

Digital inclusion in Caribbean digital transformation frameworks and initiatives

A review

Dale Alexander
Lika Døhl Diouf
Kwesi Prescod



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Abstract

This study evaluates the extent to which digital inclusion is considered in Caribbean digital transformation frameworks. Digital inclusion considers the ways in which digital divides are created as the digital transformation of society progresses, and how societal inequalities affect and are affected by digital technologies. As such, digital inclusion is a lens through which the effects of the digital transformation can be assessed. The study assesses the digital transformation policies of 11 countries and territories of the Caribbean. It complements this analysis with qualitative data gathered through surveys and interviews from ICT focal points and policymakers in the region. The study finds that Caribbean countries and territories are in various stages of their digital transformation journeys, and that there is a lack of strategic direction. Few of the countries and territories studied have an ICT plan in force, and most do not yet consider digital inclusion in their policy frameworks. Most countries take a sectoral approach, and many focus almost exclusively on e-government. As there is a lack of strategic direction, digital inclusion efforts are frequently piecemeal and *ad hoc*. Reporting on implemented initiatives is frequently lacking, which calls into question the effectiveness of the initiatives. The lack of up-to-date data to guide policy making is also identified as a challenge. The study also suggests that digital skills in the public sector may be lacking, which may jeopardize efforts to digitally transform government and provide services that may encourage uptake among people. However, while most of the national frameworks do not discuss digital inclusion, most do explicitly value and promote inclusion in general. This could serve as a foundation for future digital inclusion efforts.

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