PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION & ICTs PHASE II REPORT

Costa Rica

Prepared for the University of Washington,
Center for Information & Society.

Contractor's Name
Adriana Sánchez González (adris@sulabatsu.com)
under the coordination of
Kemly Camacho Jiménez (kemly@sulabatsu.com)

Preliminary version: Feb 15, 2008
Draft 1: June 15, 2008.
Final Report: August 15, 2008

University of Washington
Center for Information & Society
4311 11th Avenue NE, Suite 400
Box354985
Seattle, WA 98195 USA

Recommended citation:

Table of Contents

The table of contents is generated automatically. Right-click on it and select "update field" to update page numbers.

1 Extended Executive Summary

1.1 Research Project Overview

This research focuses on the public access to information and communication landscapes in 24 countries, with specific focus on public libraries, to understand the information needs of underserved communities, public access to information and communication venues, and the role of ICT.

Through field research in 24 countries conducted by local research partners, and cross-country comparative analyses based on common research design elements (see list of countries and research design overview in Appendix), the project aims to contribute to the knowledge in the field of information and ICT for development. Of particular interest and value are: the comparative look at key venues (libraries and other), and the mix of depth of in-country knowledge with breadth of global comparison to elicit success factors and scenarios to understand how diverse populations can and do access and use ICT to improve their lives. All outputs of this research will be broadly disseminated to interested stakeholders and placed in the public domain.

1.2 Introduction

A study focused in "public access to information" represents a big challenge. For the Costa Rican team, this challenge offers the opportunity to find out what are the information processes in our country, were the culture of information has no deep roots among population and public libraries and telecentres are seen as a possibility to improve the education offer for children and young people, but not as public venues that can help the hole population to change their conditions and improve the quality of life.

Our study, based on three different venues (Public Libraries, CECIs and Cyber cafes), tries to picture the diverse strategies of communication that Costa Ricans use to inform themselves according to culture, gender, age, and other variables that will complete an overview which does not pretend to cover the hole population but to illustrate the general conditions of the country in terms of information processes and the use of libraries and telecentres for this purposes, as well as the possibilities given by the high presence of Cyber Cafes around the country.

This study does not cover "public information" but "public access to information". The research is focused in daily information practices that fulfills particular immediate needs of people. This information is of general interest and is not referred to particular nor specific issues and is not technical, specialized or political related. And it is important to point that this study understands "public access to information" as an access not limited by gender, age or citizenship. Access in venues open to the public and limited by specific organizational conditions, schedules and resources. What is understood as a "venue" is an open place were anybody can look for information, and since they do look for particular information to fulfill their needs, the venue adapts to the information needs of its users.

It is very importan to make clear that any generalization found in this report generalizes from the sample selected for the field work, and does not pretend to picture the reality of the totality of venues existent in the country. The research team is awared that the sample selected for the study is not representative of the hole country reality and do not pretend to establish absolute conclusions.

1.3 Country Overview

Costa Rica is a small country (51,100 km2), and has some facilities given by the politic conditions and economic relations, having an almost full coverage of telephony around the territory, which facilitates the connectivity and the use of ICTs for information processes.

The country has a very diverse population conformed by mestizos, indigenous population, Afrocostaricans, Chinese descendants, Indian, Central American and South American migrants, and besides Spanish (the official language) there are some other languages spoken by different sector of population (Criollo limonense, Bribri, Cabécar, Brunca -among many other of indigenous tradition-). The diversity of population represents one of the biggest treasures of this multicultural country.

One of the biggest challenges for us, as researches, has been to address this issue inside the study. This is because of the invisibilization of different cultures around the country. There is a segregation of indigenous communities in isolated regions of the country, where there are not libraries, not telecentres available for people to consult, study, look for information and communicate. To find out how people from different ethnics, speaking different languages communicate and look for information in Costa Rica is a very difficult task. In many cases, the libraries do not even offer any materials translated to local languages, nor in other languages that migrants might speak (as Mandarin) and in general, English is the foreign language with the strongest presence in the country, because of the touristic dynamics generated in the last 20 years, and an education system focused in the generation of a labor force of technicians that speak that language and are able to work for international companies.

Other important aspect to be taken in count when analyzing information processes inside Costa Rica is the difference between rural and urban jobs and salaries, for this says a lot about the economic model that is been followed by the country: less support to farmers, more immigration from rural to urban areas, a level of unemployment that has remain the same for the last ten years (6,2 in 1996 to 6,0 in 2006), a highest level of invisible sub-employment (which indicates that the jobs generated by the actual governments are of low quality and do not respect the local labor legislation). In the country overview that we offer next, some of this issues will be address to explain the impact of the regional and local economy in the access to information and the insertion of Costa Rica in the digital era.

The country, located between Nicaragua and Panama, is recognized at international level for the efforts done during many years to preserve the natural environment of its lands as a touristic attraction. For many time, the touristic industry has supported the economy of the country. However, due to the new dynamics and relationships established by neoliberal economic models worldwide, Costa Rica has experimented the crash between the preservation speech and this new models, in addition to the fast and disordered urbanization phenomena that has a big impact over the natural resources. The consequences of this disorderly growth are seen with greater clarity in the present cantonal development disparity, being the northern pacific coasts the most affected by the lack of control in the resources handling, which has brought serious problems in the area,

such as potable water shortage and economic dependency of the region to private foreign touristic investments.

Perhaps this type of indicators can help us to understand the dynamics of economic growth of the country: in despite of the macroeconomic growth experimented during the last couple of years, the poverty levels of Costa Rica have kept almost the same for 12 years. This is because of the inequity in the distribution of goods: last year the GINI coefficient went up to 0.420, which means that the poorest sector of population became a bit poorer and the richest sector of population became more rich. The invisible sub employment have increased from 3,3% in 1996 to 3,8% in 2006, and this indicates that the quality of jobs generated in the country is low.

The inequity of income for different sectors of population has increased in the last years and this generates an absence of poverty reduction related to income. The social investment of the government has been too low to give solution to social inequities.

As we will mention throughout this report, the low quality of jobs and the increasing lack of protection to workers from the authorities repels directly on social security, consumption dynamics and unequal economic growth. Costa Rica has focused the education efforts towards the formation technical support personnel. This people can have well remunerated jobs, but in most of the cases those are not stable. So is the case of call centers (from costumer service and technical support to digital gambling and online casinos) that generate a stability perception and produce a movement in the internal marker that could give an erroneous idea about the reality of the country if not contextualized. Opportunities for tech-skills professionals and English knowledge are higher than for those people raised inside underserved communities, excluded from the benefits of education and other services. This is the reason why poverty has been suspended for so many time: the opportunities generated are not for all the population, nor benefit in the same way different sectors of society. The failure to meet up the social, economic and environmental issues has not been attended in an integral way for the last governments, and this last one, in particular, has focused the majority of its efforts in the CAFTA-DR approbation, even though we still do not know the reach of the repercussions that the conditions of the agreement are going to have for the diverse development areas of the country (including the public access to information).

In terms of education, strongly related to the topic we study in this research, Costa Rica has been traditionally outlined as one of the Latin-American countries with highest rate of literacy. Nevertheless, the growing desertion of third cycle (secondary) students (13.2% previous year) make us question the quality of the education system in the country. The actual government of the Republic designed, in order to decrease scholar desertion, the money conditioned transfer program called "AVANCEMOS" that consists of economic conditioned aids for those families that manage to maintain their children inside the formal educational system. This program intends to be one of the State tools to eliminate the intergenerational poverty transference and its final population are those families with youths among 12 and 21 year of age living under social exclusion .

Within this same line, the creation of CECIs, program of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MICIT), that pursues to eliminate the digital illiteracy of rural communities around the country, offers an interesting field to be explored. The CECI (Community Intelligent Centers) is a program that started last year with the creation of around 100 Community Centers (the local modality of telecentres). CECIs are part of the recent initiative of digital alphabetization that the actual government mentions in the government program for the next 4 years. CECIs are another isolated initiative that does not have links with any other information and ICT project.

There are 104 CECIs around the country, located in rural areas and offering 6 to 10 computers that should be (but this does not occur in all cases) connected to Internet. Designed to be capacity building centers for rural communities, many of them are located at isolated communities. To bring a CECI to a community, a stakeholder must look for an appropriate place that has the security requirements of the MICIT. This person or organization will be in charge of all the operative costs of the center, such as electricity, equipment and software maintenance, Internet connection, staff salaries and capacity building processes. This way of planning leaves the center unprotected and many of the initiatives are not sustainable enough to keep the doors opened at a regular shift. That is the reason why many CECIs open only for a couple of hours a day, or for specific activities such as computation classes for community schools. The goals of this program will not be reached unless the CECIs are prioritized in the government agenda, and the initiative has been active for one year, so it is early to determinate whether they be successful or fail.

Public Libraries, another venue included on the research, work as a national system (SINABI) administrated by the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry. At the moment, there are 58 public libraries in the country (including the National Library, from which approximately 22% offer any kind of ICT services –from audiovisual materials to Internet connection). None of those libraries is located at rural indigenous communities, and in general, the budget destined to the system from the Ministry is not enough to cover all the needs. In many cases, the staff counts on one person to take care of the hole library, which means less time to dedicate to assist the users and help them to fulfill their needs.

The characteristics of both Public Libraries and CECIs, as well as cybercafes, will be more detailed in the venue- specific assessments.

Finally, it is important to mention the Informatic Education Program, followed by the MEP (Education Ministry) and the Fundación Omar Dengo (FOD). It is a long term program that integrates computation laboratories and classes in schools. This program has a very interesting potential to become a space for the communities and to support the information processes of Costa Ricans, but unfortunately there is not an open program that includes the hole community, and the labs have very restricted rules for the users (students only) and do not permit other members of the community to take advantage of the initiative.

1.4 Research Rationale, Sample & Methods

For the research process, first step wat to consult all the secondary data available online (government Web pages, organization portals, online studies, reports and researches), in books and previous studies related to the topics analyzed.

Second step was to realize interviews with experts of different institutions, such as universities, Information Science Schools, the National Libraries System, the Science and Technology Ministry and a firts sample -results of the instrument used for the firts phase are not included in the final report for the surveys are different- of public library directors, CECI operators and previous visits to cybercafes. From this second stage we could extracted what was included in the first report of the research, and the data has been used to support this second report and to obtain more analytical data to complete our reflections.

After both these steps, and following the new methodologies established during our april workshop in Costa Rica, a sample of venues was selected. 21 communities were visited during the field work process, many of them had the three venues that our team was analyzing, and in total, 71 surveys were applied to users in the different venues. From the beginning, our team knew that the sample was not representative, nor large enough to make general conclusions -specially about cybercafes, that represent the highest presence venue in the country, with more than a thousand venues sprout all over Costa Rica-. 21 surveys were applied to directors and operators (for us there is a difference between "director" and "operator" in terms of public libraries and CECIs, been the "operators" the ones that have more contact with the users, while the directors are in charge of administrative issues).

Understanding that the selected sample is not large enough to obtain general conclusions, the rationale of the research has been more focused in analyzing particular cases and to generate conclusions based exclusively on the sample, that apply specifically for the sample. Other importan fact to be mentioned (that will be extended in the methodology charts) is the criteria for the definition of urban and rural. The research team included two more variables in this section: periurban and urban-rural, understanding "periurban" communities as the ones located at the urban bordes, with access to less services that the urban communities, and urban-rural as the rural head towns that count on more services than strictly rural areas.

General overviews of the venues and their actual conditions of operation are supported both in secondary data reviews, interviews with specialists and directors/operators and the country perception of the research team. Validation of data has been realized with specialists invited to Sulá Batsú, to a meeting where conclusions and salient findings were presented in order to obtain feedback and clarify any doubts and ambiguities.

Results of the data collection tool have been processed using SPSS and all the charts have particluar comments oriented to guide the data lecture and to avoid any confusions.

1.5   Information Needs of Underserved Communities

As Costa Ricans, the researchers find very important and usefull for the country´s population to have access to information related to reproductive and sexual rights, sustainable development, SMEs sustainability. Health services (specially for migrant population); instances of defense of civil rights, denunciation mechanisms, rights validation; capacity building programs and projects (related to educative resources, scholarship opportunities); labor legislation (specially for migrants and women); micro-credit programs information, programs of governmental aid for access to houses. It is also necessary information for social organization, the development of national and international networks; for spaces of incidence in the public policy, and about governmental actions and political decisions that affect the majorities, in language clear, simple and near the citizenship. However, lots of information related to these issues are to be found in places that the community do not access, for those are specialized, as documentation centers of NGO´s, Research Institutes of public and private universities, and other documentation centers of Institutes and Governmental offices. Consulting with specialists in the information field, such as Madga Sandí and the directors of diverse public libraries clarified this topic a bit more for the research team.

Regarding to ICTs, Costa Rica has developed an "easy government" which links ministries, and public services online. It is a good initiative, that unfortunately was not built taking into account the real needs of population nor the final users perceptions and opinions. In this sense, it is very important to mention that one of the biggest failures that we found in all the studied initiatives is the lack of collaboration and collective cosntruction. The key actors and the alive forces of the communities. We consider that this have created a hole in terms of locally relevant content, that must be created by the communities themselves and not by other people that do not have a local perspective while designing programs and solutions. In this sense, it is very difficult to make people identify themselves with a tool that does not represent help to solve daily problems, to improve the quality of life and to bring better conditions for the community in the long term. The actions of digital government are oriented upon presentment of the services that are offered and to the streamlining of proceedings, such as licenses, passports, and taxes payment. It is not about spaces for the citizen participation in the public policies or yield of accounts of the public institutions towards the citizen.

The instrument used to seek information among users, revealed that users find very important to have updated information related to education (specially for students, both secondary and university ones) and health. Since the majority of the users are students, their needs are more focused in information related to their formation.

1.6   Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities in Key Public Access Venues

Costa Rica is a very small country and has a very particular electricity coverage system supported by the ICE (Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad), that has been focusing its services to attend the biggest possible portion of population because telecommunications and electricity were defined as universal rights in Costa Rica. This universal vision of services derived in full coverage for mostly all the country, with 32,1 fixed telephones for

each 100 people and 1,5 million clients of mobile technology in the country. This is a big strength, that makes easier the connectivity around all the regions and facilitates the creation of cybercafes (present everywhere because of the touristic condition of the country). For this reason, when talking about CECIs and their mission (to attend rural regions and give services to farmers and isolated communities) is easy to understand how a government decides to choose this scope, for Costa Rica has the connectivity infrastructure to reach this goal. However, since the CECIs do not have a sustainability strategy and do not count on a strength organization that supports them, it is very hard to maintain them working, and the hole structure comes to remain other "telecentre programs" developed in Central America during the past years. The capacity building programs that CECIs are supposed to offer are not ordered nor organized, and many of them do not have the capacities to stay open to public and are used to give computation classes to students in the communities where they are established. Some others are seen as a "free cybercafe" for the community and since the promotion of CECIs has not been strong enough, you will find that in many cases the community members do not even know about the program, nor that they have one integrated to their own community. The communities are not properly integrated to the CECI establishment, so they do not feel identify to the venue. Since there is not previous work with the communities to help them to identify needs and the potential of ICTs to fulfill them, it is very hard to obtain a real social appropriation of technologies in these venues. However, a strong opportunity that we observed in CECIs is the integration to Public Libraries, for they seen to work very good together. Since the public libraries do not count on enough budget to update collections, having Internet integrated to their services helps the librarians to supply the users information that is not available in books. Also to involve the communities with the library, by offering Internet and Office courses for women and elders. In the other hand, libraries help to increase the quality of the CECIs by teaching the users in Boolean searches, navigation, using online services as dictionaries, e-mail and web cams (according to their own capacities).

Cybercafes do not count on a system or organization that orders them, but are located practically all over the country at very accessible prices in most of the cases (from 100 to 350 colones per hour). The high presence of this venue makes it a very good option for citizens, although no capacity building programs are offered and the owners/ operators of cybercafes are not conscious of the social roll of the venue. The main weaknesses of cybercafes to be a public access venue is, in the Costa Rican case, a combination of price and orientation. Cybercafes are SMEs, not social projects. In this sense, would be interesting to design a cooperation proposal among the MICIT, MEP (Education Ministry) and Cybercafes, but for this, there must come the organization of this venues as a total, a sort of association of owners and operators, to facilitate the negotiation with public institutions, and guarantee the access of underserved communities to the service (by developing a cooperation systems among the SMEs and the State). The biggest strength of this venue is, as we mentioned above, its high presence around the country. Almost every community in Costa Rica has a Cybercafe. Having cybercafes all over the country gives the government a platform of infrastructures that are sustainable, equipped and connected to Internet, so, the investment of public institutions could be used to generate a capacity building program that includes not only the final communities but operators and owners,

given the venue a social orientation that would facilitate the access to ICTs for all the community.

Last but not least, public libraries come to be a joining point that could be strengthened to become the community center of information, given the actual condition of the venue, that already count of infrastructure and a well organized system. Public libraries are located in 57 communities around the country, and this is not enough to cover all the population. There are not libraries located in rural indigenous communities, and in most of the cases, the collections and materials offered by the venue are not updated and too poor to fulfill the needs of users.

The passion of Costa Rican librarians can be seen in the efforts they do to help users to find what they look for: even in libraries where there is only one computer available for administrative use, you will find librarians using this equipment to help users with online searches and CD burning. Here is where the real goals of CECIs are reached: any CECI located inside a public library becomes a new tool (and much more work to do) for librarians to help users. As they say, Internet is an excellent instrument to fill the lack of investment and to solve the problems generated by low budgeting and bureaucracy.

1.7   Salient Findings

- In Costa Rica, libraries are considered as "student only" venues. Actually, the majority of users are primary, secondary and university students.

- The majority of libraries visited during the research process, do not count on enough budget to keep their collections up to date, nor to include (by themselves) ICT tools inside their processes. In this sense, the insertion of CECIs inside libraries represents an excellent option to integrate ICTs to the libraries´ information processes, but also implies major efforts and extra work for administrators and operators.

- Users of libraries that have integrated ICT consider that the quality of services has improved due to this technology inclusion. Nevertheless, users have a complain related to out of date collections and the complete absence of some information they consider very important for their daily practices. Other factor that difficults the access to libraries is the schedule 10 am to 5 pm (when many people work or go to school). Most libraries do not open on weekends and the week schedule, and this disables the chances users have to take advantage of the venue.

- Libraries budget are too small to fulfill all the information needs of Costa Ricans. The improvement, promotion and popularization of the venues depends to a great extend on the capacities and possibilities (time, salaries, staff) of administrators to get close to the community and involve other actors. Many interviewed consider that it is very importan to include changes in national legislation that support and estimulate the sustainability of public libraries

- CECIs located inside public libraries or other institutions that offer them extra components (staff, capacities, infrastructure, security) are more sustainable and have more

possibilities to survive that the ones located in community gyms, municipalities, and other public spaces that have less structure and are not organized.

- Other studies before have mentioned the digital divide related to gender. Although our sample for this study is not representative and does not cover the total of the country, it is important to mention -with no generalization intend- that it is more common to find women using traditional information tools (libraries, books, among others) while men have an easier appropriation of ICTs, and is more common to find men in CECIs. Is not that women do not access information through ICTs, but as we could see during visits to different venues, there are more men using ICTs and more women using library traditional tools (an interesting study about Women and Technology is been runned by Sulá Batsú R.L. at this time). However, the behavior of female students in visited cybercafes was a bit different, happening that in some cases both male and female attend cybercafes 50% and 50%, and in other cases -specially in rural areas, there are more female students visiting cybercafes. This interesting behavior coul be linked to the fact that cybercafes offer other services such as photocopies, printers, scanners and cd burning, while CECIs do not have any of this services available. This condition is very interesting and deserves a more deeper analysis but is very important to clarify that this information should not be use to generalize for the hole country.

- The fact that CECIs do not count on a social appropriation agenda to work with communities might explain the lack of interest seen in the visited communities. Although a telecentre has many possibilites of use and can help the communities to improve their quality of life by introducing ICT process in daily routines, many of its potencial is lost because of the methodology based on infrastructure and equipment without the human component. To obtain real impact from ICTs insertion, it is necessary to realize a previous work with the communities in order to identify which are the ICT uses that can help the community to solve their problems and improve the quality of life.

1.8   Key Recommendations

Costa Rica is a very interesting and particular case in terms of access to information and ICTs. Its particular development model in the telecommunications sector (and other sectors as education, health and potable water distribution) have considered -up to now- this services as civil and universal rights for all Costa Rican population. Nevertheless, big multinational corporations have exerted strong pressures on the government in order to open these services to the private interests. This has produced that the public actions related to telecommunications and specifically to digital ICTs as mobile telephony and Internet oscillate between universal and punctual actions, producing a lack of definition in the public ICT actions.

As good examples, universal and very important and inclusive initiatives can be emphasized, such as the Educative Computer Science Program, that allows the access to equipment at primary and secondary schools, and also the access to a basic formation in the use of computers (this program started almost 20 years ago and is still running). It is also important to emphasize the program "Communication without Borders", that was given continuity during two governmental periods of different politic parties – which is not

very common in the country- and consisted of the creation of public access gratuitous points around the country (at municipalities, post offices, banks and libraries and also to provide each citizen with a digital identity –free e-mail address and a digital space under the dominion costarricence.com). These are examples of universal access to ICT policies.

Nevertheless, the pressure of multinational telecommunication corporations has been strong on the country, and this generated a great opposition against the State monopoly or telecommunications –the only one that can guarantee universal actions. In other countries where the telecommunications sector has been opened, it has been demonstrated that the big multinational corporations worry to take care of the profitable market providing with services of highest added value to those who can pay for them, but of course the do not worry about the coverage in excluded and with less opportunities populations. In the Costa Rican case, coverage has been prioritized, but added value services(digital images, Mobile Internet connection) are not provided to all the population yet. In those countries where telecommunications have been privatized they have been to develop palliative or contingency actions, such as telecentres for excluded populations to have access possibilities.

In Costa Rica, years ago when people talked about telecommunications has a civil right, one did not think about approaches like telecentres. Nevertheless, in the last years, as the country resembles more the development models of other countries of the Central American region and has approved the CAFTA trade with the United States, the government has began to watch toward contingency solutions related to ICTs instead of universal solutions. Here is were CECIs – that we have approached in the first stage of the research- appear.

The development of the Public Libraries System has receive a similar impact. Fifty years ago, libraries were the consultation point par excellence of Costa Ricans, there were less libraries than now, but they represented a fundamental space of consultation and information for civil population. They had a very important roll, and at cultural level there existed a high respect towards the public library. At the moment, public libraries are perceived in other way, because population finds few information resources available at them. Public libraries are assigned to the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry, the ministry that receives less resources from the government. In the other hand, the Internet sprouting has re framed the roll of information among the citizens and and therefore the roll of public libraries. Specially because of the shortage of resources and lack of an strategic vision at the political level, public libraries have not been able to adapt to the new conditions of the information for the citizen.

As we can see in this study, there is a big potential in the public library as a public space, not only for the information consultation but as a space for the formation at a local level of all the population in a geographical area. ICTs could represent a great added value for the public libraries in Costa Rica, in such form that they become intermediation spaces between the information offered over the Internet and the needs of population. However, this won´t be possible if a medium and long term strategic vision (that extends the simply installation of computers, as it happens in some libraries of Costa Rica) is not settled down. To incorporate ICTs at libraries with the purpose of improve the public access to relevant

information implies, according to our perceptions to incorporate high level technology (not only Internet, but also digital media such as audio, video, digital video and multimedia among others that allow diverse ways of access to information). It also entails the transformation or the information process given at this moment in the libraries, and that go together with capacity building – specially of the library staff that have to change practices and visualize the potential of ICTs to offer an added value to the user and avoid that they come to the library to use the "free cybercafe".

This variation on the library roll would be fundamental to return to conceive the libraries as an important part of the information process of the communities. It is surprising to find out (through the study) that libraries have such a low priority at the public policies agenda. It seems to exist a contradiction between the high educative levels that report the macroeconomic numbers about Costa Rica and the operation of libraries under such limited conditions. It is also important to mention the disconnection between the ICTs actions and policies and the actions and policies related to public libraries. This can be explained because the ICT subject has been handled as a connectivity problem, and not as a problem related to the access to information, strategic uses of ICTs, appropriation processes and transformation of the information and communication processes inside the communities. There is an immediate necessity to impel the connection between ICTs and information in Costa Rica, so the ICT policy is seen as an information policy, and the strategy developed is not only a connectivity strategy, but an information strategy. This applies also to organizations that work the ICT and the information subjects in the country.

It is recommended to study all the possible connections between public libraries ans ICTs, but looking beyond the simple installation of computers as it has been done in the moment. It has to be done looking for new information and communication processes for people. We are interested in the possibility to impel the combination of ICTs and public libraries and develop incidence processes tending to increase public actions that connect both subjects and that determine which are the conditions needed for this combination to be successful. Among our recommendations for the study we include not to leave of side the aspects related to communication. "C" of ICT means communication, because the communication processes are modified by the incorporation of ICT, and at the moment effects that technology has over the processes are not studied.

About CECI, many doubts arise, specially if it is taken in count the huge amount of failures of telecentre initiatives around Latin America. This study demonstrates that many of these CECIs consist only of the installation of equipment. In other studies our team has demonstrated that any ICT community access point must be guaranteed, in order to survive of at least:

Maintenance and actualization of the ICT equipment, including computers and digital audio and video devices.

Investment in transformation of organizational processes.

Capacity building and permanent actualization of the staff.

Connection costs.

Staff with enough time dedicated to users attention.

Development of contents and information management according to the needs of communities.

Community programs that harness the use of ICT and stimulate new uses.

Mediation processes for the translation of specialized content to other languages and with terms easy to understand by the population.

Spaces for the organization and meeting of the active forces of the community

The CECIs studied in this research do not fulfill these requirements. Most of the CECIs consist in the installation/ donation of computers, in some cases connected to Internet. According to previous studies, this kind of venues do not have the conditions to be sucessful. It is recommended to analyze to depth the conditions in which the CECIs are operating to identify what aspects make them sustainable and which don´t.

A particular case in Costa Rica are cybercafes. Those are private initiatives of micro entrepreneurs, that are sprout around the country and are sustainable. Because of the "universal services" policy Costa Rica has connectivity –at least via telephone- in all the country. This allows, unlike other countries of the region, that one can find cybercafes all around Costa Rica. It would be interesting to explore if it is more sustainable to develop conditions, capacities and skills inside cybercafes, so those become information access points for the communities, instead of developing new access points as the CECIs, which have many difficulties to be sustainable.

In addition, is valuable for this study to continue analyzing the policies and actions that emphasize the universalization of ICTs and are not limited to contingency or palliative actions. To pursuit Costa Rica´s case now that telecommunications sector is going to be opened to private investment and see what the consequences will be for the country in this change of vision is also a key case study to understand the impacts of these kind of changes.

Finally, the information that must be prioritized for the citizenship should arise of civil spaces that point the information needs and the means by which is better to access it. This must start off of inclusive processes, of popular consultation, and could be a fundamental roll of public libraries.

2 Methodology

The research team used the "venue" definition of the research glossary to select the venues that are included in this research. Public Libraries were already included in the original template, as well as telecentres and cybercafes. There are no other significative venues to take in count for the Costa Rica research. Other interesting initiatives are analyzed in this section, and venues that had an important roll in the development of the informatin society for the country are mentioned as well.

Web portals and online information programs were not included in the venue selection for they do not fulfill the selection criteria, and are not physical spaces where that users can visit to access to information. The same happened with mass media. We understand a public access to information venue as a place where information is adapted to the users needs offering different types of information according to the users demand. For this reason, specialized venues offering one specific type of information were not included in the sample (documentation centers, tematic web portals, public information portals). Hot spots were not included in the sample for they are not strictly "public access venues" and have special conditions that limit the use that communities give them -not all Costa Ricans have a laptop that can capture Wi-Fi -.

We consider that the venue selection includes the three more representative venues in terms of information access as understood in the research.

2.1.1   Venues Studied

Enter the details to complete the table based on the venues studied in this country (more details will be filled in other sections):

	Public Libraries	CECI	Cybercafe	---------
Total number in country	5,8	1,04	1,000	
A. # in Urban location	1,4	,5		

% offering ICT	100%	100%	100%	
Total # of people served (annual)				
B. # in non-urban location	4,4	9,9		
% offering ICT	60%	100%	100%	
Total # of people served (annual)				

Comments (comment especially on definition of urban / non urban in the country):

Criteria to determine the urban and rural variables, is supported on the following definition: "Urban" is a centric area that concentrates services and governmental offices, where the politic and economic decisions are made, and where the cultural imaginary is created and defined. "Rural" is an area that concentrates less services and where decisions made in urban areas have more impact. "What is rural" is often defined by urban inhabitants.

As we explain late, our criteria for the research was to use 4 location variables instead of two: urban, peri-urban, urban-rural and rural. We understand peri-urban as communities located in the periphery of urban areas, that do not count in the services offered in the urban areas. People have to move from peri-urban to urban areas in order to use the services offered in these. "Urban-rural" communities are located in rural areas, but offer more services that these ones. These areas are head towns, more centric and with more services available, but still have the rural component present on them. For aims of the research, and since no other categories could be added, we joined urban and peri-urban variables, as well as urban-rural and rural together in two single groups: urban and rural.

CECIs have a particular structure contradiction, for the program was designed to cover only rural communities, but, due to the requesting procedures (a CECI can be requested by any physic or institutional person anywhere in the country) some CECIs have been approved in urban areas (such as in Cartago city, for example). The criteria used for the CECI analysis is to consider them "rural" or "urban" even though the program affirms that CECIs are located ONLY in rural communities.

2.1.1   Other experiences of public access to information that are not quite "Venues"

Basic information about other experiences with potential to make a difference to the public access landscape (tea rooms, wifi hotspots, coffee houses, web information portals) although they are not quite a "public information venue" in the sense defined for this study (see research design document for definition).

Other Public Access experience # 1: InfoAgro

Description :

It is the Information System of the Costa Rican Farming Sector whose fundamental purpose is to contribute to the process of modernization and improvement of the competitiveness of the productive farming systems and the quality of life of the inhabitants of Costa Rican rural areas.

INFOAGRO integrates 4 different components in its service offer:

INFORMATION: supply of production information, services, technology, commercialization and agro-industry, pertinent with the demands of the users of the system.

TECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORM: technology of modern information that facilitates the real access -at low cost- in the rural communities.

CAPACITY BUILDING: oriented to develop the capacities and abilities of the users in the efficient use of the information and the tools available.

COMMUNICATION AND DIFFUSION: development of a strategy that allows the increasing incorporation of users to the system.

The services offered are:

A Web Page available at http://www.infoagro.go.cr

A service of consultation via telephone: (506)2296 25 79.

Information at the InfoAgro Information Centres, located at the Farming Services Agencies of the MAG.

Information request via e-mail at infoagro@mag.go.cr

Production of information and communication media.

Bulletin: InfoAgro Hoy

Bulletin: InfoAgro Desde mi Región

Total number in country: 1,

% offering ICT access:

% in urban location:

Comments on how it is influencing public access venues in the country:

Documentation generated by InfoAgro includes gender-related information,

agricultural policies, investments and funding, risk management, farming legislation and more. It is one of the most complete initiatives, a good option for the sector, that includes capacity building programs for farmers, news, bulletins, statistics, promotion of the farming production and capacity building programs. InfoAgro has a representation in communities where MAG has offices and there users can access to printed information and bulletins.

Other Public Access experience # 2: Zon@RACSA

Description :

Zon@RACSA is a public WiFi network integrated by the Hot Spots where Racsa offers the wireless Internet Service.

The places where this service is available are called Public Hot Spots and use to be located at strategic points as airports, hotels, train stations, restaurants, among others. The Hot Spots where RACSA offers the service are called Zon@RACSA.

At the moment, the only condition given by RACSA for the use of the public service is that in high concentration places where the service is offered -as food courts- the user must be careful that he or she does not exceed the time limit for connection, in order to guarantee that all users have the same possibility to use the service.

During a indefinite period, the service is been offered for free, for it is been promoted by RACSA in order to advertise the biggest amount of users. The network is open and there is no blocked traffic or protocol established and the users have access to any service they want to access online.

The service allows the users to navigate on broad band, given the possibility of online banking, bill payments, e-mail checking and any other use available over the Internet.

Total number in country: 1,7

% offering ICT access: 100%

% in urban location: 100%

Comments on how it is influencing public access venues in the country:

Zon@RACSA represents an interesting option for workers that spend many time out of their offices (such as sellers, consultants, researcher, and others). The initiative has a particular target composed by users that have their own

laptop, and has been important for RACSA to promote the Internet offer they have available in the country. Since there are specific and important factor that limit the access to information in this spots, we decided not to include them as a venue for the research.

2.1.2 Other Existing Public Access Venues, not included in this study

Basic information about other public access venues **not** included in the study (e-tuktuk, school or other private libraries not open to the public, health centers, etc), although they could play a role in public access information in the country. Indicate rationale for NOT including them in the study.

Other Venue not studied # 1: CIDREB

Total number in country: 2,4

% offering ICT access: 85%

% in urban location: 0%

Description of the Venue:

UNED (Universidad Estatal a Distancia) has 24 different libraries around the country. They are open to communities and everyone can access the information they offer at the venues. They are aware of how difficult is for people in rural areas to access information, so at high levels of the University, they try to support the libraries. CIDREB is the axis of the documentation system of the university. They have a general collection that includes materials of different areas, a specific environment collection and the institutional documentation. Of the 30 headquarters of the university, only 6 do not have a library. The libraries are located in rural and urban-rural areas, and the Central Library is located at the University in San José city. The only headquarter located in an indigenous community does not have a library yet. There are 14 members in the staff of the main library. In the local ones, there is a problem related to the lack of professionals of the Library Sciences area. Usually, people do part time and in general, they are forced to work as receptionists, administrators and librarians. Many people working in the UNED libraries do not have formal education related to the area, so, from the main library they organize "capacity building tours" around the country. From the direction of the university it has been required that the people who work in the libraries have diverse capacities, and this and experience in the area of information management is not required. According to the assistant director, they have not designed yet an evaluation program. She considers that maybe if they had more evaluation, it would be easier

to point the needs of users and improve the services.UNED has collaboration agreements with the other public universities in terms of loan. However, this service benefits only students of the university and not the public in general. As the UNED has its own publishing house, they are always preparing collections to donate to schools (this does not work as an agreement with any institution). Other service their are integrating now is the CECIS hosting. Since they have headquarters all over the country, for the MICIT this is an strategic partnership. The UNED collaborates the physical infrastructure, the administrator and the trainer, and the MICITprovides the equipment and materials. Actually, the UNED is hosting 15 CECIs in different communities, and they expect to have one on each headquarter of the university soon. Among the services that users benefit from, we have to mention that they offer up to 20 photocopies for free (in case of more copies needed, they offer the book in loan). People is not charged any money to use the library, and they can also use the computer (available at the 85% of the libraries). The computers have access to Internet, and users can search online information. In general, the collections at the libraries are small, but what they do is to offer a "traveler box" in which they include all the books requested by the headquarters in loan. In that sense, there is a difficulty in the access to information, for people have to wait for a couple of days in order to receive the book sent from the main library. The capacity building programs are focused exclusively in the students, but the administrators have to help anyone how comes in looking for information. There is no an ordinary budget of the government dedicated to the libraries of UNED, and at the moment they do not have support from any organization. Sometimes they receive book donations that they include in the general collection.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

Although the CIDREB libraries have some services that can be usefull for the hole community, students are the main benefitiaries from the initiative, and specially secnodary and university students. The UNED do not have programs focused on capacity building for the people in general related to the access to information.

2.2 Inequity Variables

1-2 paragraphs each.

Describe how each variable affects equitable public access to information and ICT in this country, and what you did in this study to make sure each one was addressed (for example, if you visited venues in both urban and non-urban locations).

Also include additional variables of local relevance to your country, as you listed in Form 1, section 1a.]

2.2.1 Socio-Economic Status

Socioeconomics is very important inequity variable to understand Costa Rica´s public access to information processes. With 1 of each 7 families suffering of social exclusion, and a 14% of the homes living under chronicle poverty (specially in the Southern Pacific and the Caribbean Coast rural areas) Costa Rica does not show decrease of the poverty levels even though the indicators show a significative economic growth. This means that there is no improve in the quality of life of the poorest segments of population, and that the divide among low income and high income families is becoming wider.

Families suffering of social exclusion have less possibilities to benefit from public services, such as education, health care, and others. This means that the poverty hard nucleus is involved in a vicious circle where it is almost impossible to improve the economic conditions, for less opportunities mean more poverty.

Since Costa Rica has state services that aim to cover the totality of the population, many services, such as public education, public libraries and other information/education services are of free access. However, excluded segments of population are not covered by these services (other day a day priorities are in mind for the poorest families, and long term plans are not frequently made). Desertion of the educative system due to poverty is common in the primary schools of underserved communities, and children labor is a problem suffered in this conditions. We visited one of the largest libraries during the first phase of the research, located in a marginal periurban area, to see what kind of activities, programs and services are offered for this population.

Costa Ricans living under poverty conditions are not accessing information that could help them to improve their quality of life. As we explain later, people do not really understand how information can help them improving their quality of life. This is one of the biggest failures of the educative system, for people do not consider information a tool that can be used to solve problems. This situation affects specifically those persons living under poverty conditions, creating a vicious circle in which the living conditions get even worse due to the lack of information.

Including questions about about income levels of the users for the operators and directors surveys helped us to identify some behaviors related to attendance and use of services.

2.2.2 Educational level

Although literacy levels are quite high in the country, desertion during the first 3 years of secondary school is around 13% at the moment, and the efforts to decrease this percentage have been poor and without results. Statistics of the country show a tendence related to desertion: population under 18 years old, with no secondary studies completed are more subject to be underemployed or unemployed during their working life. The educational level determines, in many cases, the future of a person, and since the hard nucleus of poverty is conformed by low literacy segments of the

population, it can be affirmed that opportunities depend to a great extend in the educational level of the person.

There is an important factor that prevents Costa Ricans to visit libraries: the extended belief that the venues are for students only. Libraries have been inserted inside the educative system as an aim and not as a tool. There must be a library for students to go, but this library is not designed to take care of the needs of other populations aside from the student one. In this sense, many people out of the educative system are excluded from the public access venues at the same time.

About this variable, reflections were made with staff of the Information Science School of the University of Costa Rica. Schoolar libraries (not covered in this study) are not fulfilling their mission in terms of students formative process, as a part of a big failure in the country´s educative system that must be reviewed carefully. Educational level was covered for the study in both users and operators surveys, and is also included in the reflection made by the research team about the importance of informal education initiatives runned by some organizations in the country.

2.2.3 Age

Age is an important variable in terms of ITC access in the country. There is a significative digital divide related to age, where older population seem to feel an to be excluded from the technology benefits. The "Costa Rica Digital" government program does not address this topic in its strategy and there are few access to information venues that develop programs that include formative process for elders.

Older people have different ways to access information and to share knowledge, but their processes -more traditional and oral in many cases- are not taken into account while designing initiatives related to information and ICTs. Even though elders enjoy gathering together in libraries, they do not visit the venue to use the content available there, but to take advantage of the infrastructure. Their information processes are developed inside libraries without a sistematization (understand "sistematization" as a process that not only gathers the information but that deeply analyzes these processes and designes methodologies to manage this information and to share the knowledge with other people).

Age was addressed with specific questions included in both users and operators surveys. Other instrument designed to be applied to the community (out of the venues and to non users) covered the age divide in terms of access to ICTs, specially with perception and open questions. We also tried to identify the activities offered in the venues for different ages: libraries are the venues that offer better alternatives for children, young, adult and elderly.

2.2.4 Gender

Gender divide is still a reality in Costa Rica, and it comes to be a variable that affects the access to services and the improvement of life quality. The tendency is reflected in the low quality of jobs, bad salaries, less social security conditions and labor flexibility. Women are more subject to underemployment and subemployment, and have less opportunity even to access capacity builiding processes due to double labor days.

The absence of day care centers with social vision prevent mothers to attend capacity building programs. In Costa Rica, there is a big portion of homes where the mother is the head of the family, and is very common to find single mothers, that have all the responsibilities of work and house work. Young mothers that get pregnant while going to school usually desert from the educative system. Under this conditions, the access to information and ICTs becomes more difficult for women.

We tried to reflect the gender variable in the field work by identifying attendance and use dynamics among users, and deeply analyzing the gender phenomena related to ICT uses by generating discussions with our key informants.

2.2.5 Location

This is a good place to offer further details on the urban / peri-urban / non-urban definitions and relevance in your country, among other location variables.

What was more important for the research team was to reflect how the location affects the access to services and the quality of those. As mentioned in the chart 2.1.1, "rural" and "urban" definitions are based in our criteria and depart from an "access to services condition".

Two more variables were included in the study, although not reflected in the charts (for they can not be included in the charts). We refer to "periurban" communities as areas that are close to the services but do not count on them in their own communities. Usually, periurban population establish in these sectors in order to be closer to urban areas, where jobs and services are concentrated. In general, periurban inhabitants are migrants both from rural areas of the same country or from other countries. "Urban-rural" is the last variable included here. It refers to rural head towns, where more services are concentrated and share more characteristics with stricly urban areas.

As mentioned before, cantonal development shows huge inequities reflected in the different levels of economic growth in the diverse regions of the country. These differences are reflected in the number and quality of services and definitively affect the access to information in the most isolated and excluded regions. The information processes are different between urban and rural locations, due to the services available and the living conditions of population. Rural communities maintain more traditional information processes that have been underrated with the insertion of technologies although technologies should work as tools that facilitate any information process and collaborate to better value the traditional processes and the tacit knowledge. Since this

reality is not taken into account when designing proposals and projects, it is harder to make people to identify themselves with the new processes and to value information as a tool to improve their living conditions.

Location was addressed in a particular way for the study. Since two more variables were included in the criteria used to analyze location, the visit to different areas was determined by them. We tried to cover both urban and rural locations and to include urban-rural areas when possible. No indigenous or border communities were visited because of time limitations, but the Atlantic (a good example of disparity in terms of development) was included for the visits.

2.2.6   Other Inequity Variables

Other Inequity Variable 1: Ethnicity (cultural diversity) (if needed)

Conformed by afro descendants, indigenous, migrants, mestizos, and more, the population of the country share a high diversity condition that has not been taken into account when reflecting about information, relevant content and local languages. There are poor efforts to visualize the diversity and to include all different cultural communities in the programs designed by the governments. The research team considered very important to visualize this variable and analyze how the ethnicity has become a barrier in terms of access to information in the country.

Data collection divided in secondary data gathering and interviews was focused in trying to find indicators or practices of inclusion and content production for diverse communities. As a result of the research process we came to understand that appropriated technologies are not used to develop local relevant content for these communities (there are no educative or informative audiovisual materials produced to benefit other language speakers, which is very significative since the indigenous languages do not have written codes). The diversity is not included in the educative agendas, nor in other information processes runned around the country - not only for indigenous of Afro Costa Ricans, but to other segments of population such as Chinese descendants or Indians-.

Other Inequity Variable 2: Migration   (if needed)

Costa Rica is a brigde between United States and South America. Due to its particular location conditions and migration requirements (that have changed in the last 8 years), many migrants choose the country as a destination. Because of context civil war and economic crises in the Central American countries, Costa Rica became a receiver country. High presence of Nicaraguan, Argentine, Chinese, Indian, and Caribbean migrants can be identified in different regions of the country. Migration and its implications have not been part of the development agenda of the country, and instead disinformation and lack of political will have generated a xenophobia wave.

Since the public services offered by Costa Rica´s public institutions have a universal

coverage policy, migrants and their children are subjects of the same rights that Costa Ricans in terms of education, health care and other services. However, we tried to make a reflection about the processes of access to information venues, the uses and the conditions by which migrant population feel excluded from these services or consider them as a right to be exerted.

2.3   Data Gathering Techniques

Describe the different data gathering techniques you used to conduct this study. Provide specific examples and sample selection criteria.

2.3.1   Literature Review

Describe the type and approximate number of documents reviewed. Include detailed references of the most useful ones. Include valid links for all online sources.

2,5 number of documents reviewed.

Documents containing information related to the issues analyzed in the study: Information Society in Costa Rica, ethnicity issues, economy, politics, press freedom, accessibility, infraestructure and connectivity, annual reports of public entities, social conditions of the country, historical trends, existent programs, NGOs reports.

2.3.1.1   *Most Useful Bibliography:*

- Programa Sociedad de la Información y el conocimiento, PROSIC (2007). Hacia la sociedad de la Información y el Conocimiento en Costa Rica. San José: Universidad de Costa Rica.

The "Report Towards the Information and Knowledge Society in Costa Rica" it contributes information of great value for the understanding of the Costa Rican context in terms of access to information. Is divided in 10 chapters: 1. Institutional frame: the

Digital Government in Costa Rica, 2. Regulatory frame: a propositive approach of the norm, 3. Infrastructure and Connectivity, 4. Access and Uses of ICTs in the Public Administration, enterprises and homes, 5Development of the technologies sector in Costa Rica, 6. E- Education, 7. E- Health, 8. E- Agriculture, 9. E- Turism, 10. E-Bank, and for each one it provides context data, summaries of research and recommendations. This is one of the most important publications about information and ICT topics produced in Costa Rica, and is realized by a team of high level investigators of the University of Costa Rica.

- Centro de investigación y capacitación en administración pública, CICAP. (2006). "Informe final de diagnóstico de Gobierno Digital en Costa Rica", San José: CICAP.

Diagnosis on the strengths and weaknesses of the digital government in Costa Rica, who raises questions on the relation between public institutions and citizens, and establishes a series of recommendations in terms of inter institutional cooperation and the design of policies oriented to satisfy the needs of citizens.

Programa Estado de la Nación (Costa Rica). Decimotercer Informe Estado de la Nación en Desarrollo Humano Sostenible/Programa Estado de la Nación. (2007) San José: Programa Estado de la Nación.

The Estado de la Nación Report analyzes the country context towards diverse variables: Human Development, Gender Equity, Education, Poverty, Economy, Democracy, Elections, Citizen Participation and Environmental Management.

- Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deporte. (2007) Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas. Retrieved from: http://www.mcjdcr.go.cr/sistema_bibliotecas

- MICIT official site: http://www.micit.go.cr/

- Estado de la Nación. (2003). Segundo Informe sobre Desarrollo Humano en Centroamérica y Panamá. Resumen del Capítulo 8: El desafío de la multiculturalidad. Retrieved from: http://www.estadonacion.or.cr/Region2003/Paginas/prensa/Resumen-8.pdf

- INIL (2008). Lenguas y artes ver bales indígenas. Retrieved from: http://inil.ucr.ac.cr/proyecto.php?idProyecto=58 and http://inil.ucr.ac.cr/indigenas

- RSF official site: www.rsf.org

- RSF (2007) Worldwide Press Freedom Index. Retrieved from: http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24027

- Poder Judicial (2007) Ley de Espectáculos Públicos. Retrieved from: http://www.poder-judicial.go.cr/salatercera/leyes/leypenal/leyespect%C3%A1culosp%C3%BAblicos.htm

- Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad official site: www.ice.go.cr

- Asamblea Legislativa (2007). Agenda Complementaria. Retrieved from:
http://www.asamblea.go.cr/proyecto/agenda_complementaria/agenda.htm

- Ministerio de Comercio Exterior (2007). Agenda de Implementación. Retrieved from:
http://www.comex.go.cr/Portada/Agenda%20Implementacion/default.htm (agenda
de implementación)

- Estrategia Siglo XXI official site: http://estrategia.or.cr

- Base de datos políticos de las Américas. (2006). Educación Obligatoria. Retrieved
from: http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Comp/Cultura/Educacion/obligatoria.html

- OPS official site: http://www.paho.org/

- CIENTEC official site: http://www.cientec.or.cr/

- InfoAgro official site: http://www.infoagro.go.cr/

- Fundación Paniamor official site: http://www.paniamor.or.cr/

2.3.2   Individual Interviews

Describe the type and approximate number of individuals you interviewed. Include detailed contact
information for the most useful ones (indicate for which topic, if appropriate). Discuss how representative is
this sample of people you interviewed in relation to different opinions and perspectives in the country.

,6 number of individuals interviewed.

Describe

Interviews to key actors and experts in the field were made during the first stage of the
study. For the report, all these interviews are very important for they helped us to
understand to a depth extend what are the actual conditions of the public access to
information, what is the context where the country is inserted, which are the strengths
and weaknesses of the country in terms of public access to information, and what are
the real needs of population in this area. Interviews included:

- Interview with the Director of Public Libraries, Licda. Marlen Vargas.

- Interview with the chief of "Oficina de Automatización" of the SINABI, Licda. Helga
Ocampo Bermúdez.

- Interview with Licda. María Eugenia Briceño Meza, Director of the Libraries,
Documentation and Information System of the University of Costa Rica (SIBDI).

- E-mail interview with Mr. Carlos Bonilla Cortés, assessor of the Minister of Science
and Technology (MICIT)

- Interview with M.B.A. Magda Cecilia Sandí, director of the Library and Information

Sciences School of the University of Costa Rica.

- Interview with Miss. Mónica Arce Oviedo, assistant director of the Central Library of the CIDREB (UNED).

-Interview with Mrs. Patricia Quesada Rojas, "Programa de relaciones Externas", UNED.

- Interview with M. L. Lorena Cháves Salgado, Information Science and Educative Libraries specialist, professor at the Information Science School of the University of Costa Rica.

These interviews, plus the field work and the interviews applied to Library directors completed an overview that contains the valuable opinion of experts in the information topic for the country. Including public university members complete a more critic analysis given by social-formed professionals, while the interviews with SINABI members, added to our conversations with different Public Libraries Directors framed a more close to reality vision of the National Libraries System.

Though the collaboration od the MICIT has been valuable for the report, unfortunately there were no time opportunities to schedule an interview with the minister, and many data related to CECIs is uncompleted.

The collaboration of some of this experts during the validation process gave the team a wider perspective and more tools to identify salient findings and to elaborate qualified recommendations. The research contains the points of view of many actors: experts, users, research team, operators and directors, and we hope that this is reflected in the hole report.

2.3.3 Group Interviews and Focus Groups

Describe the type and number of group interviews or focus groups you conducted. If available, include detailed contact information for the most useful informants (indicate for which topic, if appropriate).

,2 number of group interviews or focus groups.

The first contributions for data validation were obtained during the "Coffee Shop of the World" realized on April 16th 2008. First findings were socialized with the participants. There we obtained new perspectives and and landscapes to be taken into account for the second phase.

The second validation process were runned on August 5th 2008, by presenting the final conclusions and salient findings to a group of experts in the information science field. Topics as quality of services, politics, public policies, national strategies, legitimated uses, gender behavior, promotion of public access venues and participation.

Valuable extra data and suggestions were obtained from this focus group, specially from M.B.A. Magda Sandí, director of the Information Sciences School of the University of Costa Rica, as well as Lic. Ramón Masís, professor of the Information Science School

of the University of Costa Rica, coordinator of the Information Science Program of the UCR in Golfito (Southern Pacific).

2.3.4 Site Visits

Describe the number and location of site visits you conducted. If available, include detailed contact information for the most useful informants (indicate for which topic, if appropriate).

2,7 number of site visits.

6 communities were visited during phase 1, and an instrument developed by the team was applied there in CECIs and Public Libraries. From this first step we obtained information and landscape to elaborate the first report.

The other 21 visits were made during phase 2, including urban and rural communities and applying the isntrument designed by the CIS team (with the modifications that our team considered necessary to obtain required data). For this second field work process cybercafes were included.

Specially valuable information was obtained from:

Marco Tulio Mena, Director of Hatillo´s Public Library. Tel (506) 2254-1028

Lilliam Villalobos, Director of Guadalupes´s Public Library. Tel (506) 2245 4501

Olga Rodríguez, Director of Palmare´s Public Library and its CECI. Tel (506) 2453 3066

Ana Lucía Mena, Director of Tres Ríos´ Public Library and its CECI. Tel (506) 2279 4567

Silvia Quirós Calderón, Director of Paraíso´s Public Library and its CECI. Tel (506) 25740356

Pilar Villalobos Pereira, administrator of the Cartago´s Municipality CECI

Tel. (506) 2551 3394

2.3.5 Surveys

Describe the location and number of respondents to surveys you conducted for this study. Indicate their relative distribution across venues (for example, 30% in telecentres, 20% in cybercafés, 50% in public libraries), and how they were selected.

Describe the venues, their locations and the sample size for each:

Public Libraries	CECI	Cybercafe	--------

# **urban** venues surveyed	,4	,2	,5
# **non-urban** venues surveyed	1,0	,2	1,3
# respondents in **urban** venues	,8	,4	,7
# respondents in **non-urban** venues	2,0	,2	2,3

Survey description & comments:

The surveys applied to operators and users are completely based on the instrument designed by the CIS to be used in all the countries. A couple of questions were added (to address the migration and ethnicity issues not covered in the original surveys). The surveys were translated to Spanish. On each venue one survey was applied to an operator/administrator/librarian. Up to 3 surveys were applied to users if possible. In the case of CECIs there was a limitation for in some cases the venues were closed and the surveys could not be applied. In other cases, it was impossible to apply surveys to users for there were no users at the using the venue during our visit.

In the case of Cybercafes, the limitation was more related to time. Many users refused to complete the surveys, since they pay to use the venue and did not want to spend time talking with us. In some cases, we had to look for potential users out of the venues.

The sample analized for Costa Rica is not large enough to complete a general overview of the hole country, although many patters are repeated in many cases.

2.3.6 Most Useful Contacts

List here some of the most knowledgeable and useful contacts that can provide additional information and insight, in case someone else wants to gather additional information about this topic in the country.

· Carlos Bonilla, MICIT.

Mr. Bonilla works as the adviser of the Science and Tecnology minister. Ha has been working on the CECIs area since the iniciative started.

Tel. (506) 290-1790 Ext. 131

e-mail: cbonilla@micit.go.cr

· María Eugenia Briceño Meza, SIBDI

Lcda. Briceño is the actual director of the Libraries, Documentation and Information System of the University of Costa Rica.

e-mail: mbriceno@sibdi.bldt.ucr.ac.cr

. Marlen Vargas, SINABI

Licda. Vargas is the director of Public Libraries.

e-mail: dbpublic@racsa.co.cr

· Margarita Rojas, SINABI.

Mrs. Rojas is the director of the National Libraries System.

Tel (506) 223-1303

· Magda Sandí, Escuela de Bibliotecología, UCR.

Mrs. Sandí has an MBA in Library Science and is the actual director of the Library Science and Information Science School of the University of Costa Rica.

Tel (506) 207-3445

· Mónica Arce Oviedo, CIDREB.

Miss. Arce works as assistant director of the Central Library of the CIDREB (the documentation and information centre or the UNED).

Tel (506) 507-2261

· Juan Manuel Villasuso, PROSIC.

M.Sc. Villasuso is the coordinator of "the Society of Information and Knowledge Program" of the University of Costa Rica.

Email: jvillasu@cariari.ucr.ac.cr

Homepage: http://cariari.ucr.ac.cr/~jvillasu/index.html

Tel. (506) 207-4166

· Alicia Avendaño, Directora de la Secretaría Técnica de Gobierno Digital.

She has experience in the area of ICTs and has worked in such area for different ministeries. At the moment, she works as the director of the Digital Government´s Technical Secretariat.

alicia.avendano@gobierno-digital.go.cr

2.4   Research Trustworthiness & Credibility

2-3 paragraphs

Describe any steps you took to minimize your own bias in conducting this study, and to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the results you are presenting.

First of all, a data collection process that included secondary sources was realized. This secondary data review had special attention in what is said in official sites about the venues

(Public Libraries and CECIs, for the Cybercafes are private enterprises). All this information was confronted to the information obtained by individual interviews, field work and surveys.

Contradictions were found, and due to this situation, the report was acquiring shape, including the perceptions and points of view of the different actors participating in the process. The most important conclusions, findings and reflections of the team have been shared with other experts in order to validate the data included in this report.

No generalizations are included in the report, and we have triangulated by diverse sources to corroborate the results or to reframe them. This has been obtained by means of the mixture of different sources to give validity to the results. Many key actors of the country have been included in the process, and the team have tried to make this construction as collaborative as possible.

2.4.1   Research Limitations

Describe important limitations you encountered in conducting this research, and limitations in drawing generalizations or broader conclusions based on the findings you report.

The limitations experimented by the Costa Rican team are related to public information, time and the template used for the final report.

Information about budgets has been very hard -and in some cases impossible- to find. There are no recent budget evaluations for public libraries, and although we could find general data to complete some of the questions related to budget, more specific information is not included in the report. For CECIs it was impossible to find any information related to budget. We tried in several occasions to contact the ministry, but never they provided the required information to us. We were unable to obtain any information related to budget for CECIs.

The time to select venues, visit them, apply surveys, analyze data, sumarize it, draw conclusions and complete the template was little. The template took a lot of time to be completed for different reasons: first of all, we use OpenOffice instead of Microsoft Office and this generated a lot of configuration problems when opening the templates to work. Then we had to go back to our very old version of Microsoft Office, which did not open the template properly either. The result is having to go back and forth with the CIS team trying to find a solution for the template problem. Finally we got a version that is quite compatible with our system, but works alternatively (sometimes it does not open properly, sometimes it opens with other configuration, sometimes it does not open at all). There have been problems when sending the document to other computers (whichi we hope is not the case with the final delivery).

Speaking of template, it must be mentioned that it is a little repetitive and returns time and time again on the same subjects. This have generated confusions when gathering data to complete the questions and made the process of filling it very complicated giving us the feeling that we are repeating the same answers all around the report.

In terms of the research process itself, the data collection and the field work, we decided to focus the research in specific cases, trying not to make generalizations nor to give overviews of the hole country. There were limitations in terms of time and budget preventing us to do national surveys.

We do not consider this as a limitation, because we are not using a quantitative focus and therefore we are not seeking for information tat can be generalized. The team is satisfied with the work done and the results we are offering in this report.

2.4.2 Team Qualifications

1 paragraph

Description of the research team and its qualifications to undertake this study.

Sulá Batsú was created in 2005 as an associative entrepreneurship, based in Costa Rica, that brings together the capacities of professionals from different fields interested in having a collective social enterprise. We have a multi-disciplinary perspective to approach collective processes that are based on the experience and knowledge of the groups and organizations that we work with. The cooperative has a wide experience researching the social impact of ICTs in the LAC region. The team works developing learning and knowledge sharing methodologies that support the oral and tacit knowledge processes. We have designed a working process in which the expertise of the hole team is reflected. This is obtained through processes of collective construction that reinforce the interchange of ideas and the generation of new knowledge, guaranteeing simultaneously more objective analysis that integrate different interpretations about the studied phenomena.

Sulá Batsú operates in network with other organizations that provide us with valuable feedback and facilitate the participative processes and the multidisciplinary vision. For this specific research we have to mention the very valuable help and collaboration of the Sciences of Information School of the Universidad de Costa Rica, that has become an strategic ally to carry out this project. Their expertise in the information management field, and their valuable opinions about the different topics studied in this research have been very important for our team and for the success of this hole process. It was of great help all the information and support collaborated by the Main Directorate of Libraries at the SINABI. For this research we counted on the valuable support of Vivian Zúñiga, Daniel Ortuño, María Isabel Victoria and Paulina Torres.

3 Country Assessment

Provide a broad picture of the public access information landscape in the country, informed by the results of this research. In 2-3 paragraphs, what is your overall assessment of public access information venues in this country?

In terms of public access to information, Costa Rica has as many advantages as barriers. This could sound a bit contradictory for those whom do not know the country and the changes it has suffered during the last 20 years. The insertion of Costa Rica within the new economic logic of globalization has represented a benefit for a small segment of the population and a worsening of the quality of life for a majority. Scholar desertion related to poverty and low quality of education comes to be an interesting indicator of the actual conditions of the services offered to population in the country. Costa Rica has been characterized for being a country with social vision, offering universal services for all inhabitants and some late phenomena such as poverty related desertion indicates that the economic growth does not benefit underserved communities, nor improves the quality of public services offered by the government.

This situation is reproduced in many other areas, including the access to public information, the information related services and the public access to information. Public access venues, such as libraries are not correctly placed in the development priorities of the government, demonstrating the lack of interest and political will in the area. This behavior is reproduced in the ICTs area, for the digital inclusion initiatives runned by the MICIT they suffer from a great planning deficiency. As evidenciated in the last report of the PROSIC, the trends for the last years have been characterized by a lack of public policies and strategies, and the initiatives have been isolated and without continuity.

In spite of all the bureaucratic barriers that the country undergoes, the infrastructure, connectivity and a well installed system of libraries represent an advantage compared with other countries in the region. Reinforcing the libraries system and giving libraries more autonomy to develop self-sustaining activities could be a good way to start the improvement of the system. Since there are lots of cybercafes around the country, the access to ICT-equiped venues is easier. However, the economic barriers suffered by underserved communities are still reproduced in the access and use patters of population.

3.2 Real Access Framework

Summarize the key findings and your assessment of each dimension in the Real Access framework used in this study. You will provide more details later.

3.2.1   Access

Costa Rica has a telecommunications infrastructure that covers the majority of the country. Fixed telephones are available mostly in any community, and so is electricity. Telecommunication services have low prices that allow many people to count on them (including mobile telephony). This infrastructure, added to a Public Libraries System already established and a high literacy level, gives a general good overview.

The absence of public policies, strategic plans and political will are the conditions that affect more the real access to information. Appropriated technology has not been included in the information strategies with the human component that would guarantee the benefits and improvement in the quality of life for the communities. Even affordability is not a problem in terms of access to libraries and telecenters, there are problems to access cybercafes (the most common venues to be found in the country). Although CECIs were created to fulfill the needs of underserved communities, the services offered there are not part of any strategic plan, and the venues do not have any sustainability mean that guarantee the sucess of the initiative.

The potential of technology is not been used to meet the goals of public access venues, where little information in other local languages is found, and curricular adjustments are not common. Venues do not have specific programs to take care of the needs of underserved communities nor to cover differentiated types of users, and this implies a sub use and even a waste of resources.

3.2.2   Capacity

As previously mentioned, a high level of literacy characterizes the country. However, when it comes to educative leves, we find that the country is suffering of high levels of desertion, specially in secondary schools. This evidences a basic problem in the educative system and produces subemployment and unemployment in young segments of population. Due to the economic development followed by the last 5 governments, Costa Rica has needed to increase the amount of bilingual technicians to fulfill the requirements of transnational investments. The digital inclusion has follow the markets logic, leaving underserved communities - commonly out of the public services system due to the same exclusion conditions- out of the reach of projects and programs focused in the formation of professionals that will benefit from the foreign investments.

Topics related to capacities, technology, trust and socio-cultural factors are very interesting in the country. By law, all Costa Rican librarians must have a degree in Information Sciences, and

as for we could confirm, this is fulfilled. In terms of technology, and specifity related to CECIs, librarians do not really have all the capacities needed to help the users and harness the venue. And nothing guarantees that operators of CECIs located out of institutions and libraries have enough capacities to carry out the responsabilities. In general, young users have more capacities that older ones, and more men will be found at CECIs. Socio cultural factors have a strong importance in terms of access to the venues. Trust perceptions change from one user to another, but what is clear is that books are still more trusted than Internet.

The way people approach technology is determined by diverse factors such as socio-economic condition, gender, age and education level. Costa Rica´s culture is not a "information for change" culture, and many people do not see the potential of ICTs and how they can help one to solve daily problems and improve the quality of life. As libraries are considered a "students place", libraries are seen as a good option for studens and a place to find homework-related information. This is also linked to the little supply of local pertinent content, that would attract other segments of the population to the library.

3.2.3 Environment

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of the ENVIRONMENT ecosystem in the country (local economy, national economy, legal and regulatory framework, political will & public support, regional and international context)?

Costa Ricas enviroment is very complex: poverty has been suspended for the last 7 years, no matter how high the economic growth of the country has been. The divide between the richest and the poorest has increase too, demonstranting the inequity in the resources distribution that is affecting underserved communities. Disparity in cantonal economic growth is an indicator of rural/urban related inequities, been the most isolated communities more affected by the lack of good quality services. The quality of jobs have decrease during the past 10 years, been the women the most affected segment of population.

The macroeconomic context is in general affected by the international energy crisis. Costa Rica is now inserted in an economic dynamic that tend to increase the divide between social classes in Latin American countries.

Although the actual regulatory framework facilitates the communication processes, new CAFTA contexts will come to generate legislation changes in terms of intelectuall property affecting the real access to information. This situation, added to the lack of political will and long term vision programs (reflected in the absence of information and communication public policies) evidences the lack of strategic planning where social priorities are not been taken into account. Isolated initiatives, devoid of methodologies oriented towards a real social appropriation of information processes for human development and without impact evaluation involved characterize the actual conditions of the country´s environment.

According to the surverys, users frequently look for education related information in the venues, and they complain about the quality of the information offered there. High quality information is not available in the venues, except when there are ICTs involved in the process and users can complete their searches over the Internet.

As mentioned before, the Research Centers of public universities produce useful materials that is not well delivered to final populations who could benefit from it. This situation happens also in the documentation centers of many NGOs. Information in this Institutes and Documentation Centers is of public access in most of the cases, although some NGOs allow only researches to access information in their archieves.

Information related to workers rights, women rights, violence legislation, civil rights, is not easily found in the venues studied, and public information supposed to be available at the Ministeries Sites is frequently out of date or nonexistent.

Information that could benefit underserved communities is not being correctly delivered by the authorities and in many cases people have to invest many time and extra efforts to find it.

Source: Users surveys.

Margarita Salas, member of Sulá Batsú. Psichologist, with experience in the gender field. Assistant at the Office of the Woman during 2002.

2nd Focus Group for data validation.

Elaboration of the research team.

3.3.1 Where is Information Available?

4.2b) What are the current sources for this kind of information in the country? Are these sources adequate (current, appropriate to the population, etc.) In sum, does the locally-relevant content exist?

(i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

(ii) Indicate the sources of data for this assessment

As the team as tried to position throughout the report, locally relevant content is not well produced in the country for it is not produced with the participation of the communities nor takin in count their needs and how information can help them to fulfill these needs.

Many useful content is produced in Research Institutes of public universities and NGOs. Information is often available but not well delivered to the people that need it. Unfortunately, the information flows are not efficient. The processes of information between the state and the citizens are also difficult due to the absence of information repositories readily accessible.

Different instances, such public universities, NGOs, donors, and civil and women rights activist groups offer information about important topics and develop capacity building programs. However, the access to information is not a part of the government agenda, and there are only individual iniciatives but not policies focused in information delivery. Locally-relevant content exists, but frecuently people do not have access to it. Checking the "Programa de Gobierno" for the next 4 years we could not find any specific program oriented to satisfy this need, only isolated iniciatives spreaded around three of the action areas of the program(PROSIC: 2007, p. 10-11). We have also found that although there are libraries in many places around the country, their collections are out of date and do not satisfy the needs of the population.

Source*: Sulá Batsú R. L.*

Magda Sandí, Director of the Sciences of Information School, Universidad de Costa Rica.

3.3.2   What are some of the Key Barriers to Access the Information that Underserved Communities Need?

Are the people who could benefit from this information getting access to it? Why or why not? (E.g. content exists but not in the right language, print media exists but has not been distributed appropriately, digital media is available but people do not have access points, etc.)

(i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Costa Rica produces information, but in many cases, people do not know about it. The contents and the means used are not adapted so that the populations in conditions of exclusion can accede to relevant information for their needs and world visions. The existing information is not promoted by the government, so, excluded groups do not have access to it. For example, there is a lot of digital media referred to human rights that is not being consulted because people do not have conectivity and in many cases they don´t even have the capacities to use a computer. Disinformation foments illegal practices against migrants and women, for they do not have resourses to protect themselves against labor flexibility.

Language is not a prior issue in the country, for educational system asumes that all costarricans speak spanish. Although mostly all costarricans speak spanish, they do not have the option to receive classes in their native languajes and there is no significant material produced in local languajes. Lately, linguistic and antropologic studies have rescue lots of traditions that otherwise would be lost. Indigenous languajes are oral languajes, there is no written code for them, and since the oral knowledge is not valuated is hard to empower

people and make them understand their languaje and knowledge is important for the country).

We have found that although some people use to go frecuently to libraries, in many cases they can not find the information they need, for the collections are out of date, and there are no books related to specific topics. Although the mission of the SINABI is "To promote the development of the libraries, to establish policies for a better operation of the Public Libraries and the National Library" and in order to reach that goal the SINABI affirms they count on "suitable personnel and infrastructure that allows it to contribute with the intellectuat, social, political and economic development of the Costa Ricans, offering them the apprpriated informative resources", we have found that users complain about the lake of appropriated information inside libraries, and even the people working in libraries affirm that there is a big need of updating and introducing new materials to satisfy the new information needs of the population.

All these factors are affecting the ways people approache to information in the country, but doubtless, the economic inequities are the main barrier affecting the access to information and excluding underserved communities from the benefits of public services in general.

Source: INIL at: http://inil.ucr.ac.cr/indigenas.php

SINABI at: http://www.mcjdcr.go.cr/sistema_bibliotecas/index.html

Elaboration of the research team.

2nd Focus Group for data validation.

3.3.3   How do users experience different types of public access venues?

Based on responses to the open question in user surveys, how do users experience different types of public access venues? Are there any trends or preferences for kinds of information, services or activities in one type of venue over another?

Different users prefer different venues. Users behavior regarding which venue is more visited have to do with socio-cultural factors. Most of the users prefer to visit the cybercafe, because there are more services offered and less use restrictions in that venue. That is the reason why cybercafes seem to generate a more spontaneus socialization of information, with less barriers and conditions determined by third parties.

Open questions reveal the roll of cybercafes in the information access processes inside Costa Rica. Youngest population seem to prefer this option over libraries, and since does not exist a popularization of telecentres (CECI) and not many of them around the country, cybercafes seem to be the best option for accessing information and generating private communication and information practices. People over 35 year old prefer traditional media channels (radio, television, newspapers and books in some cases) and many of them are not familiar with ICTs.

Libraries are often perceived as a necessity. But this necessity is more related to homeworks and other education-related processes. More women visit libraries, and according to the perception of information sciences especialists, this happens because is more common that

mothers help the children with homeworks. It is specially interesting that less men visit the library, but CECIs located inside libraries are more visited by men. This evidences a chauvinistic kind of behavior still present in the access to information dynamics in the country: who has which status, and by which behavior the status is demonstrated. Technology-based chauvinistic empowerment is a phenomena that the research team could appreciate during the field work process. This behavior is different i cybercafes, where knowledge is shown out of the educative system and preferences between books and ICTs are not evident. What a user do when visiting a cybercafe is more related to other socialization factors that involve gender in different levels. More women were found in cybercafes during visits, using all the ICT services offered there. Since cybercafes are perceived as "coolest" places that libraries or CECIs, the use dynamics show a different level of appropriation.

One of the reasons why users consider cybercafes over libraries and telecentres is the quality of service: bandwidth, less regulations to download executable programs, other services as photocopy, scanner, prints, webcams, online games and no restrictions to use social networking sites are the conditions that make cybercafes the preferred option among young users. Most of them claim that although libraries (specially the ones that count on a computer lab) represent a good option in terms of educative materials, and an alternative gathering place to study, do not offer as many services as they would want (photocopies, scanner, updated collections) and usually they end up paying a cybercafe hour for extra information. Same happens with library schedules: public libraries open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. This is the same schedule of many students around the country. Users complain about the absence of a night shift, for they do not have the option of going to the library after school. Same happens with university level students and formal workers. Only some public libraries that work in partnership with the municipality open on Saturdays, other day users could use to go to the venue.

3.3.4   Inequity Environment in the Country

2-3 paragraphs

What does inequity look like in the country? Using the inequity variables described in section 2.2, provide a short overview of the main underserved groups, regions and/or other locally-appropriate segments of the population.

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

First of all, we need to highlight some specific issues related to inequity inside the country (Estado de la Nación, 2006). First of all, there is a hard nucleus of poverty –meaning people that is affected by chronicle poverty- that includes around the 14% of homes. This people live under the line of poverty and do not have access to the basic services, or any resources to improve their life quality. During the last year, the GINI coefficient increased from 0,406 to 0, 420, and this reverted the gradual process of reduction of the inequity. The existence of this group of families that suffer social exclusion next to other groups of more qualified professionals, with a high income and stable jobs, makes the inequity more evident. What we see is that the type of economic growth of the country does not allow families in social exclusion situation to improve their life quality. 1 of each 7 families suffer of social exclusion

in Costa Rica. This means these families do not have access to services as education, electricity or social security. Under this conditions, people have less possibilities to change their quality of life. Education is one of the big problems in the country although there are high literacy levels. The percentage of desertion is 13.2% (during the first) 3 years of secondary. Population under 18 not attending school have more probabilities of being underemployed or unemployed.

In this context, indigenous populations, urban-marginal communities, women and children are the most affected by the inequities of the economical model. While law provide an excellent framework to protect the rights of underserved populations, the practice is very different. The indigenous issue was putted over the table late in the last century when indigenous were recognized Costa Rica´s citizens. For many time, the citizenship was forbidden not only to indigenous (it was until 1991 that a law of inscription and indigenous ID was published http://aceproject.org/ace-es/topics/lf/lfc/lfc19) but to black communities in the country. The country came to arise discussion around the ethnicity issue with the celebration of the 5th century of the discovery of America. Before that is pertinent to annotate that hiding the diversity of Costa Rican population was in charge of the education ministry, which used to teach, even during the last decade, that mostly all population was white, descendant of Spain conquistadors, not mentioning a word about black citizens and giving only a hint of the indigenous tradition present in the country. There has not existed an integration policy ruled by the State to include this segments of population inside development and education programs, nor a preoccupation about including the diversity and migration issues in the governments agenda (Costa Rica receives migrant population from many countries, as Colombia, Nicaragua, China, Argentina among others).

The gender issue has been addressed lately too. Last year Estado de la Nación Report, indicates that gender divide does not show important changes in its tendency. While the literacy level of women grows up, inequities related to poverty divide, labor markets and access to income and productive resources do not decrease. Open unemployment and visible sub employment both present a divide of 6,6 percentage points between men and women, which indicates that the quality of jobs and insertion in the labor market still show significant differences related to gender: for each 100 men with employment problems there are 153 women with employment problems. According to the same report, other problem that affects women insertion in the labor market is the absence of an integral child care program as a public policy. This generates familiar tensions and extra work for women that divide their time between jobs and family care.

3.3.5   Freedom of Press and Expression & Right to Information

What is the overall perception of freedom of press, censorship & right to information in this country?

According to the 2007 Worldwide press freedom report of the Reporters Without Borders (www.rsf.org) , Costa Rica is located at the 21 place of the rank. We reproduce here the criteria used to rank countries : "To compile this index, Reporters Without Borders prepared a questionnaire with 50 criteria that assess the state of press freedom in each

country. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of newspaper issues, searches and harassment). And it includes the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these press freedom violations. t also measures the level of self-censorship in each country and the ability of the media to investigate and criticize. Financial pressure, which is increasingly common, is also assessed and incorporated into the final score". (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=24027)

Rights to information depend on the information and who is trying to access it. It is common to receive negatives when asking for public information in public institutions. Bureaucracy and power tensions affect the delivery of information in these places, where a culture of "property over data" has been generated by public employees.

Other interesting factor is the delivery o f information to libraries and CECIs, since these two are part of the public system in the country. More use restrictions are seen in both places, where adultcentrism has a very important roll in the determination of what is legitimate: usually uses related to web 2.0 are forbbiden in libraries and CECIs. Social networking sites, chat rooms, games and video watching are forbbiden in these venues. When asking the operators and directors, it was interesting that in many cases the answer is "that use is a waste of time". In some cases the users can use web 2.0 "when nobody else needs the computer for more important things, such as information search and homeworks". One of the visited libraries, located at Pérez Zeledón, a urban-rural community that operates the library inside a "Cultural House" and counts on municipal and state support, has one of the largest computers lab we saw. Here they have a network administrator, who is in charge of the computer´s system and has installed firewalls to avoid the use of chats, Hi5, Facebook and blogs.

3.4   Charts: Information Needs, Users & Uses

Based on the results of your research (especially user surveys and interviews with librarians and operators), complete the required data to chart the information needs of underserved communities using the following examples. Provide any explanatory comments as needed.

3.4.1 Users, by type of venue

Users profile (estimated proportion of users in each category, %)		Public Libraries				Public Library with a CECI				CECI alone				Cybercafe			
		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
		General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Gender	Male	21%	23%	16%	15%			2%	3%	16%	17%			16%	6%	24%	32%
	Female	21%	23%	29%	15%			2%	3%	5%	6%			21%	23%	27%	32%
Age	14 and under	0%	0%	4%	3%			0%	0%	5%	6%			0%	0%	4%	6%
	15-35	37%	41%	24%	12%			4%	6%	10%	12%			32%	29%	40%	50%
	36-60	0%	0%	9%	6%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	0%	4%	6%
	61 and over	5%	6%	7%	8%			0%	0%	0%	0%			0%	0%	2%	3%
Education level	No formal education	5%	6%							5%	6%			0%	0%		
	Only elementary	0%	0%	7%	3%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	0%	2%	3%
	Up to high school	26%	29%	24%	20%			2%	3%	10%	12%			21%	18%	36%	44%
	College or university	13%	12%	13%	6%			2%	3%	0%	0%			10%	12%	13%	18%
Income bracket (approx)	High			2%				0%								0%	
	Medium	37%	41%	33%	23%			4%	6%	15%	18%			32%	23%	38%	47%
	Low	0%	0%	7%	6%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	6%	13%	18%
Social status (approx)	High			2%				0%								0%	
	Medium	32%	35%	31%	21%			4%	6%	16%	18%			32%	23%	36%	44%
	Low	0%	0%	7%	6%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	6%	16%	21%

Caste (if appropriate)	Dominant							
Ethnicity (if appropriate)	Dominant							

Source: Surveys applied on the sample.

Comments, including comments on other inequity variables.

There is a category called "Library with CECI" that we decided to do separately because the surveys applied in those libraries that have a CECI were had significant differences in the answers.

Where there are empty boxes is because no results came out for these cases according to the surveys applied.

Percentages must be read, for general use, as percentages of the total surveys applied in rural areas and the total surveys applied in urban areas.

3.4.2 Information People Seek, by type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Public Library with CECI				CECI alone				Cybercafe			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Education	26%	29%	29%	18%			4%	6%	5%	6%			16%	18%	33%	41%
Health	0%	0%							0%	0%			5%	6%	2%	3%
Agriculture																
Government services																
Entertainment																
News	0%	0%	0%	0%			0%	0%	0%	0%			5%	6%	4%	6%
Personal	10%	12%	13%	12%			0%	0%	5%	6%			10%	12%	38%	50%
Other	21%	23%	13%	6%			2%	3%	16%	18%			5%	6%	2%	3%

Source: Surveys

Comments: (Include description of "other". Suggested headings based on frequently reported topics in other research and may vary across countries).

"Other" was, in many cases, just "other". It was really hard to obtain information on personal uses of information, and many people included their personal activities among "other". In some cases other was literature, information for fun, web 2.0 and other information related to "entertainment" (that was not included in the surveys).

3.4.3 Uses of ICT, by type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Library with CECI				CECI alone				Cybercafe			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Email		26%		16%				2%		21%				21%		47%
Chat		0%		9%				0%		10%				21%		36%
Web browsing		32%		13%				4%		16%				21%		31%
Blogs & social networking		16%		2%				4%		10%				10%		7%
Commerce & business								1%								
Phone or webcam		0%								0%				10%		
Games		0%		2%				0%		10%				5%		2%
Other		10%		2%				0%								0%

Source: Surveys

Comments: (Include description of "other". Suggested headings not exhaustive, based on frequently reported topics in other research and may vary across countries).

"Other" again reflects "personal" concept, and is used to include all other uses not related to the ones mentioned in the survey.

All the percentages are included in the "ICT use" boxes, for the chart asks specifically for ICT uses.

3.4.4 Frequency of Use for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Library with CECI				CECI alone				Cybercafe			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
First visit			4%				0%								2%	
Rarely (less than monthly)			7%				0%								0%	
Occasional (about once a month)	5%	6%	2%	3%			2%	3%	0%	0%			10%	12%	2%	3%
Regular (about 2-3 per month)	16%	18%	16%	15%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	6%	9%	12%
Frequent (about once a week)	21%	23%	13%	9%			2%	3%	10%	12%			10%	12%	27%	35%
Daily (about every day)	0%	0%	2%	3%			0%	0%	5%	6%			0%	0%	11%	15%

Source: *Surveys*

Comments:

The percentages must be read as % of the total for rural areas or urban areas. And the ICT Use case, the frequencies are also % from the total rural or urban afirmative responses.

3.4.5 Barriers to use for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Library with CECI				CECI alone				Cybercafe			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Location, distance			0%	0%			0%	0%							2%	3%
Hours of Operation	0%		7%	6%			2%	3%	0%				5%		11%	15%
Cost	0%	0%	2%	3%			0%	0%	0%	0%			10%	12%	13%	18%
Lack of skills / training	16%	18%	13%	15%			2%	3%	0%	0%			26%	18%	16%	21%
Not enough services	5%	6%	4%	6%			0%		10%	12%			0%	0%		
Not in right language																
Not enough content	5%	6%							5%	6%			0%	0%		
Other	5%	6%	4%	6%			0%	0%	5%	6%			5%	6%	0%	0%

Source: *Surveys*

Comments: (Include description of "other". Suggested headings not exhaustive, based on frequently reported topics in other research and may vary across countries).

Must be read: "from all surveyed people in rural OR urban area, X% answered AFIRMATIVE to the barrier", which means that those persons agree that "X" barrier is a barrier for them. Same for the ICT use case.

3.4.6 Salient Initiatives to Help Meet Critical Information Needs by Underserved Communities

What are the most salient initiatives in the country (past, ongoing, or planned) that aim to meet the information needs of underserved communities in the country? How important are they? In what ways are they successful or not? Where can more information about them be found?

(i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

3.4.6.1 Past Initiatives:

In terms to the delivery of public access to information services it has to be mentioned that the SINABI was created by means of decree N. 23382-C published the 13 of January, of the 2000, "to apply the new technologies that help to the improvement of the information services, recreation and education; supporting regional and national cultures". According to SINABI, public libraries "are bibliographical information and cultural extension centers, that offer to the citizens the most representative works of the universal knowledge and develop a work of promotion to the habit of reading and diffusion of the information of recreational and educative character" . Although the system of libraries certain maintains in operation centers throughout the country, a policy that regulates the operation of these centers nor the relevance of the information offered to the citizens could not be found during this phase of t he research.

PROSIC (Programa de la Sociedad de la Información y el Conocimiento) presented the 2007 "Hacia la Sociedad de la Información y el Conocimiento en Costa Rica", a report that summarizes the activities and efforts realized by the government in order to introduce the country to the Knowledge and Information Society. PROSIC reviews the activities related to "digital government", an initiative that has been sketched during the last 2 presidential periods, and that has its antecedents in the first half of the decade of 1990. From the report of PROSIC, we extract the following information about the history of the digital government in Costa Rica:

As previous to the current one the following governmental policies can be mentioned:

1990-1994: the "National Program of Computer science" is formulated. Its objective was "to promote the use of computer science like an instrument to propose changes in the technological and cultural atmosphere of the country, helping to the intentions of sustained economic growth with social justice". This program is still effective.

1994-1998: the direction of the strategy was concentrated in the massive access of the population to the new technologies used in the "Freeways of Information" (joint of mass media that allows an agile access to all types of information stored in electronic forms, creating a structure of telecommunications that Integra telephony networks, television, radio and satellite to transport the information). The main objective of this program was to fortify the network of "Advanced Internet".

1998-2002: the policy was oriented to the development of actions directed to increase the access to the ICTs between the population. The primary target of these actions was to universalize the access to Internet so its benefits reached to the greater amount of citizens.

"Program Communication without Borders" -previously described- starts.

2002-2006: the policy oriented to the promotion of the use of ICTs continues through the formulation of the "Plan of Digital Government" that structured his actions in 5 great axes: infrastructure of telecommunications, impulse to the new economy, preparation for the society of the knowledge, regulatory frame and "Digital Government".

However, according to the study realized by the PROSIC on these initiatives, one has determined that the level of priority granted by the governments to this matter has been low and poorly structured.

More information:

PROSIC: 2007, P. 6-8

http://www.mcjdcr.go.cr/sistema_bibliotecas/publicas.html

3.4.6.2   Ongoing Initiatives:

Initiatives focused on the "Informal Education" sector have been runned by different institutions, in order to reach other population segments that are excluded of the formal education services given by the state. Informal education has had a very important roll in the socio educative development not only in Costa Rica but in the hole Latin America. According to PROSIC* this is because in countries with development differences between urban and rural areas, and between the agricultural and industrial productions, the access of population to education and its cultural and economic benefits is not equitable.

This inequities mentioned by the PROSIC in the report, produced the need of new differentiated educational mechanisms out of the formal educative system, that allow segments of population living under exclusion conditions to reach proper levels of knowledge and competencies, giving them the chance to integrate to the formal labor force with stable employments.

For its 2007 report, PROSIC** considered 4 different initiatives focused on informal education runned by organizations that have explored this mechanisms in order to close the digital divide in the country. Three of those are non profit NGOs (LINCOS, CIENTEC and Fundación Paniamor) that work to contribute to the development of the country through tha access to information, and believe in the ICTs as tools to improve the quality of life of Costa Ricans. The other one is runned by the MICIT (Technology and Science Minitry). These 4 initiatives complete an interesting effort to fight the digital divide in the country and promote the social inclusion through ICTs.

Here is a brief summary of the initiatives and sources of information that can be consulted online.

LINCOS (Small Intelligent Communities): This program was created during the José María Figueres Olsen government (1994-1998) as part of the "Costa Rica for Sustainable Development Foundation". LINCOS have a strongest presence in other areas of LAC, and in

Costa Rica, they have worked in Río Frío, Finca 6, Sarapiquí, Puerto Viejo (all these are Atlantic communities), Los Santos and Santa María de Dota (rural communities located in the central plateau). LINCOS have a structure organized under the Sustainable Development bases, and have programs in three different areas:

- "Entrepreneur and innovative women": a program focused on capacity building for entrepeneur women that promotes the empowerment for planning and developing business through digital alphabetization.

- "Ecologic tourism: capacity building and entrepreneurship mechanisms": oriented to the development of community and rural tourism as an economic alternative.

- "Elder in the construction of community identities": to empower elder members of the community.

CIENTEC (Foundation for the National Center of Science and Technology): this rganization was created in 1989 to promote the science and technology and to enforce pedagogic networks. Their web portal is an important virtual platform of educative resources oriented to the support of formal and informal educative processes around the country. CIENTEC seeks to promote the equity through the access to relevan information and the promotion of science and technology learning. CIENTEC has a gender perspective and because of its roll as promotion and systematization channel their portal was declared of national interest by the MICIT in February 2007.

Paniamor Foundation: Paniamor has three different projects that use ICT for the informal education to reduce the digital divide among youth: "Tecnobus", "Tecnoclub" and "Intel Computer Clubhouse". The projects are oriented to underserved young community members and has cost recovery methodologies that constitute a great example of good practices for cooperation.

MICIT: has 2 initiatives running at the time: CECI and CCAI (Community Centers for Internet Access). The first one of these has a full chapter of this research. CCAI is a partnership project between the MICIT and the UNED. In total, the project plans to open 12 different CCAIs in 12 headquarters of the UNED, to offer free access to computers and Internet for UNED students and community members. Each CCAI has 5 computers connected to Interner donated by the Korea government. The project seeks to fulfill immediate information needs and to democratize the access to technologic services.

More information:

*PROSIC:2007, P. 215-216

**PROSIC:2007, P. 218-225

http://www.lincos.net/webpages/espanol

http://www.cientec.or.cr/cientec.html

http://www.paniamor.or.cr/quehacemos.php

http://www.micit.go.cr

3.4.6.3   Historical Trends and Opportunities to Serve Information Needs

Based on the above, what is the general trend in the country in relation to provision of public access information services? Are there any important upcoming opportunities (for example, upcoming regulatory changes, infrastructure enhancements, etc) that can impact public access information (include services through libraries and other public information venues)?

i.   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Costa Rica is one of the Latin American countries with more advance in terms of access to public education. The education system of the country, that included technology tools more than 20 years ago in the formative processes, gives the country an important advantage. The efforts to include technology formation programs in the hole system (from pre-scholar to university). Computer labs have been a reality for the country since the 80´s. The governmental efforts, added to other initiatives that seek to reach populations excluded from the basic services complete a good overview that is a start. In is necesary to include evaluation, monitoring and coaching to the efforts, to realize what is their real impact, as well as more social-focused programs that help the good appropriation of ICTs for development.

The fact that the country already has a good public educative system supported by ICT inclusion gives a start point to other initiatives that can include strategic partnership among public and private institutions, universities, NGOs, Research Institutes and communities. Focusing on the social appropriation of ICTs has to be the next step to improve the access to information in the country. Due to the possibilities given by Web 2.0 and more accesible technologies, it becomes necessary to start a reflection around the priorities of the social inclusion efforts. Costa Rica, as other countries historically benefited from social democratic governmets (offering public monopoly services) bases the studies and reports on connectivy and infrastructure indicators. Off course these numbers are very important to analyze the conditions of the country and to identify the next strategic investments to be done, but to elaborate conclusions from this data does not provide good suggestions about what has to be done next.

It is very important to include capacity building processes inside the projects and programs created to diminish the digital divide, for this divide does not come alone as a phenomena, it is directly related to the economic divide that affects more an more the Latin American countries. Capacity building to enforce emporwerment and entrepreneurship must be included in any ICT program to produce real impact and benefit for underserved communities of the country. We consider importan to mention these recommendations for the historical trends of the country prove that the efforts have not been focused to the human component of ICTs. It is specially important to enforce this processes of social appropriation of technology now that the country is entering a new economic phase produced by the CAFTA-DR trade. Big changes will come with the apperture of the telecommunication market that can not still be

53

mesured. The "implementation agenda", with its new regulations in the intellectual property, education and telecommunications areas (among others) will represent a significative change of the access to information dynamics in Costa Rica. Alliances between key actors of the information society represent an excellent option to prepare the country for the new economic competition that is to start from the implementation of the CAFTA-DR trade.

The first salient changes we anticipated for the next years are related to the CAFTA trade. As we have already mentioned, Costa Rica has a particular telecommunications system ruled by the State, which has guaranteed the universal access to telecommunications according to a social- oriented telecommunications program. The Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (ICE) was created in order to provide telecommunication services to all Costa Rica´s population and so it has been during more that half a century. The implications of the CAFTA trade (which forces the country to open the telecommunications to private investments) will change the regulatory framework in order to allow the private competition and introduce other actors in 2 of the most lucrative areas of telecommunications: mobile technology and Internet services. Competition in telecommunications means freedom to choice between different companies, but does not mean universalization of services, for private companies not necessarily have a social vision. One of the majors preoccupations of a great sector of the civil society concentrates in the Laws of the CAFTA´s "Agenda of Implementation" , because in the specific subject of telecommunications it declares that the state monopoly in the scope of the services of telephony and Internet (the two more lucrative areas of the service, as we already mentioned) has to be opened.

Another one of the predicted changes concentrates in the scope of the intellectual property. Until now, Costa Rica has maintained in use a legislation that is oriented to protect the rights of access to the information (specifically concerning the material photocopied and rewritten for didactic use). A proposal recently presented/displayed in the Congress - and that was rejected by the Supreme Court of Justice- proposes pains of jail for the people reproducing material protected by author rights, which implies a reverse for the legislation of the country in terms of access to the information. However, the reforms are to be done and the discussion grows inside the congress, the laws are still in process and Costa Ricans are waiting for the results. For this specific issue, the case of libraries have important changes expected to come out. At the moment, the fines to transgressors of the "intellectual property" law go up to five colones (\$ 0,01) and the new project of law presented to the congress for the fortification of the public libraries it is suggested that this pain increases to ten base wages. Same source indicates that this administration is putting more attention to the libraries area, for according to the UNESCO, a country requires 1 library for each 15000 inhabitants.

Source: PROSIC:2007

Research team elaboration.

3.4.6.4   *Planned Initiatives:*

There are no long term planned initiatives. We will have to wait until this presidential period comes to an end and new initiatives starting from cero are propose. Unfortunately, short term vision has been predominant in the country for many years, and the lack of policies that could guarantee the continuity of initiatives is demonstraded when a new government period starts.

More information*:*

PROSIC: 2007

3.5   Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment

3.5.1   National & Local Economic Environment

Describe the national & local economic environment and how it affects public access to information & communication in the country.

(i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The economic growth experimented by the country in the last years has been high. It is around 6% for the last year, but curiously does not implicate a real benefit for the most excluded segments of the population. Poverty has kept the same percentage during the last ten years, demonstrating a very unequal distribution of the goods in the country. Despite of the economic growth, unemployment level is in 6% in his tenth consecutive year and the GINI coefficient grew to 0.420 during last year.

The hard nucleus of poverty maintains 2 of each 7 families in conditions of extreme poverty. Since the reduction of poverty levels has been null in the past 12 years, the exclusion conditions are becoming more evident and have influence over other indicators such as educational level, scholar desertion, underemployment, and visible sub employment. While the levels of income of the richest sectors of the country have increased due to the foreign investment and the alliances between local and transnational companies, Costa Ricans suffering social exclusion are more and more poor. The uncontrolled economic growth increases to the social inequalities and the divides that are generated from this situation.

The access to infomation and ICTs is affected by the economic inequities that generate other divides such and education divide, digital divide, entcetera, and that reinforce other cultural phenomena such as the gender divide. This fact added to the lack of strategic planning and social vision of the inclusion initiatives determine the failure of digital inclusion programs and the prevent people of the benefits of the Information Society. Since excluded segments of the population do not have real access to information and ICTs and do not have this access among their priorities, the real social appropriation of both is very hard.

In this scenario, the CAFTA trade comes to represent a new barrier in terms of universal access to telecommunications, intellectual property laws and social development. The

Implementation Agenda promoted by this government affects the equitable economic growth of the country and stimulates the inequities between different segments of the population (incresing the existent divides and making difficult the real access to information and ICTs for the ubderserved communities).

Trends:

CAFTA trade.

Source: Estado de la Nación.

PROSIC:2007.

2nd Focus Group for data validation.

Sulá Batsú R.L.

3.5.2 National & Local Policy (legal & regulatory) Environment

Describe salient features of the policy & regulatory framework in the country (and if applicable, locally) that affect delivery and access to information (e.g. censorship, wi-fi bandwidth regulation, etc). What is your assessment of the general trend on this matter?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

In terms of censorship, Costa Rica have a commission of control and qualification of public spectacles. This commission is in charge of audiovisual materials (TV channels, movies, radio), public spectacles, pornography control and video games () The law do not have an article related to Internet uses, but this is something experimented for many countries in this moment, for legislation have experimented a conflict while laws are incompatible with the new uses and applications of the online technologies. Recently, efforts have been done in terms of digital privacy and security but these still can not fulfill the needs of population. According to the Chapter #2 of the report "Hacia la sociedad de la información y el conocimiento en Costa Rica" (PROSIC: 2007), Costa Rica has not developed an articulated regulatory framework for the Knowledge and Information Society: "Of the dispositions that have been somehow regulating the ICT at present (4 constitutionalists, 11 supranational, 29 laws and 23 decrees) the majority only do it indirectly or by reference of norms that regulate other matters".

In terms of delivery of services, it is important to mention that in this moment, the unique organizations authorized to offer services of telephony and Internet are the Costa Rican Institute of Electricity (ICE) y Radiográfica Costarricense SA (RACSA), which sends to licitation different supplies from purchase of services from private companies (due to the lack of capacity to offer these services in all the national territory). No private company can serve of telephony and Internet without the authorization of ICE. At the moment, the administration of platforms of mobile telephony is ruled by the ICE with the collaboration of the companies Alcatel and Ericsson. "Plan of Expansion and Modernization of Cellular Network 2007-2010" has been developed in order to satisfy the increasing demand of the service of mobile telephony in the country.

In terms of connectivity and Internet access, the services offered by the ICE are:

Acelera: ICE service based on ADSL technology. Allows phone calls ans access to the Web. This way of access is offered through the "Advanced Internet" up to 4Mbps.

Electric cable connection: PLC system of 2Mbps offered by ICE, RACSA and local distributors.

RDSI: Exchanged access via "Red Digital de Servicios Integrados" (RDSI) up to 128Kbps.

Wi-Fi: Wi-fi access areas of 2Mbps offered by RACSA, "Proyecto Costa Rica Inalámbrica" and HotSpotExpress.

Satellite connection: this is a relative new service, developed in order to offer connection to zones located away from the public network infrastructure.

In terms of ICTs alone, as a result of the lack of a real State policy designed in order to promote the ICTs as a development instrument and as part of a planning effort, in Costa Rica each new government proposes new and different development plans for this area. In many cases, these plans do not come to the practice or have a really short scope that ends with the presidential period.

Most parts of the special legislation covering the ICT issues have been adopted as a result of international pressure generated by commitments acquired through international instruments. This is the case of some norms used to regulate generic services and the intellectual property issues.

It is important to mention that most parts of these norms are ranked as "executive decree", and this is a good indicator of the predominant "short term" vision. (PROSIC: 2007, p 46)

More than to the development of local contents, processes of social appropriation or alternative uses of the ICTs, the ICT policies at the moment are oriented to the development of technological platforms.

Trends:

Lack of normative, short term vision.

Source: http://www.poder-judicial.go.cr/salatercera/leyes/leypenal/leyespect%C3%A1culosp%C3%BAblicos.html

PROSIC: 2007, p. 45-46

www.ice.go.cr

3.5.3   Regional & International Policy (legal & regulatory) Environment

Describe salient features of policy & regulatory framework in the region and internationally that affect the delivery of public access to information & communication in the country. What is your assessment of the general trend on this matter?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Regulations inside the Information Society's Politic framework

"1. We, representatives of the world's populations, gathered in Geneva from December 10 through 12, 2003 on the occasion of the Information Society World Summit, wish to declare our compromise to build an inclusive Society of Information centered around every person and focused on development, in such a way that everyone y able to create, access, use and share information and knowledge, so that individuals, communities and populations may be capable of promoting sustainable development and increasing the quality of their lifestyles, based on the principles stated in the United Nations Charter and respecting and defending the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

World Summit on Information Society Declaration of Principles, Geneva, December 2003.

The WSIS

The continuous growth of the Information Society, and its effects felt on the way human beings interact, led the United Nations, working through the ITU, to pose the need to discuss supranational politics on the subject. Said process is known as the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

Said discussion space was designed with two features that gave the United Nations a dynamic and experimental approach to supranational development processes. On one side, central figures' involvement was considered, that is to say the Governmental Sector, the Private Sector and the Civil Society sat down as peers to acknowledge that the Information Society up to that point had been led by the Private Sector and the Civil Society, and that the UN's opinion should be held in special consideration.

The WSIS in its two phases (Geneva, December 2003; Tunisia, November 2005) produced tour documents that left a mark on the outcome of future dialogues, as well as on the national Information Society policies, since 2003. Said Documents are: a) The Geneva Declaration of Principles ; b) The Geneva Action Plan ; c) The Tunisia Agreement ; and, d) The Tunisia Information Society Agenda .

Ever since the Summit, several discussions have taken place and initiatives designed for many countries so that they may be able to generate interactive tools and agencies responsible for Information Society policies. In the Summit these discussions were encouraged by CODESI (Perú), the Agenda para Sociedad de la Información de Bolivia , the Agenda de Conectividad de Ecuador , the Agenda de Conectividad de Colombia , the CONIPROSIT (Nicaragua) , the Agencia de Gobierno Electrónico y Sociedad de la Información (Uruguay) , amongst other iniciatives in Latin America. It also required the development of spaces to discuss what to do next. That's why the Bavaria Meeting and the Bavaria Declaration ended up being extremely useful in the process, not just to reconcile regional efforts, but to take a stance from within our region . And resulted essential in the design of a Latin American and Caribbean regional politics proposal, which became a reality in the eLAC 2007 meeting.

Although there existed several sub-regional projects, such CARDISIS or CLARA, a point can be made when saying that between 2003 and 2005, Latin America focused on local developments, which in many cases resulted in astounding success stories but showcased difficulties when incorporating regulations, or when faced with developing supranational projects, a topic that will be discussed later on.

After the Conferencia Ministerial de Bavaria, preparatory meeting in Geneva succeeded in bringing members of GRULAC together with multilateral organizations, as well as Civil Society organizations (OSC's), but not until the eLAC –Regional Plan for the Information Society- presentation did discussions looking to harmonize regulations, starting from the design of regional policies, gained the strength they now posses. Partially inspired by the eEurope Plan, but living it a regional approach to Development ICT's. This spirit was already present at the 2003 Declaración de Bavaria. The 2007 eLAC represents an important document, key to the region, that was made definite at the already mentioned Declaración de Santo Domingo, approved by Asamblea General de la Organización de Estados Americanos.

WSIS on Latin America: eLAC 2007

Now, it wasn't until the second preparatory meeting in Geneva, in February 2005, that the governments, through the GRULAC, had access to the version that would be used later in the Reunión Preparatoria de Río de Janeiro and that preceded the Compromiso de Río.

However, the need of an in between meeting that could function as a space for negotiations before Rio surfaced. Said meeting took place in X Reunión Bienal de Consulta del Programa INFOLAC.

eLAC was conceived as a Plan designed to be scalable, negotiable and able to reach a consensus base don the Geneva and Bavaria principles, guided by the Metas del Milenio.

eLAC materialized as a regional public political agenda, which acknowledges the importance of ICT's in achieving economic and social development in the countries belonging to the region. The Plan de Acción eLAC 2007 was based on dialogue and cooperation from every Latin American and Caribbean country, as well as political consensus and a strategic vision in common.

30 goals were layed down. These cover 70 activities that have the potential to turn in tangible results and answer efficiently the needs of each country in the region, depending on their situation. These goals were based on projects and activities that were already underway, with the intention of taking advantage of the synergy to improve regional coordination and encourage other initiatives. Also, other national initiatives were supported and put to use, based on interaction destined to further knowledge and understanding of critical areas.

The 2007 eLAC Plan was reviewed during the February 2008 meeting in El Salvador, where a new plan, eLAC 2010, was proposed. This plan is a sequel to the initial plan, to revaluate its reaches and concrete results.

There were 5 key areas to eLAC 2007:

a. Access and Digital Inclusion

b. Generation of Knowledge and Abilities

c. Public Efficiency and Openness

d. Political Tools

e. Enabling Environment Development

Santo Domingo Declaration (OEA) :

Together with eLAC, the Santo Domingo Declaration from the 36th Organización de los Estados Americanos meeting, called "Gobernabilidad y Desarrollo en la Sociedad del Conocimiento", resulted in documents essential to the development of policies concerning the Information Society, and therefore in the construction of legal instruments to achieve the objectives clearly set by the Santo Domingo Declaration: "RECOGNIZING that human kind quickly evolves towards a new development model focused on the human being, based on intensive use of knowledge and innovation, and having in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) the ability to produce, access and spread knowledge, becoming an important tool in strengthening democratic governability, achieving equitable and sustainable development in the Americas and reducing the digital gap (…) AWARE of the existence o a digital gap, acknowledged in the in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), and the importance of closing it inside the countries and between them, to be able to help reach common goals concerning fair, equitable and sustainable development, including the reduction of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in every American population, through comprehensive development plans that include strategies to reduce said gap (…)", as noted in this text, the design of Information Society politics involves TICpD components in each country's development policies, underlining the "route ticket" (each policy's reason to be), in order to be able to tell what (legal) tools are necessary and which need to be developed.

But the document, in the declaratory part (and later in the decisive) not only focuses the Information Society and the ICT phenomenon as social tools, but gives emphasis to their use in governability when it expresses: "RECOGNIZING that a proper management of public affaire demands effective, representative, transparent and publicly responsible on every level governmental institutions, as well as civil participation, effective controls and equity in the separation of the powers. In the same context, accountability and civil participation in monitoring, control and evaluation of the public administration as an active contribution to prevent and eradicate corruption, following national laws, become tools to encourage openness, efficiency and responsibility in the region's governments, and ICT's can play an important role", this paragraph is the culmination of several declarations happening in Latin America that aim for integral politics in the region, this involves the use of Development ICT's for governability, but focusing on service to the citizenship. This certainly had already been previewed in 2005 during the Declaración de Mar del Plata , that took place in the Cumbre de

Presidentes de las Américas: "(…) the maximum effort is needed to take advantage of the possibilities offered by ICT's, in order to improve the efficiency and openness in the public sector and making the participation of the citizenship in public life easier, this way contributing to the consolidation of democratic guvernability, and understanding that it's relationship with economic and social development, as stated in the Plan de Acción".

The use of ICT's for governability, focusing on access to public information, openness, civil involvement, accountability and State modernization, is clearly stated in the 35 paragraphs that follow in the, with special mention of the citizenship, but also making clear the existence of different social realities.

Latin America facing the WSIS: eLAC 2010

If eLAC 2007 represented the first effort to develop a common strategy for the region concerning the Information Society, eLAC 2010 not only follows the same path, but maintains the commitment of establishing a common ground on the subject matter for the other countries in the region.

In order to participate in eLAC 2010, countries have been assisted by CEPAL to develop priorities that most suit the region and that are easier to effectively quantify.

This eLAC phase focuses on education and health, topics that make up the first two chapters, and delves into accessibility, being of special interest goals 18 and 77.

18. Increasing the number of community access ICT centers, including libraries and other venues, in order to reduce in half the average of potential users of this centers, or reaching an average of 1750 users per venue, independent of the Fact that the venue is public or private.

77. Encouraging citizen access to public information in an opportune way, and respecting different cultural traits, such as language, and also physical handicaps and others, according to international standards.

eLAC 2010 goes from being a Plan to becoming an interactive Platform where regional social parties look to develop an inclusive, harmonic Information Society. Finally, we can say that eLAC together with the Declaración de Santo Domingo, are the foundation of the Information Society in Latin America.

Trends:

Information society, civil participation

Source: http://www.itu.int/wsis

 http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0004!!MSW-S.doc

 http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/md/03/wsis/doc/S03-WSIS-DOC-0005!!MSW-S.doc

 http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/7-es.doc

http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1-es.doc

CODESI: Comisión Multisectorial para el Desarrollo de la Sociedad de la Información (http://www.codesi.gob.pe)

ADSIB: http://www.adsib.gov.bo/

http://www.conatel.gov.ec/website/conectividad/conectividad.php

http://www.agenda.gov.co/

CONIPROSIT: Comité Nicaragüense en pro de una Sociedad de la Información para Todos (http://www.coniprosit.org.ni/)

http://www.agesic.gub.uy/

http://www.oei.es/xiicumbredec.htm

Procesa led by the Agence Intergouvernamentale de la Francophonie (http://www.cardicis.org/index2.htm?lan=es&pg=m2)

CLARA:Cooperación Latinoamericana de Redes Avanzadas (http://www.redclara.net/)

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/index_en.htm

http://www.eclac.cl/socinfo

http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory2/pc2/index.html

http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/regional/declaration-rio-es.pdf

http://www.eventosinfolac.org/?newlang=spa

http://www.redgealc.net/archivos/documentos/eLAC_2007_Espanol.pdf

http://www.un.org/spanish/millenniumgoals/

http://www.redgealc.net/archivos/documentos/DecSantoDomingo/DECSANTODOMs04.doc

http://www.iin.oea.org/DECLARACIONES/declaracion_IV_Cumbre_de_las_Americas.htm

http://www.elac2007.org.sv/docs/compromisodesansalvador-8feb2008.pdf

3.6   Collaboration Practices and Opportunities across Venues

Linkages and collaboration between different types of venues was identified as a **strong emerging theme in the preliminary analysis**. Please provide as much detail as possible to help understand existing and potential collaboration opportunities and linkages among and between public access venues, and how they can improve the quality and relevance of information access to underserved communities.

i.   Include reference to existing as well as potential collaboration opportunities.

ii.   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

"Estrategia Siglo XXI" is a network of Costa Rica´s citizens that have worked on the public administration or in private and international organizations. Their proposal consists of a national development agenda that includes topics related to education, science and technology. The project started with the support of the CR-USA Foundation, and is directed by Jorge Manuel Dengo and Franklin Chang. This group realized an study divided in three parts: a diagnosis of the country, a strategic vision, and Action Plan (http://estrategia.or.cr). The strategy has 20 thematic groups, 4 of them related to ICTs: Computer Science, Digital Culture and Productivity, Science and Technology Management and Telecommunications. One of their objectives is the "Development of the Knowledge Society" which proposes "the attainment of a bigger fairness in the access to the knowledge for all layers of the society". (PROSIC: 2007, p. 9)

Members of this non government alliance presented the project to the Government Council at the beginning of 2006, and within they became a collective actor with great power int terms of the generation of public policies. Other collaboration practices are more related to ICT field.

According to information offered by the MICIT, the CECI initiative is going to take advantage of collaboration between ICE, MIPRO, INA, Correos de Costa Rica, Local Governments, Cooperatives, the Red Cross, Community Associations, Libraries, NGOs, Banks and firemen stations. They do not make clear how the alliances are going to work, nor if they already signed any commitments with these institutions, but we know about some of the alliances by secondary sources: for example, there is the collaborative practice between MICIT and UNED (one of the 4 public universities) in order to create CECI labs inside the headquarters of the university around the country. (http://www.micit.go.cr/Noticias/index.html)

One of the most important collaboration opportunities that we are not taking advantage of is the MEP-MICIT-MCJD. These are the three ministries working on capacity building, education and development programs. The MEP (Public Education Ministry) has representatives all over the country, not only in the local governments, but also in schools, and school libraries. The Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry (MCJD) manages the National Libraries System (SINABI) as well as the "Houses of Culture" all around the country. The Science and Technology Ministry (MICIT) works in the ICTs area. Ironically, these three ministries do not have any education network or collaborative project oriented to improve the access to information in the communities.

In terms of ICTs, we have seen the experience of CECI. These "Community Intelligent Centres" are located at the local government buildings, private buildings, community gyms, local libraries, school libraries, university libraries, and many other spots. It is clear that when the community does not have appropriated infrastructure to host the CECI, they will look for an alternative place to locate it, but in many cases, the already organized infrastructure (public, school, local library) is not being used as the host for the CECI. Many people complain about the distances they have to walk in order to access the venue, while in their own communities they might have the proper infrastructure to host and manager a CECI. It is not clear for us why the authorities do not see the library as a point of public

access to information they have to take more advantage of: those two venues installed together offer more options to the people in terms of quality of services (libraries have a proper infrastructure but not always innovative and appropriated information that can be acceded through the Internet).

3.7 Buzz Factor: Public and Government Perceptions about what is "cool"

The "buzz factor", ie, public and government perceptions about what is "cool" in relation to public access venues, where to invest resources, what places to hang out in, was identified as a **strong emerging theme in the preliminary analysis**. Please provide as much detail as possible to help understand how these perceptions about what is "cool" offer new opportunities or obstacles to strengthening public access information venues in the country.

There is a big contrast between what the public consider "cool" and the government policies. In general, users consider more "cool" the joining places that have interactive learning processes. Where they can gather together to enjoy, to develop sharing activities (children rooms, elder lecture clubs, movies at the libraries, housewives capacity building programs). Libraries offer some of this spaces, but in general the conditions of use are more controled by previous established rules (silence, limitation on uses and lack of resources).

CECIs do not offer this kind of possibilities to users. Community members no not have the chance to participate of interactive learning processes, nor to give other uses to the computers than the ones stipulated by the MICIT and the operators. Contrary to cybercafes, where there are less restrictions and users have more chances to share their knowledge and develop new learning ways, CECIs are more squared in the procedures and possibilities.

People need attractive joining point to develop their interaction processes, to share information and to realize collective constructions. This seems to be a real need of the population in general, and underserved communities in particular. By giving the social actors a real opportunity to identify their needs and to reflect about which information will help them better to solve their problems and improve their quality of life is a key point for the sucess of public access venues. What is "cool" is related to real participation and appropriation and not to "status" or "elitism".

3.8 Legitimate Uses

The difference between "legitimate" or "non-trivial" uses of information in public access venues was identified as a **strong emerging theme in the preliminary analysis**. For example, uses of social networking spaces (Facebook and similar), blogs, chat, video games, as well as opportunities to download, install and run open source software applications in public access computers poses new challenges to traditional notions of "legitimate" information needs for development, and "trivial" uses of information for development… Please provide as much detail as possible to help understand how local definitions and restrictions based on what is "legitimate" or "non-trivial" information or communication practices offer new opportunities or barriers to public access information venues in the country.

What is considered as a "legitimate use" is related to many socio-cultural factors. Since all the educative programs answer to a ideological agendas, the information offered at public access venues managed by state institutions handle a selection logic that could be seen as

censorship. From learning programs to reading and information search, all the processes have the information control as transverse axis. In this sense, information managers, formed at Information Sciences schools are also inserted in this logic and will reflect it in their future professional careers.

Adultcentrism constitutes another factor, closely bound to the previous one, that represents a barrier in terms of public access to information. At the interior of the venue, the criteria of the operator/ administrator will determine the uses given to information, for, according to his/ her perception of what is "legitimate", restrictions will be imposed. In general, age group has an important influence in the "legitimate" notions. Adults frequently consider that new Web 2.0 tools are for entertainment, and do not find the social or educative uses of them. On the contrary, younger people appreciate more the web 2.0 tools and consider themselves more "technologic".
http://www.cientec.or.cr/mhonarc/boletincientec/doc/msg00627.shtml

Other dynamics of networking generation, capacity building and knowledge sharing are seen in young population with less restricted access to ICTs. That could be a good explanation of the easier information socialization between young people at cybercafes. However, traditional conceptions around education generally do not take into account this factors and new learning tools, nor their potential for digital alphabetization processes.

3.9 Shifting Media Landscape

The ever-changing media landscape and the new opportunities brought about by new media such as mobile phones, SMS, GPS, and even renewed roles for community radio open, was a **strong emerging theme in the preliminary analysis**. Please provide as much detail as possible to help understand how these new technologies and media offer new opportunities or barriers to public access information venues in the country.

3.9.1 Mobile phones

If appropriate, describe salient uses of mobile phones, text messaging, SMS and similar technologies, in relation to public access information venues and information needs of underserved communities.

Because of a mistake in the application of surveys, the ones applied to library users did not include any questions related to mobile phones use. The team decided not to include any information about this topic for the sample is even smaller than the original one.

3.9.2 Web 2.0 tools & use

If appropriate, describe any salient uses of Web 2.0 tools among users of ICT in public access venues. (Web 2.0 refers to evolution of web-based communities and hosted services, such as social-networking sites, wikis, blogs and others. Wikipedia).

Web 2.0 is still a emerging topic in the country. No strategies, productions, appropriations or opportunities based on this kind of tools where observed in the venues.

3.9.3 Combination of different media

If appropriate, describe creative ways in which different media are being combined to meet information needs of underserved communities, and the ways they affect public access venues. Different media include community radio & TV, other print media, street theatre, songs, etc.

Different media, including audiovisual materials, theater-centered information processes,

and other dynamics are part of the efforts realized by librarians to promote culture ald libraries in the communities. Music, poetry and reading workshops are realized as part of the cultural extension processes of the diverse libraries around the country. Different topics are used to develop activities, and is usual to find activities related to specific important dates (such as the month of the libraries, the mothers day, the water day, and others).

3.9.4   Other shifting media landscape examples

If appropriate, describe other new features and practices in the media landscape that affect public information venues and information needs of underserved communities.

This would be a good place to discuss innovative practices on content creation and production of new messages, media, information and knowledge that are not described elsewhere in this report.

The approval of CAFTA-RD trade represents a big change in terms of services, access to telecommunications services and economic growth for Costa Rica. No conclusions can be made yet, but it will be interesting to pay attention to the changes that this factor will bring to the access environment of the country.

This is the most important media landscape identified for the country, for it represents the privatization of telecommunications services and a big change in the access processes of the country.

3.10 Health Information Needs

This is an extra contribution to other research on health information needs going on at the University of Washington, based on willing respondents to last two questions on user surveys at the public access venues.

3.10.1 Sources of Health Information

Where are people most successful at locating useful health information for themselves or their family (% of respondents across all venues):

clinic/hospital	friend	health worker	public access venue (library, community center, etc)

Comments: describe

3.10.2 Types of Health Information

What types of health information do they have the most difficulty finding (% of respondents across all venues)?

disease prevention	how to locate healthcare	child health information	remedies/drugs	Other

Comments: describe

4 Venue-Specific Assessments

Complete one full assessment for each type of venue studied in the country.

4.1 Venue # 1: Public Libraries

4.1.1 Overall Venue Assessment

Provide a broad picture of the public access information landscape in this venue, informed by the results of this research.

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of public access information in this type of venue?

Costa Rican Public Libraries are organized as as National System that includes 57 libraries located in different points of the country and the National Library located in the Capital city, San José. The System was created in 2000, but its history goes back to the creation of the National Library, in 1888. Majority of the public libraries were created during the second half of the XX century. The System works as a part of the Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry, and receives its budget from this Ministry. Although the coverage is wide, there are not enough libraries to cover the full country, leaving some areas uncovered, specially in border towns, and other isolated communities. Indigenous communities do not count on Public Libraries, and the information supply for them is carried out by independent organizations, public universities and NGOs.

It is a reality that the System receives a poor budget that is not enough to fulfill users needs. This problem added to the typical bureaucracy of the public institutions affect not only the delivery of services, but the quality of the services that are actually delivered. Out of date collections, poor ICT inclusion, schedules that prevent users to visit the venues and other failures characterize the actual conditions of public libraries. Other factors, such as the small production of local relevant content, the little participation of the communities in the decision spaces and the student-focused orientation have turned the libraries into a little popular joining places and reduced their importance within the access to information practices in the country.

4.1.2 Access

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of ACCESS ecosystem in this type of venue (physical access, appropriate technology, affordability)?

The access ecosystem of Public Libraries in Costa Rica is a bit complex. While the 58 libraries are located in head towns, many rural isolated communities do not have access to them. Libraries are sprout mostly all over the country, but can not cover the total of population, nor reach isolated areas of the country. There are no libraries located at indigenous communities or close to border towns.

Technology is still a big problem inside public libraries. In recent months, the integration of CECIs to around 21 libraries have facilitate the process of technology integration inside the system. It has helped the SINABI to connect those libraries by gmail accounts. However, half of the public libraries do not count on a CECI to get connected, and some of them do not even have computers with or without connection. According to librarians, the budget destined to libraries in most of the cases is even too poor to update the collections, and though technology is a very important tool to include in the services, other priorities such as infrastructure, salaries and books have to be covered before. In some cases, librarians can count on private support to establish and implement computation labs.

In terms of affordability, Costa Rica has a policy that forbid public institutions to charge users for the services they give. The use of infrastructure, materials, audiovisuals, computers, Internet and information access, do not have any fees. The costs are covered by the State, and any Costa Rican with an ID can access the venue and use its services. Other costs, as transportation to reach the venue were not covered by the research.

4.1.2.1 Physical Access

Describe how accessible this venue is to various population segments, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c), especially the differences between urban and non-urban settings.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As already mentioned, the public libraries are not enough to cover all the population. 58 libraries for 4.5 million people is, for sure, not enough. Some municipalities have their own library, that works in a way close to the SINABI ones. The differences between both modalities difficult the cooperation among SINABI and municipalities, although some of the SINABI libraries are working in a peer modality, receiving funds from both institutions. However, it is still hard to cover all segments of population, specially the ones living in isolated rural areas and border towns (in both North and South borders).

Though many libraries are located at rural areas, the access to them is not equitable. Usually this is because the libraries take advantage of the existing infrastructure (schools, churches, community centers, municipalities) and that means there are few libraries located in "highly rural" zones. In that sense, for some people it might be hard to access the venue. Students of rural areas complain about this, since they do not have school libraries integrated to their schools and they are forced to visit the public library (that in many cases is located at the main town and away from some of the communities). As already mentioned, no public libraries cover indigenous population.

4.1.2.2 Appropriate Technology & Services

Describe how appropriate the technologies, services and information offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Unequal municipal development becomes evident in terms of services related to public libraries. While in some communities the library offers any kind of services, audiovisual room, computation

labs, digital media and automatized references, other libraries do not even have a computer for administrative use. It will depend a lot on the efforts of librarians, and their possibilities, strategic relations with community members, time available for cultural extension and promotion of the library. While in some libraries there are 3 different members of the staff, in some others is only one person who takes care of the hole library: reception, administration, information management, cleaning and helping users to fulfill their needs. Under this conditions, it is hard for librarians to look for resources to give better services.

While the services provided are "as good as the possibilities allow", budget is not enough to cover the specific innovation needs in the libraries. Some libraries have the possibility of offering an audiovisual room or a conference room with video bim, TV, DVD and audio systems. Why some of them have this services and others don´t? We found that almost in all cases, the librarians look for help out of the national libraries system, and go to private enterprises, NGOs, community organizations, embassies and others to look for support in order to buy materials, technology devices and books.

In terms of collection, there is a general agreement: materials are out of date, and the libraries do not offer enough books, magazines or audiovisual materials. The information offered in libraries helps, but is not the best. High quality information will not usually be found in public libraries. In many cases, the librarians send the user to other places in which the information that they look for exists or is more updated.

The difference between urban and rural libraries is notorious. Nevertheless, CECIs have become a good option to integrate technologies to library services, even with the lack of technical support and the limitation in terms of installation (infrastructure to install a CECI has to be safe enough to protect the equipment and some libraries do not count on this infrastructure). The CECI means extra work for the staff members: they will have to take care of the equipment and offer capacity building to users.

4.1.2.3   Affordability

Describe how affordable the technologies and services offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Public institutions can not charge people for the services they offer. Since these libraries are a program of a ministry, there is no fee for the users to access it. The affordability is not a problem in public libraries, there are other issues that affect the access, but no the price. (In the case of people living in high rural communities and traveling to the main town in order to access the venue, money for transportation can be a problem). As many of the librarians commented during interviews, for the library becomes impossible to offer non-sustainable services as printers and photocopies, because they can not charge users in order to replace paper, ink and toner. Some of the libraries visited during field work give to users the chance to photocopy for free up to 10 pages. If the users needs more, they can loan the book and go to a store to take the copies (paying for them outside the library). A new law that covers the self-sustainability issue is been studied in the congress.

4.1.2.4   Fees for Services

What fees or other requirements exist in order to access and use the information in the venues? (registration, user fees, restrictions to certain populations)

If there are fees: What do these fees buy?

NO fees for library and its services are charged to users.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

In general, we notice that libraries of the most isolated rural areas offer less services than the urban area libraries. This applies to particular services as literature workshops, and also to general services as the collection size. The biggest differences found in the libraries system are related to the condition of the library as "official" or "semiofficial". There are 22 semiofficial libraries in the system, all located in rural areas. Semiofficial libraries are supposed to be collaborative initiatives, supported by MCJD (Culture, Youth and Sports Ministry), local governments, development associations, community groups, schools and others, but sometimes none of these groups/organizations/institutions assume the responsibilities for the centers. There are official libraries in rural areas too, but often more organized and offering more services.

Depending on the organization of the local government and community groups, the library will have a better infrastructure and a bigger collection. It also depends on the will of the staff to provide an updated collection (sometimes the library receives the books but the staff takes months to add the new books to the catalog). As well as you can see a small library were they offer loan to room only, you can also find a big library offering ICT services, promotion to the community, publications and many other services.

We have to mention here that political decisions have affected the quality of services offered by all the public libraries in the country. From the interviews we have realized, we got to know that not only users but directors and administrative staff have a great displeasure in terms of the actual conditions in libraries. Even the biggest ones have problems in terms of resources, budget, materials and collections.

4.1.2.5   Geographic Distribution

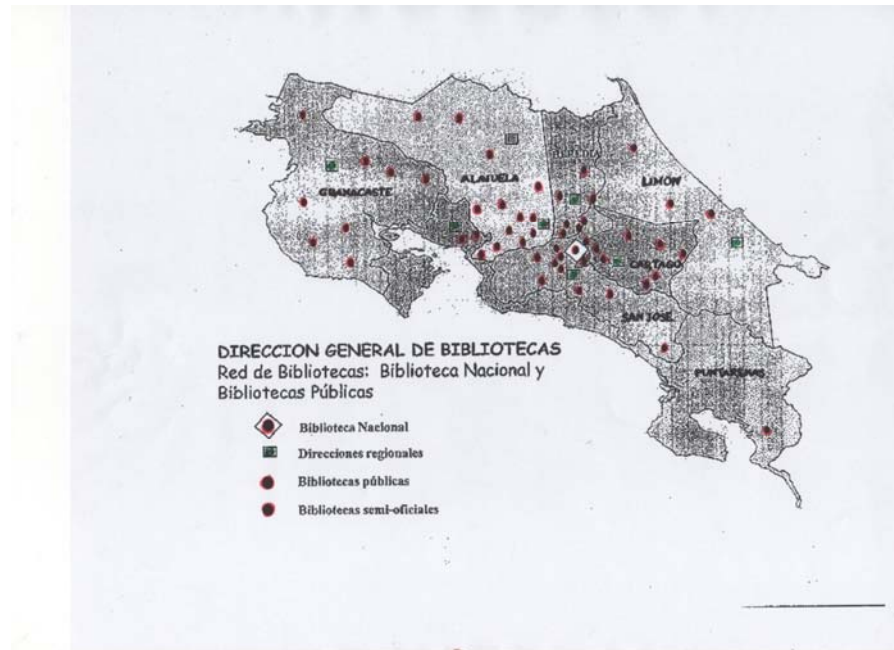What is the distribution of the venues in terms of their geographic location?

Complement any details not already included in section 2.1: Venue Selection.

Majority of the venues are located in urban-rural head towns, and other important areas such as

indigenous and border communities are not covered by them. Isolated rural communities do not count on a public library. The number of public libraries is not appropriated for the population size and the distribution is unequal.

4.1.2.5.1 Map

If available, insert a map that displays the geographic distribution of this type of venue in the country (expand to the size you need).

DIRECCION GENERAL DE BIBLIOTECAS
Red de Bibliotecas: Biblioteca Nacional y
Bibliotecas Públicas

◆ Biblioteca Nacional
▦ Direcciones regionales
● Bibliotecas públicas
● Bibliotecas semi-oficiales

Description of map:

As can be seen in the map, most of the libraries are located in the central area of the country, and the coast and borders have less presence of venues. The red points indicate Public Libraries of the system, while green points indicate the Regional Directions (administrative points) for the venues.

4.1.2.6   Other Factors affecting Access

Other factors that affect equitable access to public information in this type of venue, not covered above?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Political factors affect the public access to information in all the libraries and for all the users. Bureaucracy is a big problem inside Costa Rican institutions, and this generates delays in the payments to the employees, slowness in the appointments and corruption, all in detriment of the users.

This lack of political will can be seen in the most basic issues related to libraries: a public library is not a "school library" so, is not supposed to offer educative texts used in the schools. In many cases the students can not afford the cost of the books, and it would be good for them to have access to these materials in the public library. However, since schools are supposed to have their own libraries, the government is not forced to replace this materials to libraries (this is one

example among many others).

As already mentioned, even though the integration of a CECI is seen as a good option for digital inclusion inside libraries, the costs of extra staff, workshops, capacity building programs, human resources, Internet connection, security and others, must be covered by the library. This represents extra work and more operative costs for the libraries, while in many cases can not be covered with State budget.

4.1.3 Capacity & Relevance

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of CAPACITY ecosystem in this type of venue (human capacity, locally relevant content, integration into daily routines, socio-cultural factors, trust in technology, social appropriation of technology)?

Resources are a big issue for libraries. Not many of them have enough to contract full time employees, and many libraries work under the full assistance of one single person. By law, library staff must have a degree in Information Sciences.

Local relevant content is not produced by libraries, and in most of the cases is not offered either. As the country does not precisely counts o a "library culture", it is mostly students that use the service. They consult in education information, to complete homeworks and study for test. Locally relevant content might be found in other places (as the already mentioned InfoAgro program, health centers, day-care, institutions, municipalities, among others). Nevertheless, librarians try to have pertinent contents to fulfill the needs of users that regularly visit the venue (in Pérez Zeledón library, the staff have information about the coffee collection prices and farms, for Nicaraguan migrants usually ask for that particular information at the front desk).

Many libraries offer workshops for housewives, specially in morning shifts (when kids are usually attending school). Some of the strongest libraries have "early stimulation" programs for newborns, storytelling hour in the afternoon, children rooms, computation labs, that are open to the community and help the promotion of the library among people. What this programs look for is to reach other segments of population that do not have a "library culture", as elders, housewives, men and non-students.

Libraries offering ICT services design their ways to help users. Usually there are a couple of rules to use ICTs inside the library, as reservation of audiovisual equipment, a major how takes responsibility for the equipment, more strict schedules for the use of it, etcetera. In terms of computers and Internet, in some libraries an adult has to supervise young users. Some of them have applications that block social networking sites, chat rooms, pornography, downloading and games. Others are not that strict in terms of Internet uses, and allow users to chat and check social networking sites if the computers are not been used for more legitimated uses, as Internet searching, word processing and homeworks. It will depend on the librarian to determinate what can and what can not be done in the computers.

4.1.3.1 Staff Size

How many people work in a typical facility for this type of venue? (full time-equivalent employees or

contractors; describe any significant variations; i.e., large, medium and small libraries in the country)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

2 to 5 persons. There are particular cases: a couple of libraries have 7 members on the staff. Many of them (specially "semiofficial" ones) have only one person to take care of the hole library.

The majority of employees work under temporary contract conditions, even if they have years working for the venue. Because of bureaucracy, it is very difficult to obtain appointments, and practices related to political influence are, unfortunately, common in the area.

4.1.3.2 Staff Training

What is the overall capacity of the staff (ie, librarians, telecentres operators) to help users access and use public access to information & communication services offered in this venue? Differentiate by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

(ii) For Public Libraries, indicate if Library School training is available and/or required for librarians.

In general, there are 3 members of the staff: the librarian, his/her assistant and a person in change of cleaning. Members of the staff are (or should be) librarians graduated from Information Science Schools (both UCR and UNA offer formation programs in the area).

People working in the venues do not necessarily have any experience in working with children, nor with women or illiterate people, though the professional profile of the librarians have been changing during the last 15 years (because of the insertion of new technologies and the particular regulatory changes given inside the country). According to the director of the Library Science School of the University of Costa Rica, at this moment there is a full review and evaluation of the formation program inside the school, in order to identify the professional profile required at the time by private and public institutions (bilingual skills, ICT capacities).

4.1.3.3 Services Offered

What kind of services does this type of venue offer to the public? (ie, access to books, magazines; meeting & conference rooms; audio/video programs, computers, internet, other). Include Digital ICT services if offered.

Services Offered	Comments
1. Reference, documentary files, loan, lecture rooms, magazine and news paper collections catalogs.	
2. Digital database, computers, email checking, audiovisual materials	As we mentioned, only an 22% of the libraries offer ICT services, including computers to check on online database. It will be determined by the level of organization in the library, or the introduction of a CECI (this can not be part of this study for it is too early to find any results). All the libraries offer

		reference and loan-to-room services, but the other services are offered by some of them only. The collections are –in all cases- out of date and not appropriated to satisfy the needs of population.
3.	Users coaching, education.	All capacity building programs are basic and oriented to help users developing capacities to use the services offered by the library. In some cases, the workshops or conferences are promoted by the library and in some others users ask for them.
4.	The ones that have integrated a CECI offer the capacity building for basics on computers use and Internet search.	
5.	Meeting and conference rooms	The biggest ones have conference rooms (open to communities), but in general, do not offer any kind of ICT services (audiovisuals, video bims, TV, DVD).
6.	Children room, lecture clubs, guided visits.	Children rooms are closed in many libraries. The service does not include day-care center nor play rooms. In many libraries we have seen only one person taking care of all the areas, so they have no time to run a children room. Some libraries offer the service in the afternoons, when parents can take care of the kids, and so they offer lecture clubs.
7.	"Movies at the library"	"Movies at the library" is a project designed at SINABI in order to attract people to the library, but is offered only in libraries that have TV and DVD (not many).

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

As mentioned before, salient differences are found between rural and urban libraries. In general, the urban ones have more infrastructure and wider collections. ICT related services do not enter in this category, for the insertion of CECIs in diverse libraries have facilitate the offer of ICTs in rural libraries that have the security requirements stipulated by the MICIT. However, the poorest libraries, located in rural areas, can not ask for a CECI because the infrastructure they offer is not adequated to the MICIT requirements. The so called "semi official" libraries have less resources from the SINABI, for they are supposed to be supported by the local government and the community. These ones have less budget and one staff member only (some of them look for volunteers in the community to complete the staff, others do not practice this modality).

Describe if this venue has programs specifically intended to reach underserved communities, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The objective of the SINABI is "to guarantee the access to information with equality of conditions for all people, without any kind of discrimination, to make the library a place of all and for all people." However, the underserved communities do not receive specific services in order to improve their access to the information offered at the venue. There are no public libraries inside indigenous communities, and though some private and individual initiatives work to supply books and lecture rooms for those communities, government support does not exist.

There is not a difference between the services and programs offered to women (except in libraries that have a specific capacity building agenda to cover this segment), and as we have seen during our visits, there is no a significant presence of indigenous groups among the users of libraries. Migrants receive the same treat and services as Costa Rican users, with no differences.

While some libraries have integrated a CECI and offer specific capacity building programs (some of them said to be designed to serve women and farmers), other libraries do not even have a telephone line. ICT capacity building is uncommon in libraries and even some of the library-CECI alliances do not have an specific capacity building agenda.

4.1.3.5 Relevant Content

What type of locally relevant content is available? What else is needed? Who is doing it?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Available Content:

As already mentioned, there is little locally relevant content in libraries. Most of them offer historical information about the community where they are located, and other content produced by the Education Ministry (MEP), related to water management, energy saving, and other pertinent information (designed for young population and not too promoted). In general, libraries try to cover the immediate needs of users, and the contents are mostly related to educative issues (rural-urban localities have a high demand of university related topics as psychology, pedagogy, natural resources, ecological tourism, management, English, among others).

Other Content Needed:

Students from other careers that are less popular in the country claim that is hard to find information in the libraries. Economy, politic sciences, anthropology, among others, do not count on enough information. Same happens with regular content, for in general there are not many copies of each book in the same library, and sometimes librarians have to create a waiting list for the books. General collections are not updated, and this decreases the quality of the information offer, for research, new findigs, theory changes and discovers produce new information every day.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Public universities publishing houses are in permanent build of pertinent contents for the country, but many of this content is not well distributed among users. There are poor local initiatives to build needed content, and usually are runned by NGOs and independent organizations.

Source: *Operator´s surveys.*

http://www.editorial.ucr.ac.cr/

http://www.uned.ac.cr/Editorial/index.html

http://www.una.ac.cr/euna/

4.1.3.6   Services & Information Available in Local Languages

Describe the availability of services and contents relevant to human development that are available in **local languages** in this type of venue? (i.e., info on health, education, government services, etc)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

"American Corner" is a modality used in the libraries located in the Atlantic Region. In this region the country has a strong presence of afro Costa Ricans, due to historical causes. The "American Corner" offers material in the local language spoken in the region: English. Other libraries located in the same region do not have the same facilities as the Limon library. However, since they share region and culture, the possibility of sharing materials and taking books in loan is open. There are not public libraries located in indigenous communities, and most materials produced in indigenous languages are the product of research in universities (local indigenous languages do not have written code). According to librarians, is more frequent that users ask for English materials, and though some libraries have materials written in indigenous languages, not so many people ask for those.

4.1.3.7   Types of Uses

What do people USE the venues for (most frequent kinds of information & services people seek in them, activities they carry out in them)?

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs and complement here as needed:

As an alternative place to study.

As an access point to information (specially to do homeworks).

As a gathering place (this is for the most frequent users: students and elders).

According to our interviews, people look for information related to local history, natural sciences, arts and music and psychology.

Information that people seek in is mostly related to study matters. There is a high demand of psychology, pedagogy and English materials, for those are the most popular careers in some regions of the country. History, maths, Spanish and literature are frequently consulted by secondary school students, and according to librarians, many people, specially elders and young

students, look up for novels and literature in general. Exchange students that travel with particular programs use libraries as gathering places, and to study Spanish.

People using ICTs inside libraries do it mostly for educative purposes. When connected computers are available, people check e-mails, do online searches, communicate with others and in isolated cases use the Internet for business.

4.1.3.8   Number, Type and Frequency of Users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs**Error! Not a valid result for table.**. Complement here as needed:

It is important to mention again that the most frequent users of libraries are students (secondary school and university). There is a cultural belief that relates "library" and "student" directly. The library culture developed during the first half of last century is no longer maintained. Nevertheless, many programs of cultural extension, as "movies at the library", "early stimulation" programs, and other projects designed by each library, seek for other users that traditionally do not visit the library, as farmers, housewives, men, and young people that is out of the educative system.

There is a interesting gender behavior in terms of library use. For a reason that librarians can not explain, women visit the library more frequently than men. This applies for young girls, secondary and university students.

4.1.3.9   Users Capacity to use information and services offered

What is the overall capacity of the users to take advantage of public access to information & communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

We have found that the educative system has a lack of strategy oriented to promote the information search. In the users and community survey used for this venue, one specific question was related to the information search and most valuable information that people might look for. We found that mostly all the interviewed people had problems to understand the question. "What do you mean?" was the most frequent answer to it. It was clear for us that people do not see the value of information, nor the importance of having access to it. After a brief summary of what kind of information the investigator considered as important to his/her routine (as an example for the interviewed) people got to think for a while until they realized that actually there are information needs in their daily practices.

Students have more expertise in the area, for they are forced to visit libraries more often. However, many library directors said to us that the educative system does not help students in basic matters as reading and writing (one of them even expressed his preoccupation about the level of alphabetization of the people who visit the library and affirmed that in middle class communities the problem is not economical but of the system itself). We had mentioned in form1 that poor communities have less access to information in the country (and we still affirm it) but it is clear that even for people whom receive the benefits of public services, the system have big failures that prevent them of taking complete advantage of the public access to information

venues.

Capacities to use ICT information sources are limited too. Many people do not have the knowledge to operate a computer, nor to use the Internet. The capacity building programs that have been executed for the last 20 years have help a segment of population to develop digital capacities, but people out the educative system is excluded from this programs, as well as elder populations.

4.1.3.10 Training Courses for Users

Describe training courses offered to the public at this venue, and if they offer some kind of testing and certification.

Training courses: "Induction to libraries". Some of the librarians do not call it "induction", but say the "help people, teach them how to use the basic services of the library".

ICT specific training courses: The System do no have an agenda of training for ICT uses. Different libraries have diverse ways to guarantee this programs in their communities, as looking for volunteers or capturing university community work (TCU).

4.1.3.11 Integration into daily routines

How easy is it for users to integrate the information and services offered in this type of venue into their daily lives? (offer concrete solutions to their needs and problems, make it easier to solve them at this venue than in other places)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The integration to daily routines is different for different segments of the population. According to the interviewed, once people gets to find out the value of information, it is easy for them not only to use the venue but to produce changes in their life. For students, is easier to integrate the information to the school routines (although the educative system has failures related to methodologies designed to coach students in the process of incorporate information they learn in school to daily routines).

Elder people, through "golden citizen" programs, are getting closer to libraries. They use the venue as a knowledge sharing space, as a gathering place and as an option to look for information related to history. Often, they learn how to use the service in order to take literature in loan.

In Costa Rica´s case, integration to daily routines is more related to the infrastructure than to the information offered; this is good to a certain extent, because at least it approaches the community to the library.

4.1.3.12 Users Perceptions about the Venue

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the venue (not necessarily its specific services, but the venue itself: ie, what do people generally think about libraries? Are they places that are "cool" or "only for elites" etc?), differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)? This includes perception by people who do not use the venue…

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

In general, the perception of the users is good. They consider the library as a good tool to easy

their information processes. For students, libraries are an excellent venue to seek for information to complete homeworks and study. Non of the users interviewed expressed anything related to "exclusion", nor they consider the library an "only for elites" venue.

With the communities, this perception is maintained. Community members consider very important for students to count on a public library in their own neighborhood. However, they do not consider the library as a place they can use to gather together or look for information themselves. The general perception is that libraries are for students, a tool that they can use to improve their knowledge and to find complementary information for their academic activities.

4.1.3.13 Social Appropriation of Information and Generation of New Knowledge

What activities, products and services are users undertaking that exhibit new levels of social appropriation of technologies and generation of knowledge? For example, how are users generating and disseminating new knowledge, products and services through their use of this venue? (see category 13 in Real Access Framework for Social Appropriation of Technology).

If relevant, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

In some libraries, they offer poetry workshops. There are people attending these workshops and producing materials (this is one poor example of social appropriation, but we have to insist that the librarians are concerned about the lack of funds to support cultural activities and promote the libraries). The knowledge and interests of librarians will determinate the kind of activities promoted inside the library, and the generation of products that evidence a social appropriation of the venue.

The development of a "library culture" is another product that can be found in some libraries, specially the ones that have specific programs orientend to different segments of population (such as housewives, elders and children). Users that go to the library "just because" are not easy to find. In this sense, the appropriation of the venue by women, elder and children evidences a new perception about the library that will change this culture of "libraries for students only" that we have seen durinf the field work.

4.1.3.14 Trust, Safety & Privacy

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the safety, security and privacy (TRUST) of the information and services offered in this venue?

The complain of the users is not about safety but about lack of information. For Internet searches most of them seem to be very careful with the sources they consult, specially in libraries, where the staff share searching capacities with individuals. People seem to trust very much what books say. But they complain there are not enough books in the libraries.

4.1.3.15 Gaps and Opportunities in information & services offered

What other information gaps & opportunities exist, which are not being met? (other information / services people need that are not being met there and could be offered, especially through Digital ICT services)

People need the library to be a place that integrates technology and other information tools. Many libraries of the system do not have ICTs integrated to their services. People can not access information in other format, for the library don´t have devices to read information (DVD, CD-player, MP3 players, computers).

The infrastructure exists, but the contents are not appropriated, nor updated. Many of the interviewed people insist in the necessity of Strengthening Programs based on the integration of ICTs to the libraries. These programs must have a capacity building component to prepare the staff in order to do an optimal use of the resources. Coaching, Monitoring and Evaluation must be linked to any initiative. The authorities are not making a good use of the advantages given by having a system of libraries already installed around the country.

It is interesting to see how digital inclusion initiatives are not linked to the improvement of public libraries. Alliances between different ministries would have better results than the isolated initiatives runned separately by each institution.

4.1.4   Enabling Environment

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of the ENVIRONMENT ecosystem in this type of venue (local economy, national economy, legal and regulatory framework, political will & public support, regional and international context)?

The environment is not really supportive for the Libraries System. It is an advantage that the libraries are organized in a network and work under a national system, but it seems that this advantage is not been taken into account. As mentioned before, the System works as a dependency of the MCJD, and been the biggest department of this ministry, is the one that has the smallest budget. Public support has not facilitated the development of programs oriented to improve the quality of services offered in public libraries, nor to generate a "library culture" among Costa Ricans. The fact that the majority of the libraries are closed on weekends difficult even more the approximation of community members to the venue.

The lack of political will and information access public policies makes the operation conditions even harder for the libraries. The SINABI has not found yet a system that guarantees self-sustainability for the libraries and benefit for the users at the same time. Librarians biggest preoccupation is how to fulfill the users needs with the small resources given to libraries and without other ways to obtain support. Bureaucracy affects the information delivery to its final destination: users. They are the ones more affected by the actual economic and regulatory conditions of public libraries.

4.1.4.1   Local & National Economy

Describe the local & national economic environment and how it affects public access to information & communication in this type of venue (refer to & complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As we already mentioned, Costa Rica suffered a big decrease in the levels of quality of life, by choosing an economical growth way not focused in the well-being of the population. As the educations efforts have been focused in the generation of a good amount of technicians whom can operate technological tools, and bilingual staff for hotels and touristic projects (and in that way satisfy the needs of the foreign investment in the country), other initiatives focused in the integral formation of professionals have been left of side.

People suffering of poverty conditions do not have the chance to take advantage of the government services (they are excluded from themselves benefits of public education, and this includes library use, for many Costa Ricans consider that only students need to use this specific service). While information is a good way to empower people and improve the quality of life of the population, people whom really need this information to have better life conditions are excluded from the access to information (as well as all the other basic services). The actual legislation verifies the lack of an "information" agenda. Though "Gobierno Digital" changed a lot the perception about ICTs and access to information, libraries were left outside from the initiative for a long time and it was this year (Central American Libraries Year) that the discussion raised and efforts came to the table. Public Universities have played a very important role, positioning this subject in the discussion spaces.

The environment has not been very supportive for the public libraries system: the staff complains about the bad wages and the lack of budget to improve services. As we already confirmed by talking to the SINABI directors, the System is the biggest department of the MCJD (Culture,Youth and Sports Ministry) and the one that receives the lowest annual budget. A discussion raised the subject and even some of the deputies at the congress are working in a law proposal to be discussed at high levels. The fact is that public policies must be designed and implemented in order to improve the quality of information and services in public libraries, and to create a change of conscience in the users (that in many cases do not appreciate the social value of information).

4.1.4.2 Legal & Regulatory Framework

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information & communication in this type of venue (refer to & complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As already mentioned, the Public Libraries System works as a dependency of the MCJD (abbreviations in Spanish). Being a dependency of the ministry, holds the system to its regulations. This generates a relation in which the system adapts to the regulations of the ministry and integrates its decision making instanteces within the ministry. The administrative processes, appointments, budgets and others are subject to the conditions dictated by the MCJD. This means that the system, being part of the governmental estructure, operates with its budget, and its rules. In this sense, sustainability has become a big issue in terms of the delivery of services in libraries.

Since libraries cannot charge on any of the services offered within them, added value services such as photocopiers, scanners and printers are not offered regularly. For some libraries it is hard even to operate (with basic services such as a small collection, building loan, salaries and basic

bills) and they are not able to cover the costs of the added options. However, the law that is being studied in the congress aims for the self-sustainability of libraries and expects to give them more independency to work (the System hopes that this will improve the actual situation of libraries around the country).

4.1.4.3 Political Will & Public Support

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to & complement section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As in many other fields, we happen to have a good legislations in terms of what should be done or what libraries should look like, and even related to what kind of services them all should offer to the community. In the real practices, what we see is that there is not a good monitoring-evaluation system that gives the authorities a chance to review if they are reaching their goals.

In this sense, it must be said that the political will has not been very supportive for the public libraries system: the staff complains about the bad wages and the lack of budget to improve services. As we already confirmed by talking to the SINABI directors, the System is the biggest department of the MCJD (Culture,Youth and Sports Ministry) and the one that receives the lowest annual budget. A discussion raised the subject and even some of the deputies at the congress are working in a law proposal to be discussed at high levels. The fact is that public policies must be designed and implemented in order to improve the quality of information and services in public libraries, and to create a change of conscience in the users (that in many cases do not appreciate the social value of information).

4.1.4.4 Organization and Networking

Describe if the facilities in this type of venue organized in any network, association or other collective body? (ie, national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

Public libraries are organized as a national system (SINABI), as a dependence of the Youth, Culture and Sports Ministry (MCJD).

4.1.4.5 Partnerships

Describe notable public-private partnerships in support of this type of venue.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Some of the interviewed mentioned that sometimes they receive help from private enterprises, but this cooperation is not a part of public- private partnerships. At the moment there are not specific alliances between private-public institutions supporting public libraries.

4.1.5   For Publicly Funded Venues only: Revenue Streams

This section is meant specifically for publicly-funded venues (public libraries, national connectivity programs, etc).

4.1.5.1 Budget

What is the total budget for this public access venue system (applies especially for libraries, answer for other venues if applicable and if available)?

Total Budget for Fiscal Year 2008

Local currency name colones   amount (local currency) 1, 994, 283, 000

Approx. equivalent in USD 3,645,856 based on exchange rate of 547colones per dollar on date 08/17/2008.

No comments.

4.1.5.2 Relative size of budget

How large (or small) is this budget in relation to other funding streams? (this is a way to show, in financial terms, how much the government cares about information and public access as compared to a variety of other issues in the country).

Relative Size of Budget for same year	Total budget (local currency)	Comments
Total national budget	3 472 441 200 000	Total budget approved on Nov. 20th 2007.
Education	811 000 000 000	The National Constitution of Costa Rica establishes that at least the 6% of the GDP has to be destined to education.
------	------	-------
Public Libraries	1 994 283 000	The Public Libraries Budget is part of the total budget destined to culture in the country.

Other Comments:

As mentioned before, budget related information is barely available online. Even though this is public information, it is very hard to have access to it. According to La Nación (nacion.com) the government difficults the access to public information in the country. This might be because of recent corruption scandals revealed by the press in the country. However, the Contraloría General de la República offers some budget data online at http://cgrw01.cgr.go.cr/portal/page?_pageid=37,147324&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

and more information can be found in La Gaceta (the official paper of the Republic).

Retrieved from http://www.nacion.com./ln_ee/2008/agosto/11/pais1655271.html

4.1.5.3 Sources of funding

What are the sources of funding for this public access venue system?

Sources of funding:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Government sources:	100%	The hole budget of the Public Libraries System is part of the culture budget of the MCJD.
International donors:	0%	No comments
National donors:	?	Some donatives are made to libraries but usually is not money. Each library looks for community support and this support is controled by the library.
User fees / services:	0%	No fees can be charged on library users.
Other (name)	does not apply	no comments
Other (name)	does not apply	no comments
Other (name)	does not apply	no comments

Other Comments:

The total budget of the Public Libraries comes from the government. Extra donations are managed by each library, for the librarians look for community and private support. The donations are usually book collections or ICT materials, and some libraries (the so called "semi-official") work in partnership of the Main Directorate of Libraries and local governments, communal associations and others.

4.1.5.4 Paths and Flows of resources

How do resources get allocated and disbursed to the actual venues? For the principal funders, and especially for the public sources, what is the flow of funds? How are the funds raised (what tax stream), what path do the tax streams flow before they get to the specific venues? Who makes decisions about this funding?

We do not have accurate data for this subject. Information related to it should be available at La Gaceta, but their online history service cannot be consulted.

4.1.5.5 Fees and Cost Recovery

Describe if there are user fees or any other type of cost recovery. How does it affect service delivery and usage?

Public LIbraries can not charge users for any service they offer. This affects the service delivery because some services have different operative costs that can not be covered by the library (due to budget problems). This kind of services, such as photocopies and prints, can not be offered because the librarians do not have any options to recovery the cost of paper, toner and ink. The absence of a sustainability strategy for libraries make the venue a less attractive joining place for

the users, for they will have to look for added services somewhere else.

4.1.5.6 Cost Categories

What are the main cost categories in the operation of this kind of venue? (% of total annual budget)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Cost Categories for Operation:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Staff (salaries, benefits)	60%	This is the main cost operation category. However, the salaries are not attractive and the librarians are not well paid.
Building Infrastructure	15%	Many libraries already have their own building, and others function within local governments infrastructure.
Utilities	no accurate data	no comments
Staff Training	no accurate data	no comments
Computers / Technology	no accurate data	no comments
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

There is a lack of updated information related to this subject. No recent evaluations were available to include in this report. Public information access is very difficult in the country, due to bureaucratit practices.

4.1.5.7 Recent changes and future trends

Describe any recent changes and anticipated future trends in the funding and revenue streams for this type of venue in the country. Have funding levels risen or decreased dramatically over the past few years? What is the outlook for the foreseeable future?

At the beggining of the year, a law project was presented to the Congress (and is waiting to be analyzed there). This project aims to give rank of maximum deconcentration to the Sinabi and to consolidate the sources of financing of this cultural institution. The project proposes that the 0.5% of the tax over sales is destined to the SINABI (this would represent a source of more than 3.500 million colones). In addition, when granting legal person to the Sinabi, the System would be authorized to receive donations and to charge on services as photocopies.

However, the actual priority in the Congress is to approve the totality of the Implementation Agenda in order to activate the CAFTA trade, so, even though the project has the support of many congressists, it has to wait on line until other projects are approved.

Retrieved from http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2008/enero/19/aldea1390271.html

4.1.6   Case Example for Public Libraries

Provide a short descriptions and commentary for each type of venue, offering a realistic sense of what the venue looks and feels like in its day to day operation, the kind of people who visit, and the kind of services they receive. Also, the case example indicates what makes the case unique or what features are commonly shared with other venues. A photo and short quotes will make it even more real.

Hatillo´s Public Library

The Hatillo Library is the second biggest Public Library in the country, and the most modern one, relatively speaking.

The Library is 20 years old, and just like the others, functions with government budget managed by SINABI (National Library System) and is located at Hatillo 2 (this neighbourhood forms part of the social project "Hatillos", one of the communities of the urban area that presentes more social conflicts and poverty).

The library suffers from several problems, beginning with infrastructure deficiencies and building deterioration (such as leaks when it rains: they have to set a collection of buckets to catch the water).

Here, only the Assistant Director is a graduated librarian, the Director has had no formal

education in the area but has worked in the field for many years. The same goes for the rest of the

staff.

They lack important tools such as computers. The Library has followed the necessary procedures to be elegible to have a CECI (Intelligent Communitary Center) installed, but have been waiting a year for an answer.

According to the assistant director "The truth is Public Libraries barely scrape budget to buy books, and can't keep the collection up to date." This is one of the main complaints from users: there's a lack of information and technology access, and the current book collection is outdated. On the side of the people who work there, the major complaint is that the receive no incentives and the salaries are unattractive. Sometimes people quit because salaries were low, and months pass by before the government hires someone new; during this lapse, the remaining crew suffers from work overload. Other workers have had temporary status for years instead of a fixed position, harming them.

For the assistant director, the problem is that the government shows zero interest in public libraries. Workers with no experience or knowledge about libraries have been hired because of political interests, resulting in a waste of resources.

Another issue for the Hatillo public library is the lack of additional training for the crew: they actually have some tools they can not take complete advantage of; often oportunities are wasted and tools are used bellow their potential, if used at all, because they have no idea how to take advantage of them.

 In the library very basic needs are covered, but they still lack material and technological equipment to offer (practically every book is in Spanish. There is a very small quantity in other languages such as Bribri, but users rarely consult those texts). Until now, if they don't have certain information, the most they can do is point the user to the place where they might be able to aquire it.

The Library has only one computer with Internet access, and it is only for administrative use, but as long as the computer is not in use by the staff, they let users search for information.

They are always hosting and encouraging training courses. The building has a public auditorium and schools are asked to participate all the time (introductory courses for the use of the Library are offered at primary schools and high schools). At the end of the courses people get a certificate, but it has no real value and this practice is used only for encouragement. People look at the

Library as a space they can use. School teachers use the venue to give classes to student who failed the year. They also have a TV with Cable that they use for trainings and movie projections.

About 800 people visit the library on less concurred months. Young students constitute the majority of the users. Women and men attend in similar quantities.

Parents arrive with their children to help them with their homeworks and provide orientation. Most people look for Academic information, for example, educational texts from primary and secondary school. Unfortunately, the Library doesn't carry those type of books because the government states it is Public Library, not a School Library. So even if those texts are what the community is asking for, the government won't provide them.

This library is a good example of the actual conditions of library System in Costa Rica: they have human resourses and the will to work but the budget is not enough and the political decisions make difficult for them to develop the library as much as they could. The place is clean, well iluminated and located in a very accessible place, and with some good conditions of connectivity and capacity building they could become a better place to look for information.

4.2 Venue # 2: CECI

4.2.1 Overall Venue Assessment

Provide a broad picture of the public access information landscape in this venue, informed by the results of this research.

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of public access information in this type of venue?

CECIs are the telecentre proposal of the MICIT for this administration. The program has a connectivity-infrastructural orientation that has been common in the country for the last 15 years. One of the strategic points of the program seems to be its biggest weakness too: the fact that communities alone have to administrate, take care and orient the use of the venue without the support of the ministry gives the CECIs a small chance to survive, since self-sustainability is not contemplated in the program´s design.

It was born as an isolated program of the MICIT, that has been establishing strategic alliances with other public institutions as universities and public libraries. Up to now, there are 104 CECIs operating around the country, and the goal for this administration is to reach the 300 ones. CECIs are a technological platform composed by 6 to 10 computers connected to Internet, plus a capacity building program (not been applied yet in anyone) oriented to diminish the digital divide by reaching underserved populations as rural women and farmers, as well as students from isolated communities.

As the program is not well organized, it has been hard to reach its goals. As it will be elaborated later in the report, one of the salient findings for this venue is that the successful CECIs always work in cooperation with other institution that can guarantee the basic sustainability for them.

4.2.2 Access

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of ACCESS ecosystem in this type of venue (physical access, appropriate technology, affordability)?

In terms of access, CECIs have the same difficulties as public libraries, related to coverage, and services. Many communities that need a CECI do not fulfill the requirements to obtain one, and are excluded of the program. CECIs have a big strategy failure related to sustainability and human resources, and usually the operators have another full time job and can open the CECIs only for a couple of hours a day. The ones located in public institutions as libraries and municipalities do not have this problem and open in the same schedule as the institution that hosts them.

There are different situations related to technology inside CECIs. The program offers technical assistance from the MICIT to repair damaged equipment, to replace it and to give solution to other technical problems, as Internet connection failures, viruses, software problems, etcetera. This support has been practically null for many of the CECIs, that usually have the 6 computers but only one or two connected, while the others have software, or other technical problems. All the

computers are encoded, so, it is impossible for the CECI directors to look for volunteers´ help in order to solve this problems, and when a computer is broken, it has to remain like that until technical support personnel of the MICIT answer.

No fees are to be paid to use the equipment, and any person can access the venue, as long as they respect the use norms and identify themselves.

4.2.2.1   Physical Access

Describe how accessible this venue is to various population segments, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c), especially the differences between urban and non-urban settings.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

CECIs were thought to satisfy the needs of the less favored communities. However, in most of the cases the MICIT goes one time to the community, opens the venue, gives a press conference about it and never goes back. They are supposed to visit the venues periodically, and offer a capacity building workshop for administrators, but it is not what happens. Besides that, the promotion of the venues has been almost null, so the communities often don´t have information about the venues (in many cases, they don´t even know there is a CECI in the community).

4.2.2.2   Appropriate Technology & Services

Describe how appropriate the technologies, services and information offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

All the CECIs are equipped with 6 computers with web cam and microphone incorporated, and must (to fulfill the plans of the MICIT) have each of these computers connected to Internet. Sometimes, the connection fails after the opening and the administrators do not have capacities to repair it. They are supposed to contact the MICIT in order to receive assistance for this kind of problems, but in many cases the technicians take months to check the problems. Some CECIs have only one computer connected to Internet, some others have all them connected but do not offer any training for users. Since the restrictions of use are not quite clear (some venues count on a MICIT banner that establishes the use conditions and restrictions), it depends on the operator criteria to determine whether a use is legitimated or not. They prioritize the users needs in order to guarantee that computers are available for people that goes to the venue for studies, homeworks, etcetera.

Even though CECIs are a initiative created to help underserved communities, the appropriateness of technologies offered in the venues is not the best. To facilitate a proper appropriation if technologies by the communities, it is very important to realize a full participative study that addresses the real needs of the communtity and gives the venue a reason to exist for the communtity. Unfortunately, the program does not count on any previous participative process that help the members of the community to identify their needs and how the technologies can be a useful instrument to solve local problems and generate new opportunities for the population. With the infrastructural component alone the results won´t be as good as they can be by integrating a social vision of the technologies.

4.2.2.3 Affordability

Describe how affordable the technologies and services offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Affordability is not a problem in CECIs, because people can use the venue for free. The factors that prevent the access of population are more related to capacities and promotion.

4.2.2.4 Fees for Services

What fees or other requirements exist in order to access and use the information in the venues? (registration, user fees, restrictions to certain populations)

If there are fees: What do these fees buy?

NO fees charged for the use of the venue

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

Depending on the community, the CECI will have 6 to 10 computers. CECIs that do not operate in collaboration with other institutions have poorest schedules and less support, than the ones installed inside a library, or other public offices. All CECIs are supposed to offer the same services, but there is a huge variation among them, also depending on strategic collaboration between institutions.

4.2.2.5 Geographic Distribution

What is the distribution of the venues in terms of their geographic location?

Complement any details not already included in section 2.1: Venue Selection.

Most of the CECIs are located at rural-urban and rural communities. There is not a distribution criteria, depends on the communities that ask for a venue and if the request is approved. Of the visited venues, the majority are located at head towns, close to schools and inside other community infrastructures such as community saloons, churches, capacity building centers, sport centers, libraries or municipality offices.

4.2.2.5.1 Map

If available, insert a map that displays the geographic distribution of this type of venue in the country (expand to the size you need).

Personas de todas las edades aprenden
a usar la computadora e Internet, para
comunicarse y trabajar mejor.

Description of map:

The CECI map is part of an informative chart generated by the MICIT last year. It has not been updated, so many CECIs indicated on it might not be opened yet. As indicated in the map, there are 7 CECIs located in Limon and 7 located in the Souther Pacific region (the poorest areas of the country). Majority of venues are concentrated in the Central areas (in the case of Costa Rica, services are concentrated in this area and not in the coast, the capital city and the Great Metropolitan Area -GAM- are located there), and less are located inside isolated communities (in the coasts and border towns).

4.2.2.6 Other Factors affecting Access

Other factors that affect equitable access to public information in this type of venue, not covered above?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The gender issue might be uncovered in places were people do not have access to a day-care center, so mothers can not attend training.

We also mentioned that indigenous population have a lower literacy level, which means many people of indigenous communities do not take advantage of the service (for the hole list we have only 1 CECI located at an indigenous community).

4.2.3 Capacity & Relevance

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of CAPACITY ecosystem in this type of venue (human capacity, locally relevant content, integration into daily routines, socio-cultural factors, trust in technology, social appropriation of technology)?

CECIs count on the human capacities of the people that request them. In the ones visited, it was seen that no previous capacity building processes were followed with the operators, and are not followed with the users. CECIs operating in partnership with libraries offer more possibilities for

users, in terms of capacity building and empowerment. Although they were created to diminish the digital divide among excluded segments of population, mostly only students receive true benefit from them. Some CECIs are even used as capacity development centers, and open only for that matter. Librarians have a wider vision of the CECI and try to capture volunteers from universities to offer workshops for women and children. In many cases is the same librarian how teaches individually and helps the user in basic computer operation and Internet search. But there is not a capacity building agenda followed by all the CECIs in the same terms.

In terms of content, the Internet facilitates many of the processes. Some local relevant content on mostly every topic can be found over the web. The problem is where to look for and how to find it without the proper coaching and assistance. In libraries, is easier to develop these processes, for librarians have a little more expertise and can orient the users in a better way.

Depending on the operators agenda, capacity building will be oriented to particular segments of population. Among female librarians there is a notorious interest in women empowerment based on technology uses. Some of the libraries visited offer capacity building specifically for women, in basic Microsoft and Internet uses. Most of the CECIs have been operating for less than a year, so it is hard to see real results in terms of social appropriation and daily routine integration.

4.2.3.1   Staff Size

How many people work in a typical facility for this type of venue? (full time-equivalent employees or contractors; describe any significant variations; i.e., large, medium and small libraries in the country)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

If the CECI is located at a library, usually there will be 3 persons around. In case the venue is located at some other point (community gym, municipality office, communal hall), there will be one person taking care of it.

4.2.3.2   Staff Training

What is the overall capacity of the staff (ie, librarians, telecentres operators) to help users access and use public access to information & communication services offered in this venue? Differentiate by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

(iii) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

(iv) For Public Libraries, indicate if Library School training is available and/or required for librarians.

CECIs are supposed to have in charge a person who has expertise not only in the technological area but also in the area of information management. Unfortunately, this standard is not covered by the centers, for by policies of the MICIT the community who asks for a CECI must contribute with human capacities and infrastructure. For the case of CECIs located at public libraries, there is the expertise of information management contributed by the librarians whom not necessarily have any technological skills. For other CECIs they do not even have the information management of a librarian or an information manager, which makes difficult the access to information of the users in the case they need specific information but do not have the capacities to make an online search.

Off course, the administrators know basics for ICT´s use and they coach the users and offer them

as much information and help as they can.

In the places visited there is nothing like a "telecentre operator", for people working on CECIs are "administrators" but not specialists. In some of the places it is common that the administrator has another job so the CECI is closed and this person opens it only by request or in very specific schedules.

4.2.3.3 Services Offered

What kind of services does this type of venue offer to the public? (ie, access to books, magazines; meeting & conference rooms; audio/video programs, computers, internet, other). Include Digital ICT services if offered.

	Services Offered	Comments
8.	Internet*	
9.	Agenda for SMEs*	This agenda is supposed to include topics as the introduction of ICTs to productive processes inside the enterprise.
10.	E-mail and other applications*	All the ICT services are supposed to include a training.
11.	English classes*	

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

*These ones are services that the MICIT planned to offer in the venues. During our visits we found that the ministry do not have an organized agenda for CECIs. In most of the cases, the staff of the venue do not have capacities to help people. It was common to find different books of capacity building in the different places we visited. There is not a defined capacity building program for any of the areas that we mentioned. Some CECIs received a book that focuses the training in web 2.0, others have books about Microsoft office, others don´t even offer any type of capacity building program, and others are "planning to start" the programs "soon", "this year" or "next month".

The most salient differences in terms of services are related to the location of the CECI and the human capacities of the staff (if it is located inside other institution that gives it more sustainability and human resurses to work with).

4.2.3.4 Programs for Underserved Communities

Describe if this venue has programs specifically intended to reach underserved communities, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

We could find none. The advantage that these venues offer to the population is the opportunity to have access to Internet with no fees. Administrators of CECIs have the perception that young people from low income families use the venue often, for it is free.

During the visits, none of the CECIs included in the field work was having a capacity building process with the community. In libraries, the directors try to find support in public universities and exchange programs to obtain human resources for their training programs. There have been some sucessful ones, such as the runned in the Public Library of Tres Ríos, that seeks women empowerment through technology appropriation and started when the CECI was opened.

4.2.3.5   Relevant Content

What type of locally relevant content is available? What else is needed? Who is doing it?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Available Content:

In CECIs, contents are mediated by the regulations of the MICIT and the criteria of the administrators. Administrators actually should work as intermediaries between the information and the users, but many of them do not have the appropriated capacities to do it. In the case of libraries, this is a bit different because the librarians are information managers. Internet has many contents available and ways to access it. The main problem is the capacity o f the users to access it properly.

Other contents generated with multimedia tools are not often offered nor accessed by the users, for CECIs do not have content repositories, even though they are supposed to offer local relevant content, for their target is "farmers and housewives". Unfortunately, the information management is not adequated to the needs of users visiting the venues.

Other Content Needed:

Contents needed in CECIs include capacity building information, audiovisual materials, databases, and in general, information managed to facilitate the access processes.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

No local initiatives to build content were found during the visits. As we have insisted throughout the report, what is really necessary is to generate collaborative spaces that include the communities. Alive forces of the community are the ones who really know what is needed and what has to be done.

Source: ------------------

4.2.3.6   Services & Information Available in Local Languages

Describe the availability of services and contents relevant to human development that are available in **local languages** in this type of venue? (i.e., info on health, education, government services, etc)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Some content relevant for the communities is available in local languages online (specifically in English, spoken in the Atlantic Region), but not all the people have access to it because there are only 7 CECI in the Region and most of the communities have bad physical infrastructure (no roads available, communication by boat only, for example). For many people is hard to leave their

communities in order to visit the head towns were CECIs are located. The access to online information is not a priority for this communities, for the ICT programs do not include previous work with communities to identify needs and address the integration of ICTs for the fulfillment of those.

"Digital government" initiative does not include any information translated to local languages.

4.2.3.7   Types of Uses

What do people USE the venues for (most frequent kinds of information & services people seek in them, activities they carry out in them)?

(ii)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs and complement here as needed:

All the interviewed administrators consider that the CECI has to be a place were they offer not only educative or academic information, but also entertainment and playful information. Depending on the needs, people look for information related to academic issues, in other cases they access the place for fun. The MICIT has rules and use restrictions that are not specified in all the venues. It is common to see printed sheets with the legend "Hi5, chat, games forbideen", but it mostly depends on the administrator´s criteria. The approach is different in all the cases, and in some CECIs it is common to find users checking e-mail, updating profiles in social network web pages as facebook and Hi5 and using the chat services, while in other venues this uses are not permitted. The only clear restrictions are related to pornography, online games and downloading practices.

Some people works at the CECI (sending sales e-mails, using Skype for international calls). The use will be limited by the amount of people requesting the computers. If there is too many people in the venue, the computers can be used 1hr/ per person, and in this cases the working and studying use will be prioritized over the entertainment.

4.2.3.8   Number, Type and Frequency of Users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs, **Error! Not a valid result for table.**. Complement here as needed:

The team had little chances to observe the users dynamics involving CECIs, for many of the visited venues were closed. Information about this topic was obtained from the surveys applied to operators. The general perception of the interviewed operators is that CECIs are more visited by young male users. Particular cases involve capacity building processes oriented to cover housewives of the communities. Since CECIs are not offering the capacity building processes mentioned in the MICIT´s web page, the target has been reduced to young students that take advantage of the Internet service available in the venues.

4.2.3.9   Users Capacity to use information and services offered

What is the overall capacity of the users to take advantage of public access to information & communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

In general, for the CECIs that we visited we have seen that the most frequent users are young students. They already have capacities to use the computer and access the Web, but maybe they are not well oriented to take complete advantage of the possibilities offered online.

We could not visit the CECI located in Shiroles (the only indigenous community that has a CECI) to see how it works and what is the behavior of the community.

Some CECIs have specific programs to attend women. The majority are not giving trainings yet, but what is interesting is that the administrators have women and farmers in mind when they plan the capacity building programs.

4.2.3.10 Training Courses for Users

Describe training courses offered to the public at this venue, and if they offer some kind of testing and certification.

Training courses: None

ICT specific training courses: Basic Internet search. Microsoft Office. Depending on the CECI, there are training programs more organized. In the CECIs we visited, the training courses are a "plan", but not offered yet. What they do is to help people in specific issues as to learn how to use the e-mail or basic online search. The certifications are to stimulate the population, but not many venues offer those.

4.2.3.11 Integration into daily routines

How easy is it for users to integrate the information and services offered in this type of venue into their daily lives? (offer concrete solutions to their needs and problems, make it easier to solve them at this venue than in other places)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Seems that most of the users already know how to use e-mail and chat. Sometimes they ask for help in specific situations, as particular search or the use of a tool. The administrators have the perception that is easy to make induction. They say that people want to learn when they get to the venue and that for basic uses, they learn easily.

A particular example –and maybe the most common- is when a member of the family migrates to another country. In this case, you will see old mothers and even grandmothers coming to the venue in order to learn how to use the email. They can develop capacities even to talk over Skype and have chat conversations. This is a behavior commented by all the administrators

4.2.3.12 Users Perceptions about the Venue

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the venue (not necessarily its specific services, but the venue itself: ie, what do people generally think about libraries? Are they places that are "cool" or "only for elites" etc?), differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)? This includes perception by people who do not use the venue…

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Going outside the venue, we found out that is hard to find a community member that knows about the existence of the CECIs. Once we explained them about the CECIs program, they said it was "important" or "a good idea" (specially the ones whom have kids in school and go to cybercafes to look for information to help kids doing homework). For some people it did not seem so important, for they "do not use Internet" or "do not need" to use it.

For users, in general, CECIs represent a good option to look for information, and in the case of CECIs located inside libraries, users consider that the added value is bigger for the Internet can help the lack of written material and updated collections in libraries. No perceptions related to "coolness" were externalized by the interviewed, and people who do not know how to use the computers do not think that CECIs are for elites, they only recognized that is a pity they do not have the capacities, but that the venue gives the students more facilities and is very important to have one in the community.

4.2.3.13 Social Appropriation of Information and Generation of New Knowledge

What activities, products and services are users undertaking that exhibit new levels of social appropriation of technologies and generation of knowledge? For example, how are users generating and disseminating new knowledge, products and services through their use of this venue? (see category 13 in Real Access Framework for Social Appropriation of Technology).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

We consider that the most important product coming out CECIs is empowerment. CECIs are too young and we can not find products yet, except in particular practices, for example, when a both low income and literacy level woman of a rural area learns how to use Skype in order to keep in touch with a relative that migrated to the United States to work. This particular practices are seeing sometimes, but are not common yet, for the capacity building programs are not started in the majority of venues. Tres Ríos CECI keeps been an exceptional example, because of its agenda oriented to housewives empowerment.

4.2.3.14 Trust, Safety & Privacy

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the safety, security and privacy (TRUST) of the information and services offered in this venue?

Many people do not trust the Internet. Some of the interviewed affirm that is very dangerous to use it (they refer to Internet banking specifically, for this topic had some repercussion during last year inside the country).

Users affirm they do not trust everything they find over the Internet. Many of them said that they are very careful with their data sources and always ask for help in case of doubts. Among the youngest users, the trust is not even an issue.

4.2.3.15 Gaps and Opportunities in information & services offered

What other information gaps & opportunities exist, which are not being met? (other information / services people need that are not being met there and could be offered, especially through Digital ICT services)

CECIs are an exceptional opportunity for communities. However, what we saw in our visits is that they are not been taken advantage of to the maximum, for in some cases computers are not connected to Internet as they should be, or are not working at all. According to the philosophy of the ministry, CECIs should become a "digital alphabetization venue" but in most of the cases, there is not an appropriated control of the use nor a person with the expertise to manage the place in order to make it fulfill its mission. The interest of the community is a factor that was not taken into account when the CECIs were created. As we have already mentioned, the social appropriation of technologies comes together with the integrative processes that study the community needs in order to help people to identify themselves with the ICTs and to find a social use of the tools that goes beyond the infrastructure itself.

4.2.4   Enabling Environment

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of the ENVIRONMENT ecosystem in this type of venue (local economy, national economy, legal and regulatory framework, political will & public support, regional and international context)?

By talking to the MICIT, we had other idea about the CECIs, for at the ministry they have many plans and expectations and consider the CECI a "born to be successful idea". Costa Rica has experimented other kind of initiatives like this that failed because of the absence strategic planning nor worked in collaboration with the communities and the local governments. In this case, we see some sustainability options in the partnership between public universities, public libraries and the MICIT. Since the government has not a particular policy focused in the technological area, this initiative seems to be not so well planned and we think it will not be successful if the authorities do not design a periodic evaluation and monitoring to mentor it.

The environment enables the presence of Internet venues, for the coverage is wide, and the costs are not too high. However, there is not a real public policy that works digital divide and social inclusion topics. In this context is very hard to maintain isolated initiatives from an administration to another, and that is the reason why telecentre related programs haven´t been successful up to now in the country.

The lack of long term policies difficults the sucess of this kind of initiatives, for is common that they end within a government period and are not continued by the next one. Political agendas affect the sustainability of these programs, for it is not common that different governments share the same interests and so the efforts started by one president or ministry won´t have continuity in the next one. Public policies would come to change this context by enabling the permanence of sucessful initiatives.

4.2.4.1   Local & National Economy

Describe the local & national economic environment and how it affects public access to information & communication in this type of venue (refer to & complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As we mentioned in form3, one of each 7 families suffer of social exclusion in Costa Rica. These families do not have access to basic services, including education. Under this conditions, people have less possibilities to change their quality of life. Education is one of the big problems in the country although we have high literacy levels. The percentage of desertion is 13.2%, and population under 18 not attending school have more probabilities of being underemployed or unemployed. Thought the new economical growth puts special attention in the technological issue, we can say that the benefits of education do not reach all the underserved communities.

Since our economical growth does not have an integral development plan for the country, we have seen how the barrier that divides high and low income groups increases every year. In this sense, the objective of the MICIT with the initiative was to increase the digital literacy, so Costa Rica could start the inclusion of all population in the "information society". However, the efforts related to this subject are isolated and only mentioned now and then in the development program of the government, and this difficult the way Costa Ricans approach to ICTs.

4.2.4.2   Legal & Regulatory Framework

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information & communication in this type of venue (refer to & complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As we mentioned in the country overview, Costa Rica followed, until this year, a modality of State Monopoly for public services. Electricity and Internet were covered under this modality (State monopoly is to be eliminated for a new law of telecommunications aperture was approved in the Congress). The "universalization" of services was possible, during the last 40 years, due to the social vision of the State institutions who provided these services to population. This facilitated the access to telecommunications infrastructure around the country, which makes more easy to create ICT-related venues and programs.

However, this advantages are not precisely taken into account when designing the digital inclusion initiatives in the country. It is curious that no public policies have been developed yet, for this policies could be stimulating the social inclusion through technologies and guaranteeing that more perdurable and long term programs keep been offered to underserved communities.

The absence of public policies and strategic alliances between institutions has worked in prejudice of the excluded communities of the country: short term projects without strategi planning can not be successful nor benefit the communities for which they were created. The regulatory environment is, in this sense, not very supportive to the CECIs initiative, for even though there are advantages and facilities that whould help the ICT projects to reach their goals, there is a lack of will and communication between public institutions that prevents the success of the digital inclusion ideas designed by the government.

4.2.4.3   Political Will & Public Support

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to & complement section 3.5 Economic, Policy & Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

(i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

As mentioned before, the country does not count on an integral information policy and the ICT efforts have been focused to infrastructure and connectivity, leaving the human component out of the strategies. Actually the strategies have been isolated, and do not aim to coordinate efforts and partnerships involving different actors. This come to affect the quality of services and the sucess of the different initiatives generated during the last governments.

The absence of planning, monitoring, coaching and evaluation processes characterizes the last "digital inclusion" programs generated by government institutions. Inclusive discussion about national strategies are not part of the government agenda and in this sense the generation of public policies that guarantee the sucess of initiatives has not been prioritized yet. Short term vision has been predominant in the country planning and evidenciate the lack of interest of the authorities in the topic.

4.2.4.4   Organization and Networking

Describe if the facilities in this type of venue organized in any network, association or other collective body? (ie, national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

The CECIs are not organized as a Network. The MICIT works as the head of CECIs, supported by local governments, community associations, and other organized groups, but CECIs do not work together nor have strong contact with each others.

4.2.4.5   Partnerships

Describe notable public-private partnerships in support of this type of venue.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

There are not notable partnerships among private and public institutions that are related to CECIs.

4.2.4.6   Other Environment Factors

Other factors in the environment that affect access and use of information in this kind of venue, not covered above?

Same as in libraries, we have to mention here the lack of public policies that give continuity to the presidential initiatives (that most of the time end with presidential period) and design ways of monitor and evaluate projects in order to identify which are the practices that should be changed in order to improve the access to information in the country.

4.2.1   For Publicly Funded Venues only: Revenue Streams

This section is meant specifically for publicly-funded venues (public libraries, national connectivity programs, etc).

4.2.1.1 Budget

What is the total budget for this public access venue system (applies especially for libraries, answer for other venues if applicable and if available)?

Total Budget for Fiscal Year no information available

Local currency name colones   amount (local currency) no information available

Approx. equivalent in USD no information available based on exchange rate of does not apply on date does not apply.

Unfortunately, for the revenue streams section of this venue we do not count on any information. It was requested to the MICIT in many occasions, but we did not receive an aswer for any of the budget-related questions.

4.2.1.2 Relative size of budget

How large (or small) is this budget in relation to other funding streams? (this is a way to show, in financial terms, how much the government cares about information and public access as compared to a variety of other issues in the country).

Relative Size of Budget for same year	Total budget (local currency)	Comments
Total national budget	3 472 441 200 000	Total budget approved on Nov. 20th 2007.
Education	811 000 000 000	The National Constitution of Costa Rica establishes that at least the 6% of the GDP has to be destined to education.
CECI	no information available	no information available
Public Libraries	1 994 283 000	The Public Libraries Budget is part of the total budget destined to culture in the country.

Other Comments:

Does not apply.

4.2.1.3 Sources of funding

What are the sources of funding for this public access venue system?

Sources of funding:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Government sources:		no information available
International donors:		no information available

	National donors:		no information available
	User fees / services:	0%	No fees are charged for the use of the venues.

Other Comments:

No comments.

4.2.1.4   Paths and Flows of resources

How do resources get allocated and disbursed to the actual venues? For the principal funders, and especially for the public sources, what is the flow of funds? How are the funds raised (what tax stream), what path do the tax streams flow before they get to the specific venues? Who makes decisions about this funding?

no information available

4.2.1.5   Fees and Cost Recovery

Describe if there are user fees or any other type of cost recovery. How does it affect service delivery and usage?

There are no fees, nor any other cost recovery practice. It does affect the delivery of services because CECIs are not self-sustainable initiatives. They start working with the support of the authorities, but this supplies only the equipment of the venues. Al other costs must be covered by the organization, institution or individual who requests the CECI. Services such as photocopies or prints (the most basic ones) can not be offered by the venues because the cost is too high and the CECIs are not able to cover this extra expenses.

4.2.1.6   Cost Categories

What are the main cost categories in the operation of this kind of venue? (% of total annual budget)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Cost Categories for Operation:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Staff (salaries, benefits)	0%	CECIs operators or administrators are supposed to work under volunteer modality, or are paid with resources of the host institution/ oganization/ individual in charge.
Building Infrastructure		no information available
Utilities		no information available
Staff Training		no information available
Computers / Technology		The first investment is cover by tthe MICIT. It is not clear if the administration of the

		venue has to cover extra costs or the ministry cover all the costs related to technology (The Internet connection must be paid by the administration).	
Total	100%		

4.2.1.7 Recent changes and future trends

Describe any recent changes and anticipated future trends in the funding and revenue streams for this type of venue in the country. Have funding levels risen or decreased dramatically over the past few years? What is the outlook for the foreseeable future?

no information available

4.2.2   Case Example for Venue # 2: CECI

Provide a short descriptions and commentary for each type of venue, offering a realistic sense of what the venue looks and feels like in its day to day operation, the kind of people who visit, and the kind of services they receive. Also, the case example indicates what makes the case unique or what features are commonly shared with other venues. A photo and short quotes will make it even more real.

Since the behavior of CECIs variates a lot depending on the community, we decided to include here two examples that evidence the worst and best practices related to organization and administrative processes.

A non successful practice among CECIs:

1. Municipality of Cartago.

 The CECI from the City of Cartago is located on the second floor of the Municipal building, in the downtown area. We had a hard time finding the venue since there aren't any banners or signs at the entrance indicating it's presence. The Municipality building doesn't have curricular adjustment, so disabled or handicapped people can't access the center.

Like every other Intelligent Community Center, this one consists of 6 computers, equiped with webcam and microphone. They face the wall, with the monitors positioned in view of the main desk (where an employee can verify if the users are following the regulations). The venue follows the same office hours as the Municipality. Since it´s located inside a public building, the Cartago CECI has a larger payroll: 6 employees are permanently vinculated with the center (though none of them works for the center specifically) and the Municipality's computer expert gives maintenance to the equipment and solves quick problems (computers are codified so that this person is not able to make any changes or modifications, nor repare problems in the software). According to the woman in charge, every once in a while MICIT personel visit the CECI to make an

inspection.

The computers don't have any archives with information that users can check, only internet connection so they can do searches. Regulations are few but concise: downloading music and watching pornography are not allowed. Every user must carry their own storing device so they can extract the information (saving information in the computer is not permitted).

Aproximately 18 to 25 persons visit the Center every day. Most of them are high school students who spread the word to their classmates. The CECI has not been promoted in the community and the only hint of it's existence is a banner positioned at the door of the venue.

People from different age groups arrive to the venue, and usually come just to check the e-mail. Those that visit the CECI already possess the technological habilities needed to operate the computers: trainings are not imparted very often (rather, the user who requires help with the basic use of internet may request it). Even though the original goal of the center was to educate and provide technologic literacy, the trend is that people see the center as simply free internet access.

The most frequent use of the center is leisure related (Chat, updating profiles on personal network sites –Hi5, Myspace, Facebook- electronic mail, games), and regrettably there is no control over user activities –the only concern is that they may not infringe the rules-. This presents a problem for users that visit the center to search information and do homework or projects: amongst the interviewed users there is a consensus in the opinion that the center is being misused and that the computers are always in the hands of people doing leisure activities instead of work.

According to the answers supplied by users and by the person in charge, intermediary practices are very frequent: be it a person with more habilities teaching another, or and adult or elderly accompanied by someone with more experience (usually younger than them) to help them with tramits or searches. These are common practices in the venue.

As far as disclosure, we can state that MICIT has not properly promoted the Intelligent Community Centers, and in this particular case we witnessed that no information has been offered to the community regarding the center: many users think the CECI is a venture from the Municipality, not that it's a program from MICIT; users are oblivious to the name of the center and show no

interest in finding out who coordinates the project. To users, the CECI is just a public space where they can have free internet access, says the lady in charge.

Alter leaving the Municipality building in order to conduct interviews with the citizens of the community, we found out that the ones that know about the existente of the Center are very few. We spoke with teenagers, young adults and elderly people, women and men alike, and on of the interviewees knew about the CECI.

This CECI being one of the few centers in urban areas, has a lot of unexploited potencial: they recieve more visits from MICIT personel, the Internet connection shows none of the setbacks found in other communities, being linked to the Municipality provides a wide physical infrastructure that is in better shape than other centers (and could be used to host lectures and workshops focusing on enhancing habilities). The Center's potential as a public access venue is not being met, neither is it functioning as a technologic literacy center for the community (specially for population segments who suffer social exclusion, who don't visit the center or even are aware of it's existence).

2.   A good practice among CECIs

CECI, Palmares.

 When you arrive to the Public Library of Palmares de Alajuela, you know that there is something different from other public libraries here. The place is big, clean, well ordered and has 6 computers in permanent use. These computers (located at the main hall, in front of the administrator desk) are the community CECI, that was located at the public library with the support of the "Municipalidad", and the library staff.

Three persons work in the library and help to the administration of the CECI: the library´s director and assistant director are librarians, and the third person is an assitant that answers the phone and cleans the rooms.

As in the CECI we visited in Cartago, this one has a book of visits that people must sign in order to use the computers, but in this case, people are asked to leave a contact telephone number. "This is because sometimes someone that has more knoledge about computers comes and blocks the computer with a password. Before, we had to wait for that person to come back, or look for him/her at the neighbourhood. Now what we do in to call people when this happens", says the assistant director.

The CECI seems to be a very good opportunity for this library. They can integrate the information they offer in books to the online information and offer the user a bigger spectrum of options.

The room is always full of people, most of them already know how to use the tools (they do not only use the computer to check on the Internet, but to write papers and do homework). The administrators are concerned about the needs of users: although they do not have particular training programs running yet, they are planning to start with that this year (they had a delay because they were extending the library building). These trainings are focused in capacity building for "housewives and farmers" says the assistant director. That is interesting, for it seems they already identified the segments of population that have more needs in terms of capacity building. Young people have more computer skills, and if they have any doubt, the administrators help them by checking on the books that the MICIT gave them when they installed the CECI, or online. Then, another preocupation raised in their minds: administrators are part of the community and know many people there. They know also that among the users of the CECI, there are young people from low income families that use the venue as an opportunity to have free Internet and a computer to write papers and do homework. Cybercafes charge $0.7 an hour and these people can not afford that amount. But then they come and use the CECI, and after that, if they need to print any materials they will have to pay for it ($ 0.4 a sheet). What they want to do is to buy a printer (they are looking for support among community organizations) and offer the service to the kids. This is a good idea, but is hard to do, for even if they find money to buy the printer, there is still the permanent need of paper and ink.

In general terms, the users have a high opinion of the CECI (well, they do not seem to know "what" a CECI is, same problem as in the other ones we checked out, there is no promotion of the venue and most people simply think the computers are a new service of the library alone). They have a good connection (provided by the "Municipalidad") and the terms of use are good for them. You can have the computer for 1 hour if it is crowded, and in case someone is just checking on Hi5 or so, they know they have to give the chance to the ones that come to work.

Out the building, we come to see what we have seen everywhere: community members don´t really know about the venue. None of the interviewed had any idea about the CECI located at the public library, but for them all it sounded like a good idea to have "something like that" at the community.

For the administrators "The CECI was the best thing ever happened to the public library... they

work perfect together, it is amazing how Internet can help people."

For us, this was a very good example of who well managed technologies can help communities in their information processes.

4.3   Venue # 3: Cybercafe

4.3.1   Overall Venue Assessment

Provide a broad picture of the public access information landscape in this venue, informed by the results of this research.

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of public access information in this type of venue?

Obtaining accurate data about Cybercafés have been a hard mission. There are not previous researches in the subject, and the venues are sprout all over the country with minimum regulations and no inscription records that can help us to complete a full profile of them. Since Costa Rica is a touristic destination, and has the facilities given by high connectivity and electricity coverage infrastructure, it is very easy to find a Cybercafé almost everywhere in the country. There are different prices for different Cybercafes, and the most expensive ones are located at highly visited touristic areas of the country.

Cybercafes are often family or friend small enterprises, and this condition gives them a particular distribution around the country. The venues are not only located at head towns or commercial areas, but also in neighborhoods, close to schools and universities. Many of them are just another commercial initiative of entrepreneurs that already have a grocery store or a small bazaar and find a good option to increase their income by fulfilling the community need of a "Café Internet".

The venues have more flexible schedules than libraries or CECIs, and often are opened during nights, which makes the access to information easier for users that have day time responsibilities (work or studies). Prices are quite low, from $0,288 to $1 dollar an hour, depending on the location and the target of the venue (according to some operators, they decide how much to charge depending on different conditions: social class of the neighborhood, if there are private universities around, type of visitors they receive – venues located at touristic spots are more expensive than any other). Thought not all the population have access to the venue due to prices, cybercafes have become an excellent alternative for those who can not afford the price of home connection and do not have a personal computer.

4.3.2   Access

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of ACCESS ecosystem in this type of venue (physical access, appropriate technology, affordability)?

The fact tha cybercafes are inserted on local economic dynamics make the services offered there more appropriated than the ones offered in CECIs. For the last 20 years, the country has been focusing economy efforts in the integration of Costa Rica to the global competition markets, stimulating foreign investments and attracting international companies to generate new jobs, but these actions have not guaranteed sustainability for Costa Rican families. For this reason, local entrepreneurship has become a good option to obtain independence and improve the quality of life. Small enterprises and family business are common in the country, and cybercafes are an

example of this.

Franchised cybercafes are not to be found in the country, and this increases competition between small enterprises, specially in areas where more than 3 cybercafes are located in the same street (around universities, for example). The offer of faster connection, lower prices, international calls, and other services as restaurant, hardware store, photocopies and book store will depend on the demand of users and the amount of venues concentrated in the same area. Additional services, such as webcams, microphones, cd burners/players, are becoming common day by day in different places (some cybercafes offer only the connection to Internet service).

Affordability is the key question in terms of public access to information in cybercafes. While many people are allowed, by their economic conditions, to access the venues, there is a big segment of population excluded from the services and opportunities offered in cybercafes. As found during field work, in many cases people accessing information in CECIs are not quite satisfied by the quality of services offered there, but do not have the option to pay for a cybercafe. Although prices are reasonable, in many cases it is impossible for users to afford cybercafe time due to economic conditions.

4.3.2.1   Physical Access

Describe how accessible this venue is to various population segments, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c), especially the differences between urban and non-urban settings.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Cybercafes are the easiest venue to access in the country, for there are more than a thousand ones sprout in the different regions. Urban areas have a strongest offer of cybercafes, as well as touristic destination (rural-urban towns located close to volcanoes and caverns, and coastal towns with high touristic activities, as the Northern Pacific and the Caribbean coasts). Even in small neighborhoods located in rural communities it is possible to find a venue. Some isolated regions of the country have difficulties in this sense, but the most complete coverage of a public access venue in Costa Rica is offered by cybercafes.

As mentioned in the country assessment, the digital alphabetization is not so high in the country. There is a sector of population with specific characteristics: young people between 14 and 30 years old, with secondary studies completed, middle class families living in urban and urban-rural areas that have better conditions to access technology. Other segments of population, such as excluded periurban communities and isolated indigenous regions have less facilities regarding to access. The services variate depending on the location of the venue and the size of the enterprise, and go from Internet connection alone to more specialized services such as computer selling, prints, scanner, international calls, and others.

4.3.2.2   Appropriate Technology & Services

Describe how appropriate the technologies, services and information offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

111

Competition makes cybercafes more attractive in terms of services quality. There is a diverse level of quality among them, but usually the equipment works pretty good and since the venues have a self-sustainability condition it is easier to replace broken pieces and to maintain a successful basic services system. Many of them do not offer other services but Internet connection, while others have printers, scanners, telephones, microphones, web cams, CD burners and other facilities (that have other fees).

Services for illiterate population are not contemplated within cybercafes. Services are not adequated to handycap needs, and services for people qith special capacities are offered only if available in the computers system. Technology offered in cybercafes has less intermediary services given by operators, for the business of the venue is to sell the information service, not to teach how to use it. However, operators are always willing to help users with basic doubts, such as attachment instructions, downloading procedures, account opening and more. The most common users of this venue are young people, and when talking to the communities members, we found that there is a perception among adult working people: cybercafes are for the use of young people, and other community members do not identify themselves as technology users, nor consider that there are any barriers for them in terms of technology use, for they simply do not use technology in their information and communication processes (this is the point of view of many interviewed people, and does not reflect the researcher perception, for there are many technologies used by people in their daily routines, not only computers and Internet).

No social capacity building processes are being developed in any of the venues visited.

4.3.2.3 Affordability

Describe how affordable the technologies and services offered in this venue are to the population, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The price of cybercafes is very variable depending on the city and region. In some places, it is very expensive, and in others very cheap. Users look for alternative options, and usually they have a specific or favorite cybercafe. Other services offered in cybercafes are too expensive to be paid for, as color prints or CD burning. The users use the services according to their possibilities, and look for cheaper places to access other services. Some cybercafes that have slow connection and better price are used to access Microsoft Office and other offline applications that are expensive in the high speed connection ones. People always find the way to save money.

Off course some segments of population do not even have the possibility to access a low price cybercafe. And in these venues, people always have to pay, for they are SMEs, and can not give their services for free. In this sense, people living under exclusion conditions are excluded from this possibility too.

4.3.2.4 Fees for Services

What fees or other requirements exist in order to access and use the information in the venues? (registration, user fees, restrictions to certain populations)

If there are fees: What do these fees buy?

Fees to use cybercafes go from 100 to 350 colones depending on the place (touristic destinations have the highest fees, up to 1 dollar an hour). This buys an hour of Internet.

Other services as scanners, printers, photocopies, international calls and CD burning are charged according to the owners criteria and the prices are arbitrary and do not keep a pattern from one venue to another.

Indicate amount in local currency 100-350

Equivalent in US Dollars: $0.18-$0.63

Date of estimate 07/17/2008

and local currency name "Colón(es)"

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

As in libraries and CECIs, differences are common from one cybercafe to another. In the case of this particular venue, this differences are specially notorious, and depend on the size of the enterprise, the expansion possibilities of its owners, the demands of users and other variables. Cybercafes located close to schools and universities offer services demanded by students, as printers, cd burning and photocopies. In touristic spots is more common to find international call services, skype and webcams.

4.3.2.5   Geographic Distribution

What is the distribution of the venues in terms of their geographic location?

Complement any details not already included in section 2.1: Venue Selection.

No accurate data to answer this question. As already mentioned, it is very difficult to obtain accurate data about cybercafes, for those are not organized in a system, nor registered under a specific figure. What we can affirm is that there are cybercafes all around the country, except the most isolated areas that do not count even on basic services such as electricity (not many areas in the country suffer this condition). There are many cybercafes, located at neighborhoods, commercial areas, touristic spots, around schools and universities, in both rural and urban areas. Facilites in urban areas could make us think that probably there are more cybercafes in urban areas (this is an speculative affirmation, for there is no data to confirm it).

4.3.2.5.1   Map

If available, insert a map that displays the geographic distribution of this type of venue in the country (expand to the size you need).

No maps of cybercafes location available.

Description of map:

Does not apply.

4.3.2.6   Other Factors affecting Access

Other factors that affect equitable access to public information in this type of venue, not covered above?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

No doubt that people suffering exclusion conditions will have less possibilities to access information at a private venue. Although affordability (covered above) might not be a problem for middle and even low class segments of population, other segments of population living under chronic poverty do not have the access to cybercafes in their day a day priorities.

In this sense, digital divide shows as a big problem to be solved in the country (related not only to economy but to many other topics related to it, such as access to basic education services, literacy, digital capacities, children work and gender among others).

4.3.3   Capacity & Relevance

2 – 3 Paragraphs:
What is your overall assessment of CAPACITY ecosystem in this type of venue (human capacity, locally relevant content, integration into daily routines, socio-cultural factors, trust in technology, social appropriation of technology)?

We have seen that cybercafes are the venues where information and knowledge are more socialized. Since there are no restrictions of use (except of pornography), users have more chances to learn and exchange around ICTs. Social networking tools, such as Hi5, Myspace, Facebook, blogs, microblogs, photologs and others give the users new possibilities of use and a learning space not available anywhere else (except homes). It is common to find youths exchanging information about picture uploading, music downloading, templates, layouts, and other tools related to Web 2.0. Although many people do not have all the capacities to give an integral use to the ICT tools offered by cybercafes, other users and operators help them to develop their capacities at least in basic issues (such as e-mail, chat, information download, and others). In this sense, it is easier to appreciate the integration to daily routines in this venue: users learn playing, chatting, checking, mistaking and asking, without the strict framework of a capacity building program or the restrictions existent in telecenters.

There are cultural factors to take into account: many adults consider that cybercafes are a place for young people. While talking to community members about cybercafes, we found that this belief is very common among adult workers (in many cases people without formal education) that haven´t had contact with technology and have reticence to ICTs. In Costa Rica it is harder for adults with no ICT formation to get close to technologies and to adopt them for their information and communication processes. Another situation to be mentioned is that women still are having more difficulties to get close to ICTs. This is an interesting situation that has to be deeply analyzed, for evidences a gender issue around the digital divide.

4.3.3.1 Staff Size

How many people work in a typical facility for this type of venue? (full time-equivalent employees or contractors; describe any significant variations; i.e., large, medium and small libraries in the country)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

There is always one person in the venue, in charge of the front desk and the computers. Some cybercafes have a staff of 4-6 part time members that distribute the time according to their needs. Technical support personnel is not always available, and the operators start developing skills to repair small technical failures and to support the users. The most common is to find 1 to 2 persons attending the cybercafe at a time.

4.3.3.2 Staff Training

What is the overall capacity of the staff (ie, librarians, telecentres operators) to help users access and use public access to information & communication services offered in this venue? Differentiate by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

(v) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

(vi) For Public Libraries, indicate if Library School training is available and/or required for librarians.

We found out that there is a diverse capacity condition among operators. While some of them do not have any experience with computers and have more skills in the administrative part, others are computation engineers that opened their SME. Nothing guarantees that the staff has enough expertise to support the users. Working on a cybercafe can become a capacity building process for operators, and as a couple of them told us during the field work, they keep learning day by day even from users that have more expertise.

There are no laws in the country stipulating that cybercafe operator must have a degree in any career related to ICTs.

4.3.3.3 Services Offered

What kind of services does this type of venue offer to the public? (ie, access to books, magazines; meeting & conference rooms; audio/video programs, computers, internet, other). Include Digital ICT services if offered.

	Services Offered	Comments
12.	Computers	no comments
13.	Internet connection	no comments
14.	webcams	where available
15.	microphones and headsets	where available
16.	CD burning	where available

17.	Scanners	where available
18.	Printers	where available
19.	International calls	where available

Explain any salient differences in the services offered in different regions, sizes or other variables of significance:

Some cybercafes are part of a digital store where CDs, printers, toner, paper, software, hardware and other digital devices are sold.

Ones are big and have 20 or more computers, while others have only 5. It depends on the demand and the frequency of use. The owners introduce new services by users request, and the size of the venue and the diversity of services offered depend on the success of the business and if there are enough visitors paying for the service.

4.3.3.4 Programs for Underserved Communities

Describe if this venue has programs specifically intended to reach underserved communities, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

None. Cybercafes are private enterprises and when they offer capacity building programs these are part of the business and are charged with different amounts depending on the course and teh cybercafe.

4.3.3.5 Relevant Content

What type of locally relevant content is available? What else is needed? Who is doing it?

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Available Content:

Same as in CECIs, it depends more on the capacities and will of the operators to guarantee the access to pertinent content. Users have less limitations in terms of use of the venue, but they do not count on proper advising in order to do an optimal use of the services offered in the venue.

Other Content Needed:

No pertinent data available for this question.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

No pertinent data available for this question.

Source: --------

4.3.3.6   Services & Information Available in Local Languages

Describe the availability of services and contents relevant to human development that are available in **local languages** in this type of venue? (i.e., info on health, education, government services, etc)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Internet has many possibilities regarding to languages. However, the inclusion of operative systems translated to local languages does not exist in the country. English speakers have more facilities than any others, and from the government there is not any program or projection to include information in local languages to the Digital Government program. No health or education information is translated to local languages, and the government services are offered in Spanish only.

4.3.3.7   Types of Uses

What do people USE the venues for (most frequent kinds of information & services people seek in them, activities they carry out in them)?

(iii) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs and complement here as needed:

People visit the cybercafe for many reasons. To look for educative information to complete homeworks, to keep in touch with university professors, send papers and complete tests. To play online games, to check on social networking pages, to use Office, print homeworks and papers, burn CDs, chat, e-mail checking, business, personal activities, to contact relatives outside the country, to do appointments with the American Embassy, Internet banking, access digital government services, read magazines and newspapers, blogging, searching for hobbies information, entertainment, and others.

4.3.3.8   Number, Type and Frequency of Users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs, **Error! Not a valid result for table.**. Complement here as needed:

We do not have detailed information about the number of users visiting cybercafes. From the interviews with operators, we concluded that the majority of Cybercafe users are young male students (from both secondary and university). While some users visit one venue only once, others are considered as "locals", and have a friendship relation with operators.

4.3.3.9   Users Capacity to use information and services offered

What is the overall capacity of the users to take advantage of public access to information & communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Frequently cybercafe users already know at least the basics about computers and Internet. In many cases there are intermediary practices among family members, that work as a capacity building process.

Operators help the users to clarify basic doubts: how to download or upload attachments, how to

send an e-mail, how to subscribe to online magazines, how to use the Internet searchers, etcetera.

4.3.3.10 Training Courses for Users

Describe training courses offered to the public at this venue, and if they offer some kind of testing and certification.

Training courses: Some cybercafes offer English, computer and Internet classes. The prices are diverse, and according to operators this is an indicator of the income level of the users.

ICT specific training courses: Computation (Microsoft office) and Internet. Prices are diverse, an usually too high.

4.3.3.11 Integration into daily routines

How easy is it for users to integrate the information and services offered in this type of venue into their daily lives? (offer concrete solutions to their needs and problems, make it easier to solve them at this venue than in other places)

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

The levels of integration are different for different users. What the team could observe during the field work is that socialization of information and knowledge sharing processes are more spontaneus in this venue. People visit the cybercafes to fulfill diverse needs, and since there are less restrictions in terms of use, it is easier to develop alternative learning practices and to share them with other users by intermediation. It seems to be easier for cybercafe users to solve their use-related problems and to obtain results, than for users of libraries and CECIs.

4.3.3.12 Users Perceptions about the Venue

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the venue (not necessarily its specific services, but the venue itself: ie, what do people generally think about libraries? Are they places that are "cool" or "only for elites" etc?), differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)? This includes perception by people who do not use the venue…

(i)   If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

Among young users, the cybercafe is more than a "public access to information venue". Friends gather at the cybercafé to exchange information and to share knowledge. They play together, "pimp" Hi5 and facebook profiles, upload pictures, download materials, participate in forums discussions, chat with friends, etcetera (as many of them said during the interviews, they also do homework and look for educative information).

People do not consider the cybercafe as a "place for elites". There are different fees per hour in different cybercafes. Users visit the one they can afford, and develop information processes with the people they find there. For many students and workers, it is the only option they have to develop digital skills. For many people is the only option to communicate with relatives living in other countries. There is still many people in the country that can not afford a personal computer, nor to pay for Internet services. And since the schedule of cybercafes is a bit wider (some of them are opened until 10:00 pm,) it facilitates the possibilities of full time workers to check on e-mail,

chat, look for personal and educative information, etcetera.

4.3.3.13 Social Appropriation of Information and Generation of New Knowledge

What activities, products and services are users undertaking that exhibit new levels of social appropriation of technologies and generation of knowledge? For example, how are users generating and disseminating new knowledge, products and services through their use of this venue? (see category 13 in Real Access Framework for Social Appropriation of Technology).

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

It has been interesting to observe how the appropriation levels increase in this venue where the regulations are less than in State ones. There are more bloggers, networking game players, and people reveal a higher level of skill development. Normally for cybercafe users it is easier to upload pictures, to download materials, and to find information. This maybe has to be with the wider schedule of many cybercafes, for people can gather during the night, after going to school or to work.

The cybercafe users, specially the young ones, seem to be more collaborative. The expertise is distributed from friend to friend, user to user, relative to relative, etcetera. There is a highest level of appropriation and users know (or can find out "how" easily) to use web 2.0 tools.

4.3.3.14 Trust, Safety & Privacy

What is the general perception or opinion of the population about the safety, security and privacy (TRUST) of the information and services offered in this venue?

In general, users trust the information they access in Cybercafes. As in CECIs, they affirm to take care about their sources, and as the venues have the human resources to prevent viruses, to scan equipment and to clean it in regular terms, people is not afraid to plug-in their external devices.

Spywares are a big preocupation among users, so, as many of them affirm, they avoid to practice Internet banking in cybercafe computers. However, many of the users are not even aware of this kind of risks.

4.3.3.15 Gaps and Opportunities in information & services offered

What other information gaps & opportunities exist, which are not being met? (other information / services people need that are not being met there and could be offered, especially through Digital ICT services)

The most popular venue in Costa Rica is the cybercafé. It is a good option for people that can not afford Internet at home, and for users who do not have their own computer.

We consider that cybercafes can be an excellent option to fulfill the information needs of communties, and that te fact that there are lots of venues in the country facilitates the access for all population (if there is political will to negociate with the venues and design a policy of access that gives people from underserved communities the chance to benefit from these venues). Since cybercafes are self-sustainable and already have their own infrastructure and equipment, the

efforts of the government should be focused in guaranteeing the access of all the population to these venues, and not to start new telecenters programs every four years with the new presidential period.

As mentioned in the venue assessment, national and local economy has many repercussions in the generation and sustainability of cybercafes. The promotion of local entrepeneurship has been common due to national legislation and the existence of partnership between private and public banking. In this sense, SMEs have had the support to get started (even though it is not complemented with leadership development and entrepreneurs empowerment). Regulatory framework is the same as for other enterprises (cybercafes are subjet to taxes payment as any other for profit activity), and since there are not stricted regulations related to intellectual property, the services given in the venues are not subject to other regulations than the ones stipulated in the actual intellectual property law (that does not consider new scenarios such as Intenet, downloading, uploading, online sharing, e-learning, etcetera).

The actual conditions of national economy do not really benefit cybercafes. Poverty does not benefit local entrepeneurship at any level, for less income produces less demand of services. In the other hand, since the actual economic conditions produce less security and low quality jobs, a small enterprise becomes a very attractive option for those who have any chance to start their own business. Still, cybercafes represent a good entrepreneurship option, for there are many segments of Costa Rican population that can not afford a personal computer and do not have the option to pay home connection to Internet.

4.3.4.4 Organization and Networking

Describe if the facilities in this type of venue organized in any network, association or other collective body? (ie, national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

Cybercafes are not organized or linked between them.

4.3.4.5 Partnerships

Describe notable public-private partnerships in support of this type of venue.

If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

No public-private partnerships found. We looked up for "social vision" cybercafés but could not find any.

4.3.4.6 Other Environment Factors

Other factors in the environment that affect access and use of information in this kind of venue, not covered above?

There are two important barriers for the use of cybercafes, that are strictly related to the barriers in Public Libraries: social exclusion and digital alphabetization programs oriented to infrastructure and connectivity. If the digital inclusion projects take into account the real needs of the population by addressing ICTs use to solve social problems and to change living conditions of the population, the social appropriation of technologies will be easier for the population. And this orientation must take into account the economic divide suffered by underserved communities in order to guarantee the equitable access to information and ICTs to all the population.

4.3.1 For Publicly Funded Venues only: Revenue Streams

This section is meant specifically for publicly-funded venues (public libraries, national connectivity programs, etc).

4.3.2 Case Example for Venue # 3: Cybercafe.

Provide a short descriptions and commentary for each type of venue, offering a realistic sense of what the venue looks and feels like in its day to day operation, the kind of people who visit, and the kind of services they receive. Also, the case example indicates what makes the case unique or what features are commonly shared with other venues. A photo and short quotes will make it even more real.

El Balcón Cybercafe.

Located in San Isidro del General, head town of the Pérez Zeledón canton, El Balcón is a good example of cybercafe. It is a successful venue, that has a big 2 floor building in down town, in front of the local market, in one of the most commercial streets of San Isidro.

It has 30 computer machines connected to Internet, and offers many other services, such as

photocopiers, scanners, printers, international calls, high speed Internet connection, web cams, microphones, CD burning, among others. It opens Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 9 pm and the cost of is of 350 colones per hour.

According to Javier Esquivel, its 29 year old owner, this has been a good business for him, because the venue is located close to several universities (public and private) and some secondary schools. His general perception is that more women visit the cybercafe, and that they use more basic services, such as Microsoft Office and printers to prepare their school papers. Checking on the computers Search Histories we found that many information about psychology are done in the venue.

Javier´s perception is that students do not come to his cybercafe to play oline games, nor to use social networking sites. He thinks that he has two different types of costumers: the ones that come to complete homeworks and study, and the tourists, that come to check e-mails and to make international phone calls.

For Mr. Esquivel, the cybercafes have an important roll in Costa Rica: they offer good services at a low price and help people to develop their information and communication processes more easily. Javier receives around 40 visitors a day, and the majority come to use ICT services, while some of them take advantage of a sales service that is offered in El Balcón: they can order software packs, hardware parts, ink, toner, paper and other more specific materials.

5   SUCCESS FACTORS & STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Summary of Lessons in country

5.1.1   Information Needs

What are the most critical information needs by underserved communities that are currently not being adequately met by public access to information & communication venues?

Information is needed in many fields, but as we mentioned throughout the report, more than information itself what the population of the country need is to understand how information can help them to improve their quality of life, in order to impulse empowerment processes and specially to acquire the capacities needed to identify information needs and potential opportunities to fulfill them. This reflection must be focused in people and how information benefits people. Short term vision programs have been harming Costa Rica´s population, since the lack of continuity is developing a culture of "inmediate processes" not planned, with weak designs and methodologies used as palliative solutions to specific situations.

It is evident that information has not been included in the governmental agenda of the country and the attention given to it does not generate the policies needed to improve the services offered in public access venues, nor to guarantee the sucess of initiatives designed to meet the needs of population.

Local content is not been generated under a participative logic where the communities have a voice not only identifying needs but working in the solutions. Social participation is needed to guarantee the quality of information solutions designed for communities and to create public policies that fulfill the demands of population. People know what they need, and this has to be positioned in any agenda. The generation of popular participative meeting points is the first step needed to give solution to the critical needs of underserved communities of the country.

5.1.2   Where people go

Where do people go for public access to information & communication in the country, especially underserved communities?

Costa Ricans go to cybercafes. This joining point seems to be the most adequated for the population in the country. Libraries do not represent a good option for people, since the information and services offered there suffer of low quality and do not fulfill information needs. It is interesting to observe how libraries are becoming more and more a joining point for students, reinforcing the belief that libraries are "only for students". With poor promotion and little attractive venues, libraries tend to become a obligatory venue for students only, where they go to complete homeworks after classes.

CECIs have come to facilitate a different participation of the communities at the interior of libraries, attrating other segments of the population that do not frequently use the venue. For

some of the librarians this has to do with the fact that CECIs provide users with free Internet connection. But CECIs in libraries also mean an added value since the ICTs facilitate information processes and give other options to users.

Underserved communities are getting out of this dynamics due to the economic barrier. Although in some visited communities we saw that CECIs are becoming a joining poit for those how do not have other access options, it is not commont that this venues work specifically to meet the needs of underserved segments of population (the coverage of CECIs and libraries is poor compared to the cybercafes presence in the country).

5.1.3   Access, Capacity & Environment affect Public Access

How do access, capacity and environment affect public access to information & communication venues in the country? (Refer to details under access, capacity & environment in research design document).

In general terms, we consider that Costa Rica has regular levels of access and capacities, and that the actual environment is not causing the public acces to information in a good way. Initiatives are poor and isolated in most of the cases, and it seems to be a lack of will in the diverse state institutions, for actions are developed and implemented by single actors. No multidisciplinary processes are been designed to meet the needs of population in terms of public access to information. The infrastructure-based concept handled by the authorities does not contemplate the human aspects of ICTs and for this same reason does not fulfill the information needs of the population.

Digital inclusion programs does not include a concientious reflection of the real needs of underserved communities nor how to address the ICTs uses in order to meet them. This factor makes the access more difficult. Our team insists in the necessity of developing inclusive processes that help people to understand how ICTs and information can help them to solve their problems, to fulfill their needs and to improve their quality of life. In this sense, we consider that the alliance between ministries (education, science and technology, youth and culture) in vital to guarantee the in order to guarantee the sprouting of policies that contemplate the different aspects from the public access to information and ICTs.

Infrastructure and connectivity are almost covered in the country, but we do not really take advantage of the fact that more than 90% of the country has electricity and fixed telephony services available (even though in some communities the services are pretty basic, there is at least one public telephone available).

In terms of capacity, Costa Rica has a Educative System covering the hole country. The problems and deficiencies of it generate enough material for another research, but what we want to point is that with a system of education supposed to be designed to reach the hole population, to be free and affordable, and to generate more opportunities for underserved segments of populations, the country has high opportunities in terms of capacity building and digital inclusion. Perspectives and strategies related to education and educative inclusion must be reviewed and analized in order to promote the equity in this field, and it is still much to be done in order to improve the system, but having it is a start.

5.1.4   Role of ICT

What is the role of ICT in public access to information & communication? What untapped opportunities exist?

ICTs have proved to be an excellent tool to meet the information needs of excluded communities around the world. But ICTs are not the final solution for all the human problems, and if they are simply given to people without any relevant content, capacity building process and strategic planning, ICTs won´t solution anything at all.

The biggest problem in Costa Rica is that ICT-based programs are not designed to meet citizen´s needs. They are seen as an aim and not as a tool. Planning for any ICT-related program or project must take into account the human factor, for it is the key for sucessful projects. Costa Rica needs strategic planning and a very deep and honest evaluation of every action involving ICTs realized until now to find out what is working and what has failed (and to identify the reasons why it has failed). The identification of good practices that can be reproduced in different communities, the collaborative reflection about what are the real information and ICT needs of diverse communties, and the development of public policies that guarantee the real access for all the population are vital factors that must be placed in the priorities of the agenda.

To facilitate instances of citizen participation, where all the alive forces of society are equitably represented is necessary to address a participative discussion that points the real needs of communities and the best ways to work on them to obtain quality results.

5.2   Success Factors & Recommendations

5.2.1   Where to Invest Resources

How could additional resources (money, people, time, knowledge) be best used to strengthen public access to information & communication venues and practices in the country? (ie, solutions that would make it more accessible, affordable, appropriate?)

Public Libraries System needs not only a wider budget, but also human resources that help the strategic planning and the insertion of adequated information and ICTs. At the moment, a law project for public libraries is wainting to be analyzed in the Congress. In case of been approved, this law would give the libraries more independence for it aims to increase the self-sustainability of the venues. With more autonomy libraries can work to reinforce their strengths and identify better solutions to work on their weaknesses. ICT capacity building is a must for librarians, and many of them showed high interest in that subject. Developing a capacity building process that includes the "train the trainers" concept and allows to reproduce the knowledge within the communities is very important ot guarantee the sucess of ICT inclusion strategies.

Resources are needed to improve the quality of services offered in public libraries, but this resources have to be part of a strengthening integral plan that includes all the involved actors: librarians, users, authorities, partnes and institutions.

Cybercafes are other venues that represent an excellent option to optimize the access to information and ICTs: they are sustainable SMEs inserted in the communities, present in all the country, offering many ICT services. To think about cost recovery processes that benefit both the population and the enterprises could be an alternative for the country. "Social vision" cybercafes are possible, and can be developed in Costa Rica to guarantee the equitable access to information and ICTs.

5.2.2 Key Success Factors

What are the key success factors for public access to information & communication to meet information needs of the population, especially underserved communities, and especially through digital ICT?

No doubt that strategic planning is an essential factor to ensure the success of public access to infomation and ICTs initiatives. To guarantee good results it is necessary to increase the human investment, and to deeply analize the information processes of communities. It is vital to understand how and why people look for information, what are the processes, which actores are involved and what practices are developed. Learning to value local content is very important to meet the needs of communities. Learning to listen to the communities and to give their alive forces the possibility of participate in the decision making and the strategies developing is vital to obtain good results.

ICTs mean nothing without planning and strategic use. When people get to understand how information and ICTs can help them to improve their quality of life and how technology can facilitate the communication processes, social appropriation becomes a reality.

To involve different key actors, and establish strategic partnerships between institutions, NGOs, SMEs, community associations and ministries will help the access to information processes.

5.2.3 Role of ICT

How can public access to information & communication venues in the country be strengthened to offer more meaningful and equitable access to information, especially using digital ICT?

ICTs have to carry out a facilitation roll, by helping the capacity building processes and working as information management platforms. This roll has to include all different types of information, and to guarantee the democratic access of all people to it. To work as alternative ways to generate and rescue valuable information produced out of the traditional ways is also a mission of ICTs. To stimulate the generation of tools that can capture oral and local traditions and to facilitate sharing practices have also to be rolls of ICT based tools included in capacity building programs.

5.2.4 Top Ten Recommendations

What are the Top Ten recommendations for public access to information & communication venues in your country? Make sure you include policy recommendations as part of them.

1. Deeply analizing the actual information related initiatives to understand why the objectives are not been reached.

2. To Generate inclusive discussion spaces where communities and underserved segments of the population have a protagonic participation.

3. To generate public policies that guarantee the long term operation of the different initiatives.

4. To establish real goals that can be reached with real strategies.

5. To understand that indicators such as "the number of computers per each 100 inhabitants" do not contribute qualitative information about the social appropriation and benefits of ICT inclusion.

6. To develop participative solutions.

7. To monitor and evaluate every access to information and ICTs related action in order to easily understand what has to be changed and what can be reproduced in future programs.

8. To understand that digital divide is only a small part of the economic divide suffered by the country, and start working on integral processes that stop the excessive growth of the poverty and the social exclusion of underserved communities.

9. To establish strategic alliances between ministries and official institutions.

10. To work together with other key actors (NGOs, international cooperation, funding programs, private sector) to avoid the duplication of efforts, and to potenciate the initiatives that are active now.

6 APPENDICES

Please attach on the next pages any other relevant information, resources or materials that can help understand public access information venues in the country.

6.1 List of Countries included in Research

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Brazil
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
Georgia
Honduras
Indonesia
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Moldova
Mongolia
Namibia
Nepal
Peru
Philippines
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Turkey
Uganda

6.2   Overview of Research Design

The Center for Information & Society (CIS), in partnership with the Information School of the University of Washington, has as part of its core mission the investigation of how inequities in our global society can be reduced through improved access to information and communication technologies (ICT). As part of its research activities, CIS has brought together interdisciplinary teams of researchers to examine the needs, readiness and success factors for public access to information & communication venues through digital ICTs in 24 countries around the world.

Project Goal:

- Understand information needs, and opportunities to strengthen institutions that offer public access to information & communication, especially to underserved communities, and especially through the use of digital ICT: What are the needs, barriers, opportunities & success factors for public access to information and communication to help human development in countries around the world? For the purpose of this study, research is primarily focused on Libraries and Other institutional venues for which access to information has a significant role. This research includes understanding venues where digital ICT is currently offered, *and* also where ICT is not currently offered but there is potential and strong institutional support to include ICT (for example, some public libraries where digital ICT services are currently not offered, but there would be strong interest in offering them).

    Libraries include public libraries and other types of libraries that are open to the public. **Other venues** include national initiatives that offer public access to information, either with ICTs (telecentres, cybercafés and the like) or without ICTs (post offices, community centers and similar) and are of significant importance in local contexts.

Project Purpose:

- Inform policy & funding decisions: Inform funders and government decision makers about future program direction and funding allocations

- Contribute to public knowledge: Disseminate results of in-depth country and comparative analyses, including research design & analytical models

To inform project design, CIS adapted the Real Access framework (Bridges.org), analyzing public access to information & communication through a total of 14 research categories grouped under the dimensions of **Access**, **Capacity & Relevance** and **Enabling Environments**. Adaptation was done in consultation with research partners around the world for the purposes of this study.

The implementation of this project is organized as a two-phase process:

Phase 1:   Nov 07 – Feb 15, 2008

During Phase 1, a **Draft Country Report** will be prepared by local research teams in each country. The Draft Country Report includes a Country Profile, a Country Assessment and an early draft of Lessons & Recommendations.

The *Country Profile* is a collection of 50 general descriptive data points drawn from readily accessible sources; CIS pre-populates the reports for each country, and offers them for validation and comments by local teams. Country Profiles provide primarily statistical data that is intended to offer a quick snapshot of each country, including geography, political environment, demographics, economy, education and ICT infrastructure.

Using a common approach to define research processes, local teams will conduct initial fieldwork to inform a *Country Assessment*. The Country Assessment includes both a scan of information needs, especially for underserved communities; and an assessment of public access to information &

129

communication venues (with or without digital ICT services) and their environment, resulting in a better understanding of gaps, opportunities, and readiness of public access to information initiatives in each country.

During Phase 1, each country team will also complete an early draft of *Success Factors and Recommendations* focused on strengthening public access to information in the country, and identify potential themes and issues for further study in Phase 2.

Phase 1b: Feb 15-Mar 15, 2008

During this period, CIS will conduct a preliminary comparative analysis based on the Draft Country Reports from all participating countries, and suggest feedback and guidance for Phase 2 of the study. The comparative analysis will look for salient trends, emergent themes, patterns, and threads across regions. During this period, next steps will be determined for in-depth country research for Phase 2.

Phase 2: March 2008 – August 15, 2008

Phase 2 will involve a deeper assessment of public access to information and ICTs across all 24 countries. In particular, CIS is interested in deeper probing of the emerging themes and scenarios identified in Phase 1.   A **Final Country Report** will include high level analysis, success factors and recommendations to strengthen public access to information and ICTs in each country. Final comparative analysis across countries, with analytical models and scenarios, will be completed by CIS after receiving the Final Country Reports.

Findings will be disseminated publically through reports, academic publications, conferences and consortiums. Each country team is expected to produce at least one publishable paper on their research and findings, plus additional papers emerging out of the comparative analysis and global findings. Publications will be part of the public domain, with the CIS web site, partners' sites, and other publication channels to be identified.

6.3 Annotated Country Profile (form 2)

Attach here an updated copy of the annotated Country Profile (Form 2).