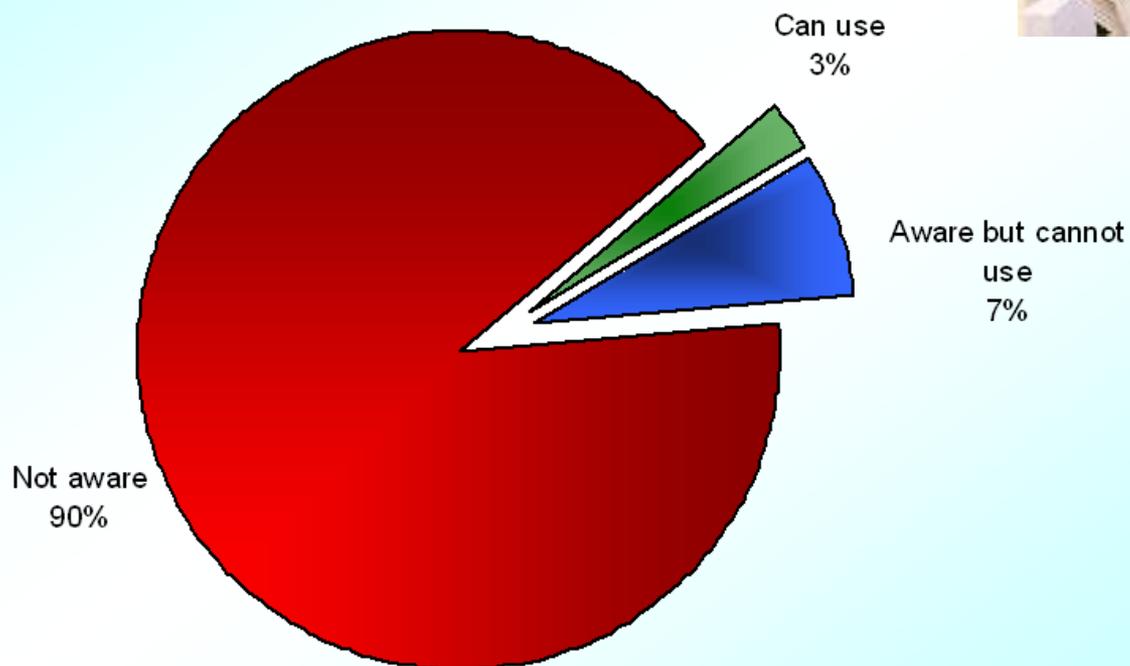
Rest of the Country : **11%**

Source: Sri Lanka Telecom

Bridging the 'Information Poverty Gap'



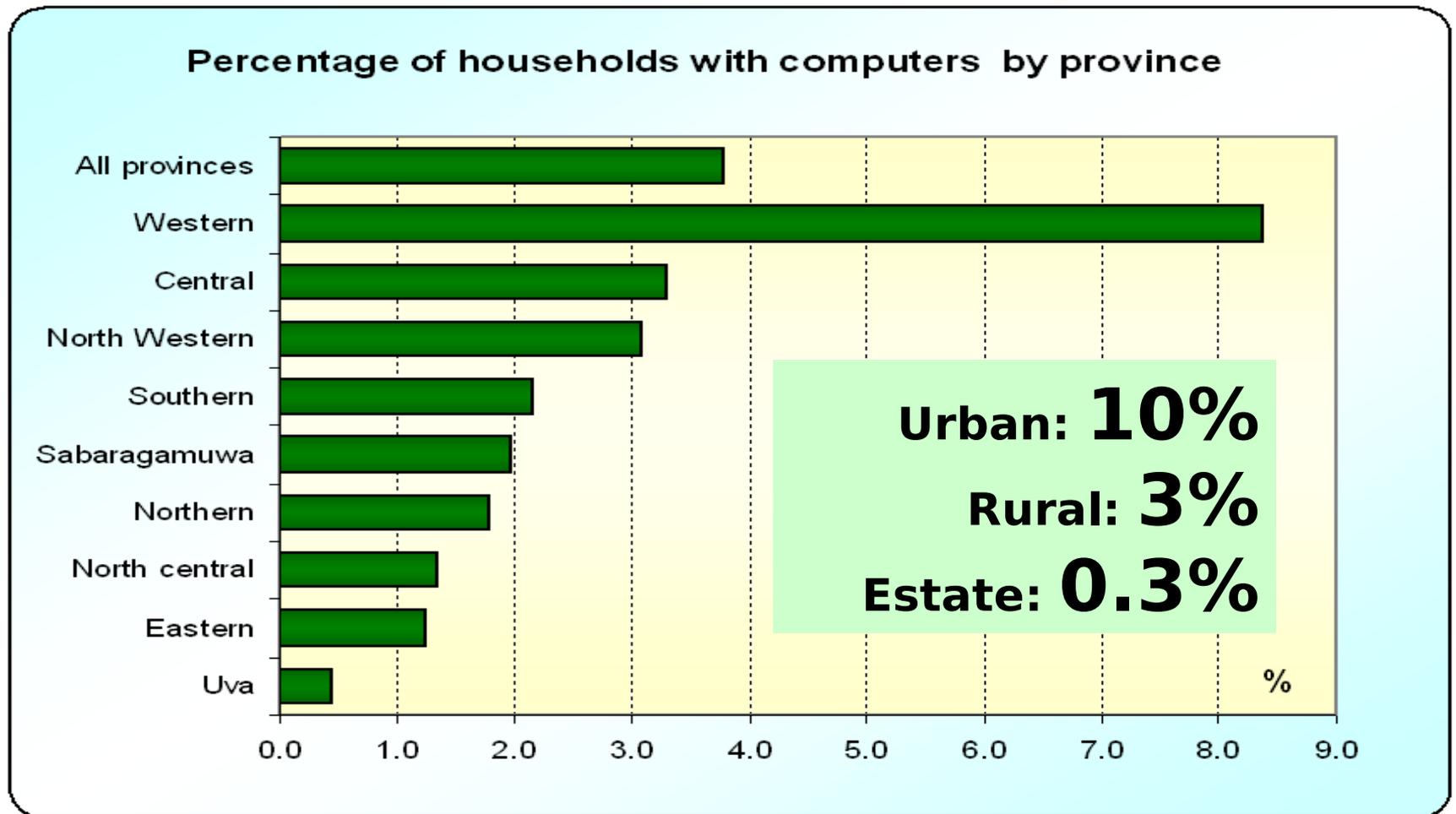
Awareness of household members about internet



Colombo:
32%

**Mannar,
Bataloa,
Nuwara
Eliya and
Monaragala**
: 4-7%

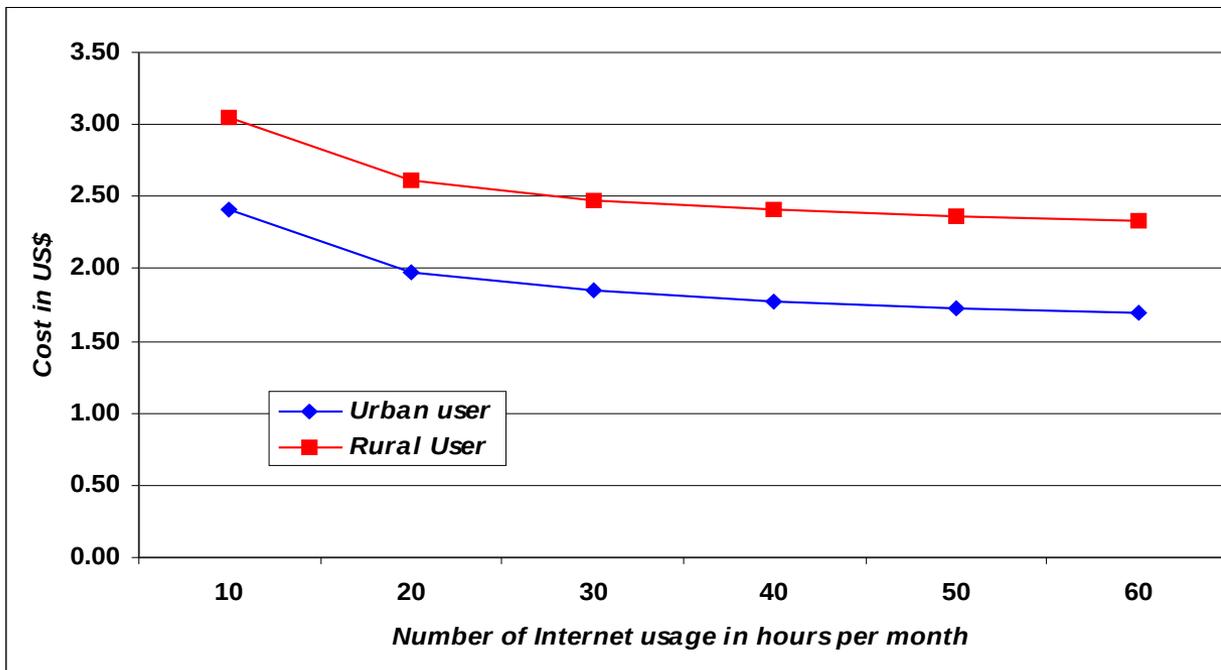
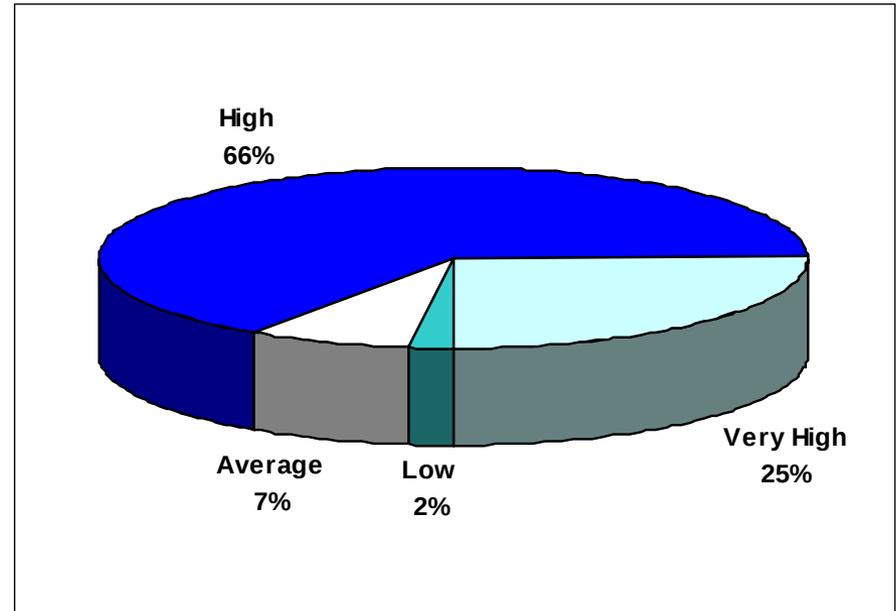
Bridging the 'Information Poverty Gap'



Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Survey on Computer Literacy, 2004

Rural Internet penetration - Financial issues

Question: How do you rate the Internet usage charges?

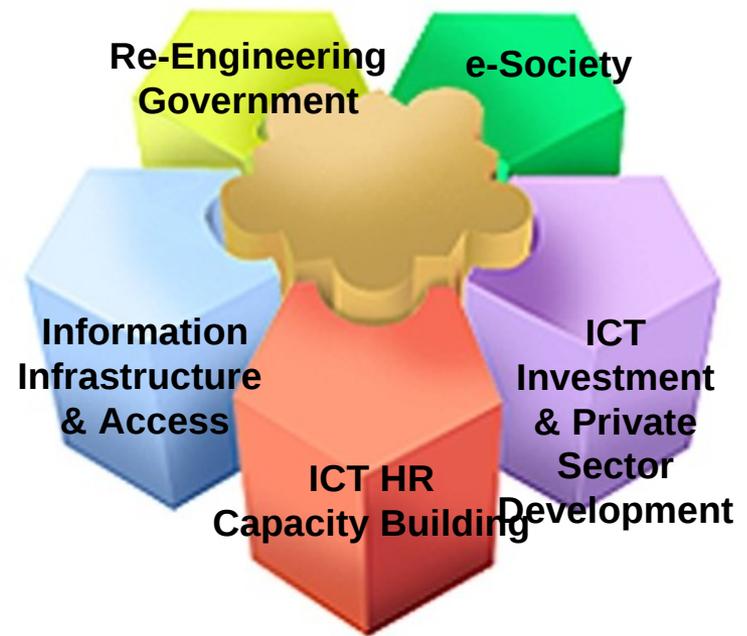


Source: A Survey conducted by an IT magazine

The usage cost differences between Urban and Rural users

E-Sri Lanka programme

- ❑ Initiative by govt. but with other stakeholders (Pvt Sector, NGOs)
- ❑ Launched in 2003 July, a multi donor project by largely funded by World Bank (USD 53 million soft loan from WB, USD 15 mil from KEB)
- ❑ Five programme areas
- ❑ Carried out by ICT Agency ICTA, a government agency that works on a different set up
- ❑ Given high priority by placing it under Presidents office (has both pros and cons)
- ❑ Specific objectives to be achieve by 2008

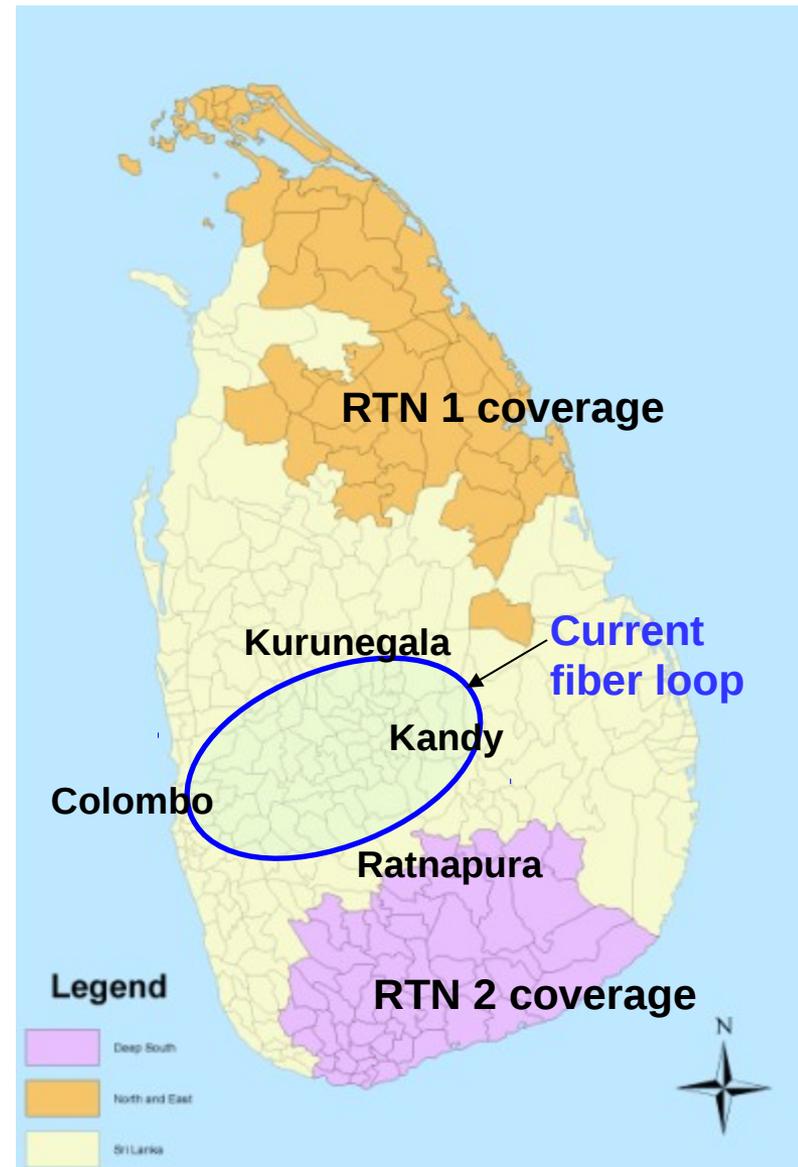


Vision

“To take the dividends of ICT to every village, every citizen and every business and to re-engineer the way Government thinks and works”

Information Infrastructure & Access

- Regional (multi service) Telecommunication Network (RTN):
 - Policy environment for affordable telecom services.
 - Smart subsidies for connectivity: multi-service platform.
- Telecenters programme:
 - Telecenter support institutions.
 - Competitive selection of tele-centre entrepreneurs.
 - Community and market development of services.



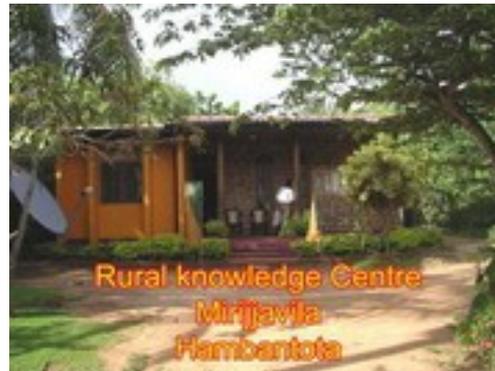
Tele-centre by any other name...



VGK Vishva Gnana Kendra



**Sarvodaya
Multipurpose
Tele-centres**



Nenasala



E-Tuk tuk

What made them different



	VGK (Vishva Gnana Kendra)	Nenasala
Model	<i>Entrepreneurial only</i>	<i>Some entrepreneurial but most aided</i>
Size	<i>Fixed (5 PCs, 1 printer, 1 fax machine etc)</i>	<i>Not fixed.</i>
Selection	<i>Entrepreneurs selected through interviews</i>	<i>Different methods</i>
Location	<i>Market place, towns</i>	<i>Towns, temples etc</i>
Coverage	<i>Only two selected regions</i>	<i>All island</i>
Replication rate	<i>Low (6 for about 1 yr)</i>	<i>High (over 250 in 2 yrs)</i>
Connection	<i>Initially VSAT. Later RTN</i>	<i>VSAT (cost LKR 75,000 pm)</i>
Issues	<i>Increasing usage</i>	<i>Gender, religious related</i>
Sustainability	<i>Ensured</i>	<i>Questionable</i>

Sarvodaya multipurpose tele centres



- ❑ Sarvodaya is the largest local NGO in Sri Lanka with presence in more than 11,000 villages; one of the largest NGOs in South Asia
- ❑ In the first phase MTCs have been established in 25 towns; The network will be expanded in future depending upon the demand
- ❑ MTCs provide Internet connectivity to rural communities
- ❑ User turnover is increasing
- ❑ Sarvodaya has been successful in bridging the 'last mile' issue
- ❑ Sarvodaya also operates a 'mobile Internet unit' in a modified truck

e-Village initiative

Horizon Lanka project



- ❑ Different from other projects as the initiation came from the village level, spearheaded by a young English master
- ❑ Mahavilachchiya is a remote village 40 km away from the nearest town. It is surrounded three sides by the jungle and there is not even a telephone connection (fixed or mobile) to the village



- ❑ **Wanni, the English master started teaching English and computers to a selected batch of students in 1998 using a used 486 computer donated by the US Embassy.**
- ❑ **Now they have a computer lab with 50 PCs, a complete web site developed by children, and another 50 PCs at children's homes**
- ❑ **Mahavilachchiya has produced some of the finest web developers, web masters, programmers, PC technicians and writers**
- ❑ **In 2006, 30 houses were connected using mesh networking technology**

Conclusion

– few points to ponder

- ❑ Sri Lanka have begun the info revolution but still a lot more to be done
- ❑ To bridge the information gap between urban and rural areas is critical
- ❑ Infrastructure remains a key issue – needs to be addressed asap
- ❑ However, just creating infrastructure will not help
- ❑ Content and infrastructure a chicken and egg situation
- ❑ Telecentres have to be self sustainable
- ❑ What matters is not the technology; participation is a key requirement
- ❑ The best is to create rural leadership





Thank You!

chanuka@gmail.com

chanuka@hotmail.com