



Algeria

PUBLIC ACCESS LANDSCAPE STUDY SUMMARY



Overview

Public access to ICT in Algeria faces significant challenges. The country has severe inequities with regard to public information access, and has no strategic national plans to address these inequities. It ranks low on public access, capacity and environment measures, and does not have a high level of needs, readiness or political will for making ICT policy reforms. Libraries in the country account for only 7% of all public access ICT points.

PUBLIC ACCESS LANDSCAPE	
Challenges ahead	Significant
Needs	Moderate
Needs (rank)	16/25
Readiness	Moderate
Readiness (rank)	15/25

Findings

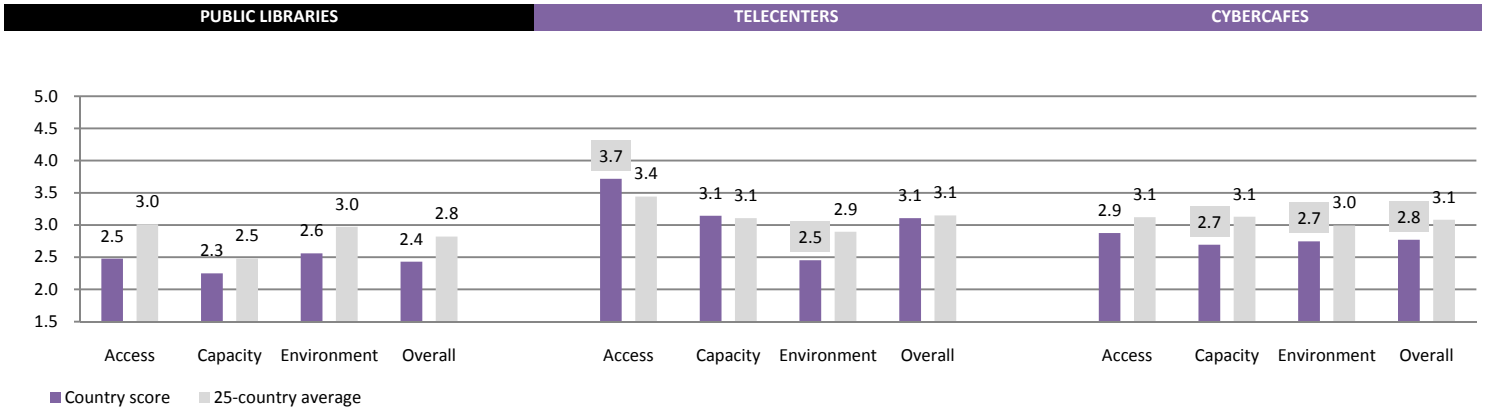
Gender, disability, age, and literacy levels all play large roles in limiting public access to ICT in Algeria. The result is broad inequity in a variety of issues ranging from employment opportunities to financial aid, social security, travel and immigration information, news about events in remote and rural communities, and student access to computers for doing homework.

Telecommunications and civil construction are becoming increasingly important in Algeria, but the existing ICT venues are concentrated in urban localities and typically lack current applicable content. Cybercafés, a few private libraries, and NGO-sponsored libraries are the only venues that are able to serve disadvantaged people and few of these sites have ICT-based services. Some people are able to use ICTs in the workplace, and some are able to afford the fees charged at cybercafés.

Other key observations include:

- For public access to information and communication, especially in underserved communities, most people use cybercafés and municipal and public libraries.
- Underserved communities lack widespread public access to information and communication venues for a variety of reasons. The public venues generally have limited funds, are concentrated in urban areas, and are often subject to restrictive regulatory issues that limit the dissemination of information about job opportunities, financial aid, social housing, social security opportunities, and administrative documents such as identity cards and passports. Some respondents voiced a concern about what they perceived to be ‘bureaucratic’ constraints.
- The venues often are not readily accessible for much of the population. Many people in remote and rural areas often must travel great distances to reach a venue, while others face social, political and economic constraints.
- The increased availability of ICTs and Internet connectivity is viewed as a welcome opportunity for the public to gain a much greater access to public information

ACE Scores



Shaded data points are outside standard deviation for 25-country set
 See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues
 See the last page for a definition of the ACE scoring framework

Venue Distributions

	ALL PUBLIC ACCESS			PUBLIC LIBRARIES			TELECENTERS			CYBERCAFES			OTHER VENUES*		
	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median	Total urban & non-urban	25-country average	25-country median
VENUES	10,991	10,017	5,489	752	1,111	1,062	2,739	1,273	366	7,000	8,693	3,225	500	398	46
number with ICT	7,587	9,802	5,122	263	349	96	274	1,149	257	7,000	8,507	3,251	50	146	13
% with ICT	69%	98%	87%	35%	31%	20%	10%	90%	100%	100%	98%	100%	10%	37%	92%
% OF PUBLIC VENUES	100%	100%	100%	7%	11%	20%	25%	12%	11%	64%	73%	67%	5%	4%	1%
POP. PER VENUE ('000)	3	8	5	44	93	37	12	205	68	5	52	9	67	419	103
with ICT ('000)	4	15	6	127	2,093	208	122	242	119	5	62	10	667	1,354	198

* See the last page for country-specific definitions of venues. For this country, "other venues" refers to private and religious libraries.
 Data points are missing for some measures in some countries, which can result in oddities when comparing rows of data (for instance, the average number of venues with ICT appears high compared to the average number of venues). For a complete overview of comparative country data, please see the summary paper for this study.

User Profiles

		PUBLIC LIBRARIES				TELECENTERS				CYBERCAFES			
		Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average	Urban	25-country average	Non-urban	25-country average
INCOME	Low income	15%	28%	10%	35%	NA	26%	NA	24%	15%	26%	15%	24%
	Medium income	60%	54%	60%	46%	NA	56%	NA	45%	80%	56%	80%	45%
	High income	25%	7%	30%	6%	NA	9%	NA	4%	5%	9%	5%	4%
EDUCATION	No formal education	5%	3%	2%	2%	NA	5%	NA	6%	10%	5%	10%	6%
	Only elementary	10%	16%	10%	21%	NA	14%	NA	13%	5%	14%	5%	13%
	Up to high school	60%	50%	65%	36%	NA	37%	NA	32%	60%	37%	60%	32%
	College or university	25%	28%	23%	19%	NA	40%	NA	28%	25%	40%	25%	28%
AGE	14 and under	10%	12%	30%	15%	NA	9%	NA	14%	15%	9%	20%	14%
	15-35	80%	72%	50%	51%	NA	74%	NA	57%	60%	74%	65%	57%
	36-60	9%	12%	15%	23%	NA	12%	NA	8%	24%	12%	14%	8%
	61 and over	1%	2%	5%	2%	NA	0%	NA	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
GENDER	% female	62%	53%	63%	49%	NA	39%	NA	39%	30%	39%	20%	39%

NA=Not applicable
 Percentages may not add up to 100% in all cases
 See the last page for country-specific definitions of these venues
 Data collected through interviews conducted by research teams. See country reports for details with regard to methodology, locations, timing, and data collection issues.

This study identified several factors that limit public access to information:

- There is no specific or effective initiative, policy, or strategic plan related to public library development.
- There is no effective collaborative way to link public libraries, cybercafés, private libraries or NGO information services.
- No initiative or plan exists to promote the concept of public telecenters.
- There is no system to monitor and register cybercafés, whose number has grown exponentially (from 100 in the year 2000 to 5,000 in 2005 to 7,000 currently).
- Information venues are not conveniently located in communities and seldom even exist in remote and rural areas.
- Most Internet content is in English while most of the population uses Arabic, French, or Berber. There is a need for more content development in Arabic.
- There is little or no investment in wireless technology in much of the country.
- Little has been accomplished to implement the “integrated rural development proximity programs (PPDRI)” as a platform to establish ICT infrastructure in rural communities.
- Little evidence exists to indicate progress has been made to implement e-administration.

Recommendations

The key recommendations from this study are that in order to improve public access to ICT, Algeria should:

- Significantly reduce the mass of administrative procedures that public libraries presently impose on users who want to obtain a reader card, and give priority to unemployed and physically impaired people.
- Design and introduce a functional concept of public library networks.
- Encourage public-private partnerships in support of public information venues.
- Establish the National Library mobile bus system, which provides portable library materials combined with cybercafé services, by using e-tuk tuk as a model (see report for details).
- Provide greater capital investments and allocations in the education of library staff. Improve training methods to emphasize user communication and education regarding information and ICT skills.
- Further encourage the implementation of the “IFLA/UNESCO, Public Library Manifesto 1994”.

Furthermore, the appropriate national government agencies should complete the following important actions:

- Promote the concept of public telecenters throughout the country. This must be conducted in partnership with the Ministry of ICTs; the Ministry of Solidarité; the Ministry of Culture; private commercial Internet service providers (especially EEPAD and Algeria Telecom); and local NGOs devoted to help underserved communities.
- Promote free access, or ensure a fee structure that enables easy access to low-income users.
- Establish public access venues in readily accessible locations, and coordinate this effort with the appropriate governmental agencies such as the Ministry of ICTs, the Ministry of Interior Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture. Make venues an integral part of sites such as public offices (post offices, banks, and municipal service facilities) and high-traffic locations such as bus stations, markets, stadiums, mosques, cafés, etc.
- Through the Ministry of ICTs, encourage private investments and promote the widespread installation of wireless technology in rural, mountainous, and desert provinces and regions.
- Encourage the Ministry of ICT’s Government Internet Network (RIGProject) toward implementing e-administration.

Geography & Economy

The Republic of Algeria is located in North Africa on the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It borders with Morocco to the west, Tunisia and Libya to the east, and Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria to the south. The country spans more than two million square kilometers and is composed mostly of sparsely populated desert and mountains.

Algeria is an important participating member of the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) cartel, and the oil industry has contributed heavily to Algeria's well-financed economy. In the past decade, Algeria has benefited from an increasing flow of foreign investments, which had been slow to develop in previous years when the country had experienced periods of turmoil.

COUNTRY PROFILE	
Total population* (millions)	33.4
Urban population* (millions)	21.3
Literacy (%)	68.9
E-readiness	3.63
Gini	0.35

*World Bank 2006 data

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About this study

CIS's Public Access Landscape Study examined how people around the world access and use information and computers in public settings such as libraries, telecenters, and cybercafés. Understanding public access is particularly important in developing countries where there is often limited private access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

This study covered a carefully-selected sample of 25 developing countries containing over 250,000 public access settings. Local research teams surveyed over 25,000 people and conducted interviews and focus groups in order to develop a detailed picture of the public access ICT landscape in each country. CIS collected, interpreted, and analyzed these detailed county-level results, and also conducted cross-country comparative analyses to uncover common themes, challenges and opportunities.

The goal of this work is to help strengthen public access to information and ICTs around the world.

This project was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, country-based research teams prepared draft reports describing the information access landscape, presented a national assessment, and compiled a preliminary set of recommendations. In the second phase, teams identified the principal locations where people seek information: public libraries, cybercafés, telecenters, and other locations (such as private and religious libraries).

Local research teams used a combination of research methods to: (1) observe how people access information; (2) conduct surveys in information venues where they interviewed operators and users; and (3) perform secondary research and analysis of existing reports and documents using both local and international sources. Teams combined site visits and interviews to review the physical infrastructure and human resources of a variety of venues, and to determine the information content, service usage patterns, communication, and knowledge development. Additionally, teams examined the effects of environmental factors such as government policies, geography, and ethnic and linguistic differences.

Definitions

ACE scoring framework: Developed by CIS based on a modified bridges.org Real Access framework. The scale goes from zero to five, with 5 being the best possible score. ACE scores are calculated by evaluating dozens of variables having to do with ICT access, capacity and environment in public access ICT venues. "Access" includes variables such as accessibility, suitability, affordability, and the availability of technology; "capacity" includes training, relevant content and services, social appropriation, and collaboration capacity; and "environment" includes socio-cultural factors, popular support, political will, and a country's legal and regulatory framework.

Challenges ahead (from table on front page): Estimates based on combinations of ACE scores indicating difficulty in improving country's public access to ICT. From the fewest challenges to most, categories are: quick wins, steady gains, slow gains, and significant.

CIS: University of Washington Center for Information & Society (CIS)

Cybercafés: Dominate the public access scene in Algeria because of many advantages: simplicity, Internet advantages, answer basic human need for intimacy and freedom.

E-readiness: The ability to use ICT for economic development, as determined by measures of connectivity and technology infrastructure, business environment, social and cultural environment, legal environment, government policy and vision, and consumer and business adoption. E-readiness is scored on a scale from 1 to 10. In 2008, the global e-readiness score was 6.4, with the highest levels in North America and the lowest in Africa and Asia.

Gini coefficient: Measures the inequality of income distribution. A low coefficient indicates more equal income distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates more unequal distribution. The global average is around 0.6; the US gini is around 0.45.

ICTs: Information and communication technologies (especially computers and the Internet).

Needs & Readiness indexes (from table on front page): The needs index is comprised of three indicators: inequality, ICT usage and ICT cost. The readiness index is also comprised of three indicators: politics, skills and ICT infrastructure. Proxies are used for all indicators. See "Information Needs & Watering Holes" on the CIS Landscape Study website (www.cis.washington.edu/landscape) for a more detailed discussion of these indexes and proxies.

NGO: Non-governmental organization

NGO Information Service Centers: May be reading rooms, Internet centers, and sometimes libraries.

Non-urban: Commonly labeled a rural area, but definitions of rural or periurban vary by country.

Private & religious libraries: Mostly libraries in mosques, usually composed of collections of ancient manuscripts.

Public libraries: These come in multiple forms, including municipal libraries, cultural center libraries, museum libraries, libraries of Islamic cultural centers, and the National Library.

Front photo: The reading room of the public library of Douaouda city (an ancient church transformed into a library). Here, a library user is shown sitting next to the librarian, the only person in the library with access to ICT. Photo courtesy of Algeria research team.