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## Digital Poverty

M. N. O. Sadiku<sup>1</sup>, S. R. Nelatury<sup>2</sup>, S.M. Musa<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX 77446

<sup>2</sup>School of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Pennsylvania State University, Erie, PA 16563-1701

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**Abstract** Digital poverty is being equated to people living in the so-called Third World or developing nations. It affects unemployment rates and increases inequalities in developing nations. It is a global issue, which must be addressed because the longer we wait, the longer developing nations fall further behind. This paper provides a brief introduction on digital poverty.

**Keywords** digital poverty, information poverty, digital illiteracy, digital divide, poverty reduction

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### Introduction

The information revolution has provided economic development, opportunities, progress, and growth. But the telecommunications access is not universal. There is a stark difference between those who have access to the information technologies and those who have not. The Third World, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, can only observe this information revolution as spectators. The Third World is largely excluded from wealth and technological progress since large segments of the population live in extreme levels of poverty. There is perhaps no region of the world that epitomizes the conflict between the information haves and have-nots than Sub-Saharan Africa [1].

A common definition of poverty is that a person whose income is below the poverty line is regarded as poor. The poor lack opportunities to convert their resources into value-creating activities that can generate income [2]. They cannot afford access to health care, education, work, transportation, and other services. Major causes of poverty in developing nations include culture, illiteracy, unemployment, income inequality, polygamy, and environmental degradation. Poverty is a global issue, which must be addressed because of the stark economic inequalities in the developing world [3].

Digital poverty (DP) refers to the inability to use information technology. This could be due to lack of digital access or lack of digital skills. It may be a feature of any population segment, whether or not economically poor. Digitally poor individuals are those who do not use ICT (information communication technology) due to lack of abilities to use them. Digital poverty cuts across economic lines and does not exactly match economic poverty. It may vary according to poverty status and geolocation. The minimum capabilities of information play a major role for the advancement of the freedoms in the life of the poor [4].

Digital poverty prevents people from participating in the global information economy. Factors that contribute to information poverty include language, sex, culture, illiteracy, household size, lack of access to telecommunications, and lack of digital skills [5].

### Poverty Reduction

Through poverty reduction economic growth can be extended to poor areas and the digital divide can be closed. Digital divide refers to the gap between those who have access to technologies and those that do not have access



[6]. Digital technology is key to eradicating global poverty. It has the potential for developing nations and for reducing the popular North-South divide. It could increase productivity and boost economies. As countries become more digitally literate, digital poverty will decrease. They will be able to tap into the huge potential of technology to improve the population and create opportunities.

More people in the developing countries now have mobile phones. This has made a huge impact in a relatively short amount of time. Mobile phones are now available in villages as well as cities. This is helping the digital divide to close. It is also helping individuals to harness mobile devices to capture and share relevant information [7].

Government, business, and International organizations such as the World Bank and International monetary fund (IMF) must team up to provide crucial services on the digital network and develop some anti-poverty programs. E-Government has been promoted in developing countries to tackle poverty-related problems. This basically uses ICT to transform government by making it more accessible, effective and accountable. ICT can be applied in the areas of e-commerce, e-travelling, e-government, e-transport, e-health, e-education, e-learning, etc.

### Conclusion

Digital information technologies are the most important new tools that will enable us to join efforts to solve our common problems of digital poverty and digital divide or a gap between information technology haves and have nots, which causes digital poverty.

The deployment of ICT and digital technologies will move people from information-poverty to information-rich. Adopting and promoting e-governance can bridge the digital divide and boost rapid economic integration. Affordable access to digital information infrastructure is a necessary prerequisite for the successful use of ICT by the digital poor, but it is not sufficient. The poverty reduction doubters insist that solutions to the problems of digital poverty and the digital divide require more fundamental changes of society and cannot be achieved by technology alone. Reaching the digital poor and realizing the poverty-reduction potential of ICT is a difficult task. Support mechanisms are needed to help the poor communities overcome their fear of technology.

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### About the Authors

Matthew N.O. Sadiku ([sadiku@iee.org](mailto:sadiku@iee.org)) is a professor at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He is the author of several books and papers. He is an IEEE fellow. His research interests include computational electromagnetics and computer networks.

Sudarshan R. Nelatury ([srn3@psu.edu](mailto:srn3@psu.edu)) is an associate professor at Penn State University, The Behrend College, Erie, Pennsylvania. His teaching and research interests lie in electromagnetics and signal processing.



Sarhan M. Musa ([smmusa@pvamu.edu](mailto:smmusa@pvamu.edu)) is a professor in the Department of Engineering Technology at Prairie View A&M University, Texas. He has been the director of Prairie View Networking Academy, Texas, since 2004. He is an LTD Spring and Boeing Welliver Fellow.

