



Sri Lankan Country Report on Local Language Computing Policy

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Policy Background

■ History

- National Computer Policy Report by CINTEC - 1984
- ICT Roadmap for Sri Lanka – eSri Lanka – 2002
- National ICT Policy draft – Under cabinet scrutiny - 2006

Background

■ **Official languages of Sri Lanka**

- Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (1978) dictates

- Sinhala and Tamil as Official Languages

(Out of 70 mn Tamils living in world only 4 mn live in Sri Lanka while 62 Tamils live in Tamil Nadu)

- English as the link language

- Official Language Department responsible for implementation of the official language policy

Background - *Literacy*

■ Literacy rate in local languages

- Population – 20 mn
 - Sinhala – 78%
 - Tamil – 18%
- The overall literacy rate - 90.6%
- Literacy among Sinhala speakers is 91%
- Literacy among Tamil approximately is 79%
- English literacy rate has not been surveyed but estimated to be around 20%

Background - *Infrastructure*

■ IT infrastructure indicators

- Computer ownership per household (in 2005)
 - Over all – 4%
 - Western Province – 8%
- Connectivity (in 2005)
 - Internet connections per household -0.7%
 - E-Mail – 0.9%

Background - *Infrastructure*

- Telephone Density (in 2005)

Type of Connection	Number of Connections
Fixed lines	1,509,913
Mobile	4,284,256
Total	5,794,169



Local Language Computing Policy

■ Background

- CINTEC and University of Colombo pioneered localization efforts in 1980s

■ Policy

- No Local Language Computing Policy per say
- National ICT Policy draft and eGovernment Policy support localization

National ICT Policy draft

- National ICT Policy draft requires

“Access to information to be facilitated through the development of national languages in ICT:

- It emphasis:
 - *Standardization*
 - *Technical support*
 - *Deployment*
 - *Content*
 - *Research and development*

e-Government Policy

- *Government organizations to use scripts based on the international Unicode / ISO10646 standards, for local language documents and web sites and in the electronic transmission of information*
- *Government organizations should work towards the content on their website being in Sinhala, Tamil and English. The web pages in local languages should be developed using Unicode compatible fonts*

Progress – *Encoding and Fonts*

■ Encoding Standards

- Sinhala – Unicode / ISO10646 standards
- Sinhala non-unicode fonts to Unicode fonts converter is completed
- Tamil - Unicode / ISO10646 standards

■ Fonts

- Sinhala – Finalized and in use (For MS & Linux), Private organizations have converted their proprietary fonts to be Unicode compatible
- Tamil – Finalized and in use (based from Tamil Nadu)

Progress – *Keyboard and Standardization*

■ Keyboard

- Sinhala – Wijesekara
- Tamil – Tamil99 to Renganathan

■ Standardization

- Sri Lanka standard, SLS 1134, published by the Sri Lanka Standards Institute for Sinhala



Progress contd....

- Lexicon for Sinhala – completed by UCSC
- Text Corpus for Sinhala – completed
- Text to Speech – completed
- OCR for Sinhala – completed

Progress - *Collation sequence*

- Collation sequence

- Sinhala finalized and given to major SW vendors for conformity
- Tamil - Has been done by Tamil Nadu

Progress - *Operating Systems*

- Operating Systems for Sinhala
 - MS XP supports Sinhala with the “Sinhala Kit” developed by ICTA+UCSC+ANCL+Microimage
 - MS Vista would support Sinhala
 - Language Interface Programme (LIP) for MS

Progress - FOSS

- LKLUG developed Sinhala support for Linux
- Open office 2.0 which supports Sinhala Unicode is used on top of MS Platforms
- ICTA engaged a FOSS expert to
 - For Sinhala support for GNU/Linux, Firefox, Thunderbird, Evolution
 - For Sinhala Unicode support for Open Office
 - Incorporate Sinhala collation sequence to FOSS databases
- Fedora core 6 is being translated

Progress – *Mobile platforms*

- 3 mobile service providers use Unicode based fonts for Sinhala SMS
- 1 major mobile phone manufacturer provides phones with Sinhala key pad

Progress - *Content*

- Sinhala and Tamil in web
 - More than 50% government websites are trilingual (plans are underway to make it 75% by the end of 2007)
 - Telecenters upload and use huge amount of content ([www'nenasala.lk](http://www.nenasala.lk), www.openenrich.org)
 - Sinhala Wiki started – But number of pages low



Challenges

- Though R&D been going on for a long time, little has been conveyed to user community
- Use of pirated proprietary OS hinders localization attempts
- Low popularity of FOSS products among users
- Different groups working on different agenda
- Difficulty to switch from either to new platform or from proprietary fonts to Unicode fonts



Future Plans

- Draft and adopt a comprehensive Local Language computing policy
- Provide all Local language support from single point of contact
- Adopt more vigorous FOSS policy which support Local Languages in a more easy manner

eSri Lanka
smart people smart island



Thank You!

**A Nation's Plan to Empower its People
through ICT**