
PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION & ICTs
PHASE II REPORT

Nepal

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

SAP International
SAP International
Sanepal, Lalitpur, Nepal

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
www.cis.washington.edu
cisinfo@u.washington.edu

© 2008 University of Washington Center for Information & Society (CIS). The views expressed in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Washington or CIS.

Recommended citation:

South Asia Partnership (SAP International) (2008). Public access to information & ICTs: Nepal. Public Access Landscape Study final report, presented to University of Washington Center for Information & Society (CIS), Seattle.

Table of Contents

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

1	<i>EXTENDED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</i>	9
1.1	Research Project Overview	9
1.2	Introduction	9
1.3	Country Overview	9
1.4	Research Rationale, Sample, and Methods	11
1.5	Information Needs of Underserved Communities	12
1.6	Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities in Key Public Access Venues	13
	Public libraries	15
	<i>Weaknesses</i>	15
	<i>Opportunities</i>	15
1.7	Salient Findings	16
1.8	Key Recommendations	17
2	<i>METHODOLOGY</i>	19
2.1	Venue Selection	19
2.1.1	Venues studied	21
2.1.2	Other experiences of public access to information that are not quite “venues”	22
2.1.3	Other existing public access venues, not included in this study	23
2.2	Inequity Variables	26
2.2.1	Socio-economic status	26
2.2.2	Educational level	26
2.2.3	Age	26
2.2.4	Gender	26
2.2.5	Location	27
2.2.6	Other inequity variables	27
2.3	Data Gathering Techniques	27
2.3.1	Literature review	28
2.3.1.1	Most useful bibliography:	28
2.3.2	Individual interviews	29
2.3.3	Group interviews and focus groups	29
2.3.4	Site visits	30
2.3.5	Surveys	31
2.3.6	Other data gathering techniques	32
2.3.7	Most useful contacts	32

2.4	Research Trustworthiness and Credibility	33
2.4.1	Research limitations.....	33
2.4.2	Team qualifications	34
3	Country Assessment	36
3.1	Overall Country Assessment	36
3.2	Real Access Framework	36
3.2.1	Access	37
3.2.2	Capacity	37
3.2.3	Environment	37
3.3	Information Needs of Underserved Communities	38
3.3.1	Information sources.....	39
3.3.2	Key barriers to accessing the information that underserved communities need	40
3.3.3	Ways users experience different types of public access venues	40
3.3.4	Inequity environment in the country.....	41
3.3.5	Freedom of press and expression and the right to information.....	41
3.4	Charts: Information Needs, Users, and Uses	42
3.4.1	Users, by type of venue	43
3.4.2	Information People Seek, by type of venue.....	45
3.4.3	Uses of ICT, by type of venue	46
3.4.4	Frequency of Use for each type of venue.....	47
3.4.5	Barriers to use for each type of venue	47
3.5	Salient initiatives to help meet critical information needs by underserved communities	49
3.5.1.1	Past initiatives:	49
3.5.1.2	Ongoing initiatives:	49
3.5.1	Historical trends and opportunities to serve information needs	50
3.5.2	Planned initiatives:	52
3.6	Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment	53
3.6.1	National and local economic environment.....	53
3.6.2	National and local policy (legal and regulatory) environment	53
3.6.3	Regional and international policy (legal and regulatory) environment.....	57
3.7	Collaboration Practices and Opportunities across Venues	57
3.8	Buzz Factor: Public and Government Perceptions about what is “Cool”	58
3.9	Legitimate Uses	58
3.10	Shifting Media Landscape	59
3.10.1	Mobile phones.....	59
3.10.2	Web 2.0 tools and use.....	59
3.10.3	Combination of different media.....	60
3.10.4	Other shifting media landscape examples	60
3.11	Health Information Needs	60
3.11.1	Sources of health information.....	61
3.11.2	Types of health information	61
4	Venue-Specific Assessments	62
4.1	Venue 1: Public Libraries	62
4.1.1	Overall venue assessment	62
4.1.2	Access	63

4.1.2.1	Physical access	63
4.1.2.2	Appropriate technology and services	64
4.1.2.3	Affordability	64
4.1.2.4	Fees for services.....	65
4.1.2.5	Geographic distribution	66
4.1.2.6	Map	67
4.1.2.7	Other factors affecting access.....	67
4.1.3	Capacity and relevance	67
4.1.3.1	Staff size	67
4.1.3.2	Staff training.....	68
4.1.3.3	Services offered	69
4.1.3.4	Programs for underserved communities	70
4.1.3.5	Relevant content.....	71
4.1.3.6	Services and information available in local languages.....	71
4.1.3.7	Types of uses.....	72
4.1.3.8	Number, type, and frequency of users	73
4.1.3.9	Users Capacity to use information and services offered	73
4.1.3.10	Training courses for users	73
4.1.3.11	Integration into daily routines	74
4.1.3.12	Users perceptions about the venue.....	74
4.1.3.13	Social appropriation of information and generation of new knowledge.....	75
4.1.3.14	Trust, safety, and privacy	75
4.1.3.15	Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered	76
4.1.4	Enabling environment.....	76
4.1.4.1	Local and national economy	76
4.1.4.2	Legal and regulatory framework.....	77
4.1.4.3	Political will and public support	78
4.1.4.4	Organization and networking.....	79
4.1.4.5	Partnerships	79
4.1.4.6	Other environment factors	79
4.1.5	For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams	80
4.1.5.1	Budget.....	80
4.1.5.2	Relative size of budget	80
4.1.5.3	Sources of funding	81
4.1.5.4	Paths and flows of resources	81
4.1.5.5	Fees and cost recovery.....	81
4.1.5.6	Cost categories.....	82
4.1.5.7	Recent changes and future trends.....	82
4.1.6	Case example for public libraries: Pokhara Public Library, Chipledhunga, Pokhara, Kaski.....	82
4.2	Venue 2: Community Library.....	85
4.2.1	Overall venue assessment	85
4.2.2	Access	86
4.2.2.1	Physical access	86
4.2.2.2	Appropriate technology and services	86
4.2.2.3	Affordability	87
4.2.2.4	Fees for services.....	88
4.2.2.5	Geographic distribution	89
4.2.2.6	Map	89
4.2.2.7	Other factors affecting access.....	90
4.2.3	Capacity and relevance	90
4.2.3.1	Staff size	91
4.2.3.2	Staff training.....	91
4.2.3.3	Services offered	92

4.2.3.4	Programs for underserved communities	94
4.2.3.5	Relevant content.....	95
4.2.3.6	Services and information available in local languages.....	96
4.2.3.7	Types of uses.....	96
4.2.3.8	Number, type, and frequency of users	97
4.2.3.9	Users capacity to use information and services offered.....	97
4.2.3.10	Training courses for users	98
4.2.3.11	Integration into daily routines	98
4.2.3.12	Users perceptions about the venue.....	99
4.2.3.13	Social appropriation of information and generation of new knowledge.....	99
4.2.3.14	Trust, safety, and privacy	100
4.2.3.15	Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered	100
4.2.4	Enabling environment.....	101
4.2.4.1	Local and national economy	101
4.2.4.2	Legal and regulatory framework.....	102
4.2.4.3	Political will and public support	102
4.2.4.4	Organization and networking.....	103
4.2.4.5	Partnerships	103
4.2.4.6	Other environment factors	103
4.2.5	For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams	104
4.2.5.1	Budget.....	104
4.2.5.2	Relative size of budget	104
4.2.5.3	Sources of funding	104
4.2.5.4	Paths and flows of resources	105
4.2.5.5	Fees and cost recovery.....	105
4.2.5.6	Cost categories.....	106
4.2.5.7	Recent changes and future trends.....	106
4.2.6	Case example for venue 2: Sangam Community Library, Gaighat-2, Udaypur.....	107
4.3	Venue 3: Telecenter	112
4.3.1	Overall venue assessment	112
4.3.2	Access	113
4.3.2.1	Physical access	113
4.3.2.2	Appropriate technology and services	114
4.3.2.3	Affordability	114
4.3.2.4	Fees for services.....	115
4.3.2.5	Geographic distribution	117
4.3.2.6	Other factors affecting access.....	119
4.3.3	Capacity and relevance	119
4.3.3.1	Staff size	119
4.3.3.2	Staff training.....	120
4.3.3.3	Services offered	120
4.3.3.4	Programs for underserved communities	123
4.3.3.5	Relevant content.....	123
4.3.3.6	Services and information available in local languages.....	124
4.3.3.7	Types of uses.....	125
4.3.3.8	Number, type, and frequency of users	125
4.3.3.9	Users capacity to use information and services offered.....	126
4.3.3.10	Training Courses for Users	127
4.3.3.11	Integration into daily routines	127
4.3.3.12	Users perceptions about the venue.....	128
4.3.3.13	Social appropriation of information and generation of new knowledge.....	128
4.3.3.14	Trust, safety, and privacy	129
4.3.3.15	Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered	129

4.3.4	Enabling environment.....	130
4.3.4.1	Local and national economy	130
4.3.4.2	Legal and regulatory framework.....	131
4.3.4.3	Political will and public support	131
4.3.4.4	Organization and networking.....	132
4.3.4.5	Partnerships	132
4.3.4.6	Other environment factors	132
4.3.5	For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams	133
4.3.5.1	Budget.....	133
4.3.5.2	Relative size of budget	133
4.3.5.3	Sources of funding	133
4.3.5.4	Paths and flows of resources	134
4.3.5.5	Fees and cost recovery.....	134
	Cost categories	134
4.3.5.6	Recent changes and future trends.....	135
4.3.6	Case example for venue 3: Rural Information Center, Ghailadubba, Durgapur, Jhapa.....	136
4.4	Venue 4: Cyber Cafes	138
4.4.1	Overall venue assessment	138
4.4.2	Access	138
4.4.2.1	Physical access	139
4.4.2.2	Appropriate technology and services	139
4.4.2.3	Affordability	140
4.4.2.4	Fees for services.....	140
4.4.2.5	Geographic distribution	142
4.4.2.6	Other factors affecting access.....	143
4.4.3	Capacity and relevance.....	143
4.4.3.1	Staff size	143
4.4.3.2	Staff training.....	144
4.4.3.3	Services offered	144
4.4.3.4	Programs for underserved communities	145
4.4.3.5	Relevant content.....	146
4.4.3.6	Services and information available in local languages.....	146
4.4.3.7	Types of uses.....	146
4.4.3.8	Number, type, and frequency of users	147
4.4.3.9	Users capacity to use information and services offered.....	147
4.4.3.10	Training courses for users	148
4.4.3.11	Integration into daily routines	148
4.4.3.12	Users perceptions about the venue.....	148
4.4.3.13	Social appropriation of information and generation of new knowledge.....	149
4.4.3.14	Trust, safety, and privacy	149
4.4.3.15	Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered	149
4.4.4	Enabling environment.....	150
4.4.4.1	Local and national economy	150
4.4.4.2	Legal and regulatory framework.....	151
4.4.4.3	Political will and public support	152
4.4.4.4	Organization and networking.....	152
4.4.4.5	Partnerships	152
4.4.4.6	Other environment factors	153
4.4.5	For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams-Not applicable for Cybercafés in Nepal	153
4.4.5.1	Budget.....	153
4.4.5.2	Relative size of budget	153
	Sources of funding.....	154
4.4.5.3	Paths and flows of resources	154

4.4.5.4	Fees and cost recovery.....	154
4.4.5.5	Cost categories.....	154
4.4.5.6	Recent changes and future trends.....	155
4.4.6	Case example for venue 4: Auckland Cybercafé, Nepalgunj, Banke (Western Nepal)	155
5	<i>Success Factors and Strategic Recommendations</i>	157
5.1	Summary of Lessons in Country	157
5.1.1	Information needs	157
5.1.2	Where people go	158
5.1.3	How access, capacity, and environment affects public access.....	159
5.1.4	Role of ICT.....	160
5.2	Success Factors and Recommendations	160
5.2.1	Where to invest resources.....	160
5.2.2	Key success factors	161
5.2.3	Role of ICT.....	162
5.2.4	Top ten recommendations	162

ACRONYMS

AFORDA: Agriculture and Forestry Development Associates

BS: Bikram Sambat

CA: Constituent Assembly

CCTV: Closed Circuit Television

CDMA: Code Division Multiple Access

CIS: Center for Information and Society

DBI: Digital Broadcast Initiative

DDC: District Development Committee

DST: Digital Story Telling

ENRD: Electronic Network Research and Development

ETA: Electronic Transaction Act

FIT: Forum for Information Technology

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

FNJ: Federation of Nepalese journalists

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GoN: Government of Nepal

GSM: Global System for Mobile

HLCIT: High Level Commission for Information Technology

ICT: Information and Computer Technology

ICT4D: Information and Communication Technology for Development

INGOs: International Non-Governmental Organization

ISPAN: Internet Service Providers Association of Nepal

IT: Information Technology

ITU: International Telecommunication Union

KIPA: Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency

KU: Kathmandu University

KUCL: Kathmandu University Central Library

KUMS: Kathmandu University Medical Science

KUTH: Kathmandu University Teaching Hospital

LBU: Lumbini Bouddha University

Mi: miles

MIS: Management Information System

MoEST: Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology

MoIC: Ministry of Information and Communication
NGO: Non-Governmental Organizations
NITC: National Information Technology Center
NSU: Nepal Sanskrit University
NTA: Nepal Telecommunications Authority
NT: Nepal Telecom
OKN: Open Knowledge Network
OLE: Open Learning Exchange
OLPC: One Laptop per Child
OWSA: One World South Asia
PKI: Public Key Infrastructure
POKU: Pokhara Univeristy
PSTN: Public Switched Telephone Network
PU: Purbanchal University
READ: Rural Education and Development
RIC: Rural Information Center
SAP: South Asia Partnership
SLC: School Leaving Certificate
SMS: Short Messaging Service
TU: Tribhuvan University
TUCL: Tribhuvan University Central Library
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNF: United Nations Foundation
UNFIP: United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
VDC: Village Development Committee
VOIP: Voice over Internet Protocol
VSAT: Very Small Aperture Terminal
WTO: World Trade Organization

1 EXTENDED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Research Project Overview

This research focuses on public access to information and communication landscapes in 24 countries, with a special focus on public libraries to understand the information needs of the underserved communities, public access to information and communication venues, and the role that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can play.

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 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

As per the research objective, effort has been laid to examine different aspects of information and communication venues that are prominent in Nepal including the physical infrastructure and human resources, information contents and service usage patterns, communication & knowledge production, as well as environmental factors such as governmental policies, geography, ethnic and linguistic differences etc. Venues have been selected on the basis of consultation with different experts and discussion with the University of Washington team. The venues that were studied for the purpose of the research include public libraries, community libraries, telecenters and cybercafés. In addition to the comprehensive consultations and assessment of these venues, a general assessment was also performed for other venues that were seen as relevant information dissemination venues for the underserved and disadvantaged groups in Nepal. These venues are University libraries, Information centers, Multimedia centers and Community radios.

1.3 Country Overview

Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, also Republic of Nepal, is a landlocked country in South Asia. It is bordered by China to the north and by India to the south, east and west. The Himalaya mountain range runs across Nepal's northern and western parts, and eight of the world's ten highest mountains, including the highest, Mount Everest, are within its territory. Geography of Nepal is uncommonly diverse. Nepal is of roughly trapezoidal shape, 800 kilometers (500 mi) long and 200 kilometers (125 mi) wide, with an area of 147,181 square kilometers (56,827 sq mi).

Nepal's gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2005 was estimated at just over US\$39 billion (adjusted to Purchasing Power Parity), making it the 83rd-largest economy in the world. Agriculture accounts for about 40% of Nepal's GDP, services comprise 41% and industry 22%. Agriculture employs 76% of the workforce, services 18% and manufacturing/craft-based industry 6%. The spectacular landscape and diverse, exotic cultures of Nepal represent considerable potential for tourism, but growth in this hospitality industry has been stifled by recent political events. Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in Asia with 31% of the population still living under the poverty line. Population of the country is 25.2 million with 7.75 million people living below the income of \$1 per day. The GDP per capita remains \$ 260. Literacy rates of the country is 56% (of population age 15+), 70.5% (of net primary enrolment) and 48% of the children under the age of five are suffering from malnutrition.¹

All the languages spoken in Nepal are the national languages.² Nepali is the official language of Nepal, with almost 60 percent of the population speaking it.³ However, all languages spoken in Nepal can be used for official purposes and documentation irrespective of what the official language is.⁴ In the capital Kathmandu, Nepal Bhasa (the Newar language) and Nepali are the most widely used language. The other popular languages are Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Gurung, Tamang, Magar, Awadhi, Sherpa, Kiranti and another 100 different indigenous languages.

Nepal has seen rapid political changes during the last two decades. Until 1990, Nepal was an absolute monarchy running under the executive control of the king. Faced with a people's movement against the absolute monarchy, King Birendra, in 1990, agreed to large-scale political reforms by creating a parliamentary monarchy with the king as the head of state and a prime minister as the head of the government. The movement in April, 2006, brought about a change in the nation's governance: an interim constitution was promulgated, with the King giving up power, and an interim House of Representatives was formed with Maoist members after the new government held peace talks with the Maoist rebels. In April, 2007, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) joined the interim government of Nepal.

On 28 December 2007, the interim parliament passed a bill that would make Nepal a federal republic, with the Prime Minister becoming head of state. The bill was passed by the Constituent Assembly on May 28, 2008. On 10 April 2008, there was the first election in Nepal for the constitution assembly. The Maoist party led the poll results, but failed to gain a simple majority in the parliament.⁵ On 28 May 2008, lawmakers in Nepal legally abolished the monarchy and declared the country a republic, ending 240 years of royal rule in the Himalayan nation.⁶ Voting for the election of the country's president and vice president took place in the Constituent

¹ Extracted from <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/asia/nepal.asp>, last accessed on August 10, 2008

² Interim Constitution, Article 5, point 1

³ Interim Constitution of Nepal, Article 5, point 2

⁴ Interim Constitution of Nepal, Article 5, point 3

⁵ http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11057207&fsrc=nwl, last accessed on September 24, 2008

⁶ <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5isOHNx5wqAzoR3Uc79spn-FzvERg>, last accessed on September 24, 2008

Assembly electing Dr. Ram Baran Yadav as the first president of Nepal with Parmananda Jha as the Vice President.⁷ On August 15, 2008, Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka 'Prachanda' was declared the first Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nepal.⁸

As far as the information landscape of the country is concerned, there is less than one telephone per 19 people. Landline telephone services are not adequate nationwide but are concentrated in cities and district headquarters. As for 2006, there were only 595,800 main telephone lines in use.⁹ Mobile telephony is in a reasonable state in most parts of the country with increased accessibility and affordability. As for 2006, there were 1.157 million mobile phone lines.¹⁰ In general, there is a poor telephone and telegraph service in the country but fair radio-telephone communication service and mobile-cellular telephone network is available. There were around 249,400 internet users and 18,733 internet hosts in the country as for 2006.¹¹ These figures are expected to have grown though since the proliferation of internet in the country has increased remarkably.

1.4 Research Rationale, Sample, and Methods

Perhaps the first of its kind research initiative in Nepal, it has paid considerable attention in analyzing the patterns of access to information through public venues, with or without ICTs. In the context of Nepal, this research is expected to lay a foundation for further interrogation and exploration on nature and type of effort to be put to enhance opportunities for people to increase access to critical information that really matters to them. The research is also expected to put forward some key recommendations and suggestions to compliment the ongoing efforts of different government and development agencies to promote access to information by those underserved masses living in rural or disadvantaged communities using efficient and effective mechanism.

For the purpose of this research, special consideration has been given to study venues that are seen as resourceful and important information venues by the community members at large. The holistic approach of the research to include venues offering information service delivery through ICTs like telecenter and cybercafés along with more conventional information access venues like libraries is likely to produce concrete recommendations to enhance public access to information arena. At a national level, this research is expected to raise key issues that need to be addressed

⁷ <http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2008/jul/jul21/news09.php>, last accessed on July 25, 2008

⁸ <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/08/16/asia/AS-Nepal-Premiership-Election.php>, last accessed on August 18, 2008

⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2008

¹⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2008

¹¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2008

to contribute towards general public's well-being by accessing timely and appropriate information through a source that is accessible to all.

Given the lack of appropriate data source in identifying the exact number of venues (telecenters, cybercafés, public libraries and community libraries) in the country, consultation with area experts was done to fix the sample size for each of the venues under study. Venues that could be representative of the four individual venues were selected to give a complete national picture.

For the research, purposive sampling was used to make the study representative of the country and bring out any disparities among the venues themselves as well. Of the total 240 telecenters in the country, a sample of 20 telecenters was taken. The 20 telecenters selected for study were selected from eastern part, the central part and the western part of the country. Similarly, of the total 100 public libraries in the country, a sample of 17 libraries covering geographic landscapes of east, west and central regions were covered. Of the estimated 650 community libraries in the country, a sample of 14 was taken for in-depth analysis across the country. Similarly, of the estimated 5000 cybercafés, 16 were selected for the purpose of the study. In all the selected venues, distribution in urban, semi-urban and rural venues has been considered as far as possible.

Following a participatory approach, the research involved a wide range of stakeholders since the inception. During the first phase of the research, area experts in telecenters, community libraries, public libraries and cybercafés were consulted to know the overall scenario at a broader level. Consultations were also done with ICT and library champions in the country. These consultations were complimented by literature reviews.

In the second phase of the research, the collected landscape information from secondary sources was further validated and corrected by doing *Field surveys* of operators and users of all four different venues across the country by selecting appropriate samples. The data collected from these surveys were also carefully analyzed to see the collective scenario at a national level. Once the information from secondary and primary sources were analyzed and categorized, *Focus Group Discussions* of thematic experts were conducted to further validate the research findings.

1.5 Information Needs of Underserved Communities

Information, as a vital resource for problem solving, decision making, education and knowledge updating, has no boundaries. Everybody, state and society requires it to achieve their goals and objectives. In Nepal, information is generally centralized in the capital city with most parts of the country remaining aloof from the basic information required by the population at large. There are different information needs of different groups. However, the common information needs include the information on education, employment, health, migration, foreign employment, rights and responsibilities among others.

Most of the opportunities of *employment* are capitalized by the people living in urban parts of the country because they get timely information on such opportunities while the people in rural parts of the country get such information very late, sometimes they do not get such information at all. Foreign employment lures many and because of lack of knowledge on safe migration practices, many people are cheated and left stranded in foreign lands. If information on safe migration practices can be conveyed to the people, many Nepalese could be saved from being beguiled.

Health and hygiene is a serious issue in the rural parts of the country. People do not know about the basic sanitation practices like washing hands before eating. Such lack of information leads to several diseases like diarrhea, jaundice, typhoid and other water borne diseases. Similarly, **Safe Motherhood** is a serious concern as well. Expecting mothers know the least about prenatal care which leads to maternal as well as infant mortality during the time of birth. More so over, even the basic information regarding postnatal care is unknown to most of the mothers, which again leads to several diseases in the child like Polio, malnutrition, stunting, and others, and sometimes even to untimely death of the child.

Agriculture is the main occupation of majority of the Nepalese and many depend on it for their livelihood. Despite this, most of the farmers have no information on how to protect their crops from pests, and how to increase the productivity of their lands. Also, the dual ownership of land is a serious issue in the country where in the farmers are left at the non-receiving end. This is basically because the farmers are unaware of their rights to property. So, if they can be conveyed information on these issues, their lands and their yields can be protected.

Education status of the country is not very encouraging. More than half of the population lack basic education. This is basically because of lack of basic educational infrastructure in the rural parts of the country, and also because most of the people are unaware of the value of education. Moreover, most of the girls lack primary education because of the embedded values that girls are homemakers rather than bread earners.

Despite government's various attempts to stop **Flesh Trade**, nothing much has been achieved. Many Nepalese girls, especially from the rural parts of the country are lured by the prospect of jobs in the foreign countries. Giving false promises, the agents take these girls to the foreign land, not for jobs but for selling them. If information on such illegal practices is conveyed to the girls, the problem of girls' trafficking could be combated.

In addition to the information needs mentioned above, there are several other information needs of the people in Nepal like the information on the **rights** issued to the indigenous community, and to the general public at large. New **laws** are promulgated time and again but information on such laws is not conveyed to the people in a timely manner.

1.6 Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities in Key Public Access Venues

In Nepal, information and communication venues include Community Libraries, Public Libraries, Telecenters, Information Centers, Cyber Cafes, and Community Radio among others. All these centers play a crucial role in providing the required information to the people. Many of the centers have also been providing Digital ICT services in order to further improve the information dissemination to the people. Also, many such centers have initiated programs intended to reach the underserved communities of the society.

Telecenters

Strengths

- An important venue for information dissemination in many places
- Significant interest in telecenter movement from government, development agencies and private sectors in the country
- Readiness among community members
- Potential of mobilizing local knowledge and generation of new knowledge through telecenters and strategic use of ICTs

Weakness

- Lack of commitment from the higher authorities
- Poor information Infrastructure (electricity and telecom) and higher costs of connectivity
- Unavailability of locally relevant content and services/lack of development focus and relevant strategies
- Lack of competent manpower at the lower level
- Lack of local support structure providing technical backstopping support

Opportunities

- Can help in trading goods and services online thereby impacting livelihood of people in the grassroots
- Collaborative opportunities: Telecenters can collaborate with cybercafés, District Development Committee, Village Development Committee
- Capitalize on the interest shown by different governmental and non-governmental bodies
- Telecenters can work as Rural ISPs

Community Libraries

Strengths

- High social appropriation
- Easily Accessible to the community members and high level of community ownership
- Community libraries have been able to address social issues like poverty, gender, social discrimination, etc
- Not just libraries, but venues to contribute towards the overall development of members

Weaknesses

- Lack of professional librarians
- Low penetration of ICT services
- Lack of availability of content in local languages
- No programs intended to serve the transgender community members
- Many libraries lack a sustainable income generating plan

Opportunities

- Libraries have the potential to work with communities to build a greater infrastructure.
- Creation of locally relevant content in local languages through different organization can be channeled through community libraries.
- Introduction of Digital ICT services is practical and feasible for enhancing their resource base

Public libraries

Strengths

- Have been seen as a prominent venue to create informed society by making available books and other resources since a long time.
- Affordable services
- Introduction of Library and Information Science Policy 2007
- Presence in almost all the districts of the country
- Government's interest in promoting public libraries

Weaknesses

- Low penetration of ICT services
- Lack of availability of local content
- Lack of professional librarians
- Operating hours not very appropriate
- Poor state of books in most public libraries

Opportunities

- Public libraries in rural areas can add content related to rights of underserved groups
- Introduction of Digital ICT services to attract more users
- Preservation of old manuscripts and other important documents through digitalization
- Introduction of programs that would involve community members directly

Cybercafés

Strengths

- Considered as important venue to access information and e-services of all kind, especially in urban and semi-urban areas.
- Provision of computer training in semi-urban and rural areas
- Easy accessibility/Cheap communication

Weaknesses

- Absence of proper connectivity in rural areas
- Established only in urban and semi-urban areas
- Not working as information collection/dissemination venues
- No programs intended to serve the underserved communities of the society
- Most information available in English
- No government body for supervision and monitoring of cybercafés in Nepal

Opportunities

- Collaboration opportunities between cybercafés and Telecenters
- Cybercafés can help in e-transaction
- Cybercafés in urban areas can also provide computer training
- Recent introduction of the cyber law

1.7 Salient Findings

The **Telecenter** movement in Nepal is still at a nascent stage. It is a relatively new concept that is gradually gaining momentum. Telecenters are established with a view to provide communication technology to the people of urban and rural areas. Its main objective is to provide computer, Internet, and e-mail technology facilities to the people of under-privileged society.¹² Telecenters are providing basic IT training and rural need-based information on agriculture, bee keeping, floriculture, health, environment, adult literacy and on enhancing livelihood opportunities. On the basis of a participatory need assessment survey, they can expand the scope of the services/information provided, as people are more interested in getting all the services at one place. They use appropriate ICTs, notice boards, meetings and Focus Group Discussions to disseminate information among the community members. They also conduct weekly/monthly tests to evaluate the progress of the students. Some of them have also formed women's groups to promote micro-credit activities as well.

Telecenter managers are not aware of the range of services that they can provide through the telecenters. They need to be well-informed about the range of services/information/training and teaching that can be facilitated through these telecenters. If they confine their services to providing only basic computer literacy, telecenters will be nothing more than IT training centers, whereas the prime objective of these telecenters is to provide value added information and knowledge to the deprived and underserved communities; and to facilitate the creation of 'knowledge societies'. The other problems faced by the telecenters are lack of adequate infrastructure, the political situation of the country, as well as the indulgent attitude of the authorities towards them.

Community library is a very old concept and are established to serve certain community of the society. There are about 650 community libraries in Nepal, with about 11% of them having access to Digital ICT services. Community libraries have been able to mobilize community members in order to be able to provide them with information that is of most value to them. For instance, if a community needs information on agriculture, the particular community library will have publications relating to agriculture, in particular, in addition to other publications.

Community libraries are not mere libraries, they are referred to as Social centers where community members get together and discuss different issues ranging from civil liberties to human rights. They conduct programs on health awareness, community development and empowerment. However, community libraries have not been able to incorporate Digital ICT components to make their services more efficient. Very few libraries offer Digital ICT services, and the sustainability of the ones which offer them is questionable.

There are about 100 **Public libraries** in the country, with about 25% of them offering Digital ICT services. Public libraries have publications ranging from history, to Geography to Politics to non-fiction. Also, many public libraries are offering services like Audio Visual, Multimedia CDs, trainings, seminars and conferences. Public libraries have not been able to attract many because of the absence of a reading culture in the country. Moreover, many people come to library just to read newspapers or meet friends and acquaintances. The introduction of Digital ICT is also not

¹² <http://www.hlcit.gov.np/telecenters.php> , last accessed on July 15, 2008

very effective. Public libraries can be of great value if it can help in preserving the culture and tradition of the country through digitalization of such components.

Cybercafés have become a very popular communication venue for most of the youth. They visit cybercafés to browse the internet, check mails, as well as chat with friends. Since quick information is available on the net, even the students prefer going to cybercafé and get the required information through the internet rather than going to the library and referring to the books. However, none of the cybercafés have program intended to reach the underserved communities of the society. If special programs are introduced, it can be of great help in increasing the number of visitors coming to surf the net and avail the benefits of the services.

The remarkable growth of *Community radio* in Nepal is significant both in the national context – a country of isolated, mountainous geography, poverty and under-development and a recent, protracted civil war – and in Asia Pacific, where no country has witnessed comparable growth of community radio. There is enormous potential for expanding community radio sector to contribute directly in addressing Nepal’s short and long-term needs, in particular the transformation of the political system, socio-economic development, greater social inclusion, and the imperatives of improving education, health and governance.¹³

Due to the geographical and topographical variation in Nepal, the remote and complex terrains have not been fully integrated into the reach of modern day technology for the rapid socio-economic development and bringing it into the national mainstream. A vital need have been felt to adopt the modern ICT perspectives in the global context. The problem is that much hard work is needed to provide computer access and training to rural areas in Nepal, and, as it stands, very little is being done to rectify the shortcomings in ICTs.

1.8 Key Recommendations

This research has been instrumental in digging out issues related to access, capacity and environment on public access venues in the country viz. Community libraries, Public libraries Telecenters and cybercafés. Based on this, key recommendations are given below.

- Although this research has been helpful in understanding public access to information and communication venues at a broader level, further research initiatives of similar kind is crucial to better understand the scenario in detail. An in depth country level research initiative can perhaps create a baseline for further analysis and future interventions in the areas of using ICTs for making universal access of information to population at large. We also need to focus on doing impact assessment of the public access venues with or without ICT component
- A formal coordination and networking mechanism should be established at the national level to create conducive environment for collaboration. Efforts from different sectors including government, private and development sectors regarding enhancing access to information and ICTs should be visible to all. This way we can expect collaborative initiatives, respecting each others strengths rather than competing with each other. We also need to establish

¹³ Ian Pringle and Bikram Subba, 2007, *Ten Years On: The State of Community Radio In Nepal, A Report Prepared for UNESCO*

knowledge sharing and networking mechanisms among the venues themselves to learn from each other and perhaps move towards sustainability.

- The social acceptance and community ownership of community library seems to be more than any other venues that have been part of research. So, lessons have to be learned from community libraries for successful implementation of other venues like telecenters and cybercafés at the community level. Telecenters in Nepal are often faced with acute problem of lack of appropriate support mechanism for sustainable operation where as cybercafés seem to be more sustainable owing to the private sector ownership and management. If we can use the potential and expertise of cybercafés directly to support telecenter movement in rural areas, we can create a positive environment of collaboration leading to sustainability of telecenters operating at rural areas and serving the disadvantaged communities.
- Rather than working in isolation, telecenters and libraries can be an integral part of broad ongoing development initiatives. This has the potential to create social ownership at the community level. Also, it creates a value of these community venues in the eyes of development agencies and development project implementers.
- To better serve marginalized and underserved community like dalits, janjatis, women, third gender, physically challenged group, etc. the theoretical concept of universal access should be brought down to implementation level. Thereby access should not be taken only in terms of physical access but efforts should be directed towards providing a favorable environment in the venues for these marginalized groups to come and access the information that matters to them the most. Careful analysis of the information need of the underserved communities should be done and bottom up approach should be encouraged rather than pushing content from the top.
- The favorable policy guidelines of Nepal in support of public access venues should be brought down to implementation level and necessary mechanisms should be devised accordingly. If we can focus on this issue, we can perhaps empower general public including the underserved communities with valuable and critical information and the use of public access venues will be enhanced as well.
- Capacity at both the ends; the supply end and the receiving end should be enhanced. Efforts should be directed towards enhancing capacity of operators of the venues as well as users. Capacity building interventions for venue operators should be initiated so as to increase their knowledge and skill to better serve the underserved communities. Similarly, effort should also be directed to promote awareness at the community level, especially to the underserved groups in accessing resources at public communication venues like libraries and telecenters.
- At a policy level, there is a need to integrate public and community libraries as direct part of the education system rather than treating them on stand alone basis. Similarly, the role of telecenters and cybercafés should be duly recognized in creating larger information society of the country.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Venue Selection

Brief description of the selection process: how you selected the types of venues to be studied, why they were included, why others were left out.

Note: this data collection template is designed to capture info about 4 venue types. If you study in detail more than 4 venue types in the country, include a full description of the 5th one as an appendix, using the same set of questions.

As per the project goal of understanding information needs and opportunities to strengthen institutions that offer public access to information and communication, a list of potential venues offering ICT services and the venues where providing access to information had been the primary objective were selected in consultation with relevant stakeholders at the country level. This preliminary list was further analyzed on the basis of project scope in consultation with the CIS to come up with a final list of the venues for the research. Special attention was paid in including venues offering digital ICTs along with those venues where providing access to information played a significant role and perhaps had an opportunity to introduce digital ICTs within their scope of services offered to the general public. The venues that have been selected for this research were public libraries, community libraries, telecenters and cybercafés.

Public Libraries

Although there is a significant variation in the definition of public libraries, we have defined public libraries “*as those venues in the country which is accessible by the general public and not restricted to specific groups of the population.*” These venues are distinct from special libraries like the agriculture research library or the social science library based on their objective to serve the general public at a larger scale rather than some specific segments of the population. In context of public libraries, the general public would represent a vast range of beneficiaries including marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the society like ethnic and religious minorities along with Dalits, women and children. These types of libraries are funded either by government or private sources including foundations and charities both within and outside the country.

Due to lack of proper research in the public library sector of Nepal, the exact count of public libraries has not been documented so far. However, consultation with library experts and organizations involved in libraries has shown that the number of public libraries in Nepal comes to around 100. Out of these public libraries about one third (25%) are offering digital ICT services by providing access to two-way information and communication services in terms of computers and internet. However, it has to be noted that not all of the public libraries offering digital services are offering full-fledged digital services with access being limited to offline browsing of library catalogs and indexes in most of the cases.

Organizations and agencies involved in the public library sector of Nepal like Ministry of

Education and Sports, Katmandu Valley Public Library, Nepal National Library, Keshar Library and Nepal Library Association were consulted for acquiring necessary information regarding this type of venue.

Community Libraries

As with the case of public libraries, there again seems to be confusion in the way people have been defining community libraries. For the purpose of this research, community libraries “*are public libraries at a smaller scale, serving a population of specific communities.*” The community in this context is based on geographic coverage rather than other factors like religion, ethnicity, etc. Community libraries are primarily owned by community in rural and semi-urban areas with or without support from government or external funding sources and the size could vary from a small library with books collection of few hundreds to large libraries with wide range of amenities and a significant collection of books.

The numbers of community libraries that have been registered with the authority are very few but there are significant numbers of community libraries that are not registered but are serving their specific communities. Incorporating both the registered and non-registered ones, there are total of around 650 libraries in Nepal. It has been found that the penetration of digital ICTs to the community libraries are limited to those who have been partnering with other organizations supporting libraries in Nepal and are relatively privileged in terms of their proximity to urban centers. In this context, only 11% of the community libraries are offering digital ICT services in Nepal

To collect data about community libraries in Nepal, consultation meetings were scheduled with different people involved in library sector like Ms. Indira Dali, Mr. Juju Bhai Dangol, Mr Bhola Shrestha, Mr. Sharad Babu Shrestha from READ Nepal along with organizations like Nepal Library Association.

Telecenters

Telecenters are public places where people can use computers, access the internet, and other digital technologies that enable them to gather information, create, learn and communicate with each other. Telecenters are normally established in rural areas where access to digital communication technologies would otherwise find difficult to exist. Telecenters are emerging and powerful tools for socio-economic development that can help in empowering communities through appropriate information where it matters the most. Telecenters have been established throughout the country by government agencies, private operators and the civil society (I/NGOs).

Although there has been varying data regarding the exact number of telecenters in Nepal, Mr. Saroj Devkota, Vice Chairman, High Level Commission on IT, Government of Nepal in his interview with mGov World has said that there are 240 telecenters in Nepal¹⁴. Telecenters are equipped with computers and other accessories like fax machines, photocopiers, etc with connectivity. In this line, 96% of the telecenters offer digital ICT services. However, a full time

¹⁴ Extracted from <http://www.mgovworld.org/PractitionerViewPoint/saroj-devkota> , last accessed on August 10, 2008

connectivity is always a problem for telecenters in Nepal.

Organizations and agencies involved in Telecenter promotion in the country like Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC), High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT), National Information Technology Center (NITC), Forum for Information Technology (FIT) Nepal, Electronic Network Research and Development Nepal (ENRD), Grameen Pahunch, ISP Association of Nepal (ISPAN), Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), Winrock International and South Asia Partnership (SAP) Nepal were consulted for acquiring necessary information regarding this type of venue in the country.

Cybercafés

Cybercafés are the venues that provide access to computers and digital technologies mostly in urban centers. Equipped with computers and internet connectivity, these venues have become the most effective way to stay connected for the people who cannot afford to have computers or get connectivity on their own. Along with providing internet access, these venues are also involved in providing desktop services (printing, scanning, photo copying, typing, etc) to the general public. The cybercafés are normally owned by private operators with very few being promoted by NGOs as well.

Annex A (p. 19) of the MIS Report of Nepal Telecommunication Authority (14 April 2007 – 16 July 2007) suggests that there are only 199 cybercafés that are being serviced by ISPs. However, there have been estimates of around 5000 cybercafés in the country. 100% of these cybercafés have access to digital ICTs although there is a problem of connectivity all the time in these venues. For collecting data on cybercafés, organizations like Nepal Telecommunication Authority, ISP Association of Nepal along with sample visit of cybercafés around Kathmandu Valley and outside the valley were very handy.

Apart from these four venues, a general assessment was also carried out for venues not included in the research so as to highlight some of their key strengths and weaknesses. These venues can be of potential interest for others to further explore as well.

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	Community Libraries	Telecenters	Cybercafés
Total number in country	100	650	240	5000
• # in urban location	70	390	168	4200
% offering ICT	33%	13%	100%	100%
Total # of people served (annual)	630,000	2,574,000	1,310,400	35,280,000
• # in non-urban location	30	260	78	800

% offering ICT	5%	5%	80%	100%
Total # of people served (annual)	486,000	1,482,000	1,006,200	6,000,000

Comments (comment especially on definition of urban/non urban in the country):
 Urban centers are defined as those places having access to public transport system, electricity and telephone and internet services among others.
 Total # of people served = average number of people served by one venue in a single day X 300 working days in a year X total number of venues

2.1.2 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, Wi-Fi 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: Community Tea Shops

Description :

These are the general tea shops in both rural and urban areas where community members hangout over a cup of tea and discuss over several issues related to the community and the country informally. These venues are run by private entrepreneurs and not backed up by any formal institutional support. These venues often provide a place for people to sit together and interact with each other. These venues are normally accessible to people from the community and are located in appropriate place in the neighborhood.

- Total number in country:** 20,000¹⁵
- % offering ICT access:** 0%
- % in urban location:** 30%

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

Often it is seen that community people read newspapers and get informed by listening to others as well in these types of venues. These are perhaps one of the most influential informal venues for accessing information. It is through these tea shops that people get informed about the different initiatives taking place in their communities along with other

¹⁵ Approximated figure based on consultation with different stakeholders.

information. 31% of the 121 users surveyed said that they use community tea shops as an important information venue. In most of the rural areas, people seeking opinions and information often make it a first attempt to go to these tea shops and discuss the issue. If people are unable to receive necessary information there, then only they go to appropriate formal venues to access the necessary information.

Other public access experience #2: Community Radio

Description :

Community radio is a type of radio service that caters to the interests of a certain area, broadcasting material that is popular to a local audience. In this term, community radios have become powerful venues to disseminate locally relevant content to underserved populations in Nepal. However, it is definitely not a venue where general population would come directly to access the information. People access information through their radios which receive the audio content broadcasted by these community radio stations.

Total number in country: 216¹⁶

% offering ICT access: 40%

% in urban location: 80%

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

In Nepalese context where the literacy rate is below 50%, for most of the people, the only source of information is audio content rather than written or printed materials. The materials aired by community radios reach to these segment of the society who can't read or write. It is hence a powerful and perhaps one of the most influential means to provide appropriate information to the totally underserved segment of the society.

2.1.3 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: Resource / Information Centers

Total number in country: 500

% offering ICT access: 10%

¹⁶ There has been remarkable growth in both private and non-for-profit radio in Nepal since 1997: 216 licenses had been issued as of July 2007 with 78 FM stations broadcasting; of 93 licenses issued to non-profit groups, 31 were operational as of May 2007. (Pringle I, Subba B (2007) *Ten Years On: The State of Community Radio in Nepal*, UNESCO)

% in urban location: 60%

Description of the Venue:

Different NGOs and civil society organizations have realized the power of information to empower their target population. In this context, many organizations have been promoting Resource / Information centers in their constituencies. These centers provide information on different aspects related to the project that the organization is implementing. Organizations involved in promoting safe motherhood have these centers providing information on safe motherhood to their beneficiaries.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

Owing to the fact that the objective of this type of venue is to compliment the works that organizations are doing by providing additional information to their target beneficiaries, the scope seems to be limited in terms of public access at a larger level. So, it has not been considered within the scope of current research. However, these kinds of venues do offer a wide range of information services not necessarily to the general public at large but to a selected group of people.

Other venue not studied#2: Community Media / Multimedia Centers

Total number in country: 20

% offering ICT access: 100%

% in urban location: 90%

Description of the Venue:

Community Media / Multimedia centers are extended versions of telecenters where a combination of old and new media is used. It includes community radio and local cable television with new media facilities (Bhutia and Martin, 2007)¹⁷. These types of venues have been promoted by UNESCO in Nepal with an objective of using ICTs for development. The centers are normally involved in providing computer and internet access, computer trainings, operating radio and televisions, trainings on skills required for content development and so on. 15% of the users surveyed said that they use community/multimedia centers for getting the required information.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

Although a successful model in penetrating ICTs for development activities in Nepal, this venue has not been part of research due to their scale. So far only three centers have been established in Nepal by UNESCO (Bhutia and Martin, 2007) and their penetration at large is still to be achieved. As the research is more focused on assessing venues that have significant impact on people rather than assessing the pilot projects, it has not been

¹⁷ Bhutia K T, Martin K (2007) *Forging Innovations: community Multimedia Centers in Nepal*, UNESCO

considered for this research.

Other venue not studied#2: University Libraries

Total number in country: 5

% offering ICT access: 100%

% in urban location: 100%

Description of the Venue:

With the adoption of multi - university concept by Government of Nepal (GoN), there have been six universities in the country at present. These are Tribhuvan University (TU) established in 1960; Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU) established in 1986 (2043 B.S.); Kathmandu University (KU) established in 1992 (2048 B.S.); Purbanchal University (PU) established in 1994 (2052 B.S.); Pokhara University (POKU) established in 1996 (2054 B.S.) and Lumbini Bouddha University (LBU) established in 2005 (2062 B.S.). Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL) established in 1959 A.D., is the largest library in Nepal in terms of space, collection, service, staff, library members, equipments and its activities. At present the library has over 300,000 volumes of books including 550 rare unique manuscripts, 7,000 rare books and other archival materials.

Kathmandu University Central Library (KUCL) is in Dhulikhel Campus, Management and Education Library in Lalitpur, for Music and Fine Arts in Bhaktapur, and for Medical Sciences KUMS Library in Chaukot, Panauti for Basic Sciences, for Clinical Sciences in B&B KUTH and Dhulikhel Hospital KUTH. All libraries hold books, video and audio cassettes, CD-ROMS, journals and magazines specific to the areas taught in their campus.

Similarly, the Nepal Sanskrit University, Purbanchal University, and Pokhara University also have their full fledged library with a huge collection of books, journals and research papers. The Lumbini Bouddha University has not come into operation, and is in its planning phase, so it does not have a library yet.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

Although university libraries have a huge collection of books, articles, research papers, journals and other publications, they have not been considered important information and communication venues since they are not accessible to the population at large. Except for Tribhuvan University Central Library, other university libraries are not accessible to all. Since these venues do not contribute to the population in general, they have not been included in the study.

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

The socio-economic status variable determines the economic well being of individuals or the communities.

Depending on their socio-economic class like High Income, Medium Income or Low Income people, the equitable public access to information and ICTs are differentiated. It is more likely for individuals belonging to high income group to pay membership fees for library subscription than the low income group people. This research has tried to study the same phenomenon.

2.2.2 Educational level

Education level has been defined in terms of individuals having no formal education, basic education (elementary level), intermediate education (up to a high school level) and higher education (post higher secondary education).

The value of information and knowledge is likely to be perceived more by individuals having formal education than their counterparts having no formal education. However, access to basic information on health, employment, etc might be more critical for individuals with no formal education than those having formal education. In this regard, equitable access to information and ICTs is greatly determined by this variable.

2.2.3 Age

It seems that youth and adolescents (under 25 years) are more into trying new things and using ICTs to access information than their elderly counterparts adult (25 – 60) years or senior citizens (60 years and above).

Understanding the value of information to all the age groups, it is important to gauge the pattern of usage of ICTs and Information Venues by different age groups so that the concept of equitable access to information and ICTs can be introduced.

2.2.4 Gender

Gender is a crucial variable that has significant impact on how individuals behave to things around. Owing to the cultural and social factors among others, women in Nepal are marginalized than their male counterparts. The third gender (transgender) is even more

marginalized in terms of their societal acceptance.

It is equally applicable in information landscape where women and transgender people are relatively less in number if we talk about access to ICTs and information. In this context it is important to see how individuals based on their sex differentiate in terms of access to information and ICTs.

2.2.5 Location

Location is a major component that defines the level of accessibility of a certain venues. If the venue is not physically accessible, there is a little contribution that it will be making towards the community members. Individuals living in urban areas of the country have more access to resources than their counterparts from rural areas. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the way people access information and ICTs from these two different geographic locations.

If we are considering equitable access to information and ICTs, it is an important aspect to consider how initiatives can be fostered to provide access to information and ICTs not only to urban sector but also to rural sector.

2.2.6 Other inequity variables

Other Inequity Variable 1: Caste / Ethnicity

Nepal is a country with significant diversity in terms of caste / ethnicity. Based on this diversity, people can broadly be categorized as Hindu caste group, ethnic group and indigenous communities.

As with access to other resources in the country, people belonging to ethnic groups or the indigenous group are underprivileged in having equitable access to information and ICTs. When we look from the country perspective, it is really very important to assess what opportunities exist to uplift those underserved caste / ethnic groups by providing them with proper access to information and ICTs.

Other Inequity Variable 2: Religion

Not very long ago Nepal was a Hindu country, but because of existence of other religious groups, it is now declared a secular state. In this context, it is important to categorize population in terms of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and others.

To make sure that people are not discriminated by the virtue of their religion, an assessment in how people of different religion are having access to information and ICTs seem locally relevant.

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.

100 (approximately) documents reviewed.

The documents reviewed include the papers that were available online, the policies related to different aspects that were available in the websites of the concerned authorities, news and articles, and other published books and documents that were available with the researchers. Also, for an in-depth study of the venues, the paper presentations done by different experts in different workshops, seminars and conferences were also reviewed.

Most useful bibliography:

- Thakur, S.B. and Parson, Helen, 1997. *The Status of Libraries, Information and Documentation Centers in Nepal*, Kathmandu: Nepal Library Association, 1997.
- Karki, Madhusudan, 2002. *National Policy for Library and Information System: A Proposed Model for Nepal* Kathmandu, 2002.
- Juju B. Dangol 2003. *Status of Community Libraries in Nepal: A Survey Report*
- Ian Pringle and Bikram Subba, 2007. *Ten Years On: The State of Community Radio in Nepal*, UNESCO, 2007
http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/files/7991/11966615215State_of_Community_Radio_in_Nepal_abridged.pdf/State%2Bof%2BCommunity%2BRadio%2Bin%2BNepal_abridged.pdf
- Dinesh P. Chapagain, 2006. *PPP Led ICT Enabled Services in Rural Nepal*, Economic Policy Network
- The World Bank (1999). *Knowledge for Development*, World Development Report, 1998-99.
<http://www.worldbank.org/wdr/wdr98/contents.htm>
- SAP International (2006). *Cybercafés of Nepal: Passage to Cyber crime*
- ITU (2000). *The Internet from the Top of the World: Nepal Case Study*. <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/cs/nepal/material/nepal.pdf>
- HLCIT. *A fact book on Information and Communications Technology sector of Nepal*
- Susan B. Neuman, Nafizuddin Khan, Thamsanqa Dondolo, *When I Give, I Own: Building Literacy Through READ Community Libraries in Nepal*
<http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RT.61.7.1&F=RT-61-7-Neuman.pdf>
- Loktantra Parajuli, *Public Libraries, Public Sphere and Politics: A Study of Social Consequences of State Policies in Nepal*
- Nepal National Library, *Library and Information Service National Policy 2064 (2007)*
<http://www.nnl.gov.np/policies.php>

- Manohar K. Bhattarai, *Telecenters in Nepal: Lessons Learned, Prospects and Challenges* <http://www.ruralict.ftml.net/np/Bhatt.pdf>
- Telecom Policy 2060 http://www.nta.gov.np/telecom_policy_2060.htm
- IT Policy http://www.nta.gov.np/it_policy_2057.html

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.

12 Number of individuals interviewed.

Describe

The interviews were conducted so as to get a rough idea of the public information and communication venues landscape in the country with a special focus on the underserved communities. Individuals were selected on the basis of their expert knowledge in the particular field.

The contact address of the interviewee is given in the section 2.3.7

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 two FGDs were done for Libraries and Telecenters. The FGD for libraries had experts in the field of public libraries and community libraries. Similarly, the FGD for telecenters had experts in the field of telecenters in Nepal. Also, some telecenter operators from near the valley were also invited. In both the FGDs, the research findings were shared with the participants to validate them. Also, opinions of the participants were taken on how to make the reporting more authentic.

The contact details of most useful informants is given below:

Name	Organization	Designation	Area of Expertise	Contact Details
Mr. Sagar Raj Subedi	Tribhuvan University Library Science Students' Alumni	President	Libraries	sagarsr@hotmail.com

	Association			
Mr. Pashupati Adhikari	Dilli Raman Regmi Library	Chief Librarian	Libraries	dkrmlibrary@htp.com.np
Mr. Bhola Shrestha	Kaiser Library	Chief Librarian	Libraries	Bholashrestha2001@yahoo.com
Mr. Rajiv Dhar Joshi	Room to Read	Senior Program Officer	School Libraries	Rajeev@roomtoread.org.np
Mr. Dashrath Thapa	Nepal National Library	Chief	Libraries	nnl@wlink.com.np
Mr. Bijay Kumar Roy	Nepal Telecommunication Authority	Assistant Director	Telecom Sector/ICT	bkroy@nta.gov.np
Tikajit Rai	Magnus Consulting Group Pvt Ltd	Co-founder	ICT	tika@magnus.com.np
Ms. Shania Soyoung Park	National Information Technology Center (NITC)	E-Governance advisor	E-Governance	Shania.park@gmail.com
Mr. Janak Raj Tuladhar	Bungamati Telecenter	Chairperson	Telecenter	E_tech@ntc.net.np
Ms. Geeta Pradhan	SAP Nepal	Program Officer	Telecenter	geeta@sapnepal.org.np
Mr. Ashim Karmacharya	Youth Telecenter	Member	Telecenter	yic@sapnepal.org.np

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).

71 Number of site visits.

The site visits were done in the following districts: Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kavre, Kaski, Baglung, Myagdi, Syangja, Palpa, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet, Udaypur, Sunsari, Morang, Jhapa.

These visits were part of surveys carried out for all the four different venues throughout the country.

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 telecenters, 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	Community Libraries	Telecenters	Cybercafés
# of urban venues surveyed	15	10	13	15
# of non-urban venues surveyed	2	4	7	1
# of respondents in urban venues	33	16	5	51
# of respondents in non-urban venues	3	5	8	0

Survey description and comments:

The survey questionnaires were designed on the basis of guidelines provided by University of Washington. Some alterations/additions were done.¹⁸ The operator's survey basically aimed at understanding the users' pattern in different venues on the basis of gender, education, caste and ethnicity. Also, the operators' survey aimed at understanding the types of information that the users seek at the venues, and the ICT tools that are most commonly used by the users. Similarly, the operators' survey also aimed at understanding the usage patterns, the ICT tools used, the limitations for the use of the venues or the ICT tools as well, and the frequency of use.

The 3 regions of Nepal were covered for the purpose of the study: Eastern, Western and Central. Not many rural areas were covered because of geographical constraints. Some venues that have been surveyed are located in places that can neither be categorized as Urban nor Rural. However, for the purpose of the study, such venues have been classified as Urban.

¹⁸ A sample of the edited version is attached in the Annexure

The timing of the field visits was not very favorable as well. During the team’s visit to Eastern Nepal, Nepal was declared a Federal Republic and there was a national holiday for 3 days. Although the team contacted the operators to have one-to-one discussion, getting hold of users could not be materialized. Similarly, during the visit to Western Nepal, Tharuhat, an ethnic community in Nepal, had called a strike. Because of the strike, some of the venues were shut, and some that were open were devoid of users.

2.3.6 Other data gathering techniques

Other Data Gathering Technique 1: Survey at Swabhimaan 2008¹⁹

Preliminary findings of the research were shared at Mission Swabhiman, the annual telecenter conference in Nepal in June 19, 2008. The audience took the presentation very well. Since the conference had telecenter operators from all over Nepal, the team harnessed the opportunity and did an impromptu survey of around 20 operators. A small questionnaire was developed with some basic questions like what does telecenter mean to the operators, the services that their telecenters offer, the financial status of their telecenter and the like. The results of the survey are attached in the Annexure.

2.3.7 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.

Contact Person	Organization	Designation	Area of Expertise	Contact
Mr. Juju Bhai Dongol	Kathmandu Valley Public Library	Director	Libraries (Public and Community)	kvpl@mos.com.np
Mr. Sharad Babu Shrestha	Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal	Country Director	Community Libraries	sbshrestha@info.com.np
Ms. Mona Sharma	Winrock International	Communication Officer	Telecenters	MSharma@winrock.org.np
Dr. Madan Prasad Pariyar	High Level Commission for Information Technology	Member Secretary	ICTs/ Telecenters / Government Policies	madan_p@hlcit.gov.np
Mr. Allen	Forum for	President	Telecenters	

¹⁹ Swabhimaan 2008 was the third Annual Conference on Rural Telecenters of Nepal organized by Forum for Information Technology Nepal from June 19-20, 2008 in Kathmandu, Nepal

Tuladhar	Information Technology(FIT Nepal)			allen@unlimit.com
Dr. Subarna Shakya	Nepal Information Tchnology Center (NITC)	Executive Director	Telecenters / ICTs / Government Projects / eGovernance	sshakya@nitc.gov.np
Mr. Chakraman Vishwakarma	Dalit Welfare Organization	General Secretary	Indigenous Community	dwo@wlink.com.np
Mr. Rajan Burlakoti	Womens' Rehabilitation Center (WOREC)	Senior Program Coordinator	Women Issues	worec@wlink.com.np
Mr. Pavan Shakya	World Link Communications Pvt. Ltd	Senior Manager	ICTs / ISPs / Rural Connectivity	pavan@wlink.com.np
Mr. Mahabir Pun	Nepal Wireless Project		Rural Connectivity	mahabir@himanchal.org
Mr. Deepak Rauniyar	Employee Provident Fund	Manager	Cybercafés / Information Security / Database	himhans@wlink.com.np
Mr. Vivek Rana		ICT Consultant	ICT4D	vivek.rana@aac.com.np

2.4 Research Trustworthiness and 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.

During the research process, conscious effort was made to avoid any biasness in data collection, analysis and interpretation. From the very first stage of the research process, a participatory approach was taken to ensure input to the research process from different stakeholders supporting the four venues under study.

Experts from different sectors viz. government, private and development were consulted to avoid possible biasness in selection of venues. Similarly, participants for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were selected after consultations with experts in the particular field, ensuring participation of experts in the particular field.

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.

Because of the limited time, it was not possible for the research team to carry out the field research in mountain regions of the country. However, effort has been made to include hilly regions in the sample venues. Due to the season being a paddy plantation season in the country, finding users in venues was difficult although we managed to contact operators in all of the venues.

Due to dynamic and volatile political situation of the country during the research period, it was difficult to cover wide areas and also to receive feedback from concerned stakeholders in time. Also during the focus group discussion, wider participation of stakeholders was not possible owing to different strikes and protests going on in the country.

2.4.2 Team qualifications

1 paragraph

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

This research was carried out by a right mix of development and ICT professionals. The research team comprised of following people.

Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali : Team Leader
Ms. Shikha Shrestha: Research Coordinator
Mr. Bibhusan Bista: Research Team Member
Ms. Khushbu Agrawal: Research Associate

Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali, an anthropologist is a dedicated professional with over 30 year's experience in research and development project management. He specializes in design, financial and human resources management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on internationally and locally funded programs, projects and initiatives. His expertise includes community and rural development, social mobilization, capacity development, civil society building, democratic governance, organizational development and conflict transformation. He is a skilled cross-cultural negotiator with direct work experience in Canada, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. As the Executive Director for South Asia Partnership International (SAP I), since July 2004, he is providing the leadership in achieving the organizational goal to facilitate solidarity between community-based organizations and issue based networks within South Asia. SAP-I is committed to the facilitation of civil society efforts to achieve the rights and prosperity of the people of a peaceful South Asia. SAP- International – a membership based regional advocacy organization, coordinates SAP network comprising five national member organizations based in Bangladesh, Canada, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and partners in India. SAP-I is a Southern-based; Southern-led International NGO. Prior to the current assignment he was the Executive Director for South Asia Partnership (SAP) Nepal, from 1991 - 2004, where he had provided the leadership to strengthen grass roots community based organizations involved in poverty alleviation actions for promoting social justice in Nepal. SAP- Nepal is currently operating in 65, out of the 75 districts of Nepal, in partnership with about 1,500 Civil Society Organizations through its four regional offices and one central office.

Ms. Shikha Shrestha is a Knowledge sharing expert with development experience of around 10 years both at the national and international level. She has been leading the coordinating the activities of Bellanet South Asia since 2005. Bellanet is a multi-donor initiative focusing on enhancing cooperation and collaboration among the development communities through strategic use of Knowledge Sharing

and ICTs. She has been actively involved in capacity building initiatives in Knowledge Management/Sharing at national and regional level. She has also worked as Program Team Leader in Western Nepal on Participatory Approach Towards Holistic Development Program (PATH) program. PATH is the program focused on addressing governance issues by promoting networked efforts of Civil Society Organizations. Her interest lies in promoting voices of marginalized community in the information society. Ms. Shrestha has also been directly involved in different research initiatives ranging from research on Knowledge Management to research on political participation of women in Nepal. As a Botanist, she has also been involved in Agriculture and Forestry Development Associates (AFORDA) to Perform vegetation analysis of International Forestry Resources and Institutions (sites in collaboration with Hills Leasehold Forestry and Forage Development Project

Mr. Bibhusan Bista has been associated with SAP International and Bellanet in capacity of Technical Officer looking after ICT innovation, research and adaptation since 2005. An Information System graduate and student of social science, he has over 5 years of experience in ICT sector of Nepal. He has also worked as Software Engineer in private companies prior to his involvement with SAP International. He is also part time faculty in one of the private colleges of Nepal, teaching different information system courses to undergraduate students. He is involved in different ICT4D research initiatives in Nepal and South Asia including telecenters and ICT status in general. He was team member of WeConnect Initiative in Nepal, a research and advocacy project aimed at generating wider awareness among development communities in the issues of ICT4D. His interest lies in mobilization and facilitation of youth groups for promoting ICT innovations and applications.

Ms. Khushbu Agrawal is a graduate in Business Administration from Kathmandu University Nepal. She has excellent academic track record and is blessed with a very strong writing skills. With very strong analytical and people skills, she is actively involved in different social activities in Nepal. She has successfully carried out research on Internship Opportunities for students in Nepal for Youth Telecenter, an initiative of SAP International, SAP Nepal and Bellanet Asia. She has been assisting SAP International in different research activities as well. Ms. Agrawal has published articles in different magazines and newspapers and is also involved in coordinating the e-notice board for Youth Telecenter on a monthly basis.

3 Country Assessment

3.1 Overall 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?

Public information venues in Nepal are a culmination of the interest of the government, learning enthusiasm of the community members, and the need to have an information venue to append to people's knowledge. There are different kinds of notable public information venues: some are the conventional types, whereas the others are very non-conventional. The conventional venues include the public libraries, community libraries, university libraries, telecenters, community radio, cybercafés, etc. The non-conventional types include the tea shops and the meeting spots for people (like shopping mall, restaurants, friend's place, etc).

All the venues have been very instrumental in imparting knowledge to the public, in general. The conventional venues, in particular, have played a pivotal role not only in informing the community but in empowering them as well. All the venues whether it is public libraries, community libraries, telecenters, cybercafés, community radio, or the university libraries, they have all contributed a lot in providing relevant information to the public at large. Libraries have started reconditioning themselves by providing not only books and magazines, but facilities for e-services as well. Many libraries have facilitated information search on the internet. However, it will take some time when such services will be provided in all the venues of the country.

Telecenters are, however, yet to establish themselves as strong information dissemination venues. Nobody in particular, can be blamed for the sorry state of most of the telecenters throughout Nepal. Everybody including government bodies to the implementing organizations to the local community seems to have no clear idea of what telecenters are supposed to do. Each party blames the other for the problem but the problems don't seem to end. However, telecenters already have their fundamental infrastructure. A little bit of revamping, with regard to the roles and responsibilities could help in improving the situation of telecenters.

The overall picture of public information landscape in the country is, however, encouraging. The general public has realized the power they have and the difference they can make. Similarly, the venues have also been successful in attracting government's attention. Efforts have been put by higher authorities to improve the state of such informational venues throughout the country. A little of more seriousness and realization can bring a remarkable change in the situation of such venues in the country.

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

2–3 Paragraphs:

What is your overall assessment of ACCESS ecosystem in the country (physical access, appropriate technology, affordability)?

The overall access ecosystem in the country is moderately favorable. In terms of physical accessibility, the venues are located in places which are easily accessible by all. The only group for whom the accessibility is a major issue is the group with some types of physical challenges. Most of the public information venues have not made any special provisions for the accessibility of venues for this group. In terms of affordability, the services are provided at a very nominal price. In addition, if someone cannot afford the services, he/she is provided with such services at subsidized price, or sometimes free of cost.

As far as appropriateness of service and technology is concerned, the public information venues in Nepal do not seem to be providing the most appropriate services and technology. Community libraries are the only venues which have been catering to the actual needs of the community members. Other venues like public libraries, telecenters and cybercafés are yet to consider the appropriateness of technology while imparting services. There are many areas that are yet unexplored by these venues. For instance, cybercafés can add the information dimension to the host of services that they provide. Rather than just being “internet-browsing centers”, they can be information dissemination venues.

3.2.2 Capacity

2–3 Paragraphs:

What is your overall assessment of CAPACITY ecosystem in the country (human capacity, locally relevant content, integration into daily routines, socio-cultural factors, trust in technology, social appropriation of technology)?

The overall CAPACITY ecosystem of the public information venues in the country is not very encouraging. In some venues, it is very good, while in some it is very bad. As far as the human capacity is concerned, it is average across the venues: both the users and the operators have been able to avail and impart the services respectively. However, a little more training to the operators/librarians would add to their expertise. Locally relevant content is absent in most of the venues. Venues are offering what is most readily available. Only few of them have made an extra effort to collect what is most desired by the community members. Integration of services in the daily lives of people is above average. People have been able to take the benefits of the services provided on a day-to-day basis within their households. However, the social appropriation aspect is missing in most of the venues. In community libraries, the users come up with new ideas but for other venues, this does not apply. The trust factor is pretty high among the user groups. They easily trust the information that is provided to them by the operators or the librarians. Overall, the capacity ecosystem is average.

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 and public support, regional and international context)?

Whereas the ACCESS and CAPACITY ecosystem in the country with regard to public access venues can be questionable, the ENVIRONMENT ecosystem, for sure, is favorable; especially the legal and regulatory framework in the country has been very favorable towards the public information venues. Similarly, the political will and public support received by such venues is remarkable as well.

Regional and international context do not affect the public access to information and communication venues in the country. Nepal does not have to comply with any such international regulations that are binding

3.3 Information Needs of Underserved Communities

Describe the specific information needs experienced by underserved populations, based on the results of your research. Who could benefit from better public access to information? This could relate to e-government services, health or agriculture information, job training, employment search, among many others. Include reference to the key inequity variables in your country.

- (i) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.
- (ii) Indicate the sources of data for this assessment

It need not be mentioned that information gives power. Access to information plays a crucial role in improving living conditions of the poor. There are various types of information that can be of help to the women, Dalits, janajatis, and other deprived sector of the community. For instance, women can be provided with information regarding their empowerment. Women have been allocated 33% of the seats in government offices but they are unaware of this fact. Addressing such issues as HIV/AIDS prevention, women's empowerment, peace and governance, women's rights, education, safe migration and life-skills training, etc. can be of great benefit to Nepalese.

The laws concerning the underserved groups have not been relayed to the group who can benefit from such information. Similarly, now and again, there have been amendments in the laws and policies of the nation. However, information regarding such amendments does not reach the respective group because of the absence of information and communication technology.

E-government has the potential to improve efficiency and transparency in the public sector. E-government can also enhance the quality of life through inclusive public services for all. So such services can also be of great value to Nepalese. Unemployment rate in Nepal is very high. The situation is even more severe in the rural parts of the country. So, if timely and required information on the job vacancies and job training can be provided to the rural people, this problem can be curbed to some extent.

Health and hygiene aspects are ignored in most parts of the nation. If such issues can be addressed and information on health and hygiene can be provided to people through various publications, the problems of diarrhea, typhoid, jaundice, malaria and the like can be tackled. Also, incidence of infant mortality, child mortality, and maternal mortality can be lowered with the help of proper guidance and information.

Girls' Trafficking is a serious issue in Nepal, especially in the rural areas as most of the girls are lured by the prospect of a nice job in a foreign land. If issues like this can be broadcasted to people there, lots of Nepalese girls can be saved from being sold out in brothels. Similarly, the public should also be provided with information on Safe Migration practices. Since we have classified

even the third gender as an underserved group of the society, we believe even they have a special need for information on different issues like their rights, the hormones, or the like.

ICT has enormous potential to improve the livelihoods of low income people by reducing the cost of providing services to traditionally marginalized communities and facilitating the build up of constructive social capital. ICT contributes to poverty reduction by enhancing the efficiency of the economy, enabling better delivery of public services, and creating new employment opportunities for the poor and disabled. Information on education, health, employment, and others can be provided through the Digital ICTs. Telemedicine is one area which can be introduced in the rural parts. Some organizations are working on providing such service but a lot is still to be done.

Source: *Interviews with experts and literature reviews*

3.3.1 Information sources

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

The current sources for this kind of information are Radio, Television, Newspapers and magazines. In the urban areas, internet is also a major source for such information. However, in rural areas, the level of education among the people is very low, which makes such publication irrelevant. Also, there are very few people in the rural areas who know how to use the internet, let alone browsing information. Moreover, the local content is completely missing. Most of the information is available in English and Nepali. Though many people can speak Nepali all over the country, understanding the written contents is difficult for most of the rural people. As far as radio is concerned, there are many FM stations that are broadcasted even in the rural parts of the country, and since it is an audio media, most of the people, including the ones with no formal education can understand what is being delivered.

Newspapers and Magazines are most of the times available in libraries, telecenters, and information centers. The access of such venues has not reached everybody in the society. As far as information to the transgender community is concerned, there is only one organization that is providing them with required information of their interest. It is the Blue Diamond Society, which is working towards the rights of the transgender community by lobbying and facilitating. They have a resource center which provides all the necessary information to this group. However, this resource center is located in Kathmandu, the people belonging to this group, who live in other cities do not have access to such information, except for the information available on the internet. Internet, again, is not reachable to all.

Most of the information required by people is available on the internet through the websites of the organization. However, most of the contents that are available on the Internet are in English language. Very few websites have been translated in Nepali language and almost none in local languages. In addition, the information on the website is not updated regularly which makes the available information outdated. Especially in government organizations, the bureaucratic hassles are so high that it takes about 3-4 months to make the information and decisions available on their websites.

Source: *Interview with Experts, general observation and literature reviews.*

3.3.2 Key barriers to accessing 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.

Most of the people who could benefit from the information have not got proper access to it. Most of the people from rural areas can benefit from information on agriculture, education, employment, health and the like. However, such information does not reach them because of several reasons like absence of local content. There are materials which have been published addressing issues of their concern but since they are available in English and Nepali, they are inaccessible to rural poor who most of the time do not understand the languages. Also, because of geographical barriers, the cost of getting the required information across to this section is very expensive.

Similarly, there is digitalization of information but there are very few access points through which people can get the required information. Libraries and telecenters are established in many places but not everybody knows how to get the information from these access points.

The major factors hindering access to ICT services in the rural areas, apart from the inadequate rural telecommunication and electricity infrastructure, are widespread illiteracy and the "under poverty- line" population. Also, the ICT awareness is really low in the country, more so over in the rural areas. In many rural parts, people even do not know what a computer looks like.

Source: *Interview with Experts, general observation and literature reviews*

3.3.3 Ways 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?

Generally, it has been found that there is a varied response in terms of their experience to different types of public access venues. People from rural and semi-urban areas find community libraries as the primary source of information access whereas people in the urban areas find cybercafés as the best source to access information. Most of the people, both in rural and urban areas access public information venues like telecenters and cybercafés to access information on education and current happenings. Libraries are used by people mostly to read newspapers and access current affair information along with a small segment of respondent using it for accessing information on health, agriculture and matters of personal interest.

With regard to users' perception of public libraries, most of the users were of the opinion that public libraries are excellent venues to look out for information. They said that public libraries are places where one can get hold of any kind of books: be it related to politics or general knowledge. Also, users said that public libraries provide a sound reading environment where the reader can indulge oneself into the world of knowledge without being perturbed. However, some users also

said that public libraries lack the latest books and that more books need to be added to help users get more information and knowledge regarding subject of their interest. Also, users who are “students” said that special privileges should be provided for them so that the services get more affordable for them.

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 section0, 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.

Inequity is rampant in Nepal and can be seen in different forms and different sections. The social structure of the nation is Hindu based, which has created a caste hierarchy in the country. Over 200 forms of caste based discrimination have been identified in Nepal. Discrimination is more entrenched in the country’s less-developed areas especially in the Mid- and Far- Western regions, but caste continues to influence inter-personal behaviors throughout the country.

When it comes to gender, women and girls are the subordinated class. The transgender group is also a minor class. As far as caste is concerned, Tagadhari, Brahmin, and Chhetri are the dominant class while Dalits form the disadvantaged group. Based on ethnicity and race, Janajatis are the chief disadvantaged group. On the basis of region, the “Parbatiya” or the Hill Dweller is the dominant group, while “Madhesi” or Plains Dweller is the subordinate/ disadvantaged group. More so over, the residents of Mid Western region and Far western Region are the disadvantaged group. On the basis of religion, the Muslim community falls under the category of disadvantaged class. Even on the basis of language, all the people who speak language other than Nepali fall under “Chief Disadvantaged Group.”²⁰

Nepal’s geography also contributes to inequity. There are urban/rural differences in access to information and communication services. Because of uneven geographical terrain, many rural parts of the Nepal do not have proper information reach. Even in urban areas, majority of the women remain deprived of the basic Digital ICT services. Because of the traditional role of women as homemaker, they remain confined to the household chores. Similarly, those people who work as blue-collar worker, like construction labors and daily wage earners, remain aloof from the Digital ICT services compared to the White-Collar professionals.

3.3.5 Freedom of press and expression and the right to information

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

The constitution of Nepal 1990 states that:

- No news/articles shall be censored, provided that nothing shall prevent the making of laws to impose reasonable restrictions on any act which may undermine the sovereignty and integrity of the Kingdom, or which may jeopardize the harmonious relations

²⁰ Based on the interview with Mr. Chakraman Vishwakarma, General Secretary, Dalit Welfare Organization

subsisting among the peoples of various castes, tribes or communities; or on any act of sedition, defamation, contempt of court or incitement to an offence; or on any act which may be contrary to decent public behavior or morality.

- No press shall be closed or seized for printing any news item, article or other reading material.
- The registration of newspaper or periodicals shall not be cancelled merely for publishing any news item, article or other reading material (Article 13).

Unfortunately, however, journalism and civil liberties have fallen victims not only to the government machinery, but also to the violent Maoist insurgency forces in the recent years. During the first State of Emergency (26 Nov 2001-29 Aug 2002), eight journalists were assassinated, six of them by the security forces and two by the rebels. And more than 150 were arrested and tortured in various ways (FNJ, *Nepali Press During State of Emergency*, 2003)

Almost every day, Nepalese journalists are facing threats, intimidation and detention at the hands of state as well as combatant parties. Protest rallies are common in Kathmandu, the capital, and beyond, followed by police interventions and mass arrests. The media has been placed under constant harassment and are being forced to dish out one-sided official statements as truth. People's right to information has been badly impaired.

The situation has not yet improved. Media in Nepal continues to face suppression and risks of various sorts by Madhes-based parties and groups who staged movement seeking their identity and respectful representation in the state mechanism. Journalists were also made the subject of attack and atrocity even during the much-awaited historic Constituent Assembly (CA) elections for their works. It means that the magnitude of suppression has not been reduced in a significant as expected following the restoration of democracy.²¹

Intimidation and demoralization by the security personnel is rampant both in Kathmandu and outside. The authorities, not legally competent to regulate the media, are interfering with the daily working of media without being accountable to a legally competent authority. Given the ambiguity of the scope of censorship, the officials at various tiers of civil and military administration are making the life of working journalists difficult. The orders are often verbal and, in most cases, violate all tenets of law. Editors and journalists are summoned to the police stations or military barracks where they are humiliated, pressurized and in some cases tortured (*South Asian Free Media Report*, May 2005).

3.4 Charts: Information Needs, Users, and 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.

²¹ <http://www.nepalpressfreedom.org/nepali-media.php> , last accessed on September 25, 2008

3.4.1 Users, by type of venue

Users profile (estimated proportion of users in each category, %)		Public Libraries				Community Libraries				Telecenters				Cybercafés			
		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
		General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Gender	Male	63.6	6.1	100	-	37.5	-	40	20	60	60	50	50	35	62.7	-	-
	Female	21.2	9.1	-	-	37.5	18.8	60	40	40	40	-	12.5	27.5	33.3	-	-
Age	14 and under	6.1	-	-	-	6.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.9	-	-
	15-35	60.6	15.2	66.7	-	68.8	18.8	100	60	100	100	50	62.5	62.7	88.2	-	-
	36-60	12.1	-	33.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.9	-	-
	61 and over	6.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education level	No formal education	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.9	-	-
	Only elementary	15.2	6.1	-	-	37.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	5.9	17.6	-	-
	Up to high school	12.1	3	100	-	25	12.5	60	20	80	80	25	12.5	15.7	19.6	-	-
	College or university	54.5	6.1	-	-	12.5	6.3	40	40	20	20	25	25	41.2	54.9	-	-
Income bracket (approx)	High	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.9	-	-
	Medium	71.4	19	33.3	-	66.7	11.1	100	33.3	66.7	66.7	50	62.5	51.4	85.7	-	-
	Low	14.3	4.8	66.7	-	22.2	11.1	-	-	33	38.3	-	-	8.6	8.6	-	-
Caste	Hindu	75.8	15.2	100	-	37.5	12.5	40	20	80	80	37.5	50	43.1	68.6	-	-
	Ethnic group/Community	-	-	-	-	6.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.8	9.8	-	-

	Indigenous community	6.1	-	-	-	18.8	6.3	60	40	20	20	12.5	12.5	9.8	15.7	-	-
	Others	3	-	-	-	12.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
Religion	Hindu	75.8	15.2	100	-	50	12.5	60	40	100	100	50	62.5	47.1	70.6	-	-
	Muslim	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-
	Buddhist	9.1	-	-	-	18.8	6.3	20	20	-	-	-	-	5.9	11.8	-	-
	Christian	-	-	-	-	6.3	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	7.8	11.8	-	-

Source: User Survey

Comments, including comments on other inequity variables.

N/A

3.4.2 Information People Seek, by type of venue

(Estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries		Community Library		Telecenters		Cybercafés	
	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban
Education	18.2	18.2	7.8	45.5	3.9	9.1	18.2	-
Health	3.9	-	5.2	18.2	2.6	9.1	1.3	-
Agriculture	-	-	1.3	-	2.6	-	-	-
Government services	1.3	-	1.3	-	2.6	-	-	-
Entertainment	5.2	-	2.6	-	2.6	-	15.6	-
News	19.5	9.1	5.2	36.4	5.2	9.1	13	-
Personal	6.5	-	-	-	2.6	-	10.4	-
Employment	-	18.2	1.3	-	2.6	-	7.8	-
Others	11.7	18.2	5.2	-	2.6	18.2	5.2	-

Source: User survey

Comments

The other information that users seek in public libraries include information on political changes, philosophy, information related to the course of study, evolution, and literature. Similarly, in community library, people seek information on safe motherhood, news related to one's profession, and politics. In telecenters, the other information that the users seek include information on forestry, vacancies in government offices, etc.

3.4.3 Uses of ICT, by type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries		Community Library		Telecenters		Cybercafés	
	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban
Email	1.5	-	1.5	16.7	6.2	16.7	53.8	-
Chat	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.	-
Web browsing	-	-	1.5	8.3	3.1	16.7	30.8	-
Blogs & social networking	1.5	-	-	-	3.1	-	3.1	-
Commerce & business	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.7	-
Phone or webcam	-	-	-	-	1.5	8.3	10.8	-
Games	1.5	-	-	-	1.5	-	7.7	-
Other	3.1	-	1.5	8.3	3.1	16.7	18.5	-

Source: User Survey

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

Many users in cybercafés and telecenters visit the venues for the purpose of computer training (basic as well as advanced). In addition, users also said that they come to cybercafés to get sports information and avail the net to phone service of the cybercafé. In community library, many users come to community libraries to take skills development training that the library provides.

3.4.4 Frequency of Use for each type of venue

(Estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries		Community Libraries		Telecenters		Cybercafés	
	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban
First visit	5.6	-	4.8	-	-	7.7	11.8	-
Rarely (less than monthly)	2.8	-	9.5	-	-	7.7	9.8	-
Occasional (about once a month)	16.7	2.8	4.8	-	-	-	11.8	-
Regular (about 2-3 per month)	19.4	-	9.5	4.8	7.7	7.7	11.8	-
Frequent (about once a week)	19.4	2.8	19	19	15.4	15.4	25.5	-
Daily (about every day)	27.8	2.8	28.6	-	15.4	23.1	29.4	-

Source: User Survey

3.4.5 Barriers to use for each type of venue

(Estimated proportion in each)	Public Libraries		Community Library		Telecenters		Cybercafés	
	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban	Urban	Non-urban

category, %)	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General Use	ICT Use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Location, distance	8.3	14.3	-	-	38.1	14.3	-	28.6	-	-	15.4	-	7.8	14
Hours of Operation	8.3	-	-	-	9.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Cost	11.1	14.3	-	-	23.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	7.7	2	10
Lack of skills/training	8.3	14.3	2.8	-	28.6	14.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.7	12
Not enough services	41.7	28.6	2.8	-	19	-	9.5	-	-	15.4	-	30.8	15.7	24
Not in right language	-	14.3	2.8	-	-	-	4.8	-	-	-	-	7.7	3.9	-
Not enough content	8.3	-	5.6	-	9.5	-	-	-	-	15.4	-	7.7	3.9	10
Other	16.7	28.6	2.8	-	19	14.3	9.5	14.3	7.7	7.7	7.7	15.4	-	34

Source: User Survey

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

In addition to the barriers mentioned above, users surveyed dwelled upon other barriers as well. In cybercafés, in addition to the problems of location, cost, and lack of training, users faced problems because of slow connection or frequent load shedding, less number of computers, not enough games, no privacy, lack of cleanliness and the like. In case of telecenters, users faced problems because of small space, less number of computers, and lack of time with oneself. Regarding public libraries, other major barriers according to the users were lack of desktop services, lack of new books, books related to management, etc. Similarly, in case of community libraries, major barriers according to the users are lack of proper management, congested area, lack of Hindi/ Nepali literature, and lack of support from family members.

3.5 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.

Past initiatives:

- **Open Knowledge Network (OKN) Initiative:**

One World South Asia (OWSA) - Delhi²² lunched the OKN project as open platform to share knowledge that adds value to people's lives. It is an initiative by One World International to support the creation and exchange of local content in local languages among local people across the South, supported by a range of information and communication technologies. OKN is a human network, which collects shares and disseminates local knowledge and is supported by flexible technical solutions. Poor people must be able to express and communicate locally relevant knowledge in local languages if they are to shape the decisions that affect their livelihoods. Local content development is closely tied to human development, and the ultimate aim of OKN is the empowerment of local communities. The project was implemented in a multi stakeholder partnership model with involvement of NGOs, Government and private sector.

Goal of the project was to promote local content in national language for economic and socio political empowerment of rural, especially the marginalized communities in Nepal through strategic use of ICTs. Accordingly, 24 different ICT points were selected in the country to shares and disseminates local knowledge and is supported by flexible technical solutions.

- **Dalit Welfare Foundation Initiative:**

To uplift one of the most marginalized community, Dalits (untouchables), Dalit Welfare Foundation has strategically used radio and Television to reach out to the community on providing right based information. The main aim of the program is to bring out the millions unheard voices of Dalits and empowering them to fight against their rights.

More information:

- <http://www.enrd.org/contentdev.php>
- <http://www.dwo.org.np/programs.php>

Ongoing initiatives:

- **Digital Broadcast Initiative**

Equal Access, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Foundation (UNF) and the UN Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), has designed a comprehensive initiative to provide critical information on a range of development issues to the

²² The capital city in India

communities themselves and community organizations active in rural areas. people of Nepal - the Digital Broadcast Initiative (DBI). The DBI is not the work of a single organization; it is a broad partnership of a large range of groups working towards a single goal: providing vital development information to underserved communities in an effective way. The DBI has served as the foundation of Equal Access' activities in Nepal and is implemented in coordination with local and internationally-based partners. A broad-based initiative, the DBI provides a range of programming and community outreach activities addressing issues such as: Health & HIV/AIDS Awareness/Education; Women's Empowerment & Reproductive Health; Youth Issues; Migration; Human Rights & Peace building; Early Childhood Development; and Current and Cultural Affairs. The program involves reaching communities directly via satellite, even in areas without access to regular radio, telephones or electrical power and currently reaches more than 600 communities in this manner.

- **Nepal Wireless Project**

The Nepal Wireless Networking Project started as a pilot project from a small and remote area of Nepal with the help of foreign supporters and volunteers. In September 2003, five villages were connected. The network runs despite problems of power shortage, and lack of wireless devices. More villages are now connected through wireless technology and are serving the communities where access to information by other means would not be possible. The project is providing direct support to communities by providing Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), telemedicine, e-education and village e-commerce services.

- **Open Learning Exchange Initiative (OLE)**

Open Learning Exchange is an initiative to develop education materials for school children who are not able to access such materials through mainstream. The developed materials are released under an open-source license and are used by the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) project in Nepal. OLE Nepal is committed to ensuring universal access to primary and secondary education for all Nepali children, significantly enhancing the quality of education provided in Nepal, and reducing the disparity between public and private schooling in Nepal. OLE Nepal intends to accomplish these goals by 2015. Over the next five years OLE will work together with the Nepali government to develop fully digital, open-source learning materials for grades 1 - 12, for all the subjects. These materials will primarily be in Nepali.

More information:

- <http://www.equalaccess.org/programs/nepal/index.htm>
- <http://www.nepalwireless.com.np>
- <http://www.olenepal.org>

3.5.1 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.

The Government of Nepal has provided some facilities for information dissemination to general public through different channels, methods, media and techniques. The delivery of public access to information services have improved to a large extent in the past 5 years. The general public has come to realize the importance of proper access to information. Also, because of I/NGOs, lots of investment has been made in the establishment of community libraries. About 100 public libraries exist and more than 650 community libraries are under operation.

However, the government of Nepal has not yet identified libraries as an important source of information dissemination. Due consideration has not been given to create congenial and favorable atmosphere to avail all sorts of information of public importance as a matter of right through a scientifically developed and designed library and information system. With the lacking of government interest to develop this sector the existing libraries and information centers are handicapped by economic crisis and legal protection.

As far as status of telecenters is concerned, not much has been achieved. The tenth Plan had envisioned the establishment of 1500 telecenters by the end of 2007 but sadly, it has not been able to meet its target by even 1%. On record, there are 240 telecenters, but only 55 telecenters are under full operation. Talking of achievements, VSAT has been used in many telecenters and the cost of using VSAT has been reduced dramatically. Some INGOs have established telecenters in areas where the development is minimal. Such initiatives have helped even the rural areas to get access to information. Cybercafés are on a surge. There has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of cybercafés in the last 5 years.

In the last 5 years, the use of ICT tools has increased to a large extent. More and more people in the urban areas are getting technology literate. The use of computers and the internet has increased. Organizations have started using computer software, digitalizing the way office functions are performed. Voice and visual communications through computer, radio, television and telephone are possible. The important areas of information communications such as radio, television, telecommunication, press and publisher etc have been recognized by government through acts, rules and regulations. However, such developments can be seen only in the urban and the semi-urban areas. In rural areas, most of the people are unaware of the technological development and the use of ICT.

Development of ICT industry of a country is conditional to the development of human resources. Realizing the importance of training for ICT personnel, the government of Nepal has taken a host of initiatives in this regard. At present, there are more than 1,000 ICT training institutes in addition to several universities which offer ICT courses. The IT Park also provides facilities for training programmes. Most of these training facilities, however, are concentrated in urban areas.²³

Very recently, the E-Governance Master Plan has been prepared by the Nepal Government to

²³ Tunga S. Bastola, Central Bureau of Statistics, The ICT Journey of Central Bureau of Statistics, A Brief Account

create effective and productive e-Government through the application of ICT. The Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MoEST) has prepared the plan with the technical assistance of Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency (KIPA). The plan will take place in 3 stages of ICT development by 2011. The plan is divided in three phases; 'As is analysis,' 'To be model' and 'Establishment Plan'. The master plan is strongly recommended in building infrastructure and human resources development. The first phase of the plan is related with ICT policies and laws. The plan also includes online-processing of administrative procedure, knowledge based government, saving of time, continuous service oriented process reform and systematic flow of information, drastic reduction of paper work, online processing of international trading, and logistics and enterprise undertaking/operating services. The South Korean government provided US\$2 million to prepare the plan. According to the document, Nepal will introduce an ICT-related curriculum for secondary education, expand provision of e-Learning, provide ICT training for bureaucrats, introduce an Informatisation Village and improve computer literacy.

Source: Interviews with experts and literature reviews

3.5.2 Planned initiatives:

A new constitution of Nepal is under way. An interim constitution has already been prepared. However, it will take some time before it comes in full play. Some changes have been made and others are being discussed upon. Article 15 of the Interim Constitution provides various protections for the media. Censorship of publications, broadcasters and printed news is not permitted. At the same time, as with freedom of expression, this does not prevent the making of reasonable restrictions to protect various interests. Both electronic media – defined to include radio, television, online media or any other type of digital or communication media – and print Media are protected against closure, seizure or having their registration cancelled for their content. Finally, no communication medium shall be obstructed except in accordance with the law.

Wi-max deregulation is on its way. Lots of developments have taken place in the past five years and the future also seems to be pretty optimistic. Major technology that is expected to emerge in the future is the E-Government. There will be infrastructure development, content development, and applications development. By applications are meant E-Education, Telemedicine, E-Commerce, E-Agriculture, and the like.

In addition to the policy changes, infrastructure development is on the way. More and more I/NGOs are investing in the development of rural infrastructure and establishment of libraries and telecenters. Such initiatives are improving the public access to Information and Communication. Also, the awareness among the people regarding the need of timely and correct information is increasing, which can itself be seen as an achievement.

Even with regard to Digital ICT services, developments can be expected in the future. New projects are being developed to make available the Digital ICT services in all parts of the country. Nepal has embraced an ambitious agenda of developing a full-fledged e-governance system by 2011. The government has prepared an e-government master plan that aims at creating an efficient, effective, transparent and innovative government to deliver citizen-focused administrative services through the integration of ICT (information communication technologies) among the government agencies. The e-governance master plan, devised with the financial support and expertise of South Korea, envisages creating a paperless bureaucracy by

2011, bringing greater coordination among the government agencies and facilitating them to take decisions on time through a wider Internet network.

The government introduced an IT Policy (draft) in 2004. The draft policy conceives to transform Nepal into a knowledge-based society by 2015 to achieve the goals of good governance, poverty reduction and social and economic development.

3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment

3.6.1 National and local economic environment

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

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

Nepal is considered as one of the poorest and the least developed countries in the world with more than half of its population living below the poverty line. The government has been moving forward with economic reforms that encourage trade and foreign investment. Such kind of bleak economic environment does affect public access to information and communication venues. When people are living at a threshold where they have to think of their daily livelihood, expecting them to invest their time in getting information from such venues is kind of being over-optimistic.

Trends:

Despite the discouraging economic environment, increase in the use of such venues to improve the livelihood of the general public can be expected in the near future. It is because that the demand exists that so many organizations are planning to invest in telecenters and more and more libraries are coming into operation. At a time when everybody is talking about how double digit growth can be achieved, it can be believed that situation of such venues is going to improve in the near future, and with the greater empowerment of general public, use of such venues is going to increase as well.

Source: Interviews and general observation

3.6.2 National and local policy (legal and regulatory) environment

Describe salient features of the policy and 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.

Right to Information Act: Each Nepali citizen has the right to demand and receive information on any matter of public importance, except legally provisioned things to keep secret and thereby

to make public activities transparent and accountable.

According to this act, every Nepali citizen shall have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of public importance except the matters mentioned in Section 11, which are mentioned as under:²⁴

- i) Matters creating adverse effects on Nepal's sovereignty, integrity, foreign relation, scientific or economic strategy and national security,
- ii) Matters adversely affecting public peace and order,
- iii) Matters adversely affecting the affection among different tribes ,ethnicities and sects,
- iv) Matters related with investigation to control crimes or to maintain peace and order and related information and notices thereof,
- v) Matters decided to keep undisclosed by the Nepal Government or matters prescribed to be kept undisclosed by law or matters received by any institution under conditions keep undisclosed or information on matters received by Nepal government from foreign government under condition to keep undisclosed,
- vi) Matters which can affect in inappropriate profit or loss to any person, firm or company,
- vii) Matters related with criminal offences being investigated and not decided about the trial to be started or not,
- viii) Matters disclosing the third party's secrecy on business, profession or intellectual property,
- ix) Matters proceeded pursuant to prevailing laws but not finally decided ,
- x) Matters related with opinions, consultations, and discussions before reaching on decision,
- xi) Matters not to be published publicly due to public morality and etiquette,
- xii) Matters of personal secrecy according to prevailing laws,
- xiii) Matters publicized through publication, broadcasting or any other medium,
- xiv) Matters related with anyone's personal character- except in cases when question is raised on personal character,
- xv) Matters that could be taken into action for contempt or libel of court,

²⁴ Extracted from www.nepalmonitor.com, last accessed August 12, 2008

- xvi) Matters that may threaten any individual's life,
- xvii) Information related with those matters, records of which are ceased in pursuant to prevailing laws.

Press and Publication Right

(1) No news item, article or other reading material shall be censored:

Provided that nothing shall prevent the making of laws to impose reasonable restrictions on any act which may undermine the sovereignty and integrity of the Kingdom of Nepal, or which may jeopardize the harmonious relations subsisting among the peoples of various castes, tribes or communities; or on any act of sedition, defamation, contempt of court or incitement to an offense; or on any act which may be contrary to decent public behavior or morality.

(2) No press shall be closed or seized for printing any news item, article or other reading material.

(3) The registration of a newspaper or periodical shall not be canceled merely for publishing any news item, article or other reading material.

The Right to Information Act is flawed in a lot of ways. For instance, it has specifically stated that right to information should be guaranteed to “citizens”. However, this should be expanded and provided to all, whether he or she is a citizen of Nepal. Also, the right should apply to all information held by public bodies, not just personal information or information deemed to be of public importance.

Private sector press has been subjected to acute censorship and FM radio stations have been totally banned to broadcast news and current affair programs. They are allowed to air only music and similar entertainment programs; although many FM studios have plucked courage to air news after the Supreme Court, in an interim order, recently asked the government not to interrupt broadcasting news and news-based programs over FM radios.

Newspapers were asked by the government not to print any material on security operation or Maoist insurgency without scrutinizing the facts from the Army. Most newspapers outside Kathmandu have suffered intimidation or arbitrary suspension at the order of District authorities. Nearly 50 percent of local publications have closed down owing to unfavorable conditions created by the State.²⁵

Although proper laws do exist in the Nepalese constitution, they are not followed most of the times. People are deprived from right to information and other civil rights such as right to free movement inside the country and freedom of expression and of opinion.

Telecommunication Policy 2004

²⁵ Extracted from www.nepalpressfreedom.org, last accessed July 22, 2008

The Government of Nepal is of the opinion that the telecommunication sector must play a significant role in the overall development of the country including economic growth, social sector development, and good governance.

The Telecommunication Policy 2056 has created a favorable environment for private sector's participation in the telecommunication sector. The dynamism of the telecommunication sector has created lots of opportunities. So, in order to be able to exploit the opportunities and future possibilities, the Telecommunication Policy 2004 was formulated for the substitution of Telecommunication Policy 1999.

The major objective of the Telecommunication Policy is to create a favorable environment in order to make the telecommunication reliable and accessible to all at a reasonable cost throughout the nation in collaboration with the private sector. Also, the policy highlights that it would do so in order to strengthen the socio-economic situation of the country.

The policy has also highlighted on the strategies that will be used to achieve the aforementioned objectives. The strategies include Universal Access to Telecommunication Service, Universal Service Obligation, Development of corporate service, liberalization of the telecommunication sector, open licensing regime, encouragement of private sector's participation, entering into information society, appropriate ICT for the users of rural areas, use of ICT in development projects, commercialization of Nepal Telecommunication Corporation, and promote healthy competition among the service providers.

In the later section of the policy, steps that will be taken to implement the strategies has been included. For instance, the policy has outlined how will it promote universal access to telecommunication service by asking the existing service providers to extend their services without subsidies, ask service providers to avail mobile phone service in rural areas, levy only 1 percent duty on the equipments important by service providers who will provide service in rural areas. Similarly, many more plans are laid down to achieve the different strategies mentioned previously.

Strategy on ICT reflected in IT Policy 2000

1. Encouraging domestic and foreign investment for the development of IT and the related infrastructures.
2. Making available the speedy and qualitative service at a reasonable cost by creating a healthy and competitive atmosphere among IT service providers.
3. Developing competent manpower with the participation of both the public and the private sectors for the sustainable development and extension of information technology.
4. Giving high priority on research, development and extension of information technology with the participation of private sectors
5. Promoting e-strategies such as e-governance, e-commerce, e-health, etc.
6. Extending IT in rural areas and use it for rural development
7. Exporting IT related services.

Trends:

The policy environment in the country is pretty conducive. For instance, the telecom act clearly states that information and communication services should be easily accessible and affordable to all. Similarly, the IT Policy has a vision to map Nepal into the world IT Map. VOIP has been deregulated, though only for international operators. The VSAT cost has been reduced substantially. Wi-fi has been deregulated. Rural ISP can be registered for a mere Rs.100 (USD 1.5). CDMA is available in all 75 districts which mean that internet connectivity is available in all the districts. Also, only 200-300 VDCs in Nepal do not have access to telephone service, and very soon, even these left out VDCs will be able to enjoy the service. The ownership tax of telephone was reduced from Rs.1500 (USD 21.7) to Rs.1000 (USD 14.5) last year. So, it can be said that policies concerning information and communication accessibility are very conducive as well as flexible.

Source: Interviews with Experts and literature reviews.

3.6.3 Regional and international policy (legal and regulatory) environment

Describe salient features of policy and regulatory framework in the region and internationally that affect the delivery of public access to information and 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.

There are not many regional and international policies that affect the delivery of public access to information and communication in the country. The only regulation that will be guiding information infrastructure in Nepal is the WTO Regulation. As per the regulation, as from the year 2009, there will be open competition in the telecommunication sector in Nepal.

Source: Interview with Mr. Ananda Raj Khanal, Director, Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA)

3.7 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.

Collaboration and networking has not been very well practiced in Nepal. However, they do exist in some forms. For instance, many libraries and telecenters have collaborated to provide services to the people. Also, most of the telecenters have been established in the school premises where a library exists. Also, telecenters and cybercafés have collaborated to provide

services in many places.

Other types of collaboration exist as well. For instance, private organizations have collaborated with I/NGOs. Not only this, they are also working as partners in the establishment of the telecenters.

In case of community libraries, they have collaborated with Telecenters, I/NGOs, DDCs/VDCs and other local clubs to provide the library services to the community. Community groups are mobilized most of the times so as to increase the ownership of the community towards the information venue and also to ensure the sustainability of the venue. Similarly, the Non-Residential Nepalese are also collaborating with I/NGOs in Nepal to provide support for the establishment of telecenters in the rural parts of the country. Some ISPs have collaborated with I/NGOs working towards the establishment of telecenters to provide technical support and work as partners in the entire project.

The information and communication venues have not been able to take full advantage of collaboration with government bodies like the Village Development Committees, District Development Committees, etc. If this can be done, the information dissemination can be made more effective. Similarly, collaboration between telecenters and libraries, libraries and libraries, and that of telecenters and telecenters can be a fruitful one. The collaboration with IT institutions and colleges can be of great benefit to the development of information and communication venues. Their technical support can be very well harnessed.

3.8 Buzz Factor: Public and Government Perceptions about what is “Cool”

The “buzz factor”, i.e., 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.

As far as public perception regarding “cool” is considered, most people in the rural and semi-rural parts of the country have accepted such venues as the major hanging out spot and long to go to such places to not only get the required information but to meet friends and acquaintances. Even in urban areas, libraries have become a hotspot to meet friends. Such kinds of perceptions have heavily affected the legitimate use of such venues. Venues like libraries and telecenters, which are believed to be important information and communication venues, have been used as meeting places, which has stunted the development of such venues.

3.9 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.

There is lots of non-legitimate/trivia use that are happening in public venues across the country. In public libraries, the illegitimate use has been the consideration of venue as social networking venues where people can have a nice chat about so many things happening around the world. This has posed a barrier in a sense that those people who actually get some information start doubting the potential of the venue as an information-seeking venue.

In case of cybercafés, accessing port sites, hacking computers, installing software on local computers have been the illegitimate uses. This trend has kind of stifled the innovativeness of the enthusiasts. Use of social networking place has not been very fundamental in cybercafés, mainly because most of the people come to cybercafés to chat (which of course is considered a legitimate use in cybercafés all over the country) with friends rather than use the networking spaces like Facebook, Orkut or hi5. Similarly, use of Blogs is also minimal.

3.10 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.

3.10.1 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.

Till date mobile phones have not been used in relation to public access to information venues and information needs of underserved communities. However, mobile phones hold a huge potential to fill in the gap. There are 2 major mobile service providers in the country and they have penetrated the market pretty well. . According to the three year Interim Plan Approach paper, the total number of subscribers of mobile telephone has reached 916,639. If a mechanism is developed through which information on employment and other opportunities should be relayed to the people through short messaging service (SMS), it would be of huge benefit to the public at large. Sending information through mobile phones would not only be cheap, but also quick and efficient. More and more people have started relying on the mobile phones to get connected.

3.10.2 Web 2.0 tools and 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](#)).

The web 2.0 tools like Blogs, social networking, and wikis are on a huge surge, but this applies only to the urban areas. Networking sites like Facebook and orkut has got huge membership and the people in urban areas consider them as the best way to network with others. However, such tools are used mostly in cybercafés and in private location of the users (office or home). Use of such tools in telecenters is limited; it is, in fact, negligible. Similarly, people in urban areas have started

considering blogging a nice opportunity to let others inform and get informed of what is happening around. Blogs are used by students, activists, reporters and other general public who want their perspectives heard. Just like social networking sites, Blogs are rarely used in public venues but used in private spaces with internet facilities.

3.10.3 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 and TV, other print media, street theatre, songs, etc.

Nepal has been one of the most vibrant regions in South Asia regarding the innovation and use of different media. Community Radio movement in Nepal is one of those examples. Innovation has also been going on in Nepal with regard to unique combination of different media. In some of the cases, Community Radios are combined with telecenters that are very effective in capitalizing the power of both venues. There are cases where community radios take content from the internet through telecenters and air it to reach out to vast number of people in the community. Similarly, the government of Nepal has recently announced to convert post offices to telecenters making general people access different services electronically to some extent. Although it has not come into implementation as such, it is expected to create significant contribution in internalizing value of ICTs by a larger section of the society. Another example of combination of different media is the use of Rural ISPs as media center. Some of the rural ISPs in Nepal are engaged in radio and print media as well, thereby acting as a media center for the community they serve. Similarly in community libraries, it is seen that they are actively involved in making use of traditional ritual and cultural shows along with street dramas and all to advocate for use of library in the community. Often, community libraries make use of such informal approaches to disseminate information on health, education and other areas of community interest.

3.10.4 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.

There are some good cases of innovative practices on content creation. Making use of simple digital cameras, some of the libraries and telecenters are involved in digital story telling whereby they train people to capture images and video footage on thematic areas. The content is edited using video editing software to make it more meaningful along with voice add on. Such content are then packaged in CDs and disseminated to the community members. Similarly, community libraries are also making use of the concept of wall magazines where children are involved in producing a hand written magazine that is passed in the walls of community libraries. It acts as place for children to showcase their creativity and writing skills.

3.11 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.

3.11.1 Sources of health information

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

62.1% Clinic/ Hospital	23.3% Friends/ Family	12.9% Health worker	11.2% Public access venue (library, community center, etc)	16.4% Internet at public/ private location	3.4% Traditional Healers	6.9% Community resource centers
-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	----------------------------------	--	---	---------------------------------------	---

Comments: The total number of respondents who answered the last two questions pertaining to health information was 116. Some respondents also said that they get such kind of information from newspapers and the health volunteers working in their respective towns/villages.

3.11.2 Types of health information

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

23.3% disease prevention	22.4% how to locate healthcare	19.8% child health information	37.9% remedies/drugs	19.8% Other
---------------------------------------	---	---	--------------------------------	-----------------------

Comments: Other information that the respondents said is the most difficult to find include information about Drug Abuse, First Aid Treatment, information on complicated diseases, Specialized treatment, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, health issues related to pollution, etc.

4 Venue-Specific Assessments

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?

Modern Nepali state (formation c. 1750s) has been an autocratic one for most of the time. The family autocracy of Ranas which lasted for more than a century (1846-1951), chose to keep education under strict control. The general masses did not have access to formal education throughout the Rana regime. People were sentenced to jail for keeping certain types of books, for making a plan to establish public libraries, and also for running schools. When the Rana rule ended in 1951, there were only 321 primary schools and 11 high schools in the entire country with a literacy rate of less than 2 percent. Majority of these schools were opened in mid 1940s when a somewhat liberal Rana, Padma Shamsher, assumed office. During his tenure as prime minister, people were able to establish some schools as well as a few public libraries. In the years following the political change of 1950-51, astronomical increase in the number of students, schools is observed. Not only schools, we find ample evidence of the proliferation of public libraries in the period between 1951 and 1960. More than 125 public libraries were established throughout the country by the local people in that period. These libraries, apart from providing reading rooms, were involved in numerous other societal activities by bringing together people from various strata. The public libraries thus could partially be equated to the 18th century European counterpart—coffee houses of England, salons of France, table societies of Germany—forming “bourgeois public sphere” where “private people come together as public”. And these libraries, perhaps were establishing “a sphere of criticism of public authority” by “the public of private people making use of their reason”. However with another political change in 1960 the number of libraries dwindled for various reasons; some of the libraries were closed down by the state agents, despite the rhetoric of "modernization and development of education" of the then regime (Panchayat). (*Public Libraries, Public Sphere and Politics: A Study of Social Consequences of State Policies in Nepal*)

Thus, in the social history of Nepal, a new phenomenon of establishing public libraries is observed. This phenomenon, which started in 1940s, gained a momentum during 1950s and attained a stunted growth after 1960s is in itself interesting, and, at the same time, raises myriad questions. The emergence of libraries is the outcome of the ideas of civilized members of the society. The educated circle felt the need of a place where they want to keep all written records/information of whatever sorts and in whatever forms for protection and preservation. Protection and preservation were specially being done just to get the relevant records / information as and when they were in need of them. The civilized ancestors were in view of that the libraries could be

an effective means to gather the wealth of information generated by man over the years for the present and for posterity.

With the passage of time, libraries became an indispensable organization of educated and civilized society. A scientifically developed and designed library and information systems perform the duty of cultural institution which establishes good relation between bodies and boundaries, at the level of the individual, nation-state, and community and across the state for information services. The responsibility of such cultural institutions is to create, select, acquire, preserve, store, process, retrieve, disseminate and to market information such as music, film, radio and television program, CD-Rom, floppy disc, books, journals, newspapers etc from all over the world. Such cultural institutions are public, semi-public, government or private, which perform a mission beyond mere commercial interests, consisting of providing cultural products and services and making them accessible to a large public without territorial consideration. The use of ICT in traditional cultural institution e.g. library and museum has been an authentic means of creating a global village of information.

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)?

As the habit of using library among the general public and students is a recent phenomenon, the condition of infrastructure is not satisfactory. Most of the buildings which have been housing library are not built for library purpose. Therefore the buildings are not suitable for holding library collection. Even the library materials are kept without caring for sunlight and dust which results in grim condition of those collections.

However, in terms of accessibility, the physical location, the services and technology used, and affordability all are pretty convenient and appropriate for the users.

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.

The physical location of public libraries is appropriate in most of the urban areas. They are located very close to market areas so that they can be accessed by people easily. However, in rural areas, the location of libraries is not very appropriate for all because of geographical barriers and unavailability of proper transport facilities. Similarly, since there are very few public libraries in mountain areas, the accessibility is difficult for the entire population of such areas. Of 36 users surveyed in public libraries across Nepal, only 8% of them said that location is a problem for the users to access information in public libraries. Such response came from the users of public libraries in urban areas, though.

Although government has recognized the transsexual section of the population, no efforts from libraries has been found to make these people feel more accepted in the venues. The same goes

with the indigenous population. Although public libraries are open to all, this group certainly remains isolated when it comes to using the services because of the deep-rooted caste hierarchy in the society.

As far as ICT is concerned, there are very few public libraries that are offering ICT services, and the ones that are offering are located either in the Eastern Region or the Central Region. Libraries in Western, Far-Western and Mid-Western do not have ICT services.

4.1.2.2 Appropriate technology and 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.

The information and services offered by public libraries are moderately appropriate to the entire population in general. For school students, the general services and Digital ICT services are highly appropriate. However, they are not very appropriate for people with no formal education as they are unaware of the technology and do not know how such technology can be used. There are publications that specifically cater to the senior citizens like books on religion that are of interest to them.

For female and transsexual group, the information, services, and technologies are highly appropriate. However, there are no specific information and services needs of these groups that have been considered. There are many libraries in rural areas but there has been no use of ICT in those libraries. There are very few initiations done by public libraries to digitalize the contents available with them. Such digitalization would help in preserving the valuable documents, and ease their accessibility as well.

44% of the users surveyed in libraries said that the services that public libraries are providing are not enough. Libraries, according to them should add more books, ICT services, and introduce Virtual Libraries so as to cater to a larger population. Similarly, 63% of the librarians were of the opinion that the services that their libraries have been providing to the users is not enough, and that more services should be added to benefit more users.

The services offered by public libraries have not considered the presence of languages other than English and Nepali. This makes the services and information inappropriate for the people speaking languages other than English and Nepali. Moreover, the Digital ICT services are only available in English language.

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.

The services offered in public libraries are quite affordable to the population in general. For high income and Middle Income population, the services are quite affordable whereas for the low income group, the general services as well as Digital ICT services are moderately affordable.

Libraries charge a nominal fee for the use of service available in the venue. However, if a person

does not want to pay the membership fee, he/she can just come to the library, read the desired book or any other publication for free. S/He cannot, however, borrow books from the library. This is the reason that not only the librarians, but most of the users also believe that the services and technologies offered in public libraries are quite affordable. Whereas 25% librarians believe that the services and technologies are not very affordable to the general public, only 11% of the users, on the other hand feel that the affordability is a barrier for use of services in public libraries.

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?

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

General Membership Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 25 to NRs 350 per year (NRs. 175 on an average)

Equivalent in US Dollars: 36¢ to \$5 per year (\$2.5 on an average across libraries in Nepal)

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Institutional Membership Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 5000 to NRs 10000 (depending on how much the institution benefits from the services of the library)

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$72.5 to \$145

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Life Time Membership Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 1000 to NRs 3000

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$14.5 to \$44

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Entry Fee (imposed only in few libraries)

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 2- NRs. 4 per entry

Equivalent in US Dollars: 3¢ to 6¢ per entry

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Internet Charge

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 20- NRs. 30 per hour

Equivalent in US Dollars: 29¢ to 43¢ per entry

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

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

- Public libraries supported by I/NGOs or other funding agencies normally provide specialized services like providing access to e-resources and libraries and don't really have contingent fund raising program.
- Libraries where funding is a constraint are more involved in activities like rental services, meeting and conference space services, desktop services, etc.
- Public libraries having dedicated and qualified library professional offer trainings on library management and extra curriculum activities
- Regions having adequate infrastructure offer more digital ICT services than those in the rural and remote areas.

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.

Eastern Development Region: 25

Central Development Region : 33

Western Development Region : 20

Mid-Western Development Region : 15

Far-Western Development Region : 7

4.1.2.6 *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).



Not available

4.1.2.7 *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.

Libraries themselves are not found promoting inequitable access to public information but it is seen that the perceived values (e.g. caste based hierarchy) of society play prominent role in promoting inequity. In addition, the interest of the general public in availing the services of a library also affects it to a large extent. There were many cases in which we found that the general public lacks a reading habit. One of the oldest libraries of Nepal called *Dhawal Library* in Palpa has its doors closed because no one visits the library according to the librarian. The library has one of the oldest and the finest collection of some rare books in history but the condition of those books is despondent. Many people take public libraries as a place for reading newspapers. Majority of the public libraries have not been able to promote themselves as an important information dissemination venue. In addition, the hours of operation also affect the accessibility in public libraries. Most of the public libraries that were visited in the course of research were opened only in the evening. 9% of the users and 6% of the librarians said that the hours of operation of libraries were not enough and more people would visit if the libraries were opened for an extended period.

4.1.3 *Capacity and 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, and social appropriation of technology)?

The overall capacity of both the users and the librarians in public libraries is above average. Although majority of the librarians have had no formal training on library management, they are able to serve the users in an efficient manner. Similarly, most of the users are capable of using the information and services provided by public libraries. A huge repository of information is available in public libraries. However, if more content was available in local languages, the services of public libraries could become more relevant for the public at large. It is such relevance of the services offered that the general public have been able to integrate them into their daily lives and social appropriation in public libraries is good as well.

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.

	Large Libraries	Medium libraries	Small Libraries
Full Time	3	2	1
Contract	1	1	n/a

For Digital ICT Services

	Large Libraries	Medium libraries	Small Libraries
Full Time	1	n/a	n/a
Contract	n/a	n/a	n/a

4.1.3.2 Staff training

What is the overall capacity of the staff (i.e., librarians, telecentres operators) to help users access and use public access to information and 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.

The staffs in public libraries are not very well trained. Most of the libraries of the country, either a public library or a private library lack professional librarians. Most of the times, the overall capacity of the librarians is medium to low. There are very few cases in which the librarians are highly efficient in availing the services to the visitors. Their training in indexing and cataloging is not enough. They are especially unable to serve the people with no formal education, and those from far-western and Mid Western Region. There are some libraries where the librarians have not had any kind of formal education. Around 12% of the librarians had no formal education at all. 41% of the librarians had completed their high school and 47% had completed their college/university degree. 41% of the librarians surveyed also said that they had some sort of formal training before they started working in the library. However, more than half of them had taken training related to Management/Operation rather than library training. Around 13% of the users said that librarians' lack of proper training has been a major barrier to access information and Digital ICT services in public libraries. Similarly, 6% of the librarians complained that their training has not been enough and this lack of training impedes their capacity to serve the users in the best possible way. Many librarians complained that they find it difficult to provide the required book immediately after the visitor demands it.

The capacity of staff is very poor when it comes to digital ICT services as well. They are not trained in the use of computers for cataloging, indexing, as well as searching. In situation like this where the librarians are not well trained, expecting them to be able to serve the visitors is improbable.

4.1.3.3 *Services offered*

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

Services Offered

Comments

1. Access to Books, magazines and journals (different categories and not restricted to few areas)
2. Desktop Services (word processing, typing, printing, copying, etc)
3. Audio Visual and Multimedia Services including documentaries
4. Email / Internet
5. Trainings (library management, reading habit development ,Forestry Training, etc)
6. Reference Services
7. Access to e-resources (eg. electronic journals and materials)
8. Meetings and conference rooms
9. Rental Services (providing utensils, equipments, etc on hire)
10. Extra Curriculum activities (discussion programs, quiz contests, etc)
11. Access to catalog and index databases
12. Computer Services

13. Multimedia CD Access
14. Computer training courses
15. Access to reference catalog and databases
16. Internet searching tips and techniques to access e-resources
17. Awareness and Social Programs
18. Religious Ceremonies
19. Different kinds of competition

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

- Public libraries supported by I/NGOs or other funding agencies normally provide specialized services like providing access to e-resources and libraries and don't really have contingent fund raising program.
- Libraries where funding is a constraint are more involved in activities like rental services, meeting and conference space services, desktop services, etc.
- Public libraries having dedicated and qualified library professional offer trainings on library management and extra curriculum activities
- Regions having adequate infrastructure offer more digital ICT services than those in the rural and remote areas.

4.1.3.4 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.

Public libraries do have some programs that are intended to reach the underserved communities of the society. Some of the activities are listed as under:

People with no formal education: Audio Visual Programs, Charts, Flip Charts, Maps, Film Shows

Seniors (>60): Availability of Religious books

Female: Female help desks are being planned and some are promoting female librarians. Books related to cater needs of women including political rights of women, women and violence, etc.

Children: Children's Reading Section, Children's Toy Section

Rural Population: Need based services depending on community

Ethnic and Indigenous Community: Local language books (although very few available)

Non-Nepali Speakers: Libraries are trying to get books and publication in local languages but there are very few that are available in the market.

Similarly with digital ICT services, people with no formal education are provided with CD and DVD shows.

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:

Public libraries in Nepal have a huge collection of books on every possible topic from religion to politics to philosophy and history. The minimum number of books that any public library holds is 1000 and some large libraries has around 86000 books also. On an average, public libraries in Nepal hold 16982 books. Most of the libraries also publish books with contents related to the community where the library is established. They publish newsletters on a fixed term basis accommodating the topics that would be of interest to the local people.

Other Content Needed:

Public libraries need a lot more content to attract more and more users: not only students and researchers, but also the general public and develop a reading habit among one and all. This can be done by adding books related to the issue of interest to the community members. If a certain community is more interested in reading entertainment books like fiction novels, the library should include such books. Nepal is a country with rich culture and heritage and libraries can play a very important role in preserving the culture by documenting them.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Different libraries have been developing local contents in their own way. For instance, the Vidhya Mandir Library in Baglung publishes a yearly magazine in which it includes issues that are of interest to the local people. Similarly, Laxmi Library in Dharan publishes a poetry book every year including the poetry written by local people.

Similarly, Nepal National Library reprinted the ancient texts and handwritten manuscripts so as to preserve them for future reference. Kaiser Library is also digitalizing its contents so as to keep them safe for the future generation to see. However, such kind of practice is not done by all. If this could be done, public libraries would be playing a very important role in cultural preservation of the country.

Source: Interviews and surveys

4.1.3.6 *Services and 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.

There are contents related to human development in almost all libraries. Human Rights Yearbook is available in most of the prominent public libraries. There are publications that do cater to the needs of the local people where the library is set up. For instance, in a village, where agriculture is the main occupation, journals and magazines on the subject are available. However, most of the publications are in Nepali language rather than the local language. Despite non-availability of content in local language, none of the librarians felt that language has been a barrier for use of library services. Similarly, only 3% users felt that language is a barrier to use the information or the ICT services in the library.

As far as Digital ICTs are concerned, there is online information regarding health, agriculture, education, job opportunities and other development contents. However, such services are offered only in English language and very rarely in Nepali language. Local contents are still not developed.

4.1.3.7 Types of uses

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

- 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.

The people use libraries for various purposes. The top 3 information content that users seek at public libraries, as per the research are education, news, and personal interest. However, in addition to this, many users surveyed also said that they come to libraries to get information on the political developments of the country, and read books related to literature, philosophy, human evolution, and books related to coursework. However, according to librarians, there are many users who come to public libraries to get information on health, employment, poverty, finance, and other subjects related to social science as well.

Different groups have different orientation of use. For instance, high income people generally use libraries especially for meeting and conference purposes. Similarly, middle income people use it for reading books, magazines, and journals, as well as referring to past research papers. Low income people, on the other hand, use public libraries for reading newspapers most of the times.

Students and youth use the libraries to refer to materials complimenting their textbooks and for training purposes. Also, they use it for Extra Curriculum Activities/Discussion Programs (applicable to school going children). Similarly, women, and other indigenous group of the society use libraries to refer to issues concerning them. For example, women use libraries to get a proper understanding of their rights.

In Nepal, there are very few public libraries that offer ICT services to users. In the venues where such services are offered, not many users come to use those services. Many use Digital ICT services in the form of browsing the Internet, Checking mails and referring to e-resources. Youth also use libraries for basic computer training. Many people from rural areas and those with no formal education use public libraries to access the Multimedia CD materials.

Users who come neither to get any information nor use the ICT services visit public libraries just to network with people. A user even said that he comes to public libraries so that he could improve his communication skills.

4.1.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs. Complement here as needed.

All kinds of users visit public libraries to read books or to get information of any kind. On the basis of caste, users from Hindu caste groups visit the public libraries the most, with around 61% belonging to this group. Ethnic and indigenous communities comprise 21% and 17% of the users respectively. The ethnic groups that visit public libraries the most include Rai, Limbu, Magar, Gurung, Madhesi, Tharu, Rajbanshi, Dhimal, and Meche.

On the basis of income, it is the middle class group that visits public libraries the most. 69% of the users, on an average, visiting public libraries belong to this group. 19% of the users belong to the low income group and the rest 12% belong to the high income group.

Some public libraries see just a handful of visitors, somewhere around 10, while some big libraries see 100 visitors per day. However, on an average, as per the research, 51 users visit one single public library in a day, i.e. 18,615 users in a given year. The frequency of users is mixed in public libraries. There are some users who visit public libraries daily (25%), some who visit once in a week (19%), some visit 2-3 times in a month (38%), and some who visit once in a month (19%). This shows that public libraries have been able to penetrate a wide community to use its services.

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 and communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

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

The overall capacity of users to take advantage of public access to information and communication resources in public libraries is quite high. Most of the users visiting public libraries have had some sort of formal qualification. 27% of the users visiting public libraries have completed their elementary schooling, while 33% and 35% of the users have completed their high level and college/university level education. Only 5% of the users visiting public libraries have had no formal education. However, even this group uses the resources of libraries with the help of librarians or fellow users.

The capacity of most of the users to take advantage of Digital ICT service is very low though. Most of the people lack computer literacy. The groups that can take some advantage of the digital ICT services offered in public libraries are the ones with formal education, youth, residents of urban areas, and those living in the Terai terrain of the country.

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: Not all libraries offer training programs. However, there are some associations

that offer training courses to the public at this venue like Nepal Library Association, Tribhuvan University Library Science Department, Nepal National Library, etc. Some public libraries also offer basic training to the users regarding how to use a book or a publication

ICT specific training courses: Training courses on how to use computers and the internet are conducted by many libraries that use Digital ICT services.

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.

As far as urban areas are considered, it is considerably easy for the people to integrate the information and services offered in public libraries into their daily lives. There is the availability of electricity, means of transportation, and other facilities that makes it easy for people to enhance integration. However, such integration is kind of missing in rural areas. First of all, there is lack of electricity in most rural parts of the country, which itself make it difficult for them. Second, poverty is so rampant that people are more into looking for ways to help them survive rather than making an effort to go to a public library and use the information available. Also, the transportation system is not as developed, which again affects the mobility of the people. So, looking at the scenario, it will not be wrong to say that the integration of information and services offered by public libraries in the lives of rural people is rather difficult.

To make this integration easy, it is very important to have a significant effort from the part of government as well as I/NGOs. Unless the required infrastructure is developed, people will have no motivation to go to a public library. Also, the issue of poverty needs to be addressed as well. More income generating activities needs to be introduced.

With regard to Digital ICTs, they are still at its nascent stage in the country. In urban areas, it has kind of gained momentum and more and more people have started considering it as a pre-requisite. However, in rural areas, many people do not even know what ICT is all about. In such as a scenario, expecting them to use ICT service in a library is unlikely. Also, the librarians themselves need training to be able to introduce such technology, which is most of the times burdensome to them.

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: i.e., 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.

The general perception of the population regarding public libraries is varied. Some think of it as an important information sharing venue, while the other believes that it is a place for socializing. The high income and middle income group has the former opinion, while the group with no formal education think otherwise. People with formal education think of it as a place to substantiate ones knowledge. People in rural areas have also come to realize the power of knowledge, and this is the

reason that even they associate high informational value to public libraries. In urban areas, youth do not visit public libraries a lot. However, in rural areas, it is the youth group which comprises the maximum user base of public libraries. In addition to just using the services, they plan on the long run sustainability of the libraries and how can the services be improved.

As said earlier, not many public libraries are offering digital ICT services. However, there are very few users who use the ICT services offered at this venue. This is not because that do not value them but because they do not know how to benefit from those services. The youth group has started using such ICT services with the help of the computer training that some libraries are offering.

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.

Social appropriation basically refers to something that is driven by consumers. In urban areas, people are interested in visiting libraries and this demand has triggered establishment of additional libraries. Even in rural areas, people have realized the importance of having public libraries. This is the reason that the locals in many villages have taken several initiatives to better the conditions of their libraries. For instance, Myagdi library in Beni, which was completely destroyed during the Maoist attack on the Army headquarters in the year 2004 stands afoot today because of the relentless efforts of the locals who looked for organizations to support them to reconstruct the library. Later, they got the support of READ Nepal, an organization working for the establishment of community libraries throughout Nepal.²⁶ As per the agreement, READ provided the library with 34.12 percent of the total cost needed to establish a library inclusive of building, books and equipments. The community on the other hand, contributed the rest of the money for the reconstruction and also approached other partners for reading materials. The building is today under construction and all the community members are putting their hands, heads and hearts together to establish the library as they dream. Such instances prove that social appropriation is very high in case of public libraries in Nepal. However, this cannot be generalized for all the 100 public libraries throughout the country.

However, when it comes to ICT services, the social appropriation is not as high. Some initiatives are being taken by the community members to include ICT services in libraries, but such initiatives are very rare in case of public libraries.

4.1.3.14 Trust, safety, and 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 general population trusts the information and services provided by public libraries. People with

²⁶ All the libraries that READ Nepal supports are called Community libraries. However, in this research, libraries that were initially established as Public libraries and later supported by READ Nepal has been classified as public libraries and not as community libraries.

formal education especially trust the information because they know about the sources from where the information comes. The urban population also trusts the information.

However, since not many people use the technology very often, they are very skeptical when it comes to using the information available on the internet. The people from rural parts of the country, and the senior citizens are especially not very confident about the e-resources.

4.1.3.15 Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered

What other information gaps and 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 basic gap that exists is the availability of required information in local language. There are different information needs in different places and for different groups. Women and indigenous communities are not getting real time information on several issues of their concern. For example, majority of the women are still unaware of their basic rights. With the use of ICT, women and other indigenous communities can be informed of their rights as citizens. Also, information on politics, business, history, geography, and other topics can be made available in the rural parts of Nepal through the use of ICT.

Nepalese culture is very rich and libraries can play an immense role in preserving it. For instance, the folklores are kind of disappearing. So, with the use of ICT, they can be recorded and preserved for the future generation to use.

Similarly, books, magazines, journals and photographs are getting obsolete. They can be digitalized so as to preserve them. In addition, many people are not informed regarding what services and information a particular library can provide. By making available the library catalogue on the internet, many people will be informed and visit libraries if it has a publication of their interest.

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 and public support, regional and international context)?

The overall environment ecosystem in library is favorable in Nepal. The concept of libraries has been gaining momentum among the general public. New public libraries have been opened with the initiation of local people and somewhere with the assistance of some I/NGOs. The government has also supported the development of libraries by providing \$53600 to 32 libraries throughout Nepal. The introduction of Library and Information Science policy is another landmark. Increasing number of partnerships is also a sign that public libraries in Nepal are developing and have a bright future ahead.

4.1.4.1 Local and national economy

Describe the local and national economic environment and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is

specific to this venue)

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

The local and national economic environment affects the public access to information and communication in public libraries to a large extent. Unless the economic environment is sound enough, investment in upgrading and updating library services will be minimal. Similarly, access also depends on the local people's level of income. Public libraries have some membership fees to borrow books and other reference materials. So, if the people's economic standing is not very favorable, they will not want to invest any part of their meager income to get the service of a library.

The economic condition of the country is not very prosperous. In a country, where more than half of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, it is very natural that the public, in general, will have low access to such information venues. Inflation is increasing, which makes it even more difficult for the people to keep a share of their income for availing the library services.

As for ICT, It's ironical but true that the total national expenditures of the government exceed the revenues. In such case, expecting a decent investment in ICT services for libraries is kind of far fetched.

4.1.4.2 *Legal and regulatory framework*

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

Libraries can play an important role in sharing knowledge and information, and in line with government's commitment to provide education for all by 2015, the Library and Information Service National Policy 2064 (2007) has been framed to provide a guide map for establishing and operating libraries and information centers.²⁷

The policy says that in order to ensure and exercise the Right to Information conferred by the constitution, libraries and information centers must be established and operated from the village to the central level with a view to enabling all citizens to have access to such information sources in an easy and simple manner. Library is a strong means to protect and promote the traditional and indigenous knowledge, skills and technologies. Presence of library is not only important for creators, publishers, and distributors; it is also a strong means to preserve the culture for future generation to study.

The long term vision of the policy is *"To build a well-cultured, modern and enhanced society with competitive capacity, by bringing about simplicity on the access to knowledge-based information and educational materials through libraries and information centers"*

The working policy put forward includes the following points:

- Formation of a library and information service development board to provide necessary

²⁷ For the full copy of the policy: <http://www.nnl.gov.np/policies.php>, last accessed on August 12, 2008

assistance to the libraries

- Develop subject/thematic libraries such as agriculture, science and technology, medical sciences libraries as central libraries;
- Establish and operate regional libraries under the national library in order to provide library and information service to each citizen in a prompt, efficient and reliable manner;
- Render support for the building, expansion and effective use of various kinds of information sources such as national Bangmaya index, subject-wise Bangmaya index, union list of serials, union catalogue etc.;
- National Library is to act as a higher body of all community and public libraries operated in Nepal;
- Have an Act providing for the storage of publications, with provisions that publications published within Nepal must be provided to Nepal National Library and other two specific libraries for the collection of intellectual heritage;
- Make provisions for involvement of concerned people in national and international symposia, seminars and trainings;
- Set aside a certain percentage of the education budget for the development of public libraries, and include library development tax to be levied at local level.

With regard to public libraries, the policy presents the following strategies:

- To have public libraries operated and managed by the local bodies
- Establish community/public/children libraries in places with no libraries.
- To encourage local communities and CSOs for the establishment and operation of public libraries
- Encourage professional training organizations to conduct library training in association with the concerned bodies of the Government of Nepal
- To get the materials published by Government of Nepal to the community libraries and information centers through district level bodies
- Operate mobile library services in rural and remote places where transportation is difficult.
- Develop digital and virtual libraries keeping in line with ICT
- Allocation of budget by local bodies for the establishment of libraries, information centers, and community resource centers

4.1.4.3 Political will and public support

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to and complement section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

The Government has realized the informational value of public libraries in the country. This is the reason that in the year 2006/07, a total of 3.7 million Rupees (USD 53600 approx) has been distributed as grants to the 32 public libraries in different parts of the country. The amount of grant to an individual public library ranged from Nrs 10000 to 500,000 (USD 145 to USD 7245).²⁸

²⁸ For the list of libraries which were provided with the grant, please visit:

http://www.nnl.gov.np/newsletter_june_2007.pdf, last accessed on August 2, 2008

Even the public supports such kinds of venues to a large extent. They show their support not only by using the services of the library, but also collecting funds from local and national organizations to make the libraries more sustainable.

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? (i.e., national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

There is no library council in Nepal. However, regarding association, there are two professional associations. ***Nepal Library Association*** is one which was established in 1976 with the view to develop library field in Nepal. Another association is ***Tribhuvan University Library Science Student's Alumni Association (TULSSAA)*** which was established in 1999. It also works for the betterment of library and the professionals. It has been publishing library journal and has been providing short term training course.

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.

Such kind of public-private partnership has occurred in very few public libraries in Nepal. Here only those instances are sought that the research team came across in the course of research:

- American Center has partnered with Pokhara Public Library to set up a separate section in which all the books, materials, and equipments were provided by the American Center. (for more information, please refer to the Case study)
- READ Nepal has collaborated with some Public libraries like the Myagdi Library in Myagdi district, Laxmi Memorial Library in Syangja district, and Vidhya Mandir Library in Baglung to provide them with necessary support. All these libraries are now referred to as Community Library as per the mandate of READ Nepal.
- Nepal National Library has collaborated with JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) which has donated some Japanese animation video tapes to add into the Children's Section of the library.
- Nepal National Library has been designated as the "Depository Library" for the publications of Asian Development Bank since August 2001. The collection is available upon request.
- British Council in Nepal transferred all its library books to its partner Kathmandu Valley Public Library in its quest to convert itself into a Virtual Library.

4.1.4.6 *Other environment factors*

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

The other environment factors that affect access and use of information in public libraries are not exclusive. Such factors have affected all the sectors of the nation. The first major factor is political instability which has affected all the sections and all the sectors of the country, libraries being no exception. Time and again, there are strikes called which forces the closure of libraries as well. Then there is the socio-economic instability. A poor peasant who finds it difficult to earn enough to feed his family will hardly even think of visiting libraries. His prior agenda would be to arrange the means of livelihood. Social inclusion is also a major hindrance. Despite many organizations working towards assimilation of all the groups, such exclusion remains rampant. The third-gender or the untouchables still find themselves excluded from such public venues. Finally, technology concentration in urban areas of the country remains a challenge. The geography of the country is such that it is difficult to make technology reach in the most rural parts of the country. Initiatives are taken; however, it will take time when technology will be able to penetrate every part of the country.

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 2005/06

Local currency name Nepalese Rupees amount (local currency) 3,700,000

Approx. equivalent in USD 53,600 based on exchange rate of NPR-USD on date July 2008.

This budget is based on the funds provided by government to 32 public libraries all over Nepal.

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	95108 Million	
Education	19211 Million	
Other (name)		
Public libraries	3.7 Million	Government direct funding to public libraries

Other Comments:

Although there might be other indirect contribution from the government to public libraries, those have not been recorded as it is difficult to find data for such contributions.

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:		
International donors:		
National donors:		
User fees/services:		

Other Comments:

Figures for other sources except government is not available at a national level

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?

In case of public libraries, Ministry of Finance channels the fund to Ministry of Education and Sports which then transfer the funds to libraries. Nepal National Library System, the government funded system having 5 libraries receive direct funding from the government on annual basis directly. For other libraries, the government funding are not always assured and whenever they are there, they are passed Ministry of Education to District Education Offices in the concerned districts where the library belongs. Individual libraries then contact the District Education Office for fund release.

In case of funding from local government, the funds are channeled through District Development committees, Village Development Committees and Municipalities directly. Some of the public libraries also receive funding from I/NGOs and individual donors. In this case, the libraries receive funding directly from the concerned donors.

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?

Most of the public libraries levy a nominal membership fee if the users want to borrow the library resources for use at home. Such kind of membership fee is, most of the times, not enough but they help in at least collecting the maintenance cost. Many libraries carry on other income generating

activities like providing training or renting the space available so as to sustain the library.

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)	35%	
Building infrastructure / Rent	20%	
Utilities / Maintenance	5%	
Staff Training	10%	
Computers/technology	20%	
Reference Update	10%	
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

These cost categories are computed based on average of the expenditure pattern of different public libraries in the country. The cost categories may differ for large public libraries or small ones, the expenditure pattern may vary.

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?

Public libraries have succeeded in getting government's attention and the funding for public libraries, has, in fact, increased. As mentioned earlier, government has allocated \$53,600 for public libraries in the year 2006/07. In the near future as well, the government's funds are expected to increase for these types of venues. However, the disappointing part is that most of the public libraries do not get the allocated funds because the Ministry of Education disburses the funds through District Education Office. Most of the DEOs do not make any effort to make the funds reach the public libraries.

4.1.6 *Case example for public libraries: Pokhara Public Library, Chipledhunga, Pokhara, Kaski*

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.

This was the first of the Regional Libraries to be affiliated to the Nepal National Library, in 1995. The Municipality provides the building and two library staff, and the library is managed by an energetic team of volunteer Executive Committee members. The library collections are being built up and there are currently about 4000 books. Sixty-five newspapers and magazines are regularly being received and about 100 readers visit the library each day. The library is centrally located in Mahendra Pool. Centrally located in a rapidly growing city with numerous schools, colleges, and two universities, the Pokhara Public Library came into existence to serve the information needs of the society with the following main objectives:



- Library Services without discrimination to all.
- Promote reading habit of the society
- Enhance the collection, publication, and fine arts if Western Region and Kaski District
- Promote Pokhara as a intellectual meeting place in national and international level.

Pokhara Public Library holds a large collection of reference materials, textbooks, university directories, and books on Nepali literature published in western region and Kaski district. PPL holds more than 11000 books, and 1500 children books to cater to learners and children. It subscribes more than 75 Nepali news magazines and more than 24 international news and literary journals. The library employs 2 full time staffs, 1 part time librarian and has 2 volunteers who are provided with daily travel allowance.

With support from DANIDA through UNESCO, the Pokhara Public Library is a centre for a Mobile Library Service to 5 local communities, based on schools and BPEP Resource Centres to enhance the reading habit of school children as well as rural people too.



Community Information Center

Under the signed Memorandum of Understanding between American Center and PPL in September 2003, the information center came into being as a unit of PPL from February 2004. American Center provided all the materials to information center including furniture, computers, photocopiers, AV materials, and collection of

reference books on wide range of subjects, magazines, CD ROMs and other information materials.

The Information Center provides library and information services to students, learners, and professionals. It also provides information about the United States, its culture, people, American education system, and supports everyone learning English Language or preparing for TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, and SAT Examination through books, access to internet, magazines, CD ROMs, online databases, and AV Materials. It provides information that will assist in building better society through democracy, peace, and prosperity.

4.2 Venue 2: Community Library

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?

Immense efforts have been put to create centers for literacy and social empowerment in rural areas of Nepal. It seems like, with the growth of community libraries, such efforts have finally reaped the fruits. Community libraries in Nepal seem to have changed the lives of thousands of the people, and this is a change for the good. With the popularity of community libraries soaring, the very definition of *library* and *outreach* in communities has been revolutionized. Community libraries in Nepal have been storehouse of knowledge and information, and have proved themselves as a vital and powerful resource for supporting literacy, social change, and social justice through empowerment.

Community libraries in Nepal have been addressing issues like social discrimination, poverty, gender equality, and education through the promotion of community literacy. They have been instrumental in diminishing the isolation, vulnerability and marginality in which majority of the Nepalese live. They have been able to strengthen communications in the remote villages of Nepal, where 90% of the population is isolated because of geographical remoteness and limited prospects for electricity, roads, and communication. Community libraries in such rural areas have been successful in promoting greater awareness about education, health, sanitation, and human rights.

Community libraries, however, contain more than reading materials. Most of the libraries include a dedicated children's section with books and a toy library filled with Montessori-like manipulative. Some libraries also include a computer room (with one or more computers), printers, photocopiers, occasional Internet access, and video and television for the community to watch movies and cartoons. Some libraries also have a room for meetings and special gatherings. Extensive access to materials represents an important step toward helping the Nepalese people attain critical literacy skills. Community libraries also conduct different outreach programs on issues like reproductive health, employment, investment and micro-financing training, vaccination drives, wall newspaper training and production, AIDS Awareness programs, community meetings, peace building conferences, literacy classes, leadership training, general health clinic, and many more. For the untouchables, community libraries have become a source of liberation.

Observations and interviews indicated that community libraries have also been improving the lives of many through its different economic empowerment activities. Such economic activities have brought people from different caste groups together and have improved the lives of women to a large extent. Perhaps the greatest stride has been the saving and loan cooperatives that has been emerging in many community libraries.

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)?

The ACCESS ecosystem in community libraries is pretty strong. Majority of the community libraries are physically accessible, has employed the right kind of technology, and the services are very affordable for the general public. Most of the libraries are located in venues where community members can reach within some minutes of walk. Similarly, the services provided are based on the needs of the community members. The charges levied are also decided upon by the management committee as per the willingness and the ability of the community members to pay.

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.

Community libraries, as the name suggests, are established for the community members and by the community members. So, most community libraries are set up in places where they are easily accessible to the community members. The location is selected with great care. Since community libraries are targeted towards a certain community, they are located in places where they are easily accessible to that particular community. Also, community libraries are constructed in such a way so as to give easy access to the physically challenged group.

Of the 21 users surveyed in community libraries, only 8 users think that location has been a problem for accessing information in community libraries. Most of the libraries, according to the users have been established in ideal location. However, of 14 operators surveyed, 6 operators (nearly 50%) believed that location of the library is not apt, which has resulted in less number of visitors in the library.

As far as the Digital ICTs are concerned, not every library has made ICT services accessible to the community members. The problem is the uneven geographical terrain of the country. It is very expensive to get the ICT services to the remote areas of Nepal. However, efforts are being made to introduce Digital ICTs services in these venues, including telemedicine and video conferencing. In some community libraries established by READ Nepal, a Rural Information Center/Telecenter has also been established with the help of HLCIT. So, efforts are being made to provide ICT services accessible to the community members through community libraries. Also, plans are under way to build satellite stations.

4.2.2.2 Appropriate technology and 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.

The technologies, information, and services are highly appropriate to the different groups that the libraries serve. Community libraries are established, run, and managed by communities. The decision with regard to services provided, technology employed, and programs designed are based on the interest and the need of the community itself. They undertake an analysis of what best interests the community and offer them likewise.

High income group rarely visit community libraries. However, the services offered are appropriate for all including the high income, middle income, and the low income group. Similarly, even people with no formal education can get the required information to a large extent since they have the audio-visual tools, like posters, Multimedia CDs, etc., that make it easy for them to access the information.

29% of the users as well as 29% of the operators surveyed said that the services that the library provides are not enough but the ones that are offered are very appropriate. However, the rest 71% were of the opinion that the services offered are enough, and that lack of proper services is not a barrier to the use of the venue.

The programs that community library undertakes are mostly the ones which are demanded by community members. For instance, before the Constituent Assembly Election that were held in April 10, 2008, many community libraries conducted mock election sessions to let the community members the entire procedure of casting vote.

There are some instances that proves that even the people with no eyesight avail the information provided by community libraries. This is generally done through the audio tools. Also, children and youth recite books and other publications to this group. Even on the basis of age, the services are appropriate for all the groups including children, youth and senior citizens. Even for senior citizens, the services are appropriate as they can come and meet like minded people and discuss on issues concerning them. Community libraries have not yet considered providing the required information to the Transgender community. So information of interest to the transgender is not very appropriate.

As far as the Digital ICT services are concerned, it has not reached most of the libraries, and the libraries which have employed such services are according to the community's need. 100% of the users surveyed in libraries providing ICT services, said that the services that are being offered are appropriate. So, it can be said that the technology, information and services are highly appropriate to the population that the library is serving.

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.

As mentioned earlier, most of the services offered by community libraries are free of cost; there is no question of affordability. Even those community libraries, that charge the visitors, levy a very nominal price. The fees, if applicable, are fixed after analyzing both the willingness and the ability of the community members to pay for the use of services of the libraries. It is affordable to all sections of the society, whether he or she belongs to the middle income or low income. Also, it is affordable to people in urban areas as well as rural areas. However, if somebody wants to use the services but cannot afford to pay for those services, the libraries wave off the charges for those

people. Despite this, 24% of the users said that cost is a major bottleneck for the community members to use libraries. Similarly, 57% of the operators said that cost factor is a problem. However, what they meant was that the services are affordable for the community members, but the library has not been able to pull enough funds to provide more services to the members.

As for the use of Digital ICT services, the community libraries again charge a very small amount. In addition, most of the libraries where funding is not a very huge issue, even the ICT services are offered free of cost. None of the users said that the ICT services offered in community libraries are unaffordable. So, even the Digital ICT services offered in community libraries are quite affordable.

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?

Membership Fee: There are 4 kinds of membership fee in most of the libraries: General Membership, Institutional membership, Founder Membership and life-time membership fee.

General membership

Indicate amount in local currency NRs 25 to NRs 300 per year (depending on the composition of the community, and their ability and willingness to pay)

Equivalent in US Dollars: 36¢ to \$4.5

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Institutional membership

Indicate amount in local currency NRs 1000 to NRs 3000 (per year)

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$14.5 to \$43.5

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Life membership

Indicate amount in local currency NRs 1000 to NRs 5000 (differs from library to library)

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$14.5 to \$72.5

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Founder membership

Indicate amount in local currency NRs 500-one time payment (on an average)

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$7

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

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

Even Digital ICT services in most of the community libraries are offered for free. Most of the libraries provide the Multimedia CDs free of cost, and also show movies and documentaries for free. However, in some libraries, users are charged with a nominal amount ranging from NRs 5-NRs 25 for the per hour use of the internet.

Note: The charges are different for different libraries. There is no standard membership fee structure.

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

- Community libraries that offer services free of cost have various income generating programs to be able to sustain the library
- The people in Hilly Region are more empowered and keen on using the services offered by libraries as compared to people from Terai. Also, women in Hills are more empowered, when it comes to the use of libraries.
- In Terai, the infrastructure is more developed as compared to the Hilly areas because of easy availability of materials and resources in these areas. Terai is developed with regard to infrastructure as well as the Digital ICT services.
- Since the ethnicity aspect is very high in Terai, the community contribution is higher in Terai as compared to the Hills. Regions having adequate infrastructure like central and the mid western regions offer more digital ICT services than those in the rural and remote areas.

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.

Eastern Development Region: 159

Central Development Region: 193

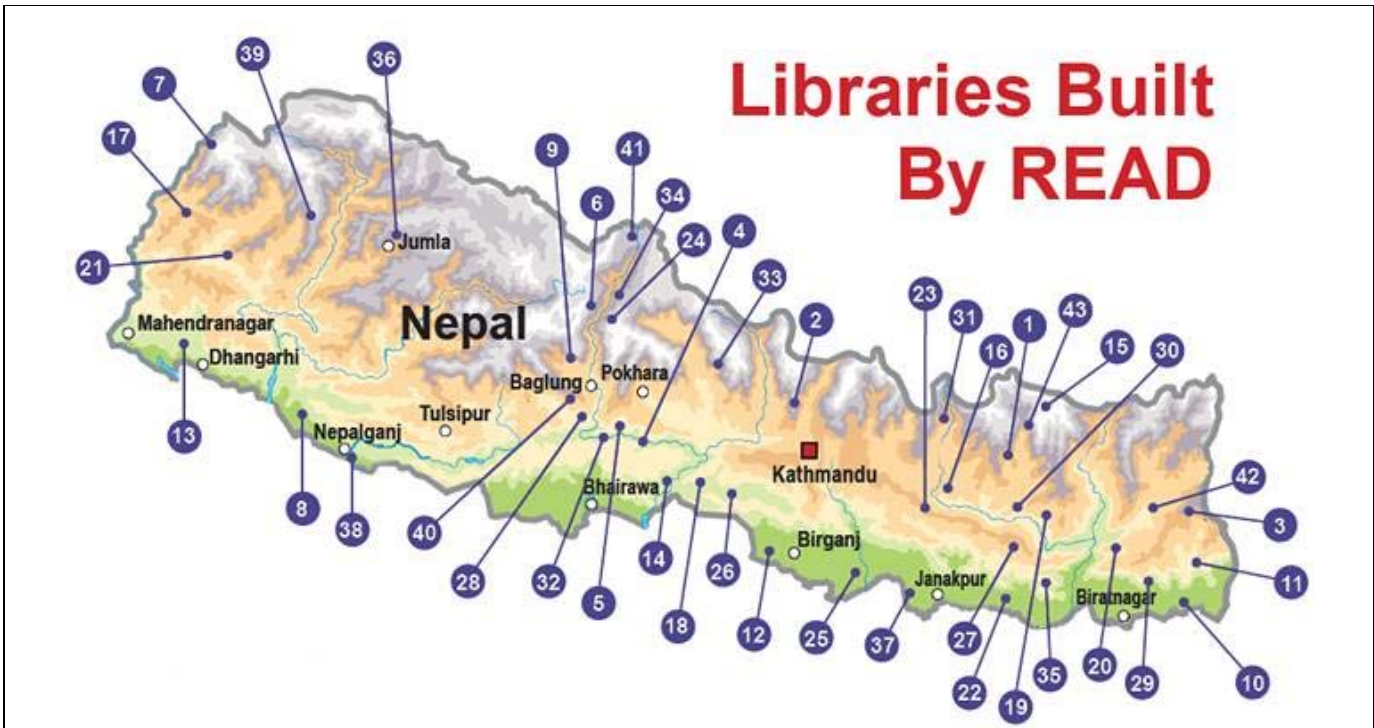
Western Development Region: 147

Mid-Western Development Region: 94

Far-Western Development Region: 57

4.2.2.6 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).



Description of map:

The map depicts community libraries established by READ Nepal. No map was available to show the location of all the community libraries.

4.2.2.7 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.

Community libraries are believed to have a very important information value. They are, in fact, extended Service centers. Equitable information access to all is the major theme of community library. However, nothing yet has been done to improve the access of this venue to the transgender community. This is because they have yet not felt the need to do so in many instances. Once they realize that even this section is important, they will certainly devise programs intended towards this group. Also, in many libraries, it was found that the space is very compact due to which only limited number of visitors can be benefited at the same time. In addition, many community libraries are highly dependent on DDCs, VDCs, donors, etc. Most of them lack a proper income generating plan, which has also hampered the overall functioning of telecenters.

4.2.3 Capacity and 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, and social appropriation of technology)?

The capacity of both the operators and users is pretty adequate in community libraries. Community libraries have been found to be the most successful examples of information and communication venues in Nepal. They have been well accepted by the community members, and the integration into daily lives is worth applause. Even the social appropriation is high in community libraries. Librarians are also capable enough to provide the community members with the required information or the needed books. However, sometimes, because of lack of indexing and cataloging, it becomes very difficult for the librarians to locate the required books efficiently.

As far as Digital ICT services are concerned, people are yet not very comfortable with the technology because of ignorance. Youth group trust it more than the older generation because of their exposure to the technology.

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.

	Large Libraries	Medium libraries	Small Libraries
Full Time	10(max)	5-7	1-5
Volunteers	25	5	2

For Digital ICT Services

	Large Libraries	Medium libraries	Small Libraries
Full Time	3	1	1
Volunteers	2	1	1

4.2.3.2 *Staff training*

What is the overall capacity of the staff (i.e., librarians, telecentre operators) to help users access and use public access to information and 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.

Although the librarians are capable of serving the visitors, a lot needs to be done to improve their potential. Community libraries do not hire professional librarians. They hire non-professionals and train them on library management. The training is of a short duration of time. The training makes them capable enough to manage the libraries as well as serve the visitors. They do the indexing and cataloging very efficiently. They are capable to serve people with formal education or those without

any education. At the same time, they serve the children, the youth, and the senior citizen. 77% of the operators surveyed had undertaken some sort of training before joining as a librarian. Also, all the librarians surveyed had some kind of formal education. 38.5% of the operators had completed their elementary level, 23% had completed their high school and 38.5% had completed their college/university level education. However, 29% of the users and 28% of the operators did believe that the training of operators has not been enough, which leads to problems at times.

Only 1 user of the 7 users surveyed in libraries with ICT services said that the incapability of the librarian to provide Digital ICT services has been a barrier to use information at the venue. Since librarians lack professional learning, their skills need to be enhanced in many ways. For instance, the librarians need a lot of training on technical aspects of managing a library from online cataloging to using the internet to compile necessary news and information for the locals.

4.2.3.3 *Services offered*

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

Services Offered

Comments

20. Access to Books, magazines and journals (different categories and not restricted to few areas)

21. Meeting Venue (Platform for discussion, seminars and workshop for locals, companies, international organizations)

22. Audio Visual and Multimedia Services (CDs, Videotapes)

23. Children Section/Toy Section

24. Early Childhood Development Classes

25. Pre-School Classes

26. Health Related Activities like Health Check-Ups and Medical Camps

27. Formal/Non-Formal Education Classes

28. Income Generating Activities like Bee-Keeping
29. Ambulance Services
30. Legal Counseling/Human Rights Counseling
31. Internet searching tips and techniques to access e-resources
32. Access to reference catalog and databases
33. Computer Training Classes
34. Animated Movies/Documentary Shows
35. Multimedia CD Access
36. Computer Services
37. Access to catalog and index databases
38. Internet/E-mail Facility
39. Environment Preservation Activities
40. Research Activities
41. Tourism Promotion
42. Books Distribution
43. Book Reading
44. Capacity building Training
45. Competition (Debate, Poem, Story, etc)
46. Programs in collaboration with

local organizations

47. Religious ceremonies

48. Preservation/Documentation of culture

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

- Community libraries that offer services free of cost have various income generating programs to be able to sustain the library
- People in Hilly Region are more empowered and keen on using the services offered by libraries as compared to people from Terai. Also, women in Hills are more empowered, when it comes to the use of libraries.
- In Terai, the infrastructure is more developed as compared to the Hilly areas because of easy availability of materials and resources in these areas. Terai is developed with regard to infrastructure as well as the Digital ICT services.
- Since the ethnicity aspect is very high in Terai, the community contribution is higher in Terai as compared to the Hills. Regions having adequate infrastructure like central and the mid western regions offer more digital ICT services than those in the rural and remote areas.
- In different areas, different concepts have emerged, based on the needs of the community. In some places, Prisoners library has been initiated, while in other places the concept of Mobile Library has gained significance.

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.

The concept of community library itself is to provide information to the underserved community of the society. Community libraries undertake various programs to increase the access of information to the underserved section of the society.

For example, most of the programs are intended towards the middle income and low income people. To encourage them to read, many community libraries provide its services free of cost so that people can access the required information even if they do not have sufficient financial stability.

Similarly, as far as education level is concerned, many people in the rural areas lack formal education. So in order to encourage them, various programs involving audio-visual technology are run. For children, they have a separate child section where there are toys, which the children can play with. Triveni Community Library in Banke district, has been providing scholarships to the underserved students and they also they have a Books Distribution program (Pustak Paincho) where they have a provision to distribute books to underserved children for one year. The books are provided to the students at a value of 25% of the original price. Also, students are supposed to return the books back once the session is complete. They also provide information on healthcare. For

instance, they provide First Aid Kit Box to the community. They sell medicines and use the money to buy more medicines.

Community libraries also run special programs to increase female involvement in the community libraries. For instance, every community library has a Library Management Committee and the committee should have at least 33% females. Also, they run programs as per the involvement of women in the community activities. In Sangam Community Library of Udaypur district (Also see the case study), mobilization of women members of the community is exemplary. They have helped eradicate some social evils against women in the society. Also, some libraries have started Old Age Home Library program respecting the old aged citizens. The audio visual section in the library with religious songs and libraries with religious books are seen as the part of attraction for them.

Also, for people who are apprehensive about visiting libraries, the concept of Mobile Library, which takes a round of the community once in a while, has been introduced. Also, they have several outreach activities intended to bring in the underserved community of the society. For instance, they bring various groups for a tour of the library so as to encourage them.

Similarly, many community libraries have formed Saving and Credit Group as so to develop a saving habit of the local people as well as provide them with micro credit when the need be. In addition, the libraries also organize Health camps. Such health camps are, most of the times, organized in the library premises so as to enhance relationship with the community and make them aware of the presence of libraries.

As far as Digital ICT services are concerned, not many community libraries have been offering such services. However, initiatives are being undertaken so as to improve the delivery of such services. Most of the community libraries offer computer training to the members of the community, However, those who are willing to take the training but are not able to pay, have to submit a letter if interest to the library management committee and the committee takes the final decision.

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:

Community libraries have a lot of content available on different topics ranging from health to education to philosophy to history. The content available most of the times is based on the need and demand of the community. Some libraries have only 200 books while there are libraries which have about 12500 books. On an average, a community library has around 3500 books. They have everything that is of interest to the community members, be it Political, Geographical, developmental, or the like.

Other Content Needed:

Despite the availability of required content, community libraries still need to collect some more content that is relevant to the community members. In addition, E-contents should also be made available through the employment of Digital ICTs. Around 29% of the operators said that the available content in community libraries is not enough. However, the users seem pretty satisfied with

what is available in community libraries. Only 7% of the users surveyed were of the opinion that the content available in community libraries is not enough and more needs to be added. Moreover, none of the users surveyed said that unavailability of content has been a barrier to use ICT services in community libraries.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Community libraries are making an effort by themselves to create required content for the community members. For instance, Sangam Community Library is creating Digital Stories on different social issues which will be of interest to the community members. Also, Trifala Library has been storing the age-old documents and hand written books and now they plan to digitalize those documents.

Source: Interviews and surveys

4.2.3.6 Services and 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.

Community libraries have most of the information that are important to the community members. They have information on Agriculture, Education, Employment, Rights and Responsibilities, Health, Hygiene, Income Generation, Environment, and the like. However, the information available in community libraries depends on the need of the particular community. Information available completely caters to what the community demands. Language used in most of the publication is Nepali. However, if the need be, the employees in the libraries narrate the information in local language. Only 1 of the 21 users surveyed in community libraries was of the opinion that language has been a barrier to use the information available in community libraries. Similarly, only 14% of the operators said that unavailability of contents in the right language has been a problem for the users.

The information available on the internet is most of the times in English, and in very rare case in Nepali. This is also one of the reasons why community members are not very comfortable using digital information. Students/youth are the ones who use the internet to get the required information as they can understand the language better compared to the older generation. None of the users said that the ICT services were not benefited from because of the absence of contents in local languages.

4.2.3.7 Types of uses

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

- 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.

The purpose of using libraries is different for different groups. The common purpose for most of the people visiting libraries is to access the resources available in the libraries. The middle income group uses it to access publications while the low income groups generally come to browse newspapers and get information on the occupation they are involved in. While the children come to

play in the toy section, youth come to refer to educational materials and learn more on their further education. For the senior citizens, it is a place to be able to meet some like minded people. Similarly, the rural people visit community libraries to get information on agriculture, employment as well as health. Also, they come to be involved in the Community Development Programs.

Based on the research, the top information content that the users seek at the venue is Education, News, and Health (from users as well as operator's perspective). In addition, the users also seek information on government services, agriculture, safe motherhood, Safe sex, HIV/AIDS, Politics, etc.

In community libraries where there is access to Digital ICT services, most people come to use the internet and get some computer training. The top 3 ICT activities performed in community libraries include E-mail, web browsing and Health Information search. People lacking formal education come to get digital information about agriculture, governance, education, health, and employment. The rural people do not generally have access to such ICT services as not many community libraries in the rural areas have Digital ICT. Most of the youth come to access the e-resources pertaining to their courses of study as well as other resources. Some people also come to get information through the use of Multimedia CDs and other Videotapes.

4.2.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs. Complement here as needed.

Community libraries see a lot of users on a single day. Of the venues surveyed, some venues had only 4 visitors visiting the library, while some libraries had around 150 users per day. On an average, 33 users come to community libraries per day. The ratio of male and female users is very balanced in community libraries. An effort has been made to increase the women users in libraries. In some libraries, only 10% of the users are female, while in some libraries, it is 80%. However, on an average, the users of libraries comprise of 52% male and 48% female.

On the basis of caste, the users in community libraries come from all caste groups, ranging from Hindu caste group to indigenous caste group. However, the Hindu caste group seems to be dominating in most of the community libraries. On an average, 56% of the users belong to Hindu caste group, 25% belong to Ethnic community, and 19% belong to the indigenous community. The ethnic groups that mostly visit community libraries include Buddhist, Rai, Limbu, Magar, Gurung, Tharu, and Newar.

Visitors from all income categories, including high level and low level, visit community libraries. However, majority of the visitors coming to community libraries belong to the middle income group. 71% of the users belong to the middle income groups, while 21% and 8% belong to the low income and high income group respectively.

Most of the visitors are the ones who come to libraries quite often. 50% of the users are the ones who visit community libraries 2-3 times in a month while 43% of the users are the ones who come to libraries nearly daily. This implies that the users have placed a high informational value to community libraries.

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 and communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

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

The capacity of the users, in general is moderate. There are some who can very well take advantage of the information and communication resources available in the libraries, while there are some groups having difficulty to access the same resources.

Most of the users who come to libraries have had some sort of formal education. Only 4% of the visitors have had no formal education. 34% of the users have completed elementary schooling, 35% have completed high schooling, and the rest 27% of the users have had college/university degree. The capacity of users to take advantage of information and communication resources depends on the level of their education to a large extent. For example, the group with formal education, can access the resources in a more efficient way as compared to those who have no formal education. Similarly, the people who can understand neither English language nor Nepali language, their capacity to use the library resources is limited. Similarly, the capacity of urban population to use the information and communication resources in the library is high as compared to the rural population.

The capacity of the users to access the Digital ICT services is not very high. Computer literacy is very low in the rural parts of the country. The capable group is the one which have had some computer training. The most capable group is the Youth Group because of their interest in ICT and the training that they are receiving through the community libraries.

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: Community libraries focus on training programs to a large extent. They offer training courses to the public on different issues ranging from personality development to Social Inclusion. Also, they offer various kinds of training to improve the reading habits of the community at large. The library management committee decides on the type of training on the basis of the needs of the community members.

ICT specific training courses: Community libraries offer training on technical processing as well as basic computer training. Also, some community libraries have provided Digital Story Telling Training to the community members.

Most of the trainings provided by community libraries are not certified. However, there are cases where International Telecommunication Union has got together with community libraries to provide such training. Also, Tribhuvan University and Library Association have provided some training to the community members.

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.

As far as integrating the services offered by community libraries in the lives of the people is concerned, it is very easy to do so. This is because community libraries are run and managed by community members for the community members. All the programs run and services offered by community libraries are designed so as to make them user friendly. The members of the community do not have difficulty to access the information. Also, the libraries are located in places which are easily accessible. Also, since most community libraries operate libraries as another addition to their ongoing community development initiatives, they have several income generating activities. So, the involvement of community members is of benefit to the libraries as well as to the participating community members.

Not many libraries are offering digital ICT services to the community members, and in libraries where such services are available, integration is questionable. This is because not many people are computer literate, and expecting them to use the internet to search for the required information is little impractical. Integration is even more difficult because the librarians themselves have to take training on ICT to provide such service to the visitors. However, if people are provided with awareness on the need of using ICT tools, and at the same time provided with sufficient training, the services can be integrated into their daily lives.

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: i.e., 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.

Educated class can immediately associate themselves with libraries because they have known and understood the value of libraries as important information sharing venues. For people in rural areas, community libraries are perceived as a meeting place, in general. Since community mobilization in community libraries is intensive, the mobilized population thinks of library as an important information sharing venue. There are instances in which people associate their home locations with the location of libraries. Even the underserved communities of the society have realized the importance of libraries and visit them whenever they have their free time. However, to get people from the underserved section visit the libraries, it is important to get this community involved in the programs of libraries through inclusion and dissemination of knowledge and there are some community libraries moving towards this direction.

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.

The social appropriation aspect of community libraries is very high. Most of the activities are consumer driven. If the community feels that there is need of addressing a certain issue, they conduct activities so on. The community members are also keen on initiating different types of

activities and programs. Community libraries are thought of as a social platform rather than just an information sharing venue. So if the community members face any problem, they go to the community libraries to get the solution of their problem.

An example of social appropriating can be cited here. Sangam Community Library had provided training on Digital Story Telling to the community members. Later, the trainees themselves designed the curriculum and provided the same training to the local people. Similarly, in Triveni Community Library in Banke, some community members (both male and female) had received training on the preventive measures of HIV/AIDS. Later, the same trainees worked as trainers when they provided the same training to other local people. In another community library called the Gauradaha Community Library of Jhapa, the local people themselves come to libraries to ask for training programs and design the program by themselves along with the operator.

Myagdi Library in Beni has started a very innovative concept of Prisoners' Library program under which every week some books are delivered to the prisoners on the basis of their preference. Such kind of initiative has given new dimension to the lives of those who are locked in jail.

However, such kind of social appropriation cannot be expected in all the regions and all the libraries. In places where people have to think of their livelihood more than anything else, initiating activities in community libraries is the last thing people can think of.

4.2.3.14 Trust, safety, and 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?

People who visit libraries to get information of their interest trust the information completely. They value the information that is provided by the librarians as well as the information available in the magazines, journals, and other publications. They do not question what is written and said. People with no education especially trust the information completely. Also, since community libraries work for the betterment of the community as a whole, people do regard the information and services completely safe and secure.

Since technological use is still not rampant in most parts of the country, people are skeptical as far as trusting the information available on the internet is concerned. Youth and people with little formal education trust such information because they have some understanding on the Digital ICT services. The other groups trust the written information more than the virtual one. This is because of the absence of ICT literacy among the people.

4.2.3.15 Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered

What other information gaps and 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)

Community libraries have made tremendous strides in improving access to a wide range of information resources. Still, there is much work to be done. Administratively, for example, community libraries lack data systems necessary to accurately track circulation and attendance figures. Consequently, quantitative analyses of the impact of libraries on literacy development, a crucial missing element, must await further analysis.

Further, libraries need to work with communities to build a greater infrastructure for their libraries. Librarians need better training to accurately catalogue materials. Many of the books currently indexed have been donated by outsiders and are unattractive, inaccessible (due to language), or outdated, taking up valuable space in the libraries. Finding resources in Nepali on topics that are of vital interest to the community would only enhance the connections between literacy and empowerment. Further, partnering with organizations to provide literacy training for adults and story hours for children, many of whom have had to drop out of school, would help to strengthen their reading and writing skills and create additional opportunities for work and greater social mobility. *(When I Give, I Own: Building Literacy Through READ Community Libraries in Nepal, Susan B. Neuman, Nafizuddin Khan, Thamsanqa Dondolo)*

Use of Digital ICT still remains very rare. This is the most important aspect that needs to be addressed by community libraries. Most of the community libraries have information on everything but at times, information is not updated and gets obsolete. The policy changes in our country are very frequent and because ICT is not used in most community libraries, it takes days to get the information to the locals.

Although computer training is being provided to the community members, they do not use it to better their lives. They rarely use the internet to find information that is of importance to them. Also, community libraries can improve the education status by providing students with important contents and questions to the SLC Candidates. Digitalized question papers are available for students. However, community libraries have not yet been able to provide students with them basically because they are unaware of it.

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 and public support, regional and international context)?

The environment ecosystem for community libraries in Nepal can be termed very favorable. In a country where almost half of the population cannot read or write, the proliferation of community libraries is worth praise. Community libraries have taken strides for the realization of Right to Information Act. Community libraries have received huge support from the public as well.

4.2.4.1 Local and national economy

Describe the local and national economic environment and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

The national economic environment is in a state of flux. The government has recently proposed a project called “One Library one village.” However, even after the proposal has been passed, the rural areas have not been aggressively penetrated.

Investment in community libraries is directly related to the national budget on Education. If the

budget on education can be increased, the investment in the establishment of the community libraries will increase simultaneously. The budget of Government on improving the IT infrastructure of the country directly affects the availability of such services. The costs of licensing and use of technology also affects the delivery of ICT services.

4.2.4.2 *Legal and regulatory framework*

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

There is not any kind of legal and regulatory guidelines issued for the operation of community libraries in Nepal. However, community libraries have been great venues to idealize the Right To Information of the Nepalese.

4.2.4.3 *Political will and public support*

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to and complement section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

The success and local support towards community libraries in Nepal is immense. People have realized that community libraries serve a vital function in communities and that by providing access to information and learning, libraries can enable people to improve their lives and the generations to come. Even in the poorest communities that community libraries serve, families that can only contribute a handful of rice to sell in support of the library construction are strongly committed to developing new resources that will help their families and communities prosper and grow. Organizations like READ Nepal provides seed funding to design, build, furnish, and stock libraries, train librarians, and launch an income-generating enterprise in each community to help pay for the library over the long-term. Host communities are involved in all stages of planning and implementation and are responsible for contributing 15-to-20 percent of the start-up costs.

The community libraries by READ Nepal functions in the following way:

Based on the needs of and demands from the community, READ provides initial financial support for the establishment of the library. But from the very outset the library is owned, managed, and run by the community in which it is placed. The community must contribute the land for the library and bear at least 20% of the initial costs. Further, each community is responsible for supporting the library with at least one sustainable income-generating project. These income generating projects—depending on geographic location—include rental stores, fish ponds, printing presses, ambulances, and other services needed in the community. Income from these projects must meet the costs of staff, newspapers, book acquisitions, and book repair. The library and the sustainability projects, therefore, are used as developmental catalysts for many other initiatives in the community. (*When I Give, I Own: Building Literacy Through READ Community Libraries in Nepal*, Susan B. Neuman, Nafizuddin Khan, hamsanqa Dondolo)

This clearly shows the level of public willingness towards the development of community libraries in rural parts of Nepal.

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? (i.e., national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

There is a network called the **Community Library Association of Nepal** which has brought the community libraries under one umbrella. However, not all libraries have taken its membership as it has not been well marketed. Many libraries under READ Nepal have come in its domain, but many are still to get connected.

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.

Community libraries are, in a true sense, a source of empowering different groups. Community libraries generally collaborate with NGOs/INGOs, District Development Committees, Village Development Committees. For instance, READ Nepal collaborates with both national and local organizations. During its National Reading Campaign held on February 11, 2008, almost 80 organizations had supported it to make the program a success.

Even for Digital ICT services, there have been a lot of collaboration activities going on. Again, READ Nepal has collaborated with Equal Access, UNESCO, E-Research Development Network (ENRD), High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT), Budhanilkantha School (Kathmandu), One World South Asia, and Open Knowledge Network (OKN) to provide support for ICT services in their community libraries.

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?

There are several other factors that do affect the access and use of information in community libraries. The first is the Political Instability. The country is facing a political unrest for the past many years and it has affected all the areas including community libraries. Unless peace is restored, the future of such venues is bleak. Also, seasonal changes also affect the use of community libraries. For instance, during Rainy season and Snowy times, there are very few people who visit libraries. Also, since agriculture is the main occupation for more than 70% of the Nepalese population, the number of visitors decreases drastically during the harvesting season.

Also, during festivals, the number of visitors in community libraries is really low. Similarly, very few students visit libraries during Exam time. Finally, the availability of transportation facilities also affects the number of visitors availing library services. People do not prefer walking long distances to be able to get to a library.

4.2.5 For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams

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

4.2.5.1 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 fiscal year

Local currency name amount (local currency)

Approx. equivalent in USD based on exchange rate of on date .

Not Applicable

4.2.5.2 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		
Education		
Other (name)		
Public libraries		

Other Comments:

Not Applicable

4.2.5.3 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:		
International donors:		
National donors:		

User fees/services:

Other Comments:

Not Applicable

4.2.5.4 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?

Community libraries generate their own funding in their own ways. They often use social and traditional cultural events and programs to generate fund from their own community.

Most of the community libraries receive direct funding from the community itself. Libraries organize different cultural shows and events apart from regular membership base to generate fund. These funds are not registered in any authorities but received directly by the libraries. Similarly, most of the libraries have individual donors from the community itself who directly contribute certain sum to these libraries.

In some cases, libraries are also tied up with different initiatives and organizations. For example some libraries are part of umbrella foundation running cooperatives, saving and credit groups, schools, etc. In such cases, libraries also receive significant contribution to cover their cost from umbrella foundations and other partner organizations.

Some community libraries also receive funding from local government. In such cases, these libraries approach concerned Village Development Committees, District Development Committees or the Municipalities for funding support directly.

4.2.5.5 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?

Community libraries, as mentioned earlier have a provision of membership. If the users want to avail the services of libraries (Including borrowing books), they have to register themselves as members. There are four types of membership-General, Institutional, Life-time, and Founder (See section Fee for services for details). Such membership fees have been the source of sustainability for many of the community libraries. However, for libraries, where the membership is nominal, cost recovery is not possible. So, many libraries, with their own buildings have provided space to different businesses and their shutter rent helps them generate a generous income. Also, some libraries also rent equipments and utensils for different functions. Similarly, conference/training hall has also been a major source of income for many libraries.

The community-run, income-generating projects are paramount to the success of community libraries in Nepal. These community businesses have included a furniture factory, a printing press, a stationery store, a grain mill, a fishpond, as well as ambulance, rickshaw, storefront rental,

telephone, and x-ray services. Often the projects have raised considerably more than library operations require and have funded additional community development projects, such as childcare centers, health clinics, and literacy centers

4.2.5.6 *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)	30%	-
Building infrastructure	-	Infrastructure support is already provided by the community and no further cost is involved
Utilities	20%	--
Staff Training	5%	-
Computers/technology	10%	-
Services	25%	Other services apart from access to books
Resource Update	10%	-
Total	100%	

4.2.5.7 *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?

The value of community libraries in creating informed society is slowly being realized in Nepal by wide range of stakeholders including development organizations and the government. Nepal National Library has been using the slogan 'One village one library, one school one library'. Government of Nepal has also recently passed 'Library and national information policy 2007'.

With this backdrop, it is expected that community libraries will finally be treated as vital points for information dissemination in the communities. With proper implementation of the library and national information policy, external support of I/NGOs and other development agencies are also expected to rise along with rise in core government funding for the community libraries. Organizations committed in supporting libraries like Rural Education and Development (READ) and Room to Read are further expected to expand their funding base to community libraries in the nearby future.

4.2.6 Case example for venue 2: Sangam Community Library, Gaighat-2, Udaypur

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.

The Sangam Community Library project was initiated by the Sangam Tole Reformation Committee. The organization not only provided land for the construction of the library, but also donated a successful rental service (rental of chairs, cooking pots, tents, etc.) to the library as its sustaining project. The Ghaighat area is home to more than 55,000 people representing mixed ethnic groups—Brahmin, Chhetri, Rai, Newar, Magar, Tharu, and others. The area's school collection includes 22 primary, seven secondary, one higher secondary, one college and 13 boarding schools.



In addition to the library and the Reformation Committee, the building houses two other entities as well: Sangam Multipurpose Cooperative, and Sangam Rural Information center. The organization had 3 purposes: Social Development, Education development, and Economic Development. The social development was fulfilled through the Sangam Tole reformation Committee. Then, the organization focused on economic development and hence, the cooperative was formed. Later, focusing on educational development, the library was established in the year 2060 BS. It is in the same year that READ came into contact with the management committee and a contract was signed with the Reformation Committee, cooperative and the library. The building was constructed within 11 months of the agreement, with the help of contribution from READ and the community members. In 2062 BS, the library was formally inaugurated.



A 10-year sustainability plan has been designed with 22 points. The focus is on the sustainability of the program as well as financial sustainability. For instance, the Sangam Tent house has been providing a financial base from the beginning for the sustainability of the library. Similarly, the conference hall is also a sustainability project of the library.

In addition, they also have a Sangam computer training institute which was established to provide IT training. This training center has also been providing financial support. In the future, they want to provide free computer training

classes and look for other income generating activities.

Library Management

The library has its constitution has stated that the operation of the library will be guided by a certain set of rules. There are 22 points of sustainability and yearly programs of the library are guided by it. The yearly programs are further divided into quarterly program so that activities can be monitored and input can be assessed. The major activities of the library include the following:

- Educational activities
- Celebration of Saraswati Puja
- Wall Newspapers
- Debate competition
- Essay Competition
- Cleaning camps
- Tree Plantation/Environmental programs



The library is trying to be a community resource center rather than just a library. The management believes that Sangam library is what it is because of its extra-curricular activities apart from the core library activities. Also, they have an audio visual section where they show movies and documentaries to the community members. The management committee comprises of 4 women of 13 members. They have hired 4 full time staffs and 15 volunteers. With the support from their team of dedicated staffs, the library has been successfully managing the team of volunteers. The library also provides different kinds of training, and in the future they plan to transform the library as a Training Center.

Membership

The library management committee places a special emphasis on getting more members. They believe that membership is the key for sustainability of the library. They have different kinds of membership in the library:

a) Institutional members

Schools, Government offices, NGOs can be institutional members and have to pay Rs. 3250 as membership fee per year.

b) Life Members

Anybody can get a life membership of the library. For the members of the Sangam Tole Reformation Committee, the membership fee is Rs. 550, while for the community members interested in getting life membership will have to pay Rs. 1250 as membership fee.

c) Annual Members

The annual members have to pay Rs. 550 in the first year of which Rs. 300 is the deposit amount and Rs 250 is the membership fee. In case of renewal of the membership, the member will have to pay Rs. 250 only.

d) Founding Members

There were 87 founding members of the library. These members have the liberty to take decisions for the benefit of the library. They have to pay Rs. 550 as the membership fee.

Mobile Library

There's good news for many people in Nepal who are interested in reading but who either don't live near a library or can't afford to buy books. Sangam Library has developed an innovative system of distributing books-through Mobile Libraries to help people get the books they want: instead of having to travel to far-off libraries to borrow books, people will now have books brought to their doorsteps.

The concept of mobile library was developed by the library itself and readily approved by READ Nepal. The pilot mobile library project was started on the eve of World Book Day, April 23, 2007. In the beginning the Sangam Library employed five volunteers to distribute books. They would go from door to door, making enquiries about which books people wanted to read, and provide the books thus chosen. With the start of the book distribution service, the number of people reading books in Gaighat increased considerably, and an additional fifteen youth were employed to provide books to people of all the 35 wards of Triyuga municipality. The fifteen youth traverse the locale on their bicycles, drop into homes, drop off books and return in seven days to collect the books. The mobile library has proved to be an income generating activity and has been well accepted by the community members. The library has 3 programs under its domain:

- Books in every household
- Books in every school
- Books in every Organization

Under Books in every household, the volunteers take books on cycles to many places. A Book circulation register is maintained. Each household pays Rs. 20/month of which 60% is kept by the volunteers themselves and 40% is given to the library. This initiative was promoted to enhance reading habit among the community members. Later, some community members even started to come to the library to avail its services.

Now they are focusing on Books in every school initiative. Under this concept, 4-5 schools will be provided with 300-500 books at a time, and the books will have to be returned within 15 days. For this to hold true, the schools will have to be a life member of the library. Similarly, the school has to fulfill certain criteria to be selected for the project. Also, the school will have to commit to provide rooms, furniture, and HR for the library, and prove that the mobile library will be a sustainable project for the school. Under this, Rs. 5 is collected from each student per month of which Rs. 3 is given to Sangam Library and Rs. 2 is kept by the school for maintenance. Also, it is the responsibility of the school to collect the books from Sangam Library and deliver the books back again. However, Sangam Library will be providing the schools with the libraries for its volunteers.

The library has been of help to people from all walks of life. Students who cannot afford to buy books have benefited greatly from the campaign. So have teachers and housewives, government workers, businessmen and even farmers. Housewives have been given self-help books on house management, cookery, relationship with family members and so on: farmers have borrowed books on agriculture, children have been provided with children's literature and pictorial books; professionals and teachers have been provided books that are useful in their everyday work.

According to the Secretary of the library, Dhan Kumar Shrestha, plans are also afoot to extend the library's services throughout the district. In the coming days, the library will provide email, internet, phone, and fax facilities. And to make computer technology accessible to the people, plans have been made for the library to provide mobile-computer services.

Women's Section

Sangam Community Library also has a Women's Section which develops its programs and works with the community. The section consists of 9 members. Their major activities include the following:

Monitoring and Supervision of activities of libraries

- Saving-Credit Activities
- Sarau Abhiyaan (Assisting Mission)
 - They have lobbied in convincing the community members that women should be given the rights to go to 'Malami'
 - In case of death in the community, the women's group provides support to the family of deceased in terms of financial as well as moral support (first day). On later days, women manages other people to look after the family
- They celebrate March 8 every year and Teej (a Hindu festival in which wives fast for the long life of their husbands).
- They also conduct different kinds of trainings and help in conflict resolution.

More than 50% of the members of the library are women. The women's section also works towards increasing the number of women members in the library.

IT Section

The IT section has been divided into two sub sections:

- Training Institute (which is directly operated by the library)
- Telecenter (supported by HLCIT)-There is a separate committee for the operation of the telecenter



The library has supported the telecenter by providing telephone line. The telecenter has been using Digital Story Telling (DST) as well. Similarly, the library is also involved in journalism. They have this journal called SANGAM SANDESH which is printed in the telecenter

itself. The information for the journal is collected mostly by the volunteers of the mobile library. The employees gather information pertaining to their locality and twice a month, publish them on wallpapers. They gather information on job openings, livestock sales taking place and other bits of information relevant to their community. The library has thus become the focal point in Gaighat for the exchange of trade information. The library could also expand their services into their areas: Renuka Basnet, the coordinator of the library, says that they are thinking of providing training to their book distributors which will turn them into community development activists as well.

4.3 Venue 3: Telecenter

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?

Telecenters in Nepal, to put it in a candor tone, are still in a nascent phase. There are lots of organizations, ranging from government to private, who are trying to build an informed Nepal with the help of telecenters. However, despite the effort, the situation of telecenters in Nepal is not very encouraging. The most obvious example would be lack of sufficient data on even the number of telecenters in Nepal. Not a single person interviewed could give us an actual figure regarding the number of telecenters that are operational in Nepal. The answers ranged from 50 to 250.

Telecenters, however, play a very important role in most of the communities. They have been instrumental in transforming the lives of many. In all the places that was part of the study, telecenters have been regarded as a hub for access to knowledge for local communities, a center for strengthening communities, a place to increase productivity and income, a venue for capacity building and empowerment, and an opportunity for voicing needs and sharing solutions. The community preparedness is very high, and telecenters have taken into consideration the need to include women and other underserved communities of the society in its activities. Also, there is a congenial local and national environment, at least at the policy level.

In Nepal, there are 5 different models of telecenter operational²⁹: School Telecenters, Community based organization telecenters, private telecenters (similar to cybercafés), local government telecenters, and Rural ISPs. However, despite the interest that multiple stakeholders have shown towards telecenters, majority of such venues have not been able to provide the services that they should actually be providing. The distinction between a telecenter, a cybercafé, and a computer institute is getting blurred because most of the telecenters in Nepal are functioning as the latter two. “Community knowledge & resource base”, and “Information dissemination”, which are supposed to be the major concerns of a telecenters, are highly neglected. Majority of the implementing agencies, for whom, telecenters have become a “cheap” and a “short-term” investment are competing with each other rather than complimenting each others’ efforts, which has become the major issue of concern. Every entity from high level commission to a local investor is into establishing telecenters. However, none of these entities seem to be concerned about the overall development of telecenters in Nepal. Unless, such unhealthy competition is combated with, nothing much can be hoped regarding prosperity of telecenters.

²⁹ This is based on the findings of the research

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)?

Access ecosystem in telecenters in Nepal is average. As far as physical location is concerned, the accessibility is pretty alright. Telecenters are located in venues where community members can easily reach without much difficulty. We have telecenters in Terai, hills as well as mountains. Nepal Wireless Project has established telecenters in locations where there is no other modes of communication available.

Similarly, the services offered in telecenters are the ones that are most needed by the community members like the telephone service, internet, computer training, etc. However, if telecenters could work towards providing the right information to the community members, they would be actually working as an information center and telecenter. Also, the technology used in many telecenter is not the best one. In many instances, the operators' capacities are not enough to handle the equipment and technology used in telecenters.

Like every other venue, telecenters also suffer because of the rampant load shedding that has been imposed. The fluctuating electricity line has been a major problem for accessibility in telecenters. Similarly, lack of landline service has been another problem. In many cases, even when the telecenter is located in a municipality, there is no landline. Many are using CDMA, which is not the best way to use internet.

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.

As far as physical accessibility of telecenters is concerned, most of the telecenters, both in urban areas as well as rural areas are located in places most appropriate for the community members. Normally, telecenters are set up in consultation with the local user committee, who are responsible for deciding upon the physical location of the venues. So, majority of the telecenters are at least connected with at least trail roads.

Of the 20 telecenters studied, operators from only 2 telecenters (1 from rural area and one from urban area) said that location of the telecenter was a problem for the users. Similarly, users in only two telecenters (both in rural areas) said that location is one of the problems for them to access information at the venue. This states that the physical access of the telecenters is fairly easy for the members of the community.

However, some users did complain of compact room rooms in which telecenters are housed. Also, very few telecenters have taken into consideration the accessibility of the telecenters for people with disability, i.e. provision of ramps for wheelchairs, or special software for blind people. Of all the telecenters visited, only one telecenter "Haldibari Rural Information Center" has special facilities for

the physically challenged group. Similarly, not many telecenters, in fact very few, have considered setting up a separate section for women users. Additionally, many women are hesitant to visit telecenters just because they lack toilet facilities.

4.3.2.2 Appropriate technology and 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.

Most of the telecenters in Nepal are functioning as a cybercafe, a PCO, or a computer training institute. The technology that most telecenters use is the most appropriate for the users. However, in some venues, the donor/supporting agencies have provided them with equipments which are very expensive to maintain. However, as far as appropriateness of technology for users is concerned, they are quite appropriate- in terms of increasing their connectivity. For example, some telecenters are offering VOIP telephony to connect with their friends and relatives in other villages along with normal PSTN telephone services. Many telecenters are using CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access) telephone lines for internet, which leads to very slow connectivity. Many users complained that the internet connectivity in the telecenters is very slow which dissuades their internet experience.

Many of the telecenter operator surveyed said that they have not been able to provide appropriate services to the users like information services because of lack of proper content. The services that they are providing are appropriate, but not enough. Some telecenter operators complained that they do not even have internet facility because of absence of landline in the area, and because of this, they are not being able to provide informational services to the users on matters ranging from agriculture price to government services. Similarly, nearly 50% of the users surveyed said that the services that telecenters are providing are not enough and that they should add up some more services like information dissemination and capacity building programs.

It has been found that telecenters are yet to prove their value in terms of having direct impact on livelihood of communities they serve. Some initiatives like informing people of agricultural prices have started but they too have not been very efficient to have any measurable impact on the livelihood of people. Similarly, operators of telecenters have not been able to give right information to people who cannot use ICT. An effort should be made by the operators to make available required information by assessing internet to get the information that the visitor demands.

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.

Telecenter in Nepal have been opened with a service motive. Majority of the telecenters are supported by some institutions or projects. The charges that telecenters levy against the services provided are lower compared to the private competitors. For instance, if a cybercafe in a particular area charges Rs. 20 per hour for internet use, a telecenter will provide the same service for Rs. 15 per

hour. So, most of the services that telecenters provide are affordable to the communities that they serve.

In many cases, telecenters also provide some services free of cost to the underserved members of the community like the low income group, women, elderly, Dalits and other minority groups. Many telecenters have to sustain by themselves through revenue generation activities. So, they do so by offering different kinds of desktop services, computer training classes at a subsidized rate, and the like. Also, telecenters have different fee structures for underserved communities and hence increase affordability to these groups.

Only 1 user of the 13 users surveyed in a telecenter said that cost is a barrier for using the ICT services in the venue. However, none of the users said that cost is a hindrance to using the services in the venue as a whole, which itself proves that the prices offered in telecenters are very affordable to the users. On the contrart, many operators (nearly 50%) were of the opinion that cost is major hindrance for them. The grounds were, however, different. What they meant to say was that they have not been able to provide services at a more affordable price because of lack of financial support from the implementing agencies.

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?

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

The fees that the telecenter fix are based on different factors: location of the telecenter, private competitors, community's ability and willingness to pay, and the cost of service.

The equipment usage fees are the charges that users pay for using photo copiers, fax machines, web cameras, etc. These fees along with the fees for internet usage are determined normally by the local user committees responsible for management of telecenters. Some telecenters also provide computer trainings and other activities for which they charge fees, which again is determined by the telecenter management committee at the local level. Charges for use of telephone and Fax are based on the prices of the telecom service provider.

Photocopy Usage Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 1-4 (depending on the number of sheets to be photocopied, and the cost for the operators themselves)

Equivalent in US Dollars: 1.5 cents to 6 cents

Internet Usage Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 15-30 (Based on the technology employed and the cost to the operators)

Equivalent in US Dollars: 22 cents to 44 cents

Desktop Services Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 10 (Type +Print)-Grayscale

Equivalent in US Dollars: 14.5 cents

Computer Training Fee

Indicate amount in local currency NRs. 500-2000 for Basic and NRs. 2000-4500 for Advanced (depending on the prices offered by the private institutes and the ability of the community members)

Equivalent in US Dollars: \$7.5-\$29 (Basic) and \$29-\$65 (Advanced)

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name: Nepalese Rupees

The other charges are based on the cost that the operators will have to bear with a minimal profit so as to sustain the telecenter. Some services are provided free of cost like information dissemination, capacity building training, etc.

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

The difference in services offered is primarily based on the financial status of the telecenters and to some extent the community readiness.

- Telecenters with sufficient fund are expanding their services by having reliable connectivity. They are also adding more equipments like additional computers (up to 20) and photo copiers where as telecenters with financial crisis are running with a single computer in place.
- Telecenters in places where community is interested in ICT seems to offer different services like multimedia story creation and film making, trainings than the telecenters with not very supportive communities.
- Similarly, telecenters established as part of a broader development projects by different NGOs and supporting organizations are offering content services like agriculture information and prices.
- It has been found that the range of services offered by telecenters is directly related to the expertise and commitment of the telecenter managers and operators.
- In mountainous regions where connectivity is a major problem, telecenters are more into giving communication services like telephone, fax than their counterparts in hill and Terai regions having less connectivity issues.
- In rural areas, where people cannot pay a large sum for the training at private institutes, telecenters are also providing with computer training classes at a minimal cost.

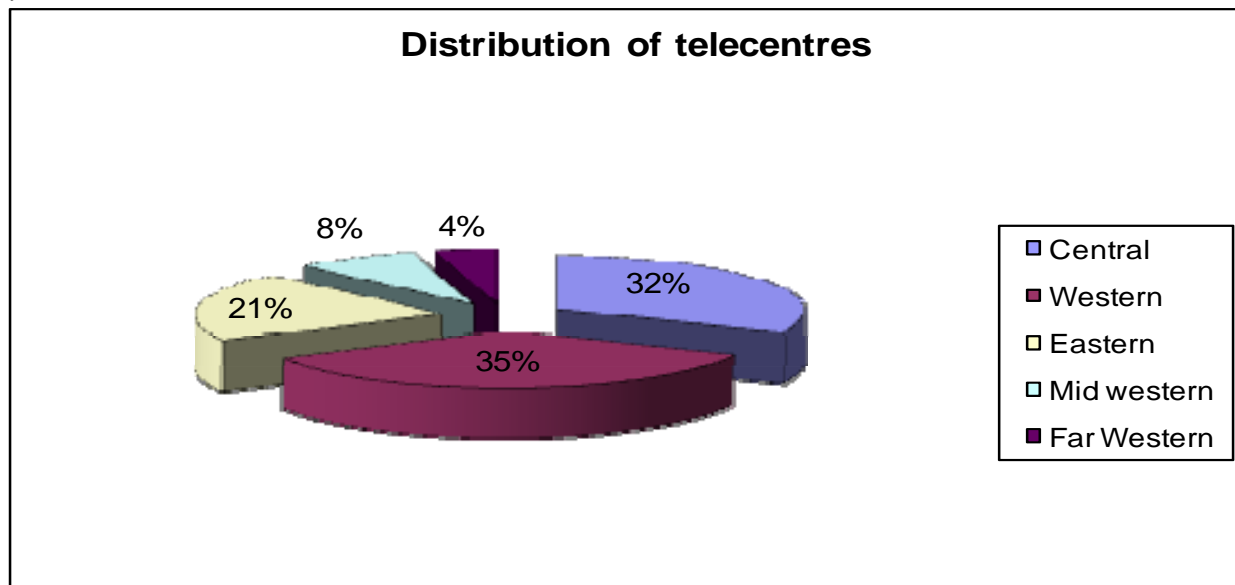
There are two extremities of services that telecenters in different parts are providing: some telecenter operators are ignorant of the services that telecenters should actually provide, while some telecenters in Myagdi have gone out of their way to provide appropriate services to the users.

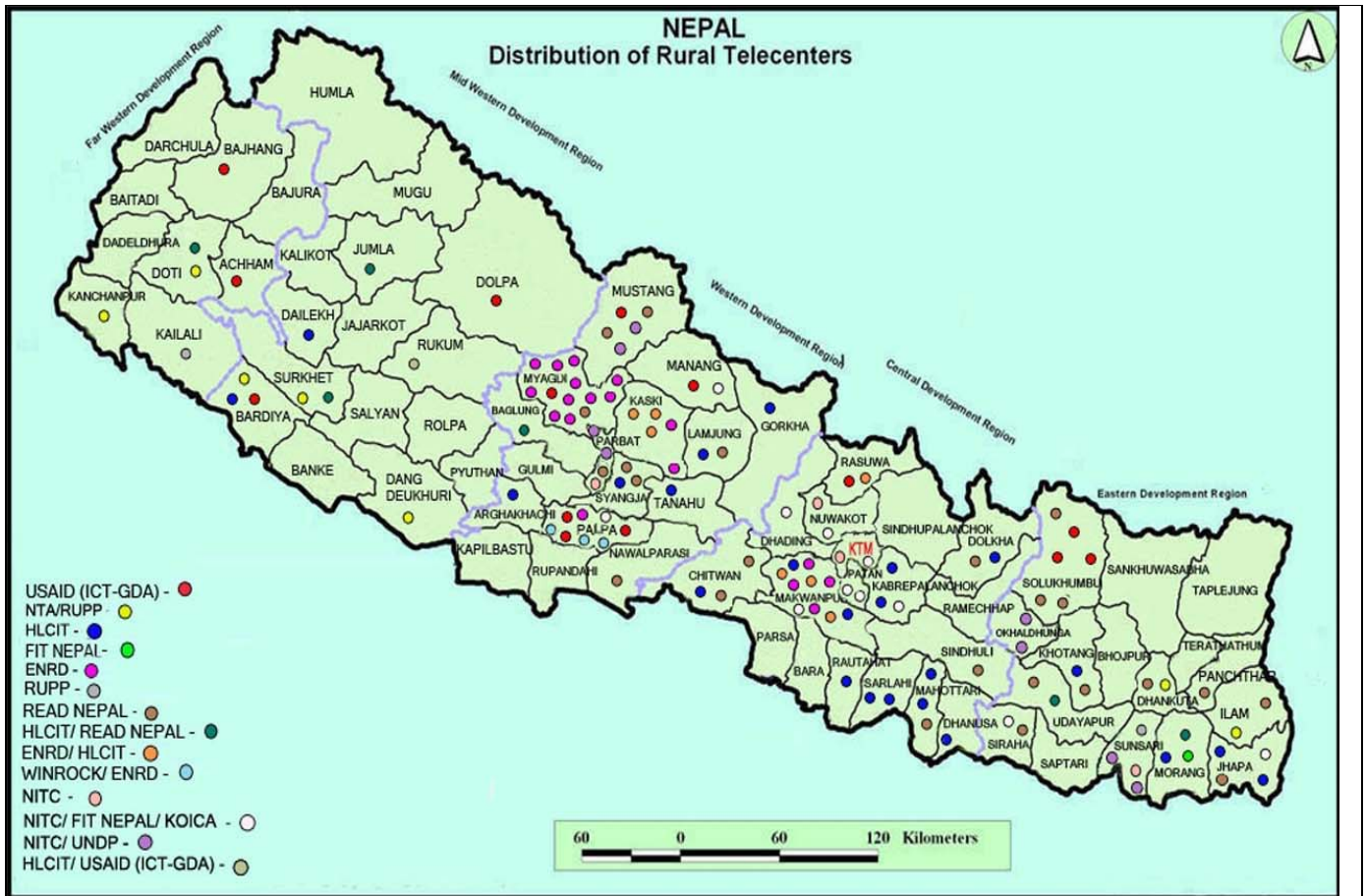
4.3.2.5 Geographic distribution

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.

Of the 250 telecenters in Nepal, as claimed by experts, most of the telecenters are located in the Western and the Central Region with 35 and 32% respectively. Far-Western Region has the lowest number of telecenters, with only 4% of the telecenters in that region. The following figure will provide the details (based on presentation made by Mr. Manohar K Bhattarai, HLCIT, at Mission Swabhimaan 2008: “Rural Telecenters in Nepal, *Taking stock of activities conducted during the past year*”)





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).

Description of map:

This map has been taken from Rural Information Portal³⁰. However, some of the telecenters have not been included in the map, basically because they have been established by some private entities and have not come in the picture. However, this map, because of its authenticity can be used for further reference.

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.

There are several other factors that affect the accessibility of telecenters. The major one is hours of operation of the telecenter. One operator complained that if the hours of operation could be extended, telecenters could have been more accessible to the general public. Also, some operators said that the venue had very few computers due to which they have been able to serve only a small section of the community as it is problematic for the people to wait for their turn to come. Similarly, accessibility is jeopardized because of lack of knowledge among the community members. They are unaware of the benefits that a telecenter could provide. Also, since most of the people in rural areas are heavily engaged in earning for their livelihood, using telecenters to get information is their last priority.

4.3.3 *Capacity and 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)?

The capacity ecosystem in telecenters can be rated as average. Although most of the telecenter operators have not undergone any kind of formal training for the operation of telecenters, they have been able to manage the venue through experience. In case of technical problems, the operators, though, lack the capability. A proper formal training to the staffs could help improve their abilities.

Relevant content is missing in most of the telecenter. The local bodies should join hands to deliver the right content to the community members, and this can be done in collaboration of telecenters. The community members have realized the value that a telecenter holds, and have started considering their presence as a pre-requisite to development. However, social appropriation from the part of the community members is still missing.

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)

³⁰ http://telecenters.org.np/rural_telecenters_nepal.php, last accessed on July 25, 2008

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

Typically, there are at least 2 employees working for telecenters. One of them is involved in technical activities like troubleshooting; looking after equipments and the other one is manager looking after managerial activities and other things like community awareness activities and so on. For smaller telecenters with only one computer or so, there is only one full time employee with manager working part time. In some telecenters, which also provide computer training classes, they have one instructor who conducts the classes and provide assistance to the trainees. However, for larger centers, there are up to 5 people working full time.

4.3.3.2 Staff training

What is the overall capacity of the staff (i.e., librarians, telecentres operators) to help users access and use public access to information and 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.

Of the 20 telecenters visited, 80% of the operators said that they have undertaken some sort of formal training for running the telecenter. Some operators were provided with training from HLCIT. However, by training, most of the operators meant that they had undertaken the formal computer training and not the training for operating telecenter. Also, some operators also said that they had taken some management training before working for the telecenter. Similarly, in terms of educational qualification, all the operators interviewed had some sort of formal education. 20% of the operators had completed their elementary education, 45% had completed high schooling, and 35% had completed their college or university degree.

However, despite the training and the educational qualification, the capacity of telecenters staff in terms of making users access information and communication services seem to be quite lagging behind in most of the telecenters. Except in some cases, the staffs find it difficult to understand what people from the underserved communities really need and hence are not able to help them substantially. However, they have been delivering services to the user groups like youth and people with formal education who are smart enough to specifically ask what they are looking for. (Eg. the annual SLC exam results and news updates are made accessible to those who look for it). Unavailability of competent manpower in telecenters has resulted in inefficient day to day operation and lower prospects of sustainability at the local level

Even in terms of Digital ICTs, the operators seem to lack technical expertise in basic troubleshooting and proper operation of the system. (eg. it has been seen in many cases that operators allow users to log in as administrators and hence make the computer more prone to virus attacks). There was a case in which the telecenter operation was jeopardized for days just because the operator could not find the solution to a basic problem with the computer.

4.3.3.3 Services offered

What kind of services does this type of venue offer to the public? (i.e., access to books, magazines; meeting and conference rooms; audio/video programs, computers, Internet, other). Include Digital

ICT services if offered.

<i>Services Offered</i>	<i>Comments</i>
49. Access to Internet	
50. Computers and ICT trainings	
51. Audio Visual Shows	
52. Photocopy Services	
53. Telephone Services (STD/ISD)	
54. Fax Services	
55. Recharge of pre-paid mobile SIM Cards	
56. Access to government forms	
57. Internet browsing training and support	Most telecenters in rural areas are providing such services
58. Digital Photo Story Creation	Very few telecenters are providing such service like Sangam Rural Information Center
59. Printing and CD Burning	
60. Local content collection and posting	
61. Magazines and Newspapers collection	Telecenters which are housed in a library or houses a library provides such service.
62. Market prices and agricultural information services	
63. Employment and education news services	
64. Screen Printing	
65. CD Mixing	

66.	ISP Broadband	Only a few telecenters are providing such service
67.	Money Transfer	
68.	Clinical Services	
69.	Library Services	
70.	Awareness/Talk Programs	
71.	Skills Development Training	
72.	Leadership/Communication Training	
73.	Preservation of local culture	

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

The difference in services offered is primarily based on the financial status of the telecenters and to some extent the community readiness.

- Telecenters with sufficient fund are expanding their services by having reliable connectivity. They are also adding more equipments like additional computers (up to 20) and photo copiers where as telecenters with financial crisis are running with a single computer in place.
- Telecenters in places where community is interested in ICT seems to offer different services like multimedia story creation and film making, trainings than the telecenters with not very supportive communities.
- Similarly, telecenters established as part of a broader development projects by different NGOs and supporting organizations are offering content services like agriculture information and prices.
- It has been found that the range of services offered by telecenters is directly related to the expertise and commitment of the telecenter managers and operators.
- In mountainous regions where connectivity is a major problem, telecenters are more into giving communication services like telephone, fax than their counterparts in hill and Terai regions having less connectivity issues.
- In rural areas, where people cannot pay a large sum for the training at private institutes, telecenters are also providing with computer training classes at a minimal cost.
- There are two extremities of services that telecenters in different parts are providing: some telecenter operators are ignorant of the services that telecenters should actually provide, while some telecenters in Myagdi have gone out of their way to provide appropriate services to the users.

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.

Although the programs for underserved communities differ from telecenters to telecenters depending on the community constitution and the demand, it has been found that the programs mentioned below are some common initiatives of telecenters to provide service to the underserved communities of the society.

For People belonging to low income group, telecenters are offering free services and have specific ICT awareness and training programs based on the consultation with local telecenter management user groups.

For people with no formal education, some telecenters have been using multimedia animations for literacy promotion. Similarly for students, telecenters have also been using CD based multimedia course guides to compliment their formal courses in schools. Also, they have been providing Sample question papers for students of SLC (School Leaving Certificate). Also, majority of telecenters that are providing computer training classes have been providing such training to SLC students at a subsidized price so that they utilize their free time in learning something productive. For children, most of the telecenters are offering computer games to acquaint them with computers in general.

Understanding the fact that women are socio-culturally excluded in participating in newer and innovative technologies, some telecenters have mobilized women operators to motivate women to visit telecenters and use Digital ICT services. Also, some telecenters have specified a particular time when the telecenter will be open for women users only.

For rural dwellers, where physical proximity to facilities is a problem, some telecenters have been offering distance learning and telemedicine along with information update on education, employment and agriculture sectors.

In some telecenters, content that is useful to the locals, like information on agricultural prices, health information, etc are translated, printed, and pasted on the notice boards. Some telecenters are also working on preserving the culture of the underserved community so that they feel more accepted. For instance, Haldibari Rural Information Center in Jhapa (a district in Eastern Nepal) is documenting the tradition, culture, and music of Santhal Community (an indigenous community) in DVDs so as to be referred by the future generation.

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:

Most of the content that is available is related to education and agriculture. Also, a book called “Daktar Na Bhayeko Ma” (In the absence of doctor) has been of great use to the community members. This book is available in most of the telecenters and when there is no doctor available, the telecenters operators themselves help the patient find solutions to the problem (at least for a short

term relief). Also, many telecenters provide E-News to the community members through different kinds of websites. Similarly, information on agriculture prices, agriculture productivity is also available on the internet. Information on Government services is also available online, and some telecenters help the community members fill the required forms so that they don't have to go through the hassles. Most of the telecenter operators (around 85%) and 75% of the users said that unavailability of the relevant content is not a problem for the telecenter.

Other Content Needed:

The content that is available is not enough though, at least 15% of the operators and 25% of the users surveyed believed that. There is an absence of locally relevant content which has resulted in limited prospects of sustained value creation for communities. Telecenters, can, therefore provide a lot of more relevant content like environment conservation, natural disaster mitigation, Tele-health, Tele-Banking, Distance Learning, etc.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Some initiatives for content development have been undertaken. An organization named E-Network Research and Development (ENRD) in partnership with Open Knowledge Network (OKN) has been instrumental in designing some locally relevant content related to E-Learning, E-Commerce, E-Governance, Telemedicine, and the like. ENRD is continuously working on the documentation and dissemination of local content among grassroots communities in education, health, information and communication sector. For more information www.enrd.org. In addition, some operators of the telecenters are themselves working to create content as per the need of the community.

Source: Interview with Mr. Mahabir Pun, President, ENRD

4.3.3.6 Services and 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.

Although telecenters have some content on health, education and government services, they do not seem to have any uniform or specific content services in local languages. In most of the telecenters, they are using the book on basic health called Doktor Nabhayama (If there is no doctor) in Nepali language.

However, in the fields of education and government services, apart from the government forms available online, they don't really seem to have materials in Nepali Languages. It is also seen that telecenters don't really have content available in the local community languages as such.

About Digital ICT services, there are some guidebooks in Nepali language on using computers which is all they have. Despite the unavailability of content in local languages, both the operators and the users were of the opinion that it is not a major problem. Only one user said that unavailability of enough content in local language have resulted in less number of people using telecenters. Similarly, only 12.5% of the operators said that the issue is a matter of concern. However, despite such responses, it is believed that having the contents in local language would be of benefit to the community as a whole, and telecenters could penetrate its services to a larger mass.

4.3.3.7 *Types of uses*

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

- 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.

Different user groups use telecenter for different purposes. Children mostly use telecenters for playing computer games while youths use telecenters for checking mails and internet browsing. Some youths also use for accessing multimedia course materials. Educated youths are also using telecenters for obtaining computer training and exposures. Educated and high/mid income groups access telecenters to access latest international and national news while low income and uneducated groups access telecenters just for curiosity rather than any specific information. These are the ones using more other services like telephone and government services information from the telecenters. Women are also found accessing telecenters out of curiosity except educated ones who use it to communicate with their friends and family living elsewhere. People who can speak Nepali are more found using the telecenters to access useful information on health, education, employment than those who can't speak and read Nepali. Rural people are interested in knowing more of agriculture information than urban dwellers.

Of the users surveyed, the top 3 information content that they seek in a telecenters are related to Education, News and Health. However, according to the operators, in addition to information related to education, news and health, users also seek information on agriculture, and employment. The users who do not come for specific information come to telecenters for networking opportunities, and to take the computer training classes that the telecenters offer.

Similarly, in terms of using ICT facilities of the telecenters, the top 4 ICT facilities that users avail at telecenters are E-Mail, Chat, Web Browsing and use of Webcam/Phone. Also, some users, who come to telecenters for training, said that they use the MS Applications like MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc. According to the users, other main reason why people come to telecenters is to avail the Photocopy, Scanning, Printing, and other desktop services. Telecenters have also become a hub for information: whether people want to know about what is happening in the world of politics, or what the price trend of agricultural products is, they seek help from telecenter operators.

4.3.3.8 *Number, type, and frequency of users*

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs. Complement here as needed.

The usage pattern is very different across telecenters in the country. Places where the community is educated and are interested in ICTs seem to have relatively high access than those places where ICTs are still considered luxury. According to the research findings, the number of users range from only 4 users per day to 150 users per day. The difference in the range is itself a testimony to the fact that telecenters have not been able to penetrate its services in all the regions equally. According to the findings, on an average, 33 visitors come to a telecenter everyday.

In most telecenters, there is a significant involvement of women. They come to telecenters to avail various services. Most importantly, they come to contact their husbands who have gone abroad for education or for earning money. Even for taking computer training classes, the number of male and

female trainees is nearly equal in most telecenters. Whereas, in some telecenters, 90% of the users are male, in some telecenters female users outnumber the male members. On an average, 60% of the users in a telecenter are male, while 40% are female. There has not been a record of Transgender people visiting telecenters from information provided by telecenters. Even if they visit, there is no mechanism to monitor that.

On the basis of income, it is generally the middle class group who visit the telecenters the most. On an average, 57% of the users who visit the telecenters belong to the middle income group, while 6% and 37% constitute the users from high and low class respectively.

On the basis of caste, the user group is mixed in most of the telecenters. However, the maximum number of visitors consists of the Hindu caste group with around 47% of the users from Hindu caste group. Similarly, around 29% of the users are from indigenous caste group, 22% from the Ethnic community and 2% of the users from other caste group like Islam, Christian, etc. The users from the ethnic community comprises mostly of Magar, Limbu, Tamang, Newar, Gurung, Bishwakarma, Damai, Kami, Chaudhary, Pariyar, Rai, Santhal, Matwali, etc. It can clearly be seen that there is a significant involvement even of the underserved communities in telecenters, whether it is in rural area or the urban area.

Around 41% of the users who visit telecenters are the ones who come nearly daily. 35% of the users are the ones who visit telecenters 2-3 times in a month and 24% of the users are the ones who come there 2-3 times in a week. The frequency of use of telecenters, however, can not be generalized for all instances. Yet, the general observation is that youth and Children visit telecenters on a weekly basis or more and are the most frequent visitors of telecenters compared to people from other age group. In terms of gender, men visit at least once a month where as women are more frequent visitors. They come to telecenters to make a phone call or to just get some information. There is no record of transgender groups visiting telecenter. Even if they visit, there is no mechanism to monitor that.

People with intermediate education and above visit telecenters on a weekly basis while people with no formal education visit only few times a month or even a year. Urban centers being close to city centers, people prefer going to cybercafés than telecenters. So, rural people with no other alternatives visit telecenters more often than urban people. Also, many people prefer telecenters for taking computer training as they provide such training on a subsidized rate as compared to private institutions.

Due to geographic complexity, it has been found that people in Terai pay at least few visits a month than people in the mountains who hardly visit telecenters unless it is very close to the location they stay.

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 and communication resources, differentiating by applicable Equity of Service variables (Form 1c)?

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

Overall, the capacity of users to take advantage of public access to information and communication resources varies depending on the rural / urban setting of the telecenters along with other variables. On the basis of education, all types of people visit telecenters: ranging from those who have no

formal education to the ones with university degree. As per the findings, 10% of the users, on an average, constitute the group with no formal education, 34% of the users are the ones who have completed their elementary schooling, while 34% of the users are those who have completed their high school, and the rest 22% are the ones who have attained their college or university degree.

Educated and people belonging to mid and high income group do have the capacity than uneducated or people belonging to low income groups. Similarly youths have more capacity to learn technologies and it's usage than elderly people. Communities of telecenters set up in urban setting have more capacity than their counterparts in rural settings. According to administrative divisions, it has been found that users of telecenters based in central development region (where Kathmandu is based) have more capacity than anywhere else. Similarly, people whose mother tongue is Nepali and who can understand English seem to have more capacity than people who cannot understand the languages so well.

Regarding ICT services, the overall capacity of the users is not very promising. However, since telecenters are conducting computer training classes in rural areas, the capacity of users is being enhanced as well. An elderly woman, who had never touched a computer in her life, can now send an e-mail to her son who is studying abroad. This has been the power of telecenters in many rural areas of the country.

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: ICT Awareness, Report Writing, Content Development, Skills Development Training, Communication Training

ICT specific training courses: Use of Office Package, E-Mail and Internet, Typing (both Nepali and English), Web Page Development, Multimedia Documentary Development, Hardware Training

Testing and certification has not been prevalent in telecenters of Nepal

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.

Although there does not seem to be any specific programs from telecenters in making the information and ICTs integration to daily routines, it has been found that indirectly, users of the telecenters have been integrating the services into their daily routines. Farmers have been accessing the agricultural product prices to some extent from telecenters along with solution to different problems. However, it has been observed that it all depends on how active the telecenters operator/manager is, along with the telecenters management committee at the local level to serve their communities by accessing information and ICTs from telecenters. Without interventions as such and leaving it to the user, people find it difficult to integrate the information and services into their daily lives.

Regarding digital ICTs, in telecenters where VOIP services are made accessible, people have been

found using it to be in communication, which is an example of integration into their daily lives. Also, students accessing multimedia resources to supplement their courses have found it useful for their exam preparations. Even in this case, the mobilization component of telecenters operator and the management committee at the local level is a crucial factor.

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: i.e., 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.

All the users who were surveyed in the course of the research had a very positive perception about the telecenter. They have realized the power of information and consider telecenters as an effective medium of getting such information. Also, they consider telecenters as an important hub to learn new things. 38% of the users surveyed said that they visit telecenters on a daily basis and 31% said that come at least once in a week. These figures speak for themselves. Had the users not valued the venue, why would they go through the pain of visiting the telecenter everyday?

Similarly, as far as digital ICT services are concerned, visitors are also aware of the benefits they can provide. Many people have enrolled themselves for the ICT Training and come to use internet and other ICT services that the telecenter provide.

However, despite the positive picture, for some who do not visit the venue, telecenters are for those who have ample free time. People are so busy earning a decent living for themselves that the benefits that a telecenter could provide them with are not of value to them. A woman who was surveyed in Chandrakot of Kaski district, who was a regular visitor of telecenter once said that now since she has a shop to look after and a son to tend, she doesn't have enough time to go to telecenter which is just 5 walk from her shop and home. She also said that she has a telephone in her shop itself, so she sees no point going to telecenter. This indicates that people are still not clear on what benefits a telecenter could provide. Telecenters, for many, are mere PCOs. Such perception needs to be shed to make telecenters an important information and communication venues.

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.

Though social appropriation and generation of new knowledge through the use of this venue is not very high, there have been instances when people have used the multimedia skills they have learned from the telecenters to prepare short films to portray social problems along with stories about their communities. Also, some people have started building websites form others with the skill they have learned from the telecenters. For instance, community members along with the telecenter manager have been creating Digital Stories on different issues pertaining to the community.

There are several dimensions of social appropriation like

- Community ownership and participation in telecenter operation and management
- The abilities of the community to leverage telecentre resources in local development contexts
- Availability of content and services tailored to local needs
- Policy provisions with regards to harnessing ICTs to address problems in governance and poverty reduction

Not everything is happening in telecenters in Nepal. However, community ownership and participation in the telecenter operation and management is happening. Also, the community members have been able to leverage the telecenter resources in local development contexts. Except these, community has not been able to harness on the last two dimensions. As such, social appropriation at large by the users of telecenters is very negligible which is applicable to Digital ICT services as well.

4.3.3.14 Trust, safety, and 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?

Regarding safety, security and privacy of the information and services offered by telecenters, it seems that people who are aware of internet and digital ICTs in general trust the information received from telecenters. Maybe it is due to lack of proper awareness campaigns that vast majority of the people are skeptical about the integrity of the information received from telecenters. For example, students who use internet services in the telecenters to access their results do trust the information. However, for an illiterate farmer, it is hard to believe the instructions given in some website as authentic way of curing the disease of his cow. For him, the only thing he can trust is some veterinary person explains the steps in front of his own eyes or has been written in a book / manual. Even in cases where ICT awareness exists and the demands are high, people have relatively very high expectations and hence are disappointed at times due to lack of appropriate services.

As we are dealing with telecenters, the same explanation is applicable even for digital ICTs

4.3.3.15 Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered

What other information gaps and 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)

There exist a lot of gaps and unexplored opportunities in telecenters in Nepal. Telecenters are not providing services that an actual telecenter should be providing. It has been found that the successful implementation of telecenters is, to a large extent, guided by the leadership and proactive initiation of operators and management committees to explore the community needs. While most have not been able to do so, there are some positive examples. If telecenters could provide appropriate information on education, health, government services, employment opportunities, agriculture, microfinance, natural disaster mitigation, etc. they can be more effective. Through digital ICTs, if a mechanism can be set to regularly provide information with a holistic approach rather than bits and pieces, it seems to make more sense to the communities.

Another major problem with telecenters that exist is the lack of collaboration among agencies. As said earlier, everybody is into establishing telecenters. There is no clear demarcation between the governing body, the implementing body and the intermediary body. The governing body should be looking after the policy aspects of telecenters/ICTs, the implementing body should be into bringing new telecenters under operation, and the intermediary body should be providing access, locally relevant content, and should be working towards skills development of the operators, and content packaging and presentation.

With the use of ICT, telecenter can improve marketing potential and income of the small farmers, traders and entrepreneurs, improve, update and sustain the knowledge base required for the above purposes through portal and product developments, and obtain various services with developments in e-governance, e-commerce and e-services

4.3.4 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 and public support, regional and international context)?

The environment ecosystem for telecenter is very favorable. There have been policies that have been designed to promote telecenters in Nepal. Similarly, the public support and political will for promotion of telecenters is praiseworthy as well. The economic condition, though dismal, has been favorable for telecenters. Some notable public private partnerships have also been initiated in the telecenter movement, which itself proves that the environment for telecenters is conducive. Some glitches that have hindered the telecenter movement are the fluctuating electricity, and the lack of commitment from the implementing organization itself.

4.3.4.1 *Local and national economy*

Describe the local and national economic environment and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

It seems that the priority sector as set by the government affects the overall national economic environment which has its consequent impact on telecenters as well. At the moment, the national concentration is more on peace and reconciliation so that government hasn't made enough provisions for direct support of telecenter movement in Nepal. However, development initiatives in Nepal are influenced a lot by the policies of donors and funding agencies. It has been observed that donors are these days interested in mainstreaming ICTs in the overall development initiatives. So, there is a high possibility for Nepal to move forward in the telecenter movement with support from different funding agencies.

However, the high customs duties for wireless equipment and VSATs has resulted in high investment and operation costs, de-motivating rural entrepreneurs

4.3.4.2 *Legal and regulatory framework*

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

The legal and regulatory framework is favorable for telecenters in Nepal. The tenth five year plan had envisaged establishment of 1500 telecenters. As much as it was overambitious, the target could not be met even by half. So, the three year interim plan has now said that it would establish 300 telecenters by the end of 2010, which is more realistic compared to the ambitious plan of the past.

The E-Government initiative has been a major undertaking. It was in the year 2002 that the E-Government initiative was launched when NITC developed multilingual national government portal (www.nepal.gov.gov.np) with 32 downloadable forms. The need for an E-Governance Master Plan was felt and in the year 2006, the plan was developed with the help of Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency. In May 2008, foundation stone for Government Integrated Data Center was laid with the help of KOICA. The E-Governance Initiative is a major landmark for telecenters as well as they are able to provide at least some e-governance service to the community members. But despite this, district government offices remain reluctant to accept e-forms

However, there have been inadequate policies governing use of VSAT-based connectivity; and there has been a lot of confusion over role of government entities. Policy amendments to VSAT registration fee from \$3846 to \$1.5 every 5 years have been instrumental in enabling non-commercial VSAT-based connectivity. However, regulating entities need to follow up with provisions for such telecenters to be registered as rural ISPs to share out cost of bandwidth, promoting sustainability. Similarly, registered rural ISPs have been given waiver on annual payments for use of VSAT bandwidth (\$ 246 per 64 kbps). The VoIP restrictions on VSAT need to be lifted.

As for Wi-Fi, the of equipment needs to be co-located on existing towers to minimize costs, and customs duties on wireless equipment for registered rural ISPs needs to be amended.

4.3.4.3 *Political will and public support*

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to and complement section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

Building successful community telecenters takes time and needs continuous support from the public and the political agents. Public have realized that telecenters provide public access to government information, easier access to markets and best practices as well as facilitate commercial transactions between buyers and sellers thereby contributing significantly to raising incomes of rural communities.

Most of the operators were of the opinion that the political parties are very supportive towards the telecenter movement, and that they make the best effort to promote the telecenter movement in the area.

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? (i.e., national public library system, telecentre franchise or network, etc)?

There is no organizational networking of telecenters as such. However, an association called Rural Telecenters Coordination Committee has been formed with the initiation of High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) incorporating stakeholders who are directly involved in telecenter promotion from both private sector and the I/NGO sectors.

Also, an annual event called “Swabhimaan” which is organized by Forum for Information Technology (FIT) also brings under one umbrella telecenter operators from different parts of the country. The event is a chance to get together operators and provide them with some information and training so as to build their capacity.

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.

Building partnership is very important for sustainability of telecenters as it helps in increasing collaboration, enhances participation, and catalyzes mutual support, helps in exchanging experiences, and also encourages policy support. There are some notable public-private partnership in support of telecenters:

- National Information Technology Center (NITC) is working with Forum for Information Technology (FIT) Nepal and KOICA (Korean Development Agency) to implement telecenters in Nepal
- High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) is working with Winrock International and Mercantile (private ISP in Nepal) in establishing telecenters in mountainous areas by taking advantage of VSAT technologies.
- Electronic Network Research and Development (ENRD) and Nepal Wireless Project is working with HLCIT and READ Nepal in implementing Open Knowledge Network (OKN) project in Nepal aimed at recording indigenous knowledge from the grassroots level using telecenters.

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?

Smooth operation of telecenters depends heavily on availability of infrastructure facilities like telecommunication and electricity. As the country is in energy crisis at the moment, electricity has been a major problem for telecenters. Electricity load-shedding is a real threat to sustainability due to disrupted connectivity and cost of batteries and inverters

Similarly, the telecommunication infrastructure is not adequate in remote areas and some of the telecenters are relying on expensive solutions like VSAT. For telecenters to flourish and serve their communities by providing equitable access to information and ICTs, a favorable environment with adequate telecommunication infrastructure is indeed a prerequisite. In addition, the worsening

security situation has resulted in heightened threat perception (for communications infrastructure if not directly for telecenters) and as such affecting implementation and sustained operation.

Provision of e-services such as e-government forms can be essential telecenter services. But district government offices remain reluctant to accept e-forms. Similarly, sustainability of e-products is questionable. Limitations on products has already developed because of cost constraints

4.3.5 For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams

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

4.3.5.1 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 2006/07

Local currency name NRs amount (local currency) 3,500,000

Approx. equivalent in USD 50,725 based on exchange rate of USD 1 = NRs 69 on date July 15, 2008.

The figure represents only government funding for telecenters and does not include funding from other sources as exact figures are not available for others.

4.3.5.2 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	95108 Million	
Education	19211 Million	
Telecenters	3.5 Million	Based on the annual budget for the year 2000/07 of HLCIT

Other Comments:

The total government budget for telecenters is based on the figures available only for telecenter implementation by High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT)

4.3.5.3 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:		
International donors:		
National donors:		
User fees/services:		

Other Comments:

Telecenters have been established in Nepal from a very small scale to larger scale. The promoting organizations range from a small NGO to donor agencies like USAID and UNDP including government line agencies. Since there isn't any coordination between these promoters, it is really not possible to trace down the sources of funding for telecenters in Nepal.

4.3.5.4 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?

Resources for telecenters are disbursed through the implementing agencies themselves. In case of government funding, funds are channeled to the telecenter management committee as per the agreement signed between the government and the committee. These fund are directly allocated from the annual budget of Ministry of Environment Science and Technology along with other national budget heads. The funding decisions for the government are done by the line agencies including High Level Commission for Information Technology (HLCIT) and National Information Technology Center (NITC)

In case of other development agencies (I/NGOs) supporting telecenters, funds are channeled to the community based organizations that are responsible for managing the telecenters. These funding resources are allocated by the development agencies as per their annual budget plan under different headings.

4.3.5.5 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?

In most of the telecenters, fees are based on the services offered by the telecenters. As mentioned above in Section 4.3.2.4, based on the type of services used by users, different fees are levied to them accordingly.

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)	30%	
Building infrastructure	-	Telecenters are established in places with existing infrastructures
Utilities	10%	
Staff Training	-	Trainings are provided by supporting agencies directly
Computers/technology	50%	Including connectivity and maintenance
Miscellaneous	10%	
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

Although cost categories differ for different telecenters, the table above has been summarized to give general picture as a whole.

4.3.5.6 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?

As far as funding stream is concerned, it is expected to increase in the near future. Other foreseeable changes have also been highlighted in this section. In the past year, a Rural Information Center (RIC) portal was launched targeted to rural audience. 17 telecenters were established by Winrock in collaboration with Mercantile, and 12 school based telecenters were established by Nepal Information Technology Center in collaboration with Forum for Information Technology (FIT) Nepal. Similarly, 4 community libraries under Rural Education and Development (READ) Nepal

Several Intranet based telecenters are in operation in Kaski and Myagdi districts with limited implementation of telemedicine and delivery of educational materials. In the tenth year plan, establishment of 1500 telecenters was envisaged, which could not be realized. So, the three year interim plan 2008-2010 has planned 300 telecenters. The long term vision of the plan is to expand

Information Technology and make it within the reach of Dalit, Adibashi, Janjatis, Madheshi, persons with disability, women and senior citizens in an equitable and inclusive way; thereby maintaining regional balance. In addition to this through the development and use of IT, the Plan envisage social and economical development , employment generation and poverty alleviation and formation of information society and strengthening of e-government which would provide easy access of the people to public services and facilities.

To keep track towards long term vision, the following quantitative targets have been set:

- Installation of firewall, VSAT & one server set.
- Capacity enhancement of operating 27 information centers
- Basic computer training and motivation program to 2550 government staff for the implementation of e-government
- Establishment of 300 rural information centers in different parts of Nepal
- Pilot - examination of citizenship records in 20 districts and Central Computer Unit of the Ministry
- Computerization of government accounting system and implementation in 300 government offices.
- Establishment of Information System Lab (IS Lab) at national level to examine quality of hardware and software
- Construction of 5 websites.

There have also been some initiatives taken by Nepal Telecom and Nepal Telecommunication Authority to improve the telecommunication services in the country.

- Nepal Telecom (NT) has plan to invest about US\$282 million in next 3 years to achieve Tele-density of 26% (presently it is 9%), which means subscriber base of about 7.4 million (presently it is 2.4million). Subscribers will be of mainly four categories: fixed, GSM mobile, CDMA fixed & mobile, and 3G mobile.
- It is expected that private operating companies will also be investing substantially within next three years. This means combined Tele-density will be much more than 26%.

NTA to provide subsidies to the basic telecom operators, and provide License conditions with reduced fees and enhanced access to spectrum. Similarly, operators can expand their network on conditions of extending services in rural areas as well. The new telecom operator Nepal Satellite Telecom will have to provide rural services on a mandatory basis.

4.3.6 Case example for venue 3: Rural Information Center, Ghailadubba, Durgapur, Jhapa

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.

The Jana Kalyan Samaj was existent in the community for a long time. Later, they submitted a proposal to HLCIT to establish a telecenter. In 2062 BS, the telecenter was started formally. At present, they have 4 computers, one photocopy machine, a telephone, a scanner, and a printer, which were given by HLCIT. The telecenter is providing computer training to the underserved members of the community at a minimal cost. They also provide agricultural information to the community members by informing them of the Market price and other information related to agriculture. Without any financial support from any government entity, the telecenter has been managing funds on its own.



The telecenter has not been able to deliver as per the norms of telecenters because of their limitations of telephone, connectivity cost, etc. However, they have clearly understood the domain of telecenters and know that telecenters are much more than mere cybercafés and training centers. They believe that if they are provided with free internet connectivity, they can serve the community much better. They also plan to explore more opportunities so that they could make the telecenter

sustainable. They added that the government is not providing enough support in terms of creating conducive environment for making the telecenters sustainable. The role of different government entities is not clear according to them. They say that government can support by organizing awareness programs to let the people know of the benefits of availing ICT services through telecenters.



4.4 Venue 4: Cyber Cafes

4.4.1 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?

Cybercafés are public access venues for Internet access. These are an important tool of a society for access to information and e-services of all kinds. However, being public places and thus the perceived anonymity arising out of it, unfortunately they also stand as one of the most vulnerable places to commit cyber crime.

Nepal has a significant number of cybercafés. Cybercafés can be found in almost all important streets and buildings of major cities. However, many of them are not registered and in the absence of a designated authority to monitor and supervise them, all of them remain unsupervised. Further, there are no policy interventions to regulate them. Thus, the cybercafés of the country operate with complete freedom accordingly to their wishes and what they can afford. The same is the case with the visitors visiting these browsing centers. This raises serious concerns in the light of cyber crimes as they provide enough incentives for people looking for opportunities to commit cyber crime and get away uncaught.

Registration of cybercafés can be regarded as one of the indicators for tracing existence of these cafes. It also provides easy access to government institutions to monitor and supervise tasks undertaken in these centers. However, the sad story is that most of the cybercafés (nearly 50%) are not registered with any authority including the tax offices (for taxation purposes). Those that have been registered are registered either with the respective municipality, the tax office or the cottage industry. In addition, none of the cybercafés are supervised or regulated by any authority. In a nutshell, all the cybercafés in Nepal are unsupervised and unregulated.

Accessing information for public at cybercafés is very easy and convenient. Anybody with the general knowledge of computers can use internet at cybercafés to get any kind of information related to education, health, agriculture, politics, entertainment, news, etc. No restrictions of any kind are present in cybercafés that impede public's accessibility to information.

4.4.2 Access

2–3 Paragraphs:

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

Cybercafés are usually accessible to all the segments of the population: all in terms of physical accessibility, affordability and appropriate services and technologies. They are the profit centers which are opened everywhere. However, their presence in rural areas is dismal and majority of the

rural population is yet to benefit from the services of a cybercafé. Cybercafés are not only internet browsing centers but are venues where other services like the photocopy service, telephone service, and other desktop services are offered, therefore making the venues appropriate for a large segment of the population. However, if cybercafés could add the information dissemination to their host of services, they would be actually functioning as public information venues. Similarly, the services offered in cybercafés are very affordable to the general people. Anyone can visit a cybercafé and get its services at a very nominal cost.

4.4.2.1 *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.

Cybercafés in Nepal are major public browsing centers found commonly in cities and semi urban areas. In the major cities, a cybercafé can be found in almost all important streets and buildings. Further, a significant number of the numerous hotels and lodges also maintain browsing centers or cybercafés, targeted towards guests and visitors. Only 8% of the users surveyed in urban locations said that the location of the cybercafé is a problem. So, we can say that in urban areas these services are easily accessible to all income, age, education and sex groups regardless of any ethnicity or religion, but in rural areas there are very limited cybercafés because telecenters are working as cybercafés in such areas. In such areas, there are very few, if any, cybercafés, therefore, impeding physical accessibility.

However, no cyber café has any facilities to make them accessible to the physically challenged people. They do not have any special equipment to support this group.

4.4.2.2 *Appropriate technology and 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.

Cybercafes are public places of Internet access and thus are important tools of a society for access to information and e-services of all kinds. Nepalese cyber cafes provide a host of services to its users, ranging from internet to song transfer through bluetooth. The services are very appropriate for the users. Cybercafes outside the valley are much more than mere cybercafes. They have been providing computer training classes as their additional income generating activity. They offer lower prices compared to the private training institutes.

According to a research done by South Asia Partnership International entitled, *Cyber Cafes of Nepal: Passage to Cyber Crime* reports that cable internet is the most used means of Internet Connectivity (52%), followed by broadband (21%), wireless (18%), dial-up (7%) and other (2%) that included fiber optics, DSL, etc. Similarly, the subscribed bandwidth by the cybercafes was reported to be as follows: less than 64 kbps-13%, 64kbps-48%, 128kbps-20% and more than 128kbps-19%.

The connectivity is a huge issue in many cyber cafes as the speed is very slow (due to dial-up connection) creating troubles to the users. To combat the problem, many cyber cafes have today started switching to Wireless (wifi) Connectivity, which is faster and more efficient compared to the dial-up connection. However, such connectivity is being employed only in Kathmandu valley and other few urban locations outside Kathmandu. Most of the cyber café operators in semi urban areas and rural areas are ignorant of the wireless connectivity, and this is the reason they have not yet employed it. Such kind of connectivity would be of very beneficial to the users as they could surf internet at a much faster pace, thereby saving a lot of time.

Apart from the connectivity issue, the services and technologies are highly appropriate for everybody, including users from underserved communities. Of the 51 users surveyed in cyber cafes, only 17% of the users said that the services offered in cyber cafes are not enough, and 24% of them were of the opinion that the ICT services offered in the venue are not enough. However, this is not to say that the services are not appropriate. Additional services would be an added advantage, but the ones that are being offered are very appropriate.

4.4.2.3 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

Basically internet services are affordable to every group as it ranges from NRs. 10 to NRs. 25. But discounts are given to certain people who ask for discounts. Besides that every income group tend to manage their time according to their capacity to spend while using the services (internet facility, phone and net to phone) offered.

“Excluding speed, I have no hesitation to saying that through cyber cafes, Nepalis enjoy the cheapest Internet access in comparison to other countries,” says Pavan Shakya, of ISPAN (ISP Association of Nepal). This is true despite Internet bandwidth being significantly more expensive in Nepal, as all ISPs use expensive satellite hookups to international backbones.

Of the 51 users surveyed, 10% said that the fees charged in cybercafe is a barrier for use of ICT services in the venue. However, only 1 user was of the opinion that the other non-ICT services in the venue are expensive. So, overall, the venues are pretty affordable for all sections of the society. It seems that the services are less affordable to the operators than to the users. 25% of the users said that they have not been able to provide more services to the users because they do not have sufficient funds to do so. Funds management has been a major bottleneck for the operators.

4.4.2.4 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?

The fees to access and use the information differs from venue to venue but with not much of difference. Other than the internet charges, they have to pay certain charges for the use of photocopy machine, fax, and other general services that they avail in cyber cafes.

Desktop Services

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 20 per page (Typing)

Equivalent in US Dollars: 30 ¢

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Printing

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 3- Rs. 10 (Rs. 5 on an average)-depends on the type of printer used, Laser or Dot Matrix and the cost to the operators

Equivalent in US Dollars: 4 ¢ to 15¢

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Photo Scanning

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 10

Equivalent in US Dollars: 15 ¢

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

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:

Internet Charges

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 10 to Rs 60 (Rs. 25 on an average)-depends on the location and the type of connectivity used

Equivalent in US Dollars: 15 ¢ to 87 ¢

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

Internet Phone

Indicate amount in local currency Depends on the country, For instance Rs. 3 for India, Rs. 5 for US, Rs 4 for Canada and the like

Equivalent in US Dollars: 4 ¢ to 15 ¢ per minute

Date of estimate July 2008

and local currency name Nepalese Rupees

- Many cyber cafes in urban areas offer wide array of services, ranging from website development to Graphics designing. Also, there are many cyber cafés that also offer restaurant services like selling snacks and drinks, while the customers are browsing the internet.
- In rural areas, cyber cafes mostly offer internet services, desktop publishing and document preparation
- In urban areas, the size of cyber café is larger as compared to the ones in the urban areas. Also, the number of people visiting cyber cafes for various purposes is higher in comparison to the people visiting in rural areas. This is because the urban population is more abreast with the ICT services, and their fascination towards online chatting with friends and acquaintances is also high.
- In rural areas, cybercafés are more than just browsing centers. They serve as computer training institute and an important information venue.

4.4.2.5 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.

Eastern Development Region:Around 400

Central Development Region:Around 3,500

Western Development Region:Around 8,00

Mid-Western Development Region:Around 275

Far-Western Development Region:Around 25

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).



Not Available

4.4.2.6 *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.

Since there are not many programs that are intended towards bringing in the underserved communities of the society, it is difficult to say that these venues are offering equitable access to the public at large. Majority of the visitors in cybercafé constitute the youth group and school students. Because of the embedded discrimination in the society, there are many groups that feel unwanted and unaccepted and do not prefer visiting places like these. Level of Knowledge, education and importance of information affects equitable access to public information from cyber cafes.

4.4.3 *Capacity and 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, and social appropriation of technology)?

The overall CAPACITY ecosystem if cybercafés is good enough. Most of the operators in cybercafés are capable enough to provide the required information and services to the users. Even the users who visit cybercafés are well versed with computer applications. Those users who face difficulty while using the services, operators are there to provide them with assistance. As far as relevant content is concerned, a lot of information is available on the internet. However, not many users know the tricks while searching information. In addition, most of the content available on the internet is in English. Since majority of the users are students or youth, they can understand the language but users who do not speak or understand English very well find it difficult to comprehend the available information.

Social appropriation of technology in cybercafés is not very high and although people use cybercafés to get information, they do not trust the technology because even with the presence of a cyber law in the country, it has not been practiced widely.

4.4.3.1 *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 are around two to three people who actually manage cyber cafes. In small cybercafés, only 1 person handles everything from management to customer support. Most of the operators interviewed in cybercafés were male. In Kathmandu, majority of cybercafé operators belong to the Newar community.

4.4.3.2 *Staff training*

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

- (vii) If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.
- (viii) For Public Libraries, indicate if Library School training is available and/or required for librarians.

Most of the operators at cybercafés are capable enough to help users' access information through the use of computers. More than 50% of the operators surveyed had college and university level education and 38% had high level education. So, education wise, the operators are capable enough.

Similarly, 50% of the operators surveyed said that they had undertaken some kind of formal training before they started the cybercafé. By formal training, they meant that they had taken some sort of computer training and have a sound knowledge of computer applications and can help the customers in any way. Some operators also said that they had undertaken training related to hardware which is helping them troubleshoot computers when needed. The rest 50%, who had no formal training said that they have learnt through experience and face no difficulty handling computers or the problems that users face. Majority of the operators are basically adult (male) ranging from 25-35 years of age.

4.4.3.3 *Services offered*

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

Services Offered

Comments

1. Desktop Publishing

2. Print

3. Computer Maintenance

4. Internet Facility

5. Website Development

6. Telephone

7. Document Preparation

8. Webcam Chat

9. Net to phone

10. Mobile Ringtones

11. Music Services

12. CD/DVD Copy

13. Scanning

14. Photocopy

15. Lamination

16. Computer Training

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

- Many cyber cafes in urban areas offer wide array of services, ranging from website development to Graphics designing. Also, there are many cyber cafés that also offer restaurant services like selling snacks and drinks, while the customers are browsing the internet.
- In rural areas, cyber cafes mostly offer internet services, desktop publishing and document preparation
- In urban areas, the size of cyber café is larger as compared to the ones in the urban areas. Also, the number of people visiting cyber cafes for various purposes is higher in comparison to the people visiting in rural areas. This is because the urban population is more abreast with the ICT services, and their fascination towards online chatting with friends and acquaintances is also high.
- In rural areas, cybercafés are more than just browsing centers. They serve as computer training institute and an important information venue.

4.4.3.4 *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.

Cybercafés in Nepal are generally profit-motive centers rather than service centers. They have not yet thought of how they can include the underserved sections of the society. Most of the cyber cafes, especially in urban areas do not have any programs specifically intended to reach underserved communities of the societies. However, in peri-urban areas, some cyber cafes have started designing program for underserved communities, like providing them with services at a subsidized rate. Those cybercafés which provide computer training offer special prices to the people who cannot afford the normal price. Some are even provided with training for free.

4.4.3.5 *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:

There are very few locally relevant content available in cybercafés. Cybercafés, as said earlier, are simply working as internet browsing centers. The content that is available online in different websites is the only content available in cybercafés. None of the cybercafés has made an effort to collect locally relevant content and disseminate it to the community members.

Other Content Needed:

Cybercafés can work towards collecting locally relevant content related to agro-product prices, the political developments, local news, health related information and many more to benefit the community members at large.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Very few cybercafés are taking the initiative to build such kind of locally relevant content. The Buzz Venture, a cybercafé in Surkhet has plans to develop such local content and provide them to the community members.

Source: Interviews and surveys

4.4.3.6 *Services and 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.

All the accessible materials are available in international language i.e. English and few are also available in national language i.e. Nepali and there are no provisions for other local languages. However, despite non-availability of content in local languages, neither the operators nor the users feel that it is a barrier for the users to access information. None of the users said that the language has been a barrier to use ICT services at the venue. This might be because all the users who visit cybercafés have some working knowledge of English or Nepali which makes it easy for them to use the services. Nevertheless, if information was available in more local languages, a wider mass could have been benefited from the services of the venue.

4.4.3.7 *Types of uses*

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

- 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.

Most of the people come to cybercafé to use internet or to use the venue's desktop services. Some users do come to get information that is available on the internet. The top four information contents that users seek in cybercafés are related to education, news, entertainment, and personal. Users who do not come to cyber cafes to access information come for networking, or for using the ICT and other facilities of the venue. The top four ICT activities that user undertake at cybercafés include the use of E-Mail, Chatting, or for web browsing. Some users also come to undertake computer training, or just to hang out.

Different user groups use cyber café for different purpose. For instance, students come to get more information regarding their courses, businessmen come to get information on their business, and investors come to get information on best investment opportunities. Similarly, journalists come to keep themselves updated of the most recent happening in town, country, and international scene. Elderly people rarely visit cybercafés, and the ones who visit come just to pass some time.

4.4.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

Refer to section 3.4 Charts: Information Needs. Complement here as needed.

Cybercafe sees a wide range of users. The ratio of male and femal users is nearly same in cybercafes. On an average, 55% of the users who come to cybercafes are male, while 45% are female. No data on visit by transgender group has been recorded.

Like every other venue, the Hindu caste group seems to be dominating when it comes to segregation of users on the basis of caste. On an average, 75% of the users visiting cybercafes belong to Hindu caste group, while 12%, 10% and 3% belong to the Ethnic, Indigenous, and other caste groups respectively. The ethnic groups that normally visit cybercafes are Mongolians, Tamangs, Newars, Lama, Rai, Gurung, and Magar.

Middle Income groups use the services of cybcercafes the most. 70% of the users visiting cybercafes belong to the middle income groups, while only 16% and 14% belong to the high and low income groups. The reason for this difference is that the high income groups need not come to cybercafes to get their work done, while the low income groups cannot afford the services.

Cybercafes are visited by many on a given single day. In a normal cyber café, on an average, 28 people visit per day, which means 10220 users visit one cybercafe in one year. Most of the users who visit cybercafes belong to the group who are regular visitor of cybercafes (2-3 times in a month). Students (age group between 15 to 35) are regular users, among them as well male and female group use those services on daily or weekly basis in urban areas .In rural areas the frequency to use such services are not on a regular basis which applies to every group (age, gender, education etc)

4.4.3.9 Users capacity to use information and services offered

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

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

Most of the people who visit cyber cafes have a basic knowledge of using computers and the internet. They can generally check their mails, use the web cam, and initiate online chat. Most of the users visiting cybercafés have some sort of educational qualification, which helps them use the venue for the best. 30% of the users have completed college/university education, 34% have completed their higher education, 27% elementary education. Only 9% of the users visiting cybercafés have had no formal education. It is this category of users who are unaware of various search engines and how to browse the required information. Students are most of the times aware of such things but other groups do get confused.

4.4.3.10 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: Besides few cyber cafes in semi-urban areas, none offer training courses but they do teach people who come to surf internet and who even do not have basic surfing skills.

ICT specific training courses: Graphics Designing, Computer Training-Basic and Advanced, Website Development Training (In limited cyber cafes only)

4.4.3.11 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.

Individual access the cybercafés mostly for communication propose. They can utilize internet for small business deals as well and to access abundant information available. Services and information offered in cyber cafes are easily integrated in the lives of the people. People generally visit cyber cafes in their free time and since there are so many cyber cafes in the country, they are accessible to most as far as physical distance is concerned. Also, many students browse study materials from the net which helps them in their intellectual growth. Similarly, students and youth who plan to go abroad for their studies or job can browse information on universities and job prospects.

4.4.3.12 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, i.e., 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.

Every age group take it as a social hub and people of every high and medium income group, gender, religious, ethnic and geographical group take them as a communication centre but to very low income group these venues seems unaffordable and unimportant.

4.4.3.13 *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.

Social appropriation of information and generation of new knowledge through the use of cybercafés is not very high in the country. Cybercafés are just seen as affordable communication centers. Students as well as researchers can easily access to the information and acquire abundant knowledge about their field. Cybercafés has become a source of entertainment for the users rather than a value-adding information venue. However, users have not thought of cybercafés through which new knowledge can be generated and disseminated to a larger mass.

4.4.3.14 *Trust, safety, and 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 use of e-transaction in cybercafés is minimal. This is because people are very skeptical to provide their credit card number. The services provided by cybercafés are regarded secured as users visiting cybercafés increase safety, security and privacy of their information by acquiring average knowledge of using the services appropriately.

In the absence of appropriate regulations; secured infrastructure; security controls and practices; standard operating procedures like the maintenance of visitor logs, photo identity checks, the supervision and monitoring of visitor activities, logging of visitor usages, access restrictions to resources; and the technical skills and capability of the operators, it can be concluded that one can exploit the cybercafés of Nepal to commit cyber crime and get away with very less chance of being caught.

A large number of cybercafés in Nepal allowed children to use their facilities. Most of them allow children to use the facility without any supervision for access and usage. Given the fact that a majority of cybercafés in Nepal do not block or filter websites, it can be said that the risks to children towards exposure to pornography, undesirable information, etc is very high in Nepal.

4.4.3.15 *Gaps and opportunities in information and services offered*

What other information gaps and 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)

Cybercafés in Nepal are considered as mere internet centers by most of the people. People do not, however, realize that cybercafés have important informational value. Internet connectivity is an asset for cybercafés but operators as well as users have not been able to leverage the opportunity to provide or get real-time information on many issues. All people do is check mails, chat with friends and relatives, or use the other services of the center. If anybody needs any information on education,

health, agriculture, or the like, people rarely think of going to a cybercafé to get the news. If cybercafés could add the informational dimension to their services, it would be very valuable to the people.

Also, another major challenge for cybercafé is lack of supervision and monitoring mechanism. As per the research by South Asia Partnership International, 89% of the cybercafés do not maintain any Visitor Log Register. Therefore, tracing a visitor later (e.g. with regard to cyber crime investigation, etc) would be very difficult. None of the cybercafés require a photo identity of the visitor for the Visitor Log or access cybercafé resources.

Majority of the cybercafés do not supervise the activities of their visitors. None of the cybercafés has Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras installed in their premises for this purpose. This provides an opportunity to the cyber criminals to commit cyber crime and get away uncaught.

4.4.4 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 and public support, regional and international context)?

There is no designated authority for the resignation of cybercafés in Nepal. Similarly, none exist for their monitoring and supervision. Further, there are no policy interventions specific to cybercafé operating in the country. The net result is that the cybercafés in the country operate with total independence according to their wish and what they can afford. Essentials like secured infrastructures, ideal operating norms, sound computing practices etc usually take a back seat. Accordingly, they are also mostly disorganized in terms of resources including human resources and knowledge.³¹

However, assessing the overall environment, it can be said that cybercafés in Nepal enjoy a very favorable environment as it is very easy to start a cybercafé-anybody can do it with very little investment. An average cybercafé earns a profit of around Rs. 20000 (\$290), which is pretty good for a country like ours.

4.4.4.1 Local and national economy

Describe the local and national economic environment and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

The people having low and medium income cannot afford to buy computers or use internet facility at home. In Nepal, there are two types of connection available: broadband and dial-up. Broadband is expensive where as dial-up connection is slow. So, people tend to visit cyber café as it is cheaper

³¹ *Cyber cafes of Nepal, Passage to Cyber crime, South Asia Partnership International and Bellanet*

than to use it at home. There are many Nepalese who have migrated to other countries ranging from India, Europe to America. Relatives and friends visit cybercafés to be able to have an online chat with the people living on the other side of the globe.

4.4.4.2 *Legal and regulatory framework*

Describe the legal and regulatory framework and how it affects public access to information and communication in this type of venue (refer to and complement economic summary in country assessment, section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

Considering cyber crimes to be a special (and often non-traditional) type of crime, many countries have come out with specific cyber laws to deal with the. Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) is one of the major cyber laws of the country. With the objectives of providing legal recognition to electronic transactions, i.e. transactions carried out by means of electronic data interchange and other means of electronic communication, as an alternative to paper-based methods of transactions, communication, and storage of information: and the sanctity of such electronic transactions against authorized usage and illegal modification, the government of Nepal has re-enacted the ETA in November, 2006.

The ETA is also known as the Cyber Law of Nepal and provides for the legal recognition of electronic records and digital signatures and their security. Broadly, the act consists of three significant aspects: (i) legal recognition of electronic records and communications, which includes contractual framework, evidentiary aspects, digital signatures as a method of authentication, rules for determining time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic records, (ii) regulation of Certifying Authorities (CAs) which includes appointment of a Controller of CAs, granting licenses to CAs, duties vis-à-vis subscribers of digital signature certificates, recognition of foreign CAs and (iii) cyber contraventions, which includes civil and criminal violations, penalties, establishment of an adjudicating authority, etc. It also defines the security of electronic transactions in terms of cryptographic techniques.

Under the ETA, the office of the Controller of Certifying Authority (CCA) assumes responsibilities towards establishing the necessary Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) required for online transactions. Its responsibilities also include appointing CAs from where subscribers can obtain their digital signature certificates, authentication of entities in cyberspace, security of electronic transactions and n issues pertaining to computer related crimes.

In terms of cyber crime, the act discourages computer related crimes in the country and makes specific provisions of penalty for damage to computer, computer systems or computer networks-applicable to a person or a group of persons. It provides for offences of hacking: of destroying or altering data; security violations; furnishing wrong information and furnishing wrong license or digital certificates. It also seeks to regulate the Internet in some form by making publication of obscene information in electronic form an offence. It provides necessary powers to the Nepal police and provisions for a special cyber court for such provisions. The act even applies for computer related crimes made from outside Nepal (Rauniar, 2006)

4.4.4.3 *Political will and public support*

What is the level of political will and public support for this type of venue? (refer to and complement section 3.6 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment, calling out what is specific to this venue)

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

It is difficult to talk of political will and public support for this kind of venue basically because cybercafés have been considered ordinary venues that provide internet and other communication facilities. People visit cybercafés not to support it; rather they go to get its services. Politically as well, cybercafés have never had any problem except for the times when there is a strike. It is not only the cybercafés that suffer during such times, but every business suffers. Except for some organizations that are against the freedom to get anything and everything on the internet, there are no other objections that cybercafés face. So, it can be said that cybercafés have no problems in terms of political will and public support.

4.4.4.4 *Organization and networking*

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

There are no facilities in this type of venue organized in any kind of network, association or other collective body.

4.4.4.5 *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 is very little public private partnership that has happened in support of this type of venues. In some semi-urban areas, cybercafés has working as internet service providers (ISPs) and have joined hands with many public and private organizations.

Very recently, perceiving the dangers that internet pose on the young minds, CWIN Nepal has joined hands with Forum for Information Technology (FIT) Nepal to increase awareness among the operators on this issue.

Through the campaign, the operators have been advised to set up a proper space for observation by putting the computers in open space, alerting the young users of possible risks through leaflets and posters, provide filtered content for children and young people or have separate computers for children with child friendly browsers. In addition they have recommended providing training to the operators to watch out for illegal activities such as grooming of a child, distribution of abuse images and viewing child abuse images, and creating guidelines or code of conduct regarding child safety by which all cybercafés have to abide. In addition, they recommend that ISP's should install filtering software at the source.

For more information on the initiative:

4.4.4.6 *Other environment factors*

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

The cyber cafes are generally open to all, regardless of age, sex, religion, and caste. In many tourist areas, tourists are the major source of income. So, in such areas, during tourism season, many people visit, however, during non-tourism season, only local people visit.

The real push in business for cyber cafes come when the American Diversity Visa applications go online. Cyber cafes do roaring business not just with higher online time, but many floated package deals to help people with the applications. The online SLC results bring another surge in visitors trying to get a hardcopy of Gorkhapatra (a national daily) with their results. But logging in gets difficult because one of the sites providing the results hosts the data on a US server and the system clogs up with traffic.

4.4.5 *For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams-Not applicable for Cybercafés in Nepal*

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

4.4.5.1 *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 fiscal year

Local currency name amount (local currency)

Approx. equivalent in USD based on exchange rate of on date .

Not Applicable

4.4.5.2 *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		
Education		
Public libraries		

Other Comments:

Not Applicable

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:		
----------------------------	--	--

International donors:		
------------------------------	--	--

National donors:		
-------------------------	--	--

User fees/services:		
----------------------------	--	--

Other Comments:

Not Applicable

4.4.5.3 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?

Not Applicable

4.4.5.4 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?

Since cybercafés in Nepal are run for profit motive, they charge the users with different charges for the services offered and this is what helps them earn profit and sustain to provide better services.

4.4.5.5 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)	12%	-
-----------------------------------	-----	---

Building infrastructure	23%	Normally used for rent
Utilities	20%	Electricity
Staff Training	-	-
Computers/technology	11%	Computers used are normally invested one time as capital investment and this cost category refer to any additional computers/equipments they add
Connectivity	23%	-
Maintenance	11%	Repair and maintenance of equipments and facilities
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

The cost categories for cybercafés depend on the location of the cybercafés. The above picture represents the general scenario only. For bigger cybercafés, there are additional categories and the percentage distribution differs accordingly.

4.4.5.6 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?

Based on increasing trend of computer literate people, there is an increasing trend of cybercafés being opened in semi-urban areas. With the introduction of new and cheaper technologies like ADSL, it is expected to decrease the cost and increase the number of venues in the country. Accordingly, private entrepreneurs are likely to bring in more investment in cybercafés.

4.4.6 Case example for venue 4: Auckland Cybercafé, Nepalgunj, Banke (Western Nepal)

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.

Auckland Cyber & Computer's is located in Surkhet road, beside Nepalgunj Municipality Office. This cyber cafe provides fast internet speed with 128 Kbps. All computers are kept in separate cabins for private surfing without disturbance.

This cafe also provides Desktop Publishing, Scanning, Photo Print from Mobiles or Cameras, CD/DVD Burning, Song Downloading, Computer Maintenance, Prepaid recharge cards, Software Installation and Voice and Video chat. They have Internet surfing facility peaceful environment with full backup of UPS.

Different user groups visit the cybercafé for different purpose. The operator said that 30% of the youth from the age group between 15 and 20 come to cybercafé to access porn sites. The operator also said that they do not have any mechanism to stop such kind of illegitimate use. The users, according to the operator lack interest as far as accessing information through internet is considered. The cybercafé operator aims to expand its services in the near future with addition to informational services.



5 Success Factors and 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 and communication venues?

Despite sincere interest and commitment, most of the public access to information and communication venues have not been able to deliver the critical information needs of the communities due to various constraints. The most important information needs by underserved communities that are currently not being met by public access to information and communication include the following:

- Education

With literacy rate of Nepal being just 56%, education remains a greater challenge for the development of the country. This rate is significantly higher in case of underserved communities. In most of the rural areas and underserved communities, lack of schools, teachers and education materials are common problems. In this context, there is an opportunity for public information access venues to address these issues by making available education materials and mechanisms to enhance learning and sharing. However, the public venues are not able to do so. Although some initiatives have started, telecenters and cybercafés are not seen utilizing the power of ICTs to enable tele-teaching and distance learning. Similarly, public and community libraries have not been able to provide supplementary education materials to the community as required.

- Health and hygiene

Matters related to health and hygiene is of high importance to the underserved communities. Due to low economic condition of these communities, health is not of high importance for them when they need to struggle everyday for survival. In this context, if public access venues can proactively reach out to underserved communities, provide information on safe motherhood, HIV/AIDS, sanitation, disease control, etc it would be significant contribution on their part. Although some initiatives have started in this regard specially in community libraries, the holistic approach to provide health related information is still missing. If we really want to serve underserved communities, this issue should be taken seriously by public access venues.

- Agriculture

As 76% of the people depend on agriculture, most of the underserved communities at large are directly involved in agriculture sector as well. Public access venues have not been able to bring in programmatic approach to provide critical information related to agriculture to these

communities. Although some information are provided by some of the venues, holistic approach in making impact of the lives of the communities by providing critical agriculture information seems missing. Perhaps by working in collaboration with organizations working on agriculture, public access venues can deliver information that matters to the vast majority of people depending on agriculture.

- Employment

With increasing rate of unemployment in the country, those belonging to the underserved communities are the ones being affected the most. Often, it is because of the lack of appropriate and timely information that these people are deprived of employment opportunities. Public information access venues also do not seem to be addressing this issue very well. These venues lack appropriate information on both domestic and foreign employment opportunities. As a result, there are cases of employment brokers cheating innocent citizens in the name of foreign employment every day. Also, employers are unaware of the existing skill in the country and there seems to be a big gap between job seekers and job providers.

- Rights of the citizens

Often it is the case that people are not able to access their rights as sovereign citizens provided by the constitution of the country due to lack of appropriate information. As a result people in the country, especially in rural areas are still living with traditional norms like untouchables and slavery. Public information access venues like telecenters and libraries do not seem to have adequate information dissemination mechanisms regarding laws, policies and practices which provide underserved communities the opportunity to live peaceful an indiscriminate life in the country.

5.1.2 Where people go

Where do people go for public access to information and communication in the country, especially underserved communities?

The research revealed that vast majority of the people living in both urban and rural areas and especially the underserved communities go to public information venues to access information very frequently. They have other forms of informal venues where they actually seek information.

Especially in rural and semi-urban areas, people go to community tea shops very frequently to discuss on various topic ranging from politics, health, and education to employment. In fact, these are the venues where people actually receive critical information through peers and other sources. With advent of community radios and FM stations in the country, people often access necessary information directly through their radio sets. Also, the penetration of cable television has made it possible for people to access necessary information like news, political update, etc through their television sets at home.

In most of the cases, newspapers and magazines are still the valuable source of information which are accessed at stationary shops. In urban areas, people access different information portals and websites at their convenient place for necessary information rather than going to

formal public venues. In case of students, it is schools and academic institutions at large where they rely for necessary information.

5.1.3 How access, capacity, and environment affects public access

How do access, capacity and environment affect public access to information and communication venues in the country? (Refer to details under access, capacity and environment in research design document).

Access:

In Nepalese context, access is often perceived only in terms of physical access by most of the public access to information and communication venues. However, there are other forms of access like access to physically challenged, affordability, availability of appropriate services and technology that matters in accessibility. These various forms of access have a very visible impact on user perception of the venues. It is often the case that people don't go to public access to information and communication venues just because the service fees are unaffordable or there are not enough services in the venues. Marginalized groups like people living with disabilities don't go to these venues because the physical infrastructure are not suited to them. Except in few cases, most of the venues don't have ramps for wheel chair entry or the special sections for visually challenged people. Even the nominal fees levied by the venues for services might be difficult for poor and marginalized community to pay for accessing services and information in the venues. If we really want to create a culture of people using these communication venues, attention needs to be paid in increasing accessibility beyond physical infrastructure.

Capacity:

Capacity can be seen in terms of the capacity of operators of the venues, capacity of the users and the capacity of the venues like availability of local content, trust in technology, social appropriation and so on. Public access to information and communication venues is not able to create positive impact in the society primarily because of the lack of capacity among the operators to deliver critical information to the community. In rural areas, opening a telecenter and expecting people to make use of internet to find information on agriculture is not fair until the operator can assist people in finding the information they are looking for. It is because of this reason that people have not felt the real value of venues. Similarly the capacity of users to make use of services affects a great deal. In libraries, due to low capacity in reading or accessing information from books, underserved communities do not find them very fascinating. Unavailability of local content also matters for venues. Until and unless there are need based content available in the venues, people won't consider these venues very appropriate. Venues need to make available those content and information that can play direct role in the lives of the people. There is also an issue of trust in technology. Due to lack of exposure and awareness, people still see computers and ICTs as sophisticated technologies for elites. Until and unless we can create a sense of trust among users for technologies being used, it is difficult to make them access the information making use of these technologies.

Environment:

Local, national and sometimes even the regional and international environment does have significant impact on the public access to information and communication venues. For the venues to create a value of their existence there needs to be support from the local environment in terms of awareness, support and trust. It has often been the case that community libraries are successful than other venues because an environment of trust is present for the libraries by the local community as it is owned by the community themselves. Similarly, supporting environment from local government authorities in terms of appreciating the contribution of venues and funding support helps a great deal in sustainability of the venues. At a national level, political will along with policy and implementation support from the government matters a great deal. It is because of the favorable policies to de-regularize radio waves that community radio movement is flourishing in Nepal and is perhaps an example to the rest of the world.

5.1.4 Role of ICT

What is the role of ICT in public access to information and communication? What untapped opportunities exist?

Undoubtedly, there is an immense benefit for public access to information and communication if we can leverage the power of ICTs in expanding the reach of information access. For country like Nepal where there is acute shortage of resources and geographic barrier is a challenge, ICTs can perhaps be the remedy to provide information to those deprived from the mainstream media. By making use of appropriate technologies like Wi-Fi and Wi-Max, geographically isolated places in the northern mountains of the country can be linked with plains in the South. ICTs can also play vital role in providing real time information on health, agriculture, education, etc to those who need it the most. Also the rate of information transfer is much faster through ICTs. Instead of making people wait for 2-3 weeks for them to receive hard copy response of their application to open a new school in the village, an email message with their approval notification can be of great help.

To create an impact of ICTs in the lives of people, there are certain opportunities that have so far been ignored in the country. It is necessary to integrate ICTs in successful interventions in the communities like women's group, farmer's group, microfinance, micro entrepreneurship, etc. This can perhaps expand the scope of successful initiatives to make them more successful as well as help in realizing the value of ICTs in imparting direct benefit to the people. For widespread use of ICTs, there is an opportunity to integrate private cybercafés as supporting partners for telecenters to create synergy effect. Similarly the widespread penetration of mobile needs to be tapped and we need to go beyond computers and internet for service delivery through ICTs, especially to the underserved communities. Innovative use of mobile services need not be restricted only to urban centers and the elite masses.

5.2 Success Factors and 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 and communication venues and practices in the country? (i.e.,

solutions that would make it more accessible, affordable, appropriate?)

In general, there is a growing interest from multiple sectors in supporting public access to information and communication venues in the country. However, there is a need to capitalize on this interest to further strengthen the real access by people to whom it matters the most. Additional resources in terms of money, people, time and knowledge can yield better results if we invest them in following ways.

- Functional networking and collaboration among venues, partners and stakeholders so that a synergy can be created based on individual strength.
- Integrating public access to information and communication venues to ongoing development initiatives like health, education, entrepreneurship, etc.
- The role of venues to be expanded beyond mere information providers and acting as social mobilization units, especially in the underserved communities.
- Equipping venues with increased capacity (human and technology) to provide need based information to the communities.
- Further cross sectional research and innovation to create successful model of operation for the venues.
- Capitalizing on the ownership and preparedness of the community for sustainability of the initiatives.
- Advocacy and campaigning to government and policymakers to further invest on the public access to information and communication venues.
- Increasing the number of venues and strengthening the existing ones specially in geographically challenged and rural areas.

5.2.2 Key success factors

What are the key success factors for public access to information and communication to meet information needs of the population, especially underserved communities, and especially through digital ICT?

The key success factors for public access to information and communication venues to meet information needs of the population, especially underserved communities, and especially through digital ICTs are:

- **Community Preparedness:** To a larger extent, communities are prepared to experiment with new technologies and practices to increase their access to information. However, effort should be made to provide appropriate need based technology and content.
- **Conducive Policy Environment:** Although there are issues in implementation, Nepal has quite a favorable policy environment for public access to information and communication venues both at the national and local level. Conducive policies, rules and regulations are in

place for supporting public access to information and communication venues along with newer forms of digital ICTs.

- ***Interest from multiple sectors:*** Ranging from government to I/NGOs and donor agencies, there is visible interest to support public access to information and communication venues along with digital ICTs. This interest can be converted into functional initiatives if appropriate plans and programs can be developed.
- There are many organizations working on the issues of underserved communities. If these kinds of initiatives are formally tied with public access to information and communication arena, we can be hopeful of providing need based information to the underserved communities.
- There are some innovative models of sustainable operation of public access to information and communication venues in the country. These models have evolved gradually and have taken into consideration several aspects of the society. These models of operation can be replicated in other parts of the country as well.

5.2.3 Role of ICT

How can public access to information and communication venues in the country be strengthened to offer more meaningful and equitable access to information, especially using digital ICT?

Public access to information and communication venues in the country needs to be strengthened to offer meaningful and equitable access to information, especially using digital ICTs in following ways.

- Proper information needs assessment of the community and linking it with the appropriate technology solutions to be offered by venues.
- On visible information need areas like education, health, employment and agriculture, appropriate technologies complimented by sufficient resources needs to be deployed. For example, providing facilities of tele-teaching and e-books to students through telecenters or providing telemedicine facilities can be helpful for the communities. Similarly, there exist opportunities for distance micro enterprise development support or online agriculture support helpdesk to the underserved communities.
- Linking technology solution providers with information providers and implementing the mix in public access to information and communication venues.
- Capacity building of operators in making proper use of the technologies to deliver need based content to the community.

5.2.4 Top ten recommendations

What are the Top Ten recommendations for public access to information and communication venues in your country? Make sure you include policy recommendations as part of them.

1. Collaboration and Networking among venues and relevant stakeholders to learn from each other and avoid duplication of effort.
2. Public private partnership model should be encouraged. Integrating cybercafés in urban areas as capacity building and supporting partners for telecenters in rural areas.
3. Advocacy to enhance user capacity in reading and making use of technology services officered by the venues
4. Government (both central and local) should formally take public access to information and communication venues as integral part of service delivery mechanism
5. Capacity building of venue operators in providing appropriate services to the community should be encouraged.
6. Both ICT enabled venues like telecenters and cybercafés along with venues with or without ICTs like libraries should be taken as integral part of information society along with other venues like community radios and cable televisions.
7. Impact assessment of venues with or without ICTs needs to be done
8. Sustainability of venues needs to be pre planned at a broader level and not left to venues only
9. Public access venues need to be integrated with other ongoing successful development initiatives.
10. A well planned policy to integrate libraries as direct part of the education system should be present