PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION & ICTs
PHASE II REPORT

Sri Lanka

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

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1 Extended Executive Summary

1.1 Research Project Overview

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

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

1.2 Introduction

Public access to information is provided by a variety of venues that include public libraries and ICT enabled venues. While public libraries have a history dating back to several hundred years, the other venues have been established recently with the strategic objective of diffusing and reducing disparities in access to and use of new information and communication technology. These are the publicly funded Nenasala (knowledge) centres, specialized information centres – the Vidatha Resource Centres and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres, and privately owned Internet cafés that are commercially driven. In addition to these venues, non governmental organizations, the private sector, and community based organizations either on their own or in partnership with other stakeholders have established venues to meet the information needs of various segments of the population.

This report presents the findings of a study undertaken to assess the information and communication needs of marginalized and underserved communities and to find out how their

information needs are met through public access venues especially using digital ICT services. The study is in two parts. The first assesses the macro level environment focusing on types of inequity in the country, the policy and regulatory framework relating to ICT and public access to information, and the information needs of underserved communities while the second assesses four types of venues that provide public access to information based on the findings of a survey of users and operators of these public access venues. The study draws on discussions with key stakeholders, interviews with operators and managers of public access venues and their users, key informants and a review of literature and statistical data.

1.3 Country Overview

Public libraries come within the purview of sub national and local government administrations under which there are over a thousand main libraries in all parts of the country. The National Library and Documentation Services Board has a mandate for the development of libraries while two of the nine sub national level governments have set up Provincial Library Services Boards for district and provincial library development.

Sri Lanka embarked on a national programme in 2004 to extend digital technology throughout the country through institutional reform, regulatory changes and the implementation of a holistic programme aimed at infrastructure development, and re-engineering government processes. This initiative moved forward amidst political instability, sub optimal economic growth brought about by terrorism and internal armed conflict, external shocks and a weak business environment. A fairly high national literacy rate with gender parity in general education, low school drop out rates and an 82% junior secondary education completion rate, increasing university enrolment especially in science and technology streams, emphasis on computer literacy, introduction of computer aided learning and basic computer literacy into the school curriculum augurs well for the wide spread adoption of information and communication technology to leverage socio economic development.

However there are factors that impact negatively on the use of ICT. Sri Lanka is predominantly rural and 75% of the population lives in the rural and estate sectors, 42% of the population live on less than $2 a day and 6% on less than $1 a day, 21% all households are headed by women, and although the poverty head count ratio has declined over the years 15% of households are still trapped in poverty. The mean household income is Rs. 26,286 per month (US$ 262) with a Gini

coefficient of household income of 0.46. Regional disparities are marked and pockets of deprivation exist especially in landlocked mountainous areas, and remote locations that lack basic infrastructure and services, and in conflict affected districts.

A striking feature of the economy is its changing sectoral composition with the dominance of the services sector and the declining contribution of the agricultual sector to the GDP. The telecommunications sub sector, which has led growth in the services sector is expected to maintain the growth momentum. Expansion in telecommunications coverage due largely to the use of wireless networks with CDMA technology, the introduction of advanced technology and value added services, higher capital investments and increased competition and affordability characterises the sector. The major contribution to the increase in telephone density has come from the mobile sector. Internet access too has increased substantially but increasing inflationary pressures has impacted on the use of ICT services. There is a high level of political will for using ICT as a leverage for development and empowering people, especially the rural population but this same degree of political will does not exist for the development of other public access information venues such as libraries.

1.4 Research Rationale, Sample, and Methods

Four types of venues providing public access to information were surveyed to gather detailed information on how they functioned in achieving their objectives in providing access to information to users of these venues. The selection of the types of venues for the research study was primarily determined by the geographical coverage of venues, availability of ICT based services or having the potential to provide such services, clientele of venues, ownership of venue (public/private), and innovative approaches in disseminating information. The selected venues were spread in seven of the nine provinces and 15 of the 25 districts and comprised a total of 126 venues of which 39 were in urban and 87 in non urban areas. Of the 1,614 users surveyed 717 were from venues in urban areas and 897 from non urban areas. Operators of the 126 venues were also interviewed. In addition to the survey that was administered to the users and operators of the venues, focus group discussions were held separately with operators and community members. Altogether 133 participated in the discussions. Site observations were made with

respect to siting, availability of infrastructure facilities, physical security, resources, staff attitudes and user behaviour. Discussions were held with 22 key personnel to obtain an overview of the public access information venue landscape in the country, the policy and the regulatory framework, and future trends in providing public access to information. An extensive literature survey that included web resources was conducted to obtain background and other information for the study.

1.5 Information Needs of Underserved Communities

The study found that underserved communities require two types of content, namely generic information irrespective of individual attributes and circumstances, and specific information that is determined by location, age, gender, livelihood patterns, socio economic status and political environment. The former category includes information that is related to government services at central, sub national and local government levels, economic and political conditions, health and nutrition, education and training opportunities, and employment opportunities in the formal sector

In the latter category is the strategic information that a specific group, community or individual requires to overcome disadvantages and achieve upward economic and social mobility. For example the estate population requires information on citizenship, improving health, hygiene and nutrition, adoption of safe motherhood practices and improving literacy; information that rural people require relate to daily living such as obtaining licenses for stalls at markets, fairs etc., and property and strategic information relating to education and opportunities for acquiring marketable technical and vocational skills: specific information relating to their livelihoods – agriculture, finance, industry-starting a business-micro, small, medium, production processes, and labour market opportunities; women require information on rights and legal provisions and access to critical services such as legal aid and safe houses. The conflict affected need information on the security situation, resettlement and relocation, entitlements, obtaining redress from various abuses, and conflict resolution.

Much of the information that the community groups require is available from formal and informal channels but this information is often fragmented. In addition to public access information venues, government and non-governmental agencies, financial institutions, and

commercial entities provide information either on demand or proactively. Information is available from multiple channels and in ever increasing quantities, the quality of whihc is sometimes questioned. This information environment exacerbates the lack of information literacy among communities and requires special efforts from information providers to disseminate information in formats preferred by, and useful to people.

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

The most extensive public access information venues are public libraries. The strength of the public libraries lies in their acceptance by the community, their extensive network that attempts to reach as many of the marginalized as possible, the services they render in support of education and learning, the space they provide for all without discrimination to use their services and their integration with social and cultural activities of the locality. Among all the venues studied public libraries still attract the largest number of users of all ages, educational background, and socio-economic status. Most of the libraries have professional and skilled librarians and para-professionals some of who are motivated to provide a service to their users. The National Library and Documentation Services Board, which has a mandate for library development in the country, and the Sri Lanka Library Association constantly seek to enhance the professionalism of librarians. Many libraries have started to automate their back office functions and librarians are aware of the need to provide ICT services to their clientele.

The major weaknesses found were the traditional mould in which the libraries still function and the slow progression into the provision of information services to meet community information needs. There is no national law for the operation of public libraries, and only two of the nine sub national governments had passed a statute relating to library services. As libraries are only a permissive function for local governments, library development is not carried out on a sustainable basis particularly because there are no regular financial allocations. Administrative dichotomy has resulted in staff shortages, recruitment of non professionals, and poor service conditions resulting in lack of motivation and lethargy among staff. Nearly a decade after new ICTs were introduced in to the country the public libraries have not been able to make any progress in the application of digital technology for the provision of user services.

As there is an already established institutional framework in public libraries and they have a solid user base the opportunity exists for these venues to be reorganized to provide enhanced and efficient services through the application of ICT. With the experience that librarians have in managing information it should be possible for libraries to move into the new digital environment as this well used institution enjoys the confidence of the public.

The other key publicly funded venues studied had been established fairly recently with the specific aim of diffusing new information and communication technology (ICT) to the vast majority who live outside major cities and towns and using digital technology to meet the information needs of specific groups. The Nenasala centres that had been established as part of a holistic programme to use ICT as a "leverage for socioeconomic development" are primarily located in rural and semi urban areas. These centres are expected to meet the information needs of the community using digital technology.

The Nenasala centre programme is a component of a wider programme of the government and therefore benefits from the outputs of the other sub programmes. Provision of a subsidy during the initial years of operation had enabled many of the venues to take off. The Information and Communication Technology Agency has responsibility for the supervision of the centres and attempts to fund local community initiatives that complement the activities of the Nenasala. It has established a Regional Impact Team to provide for technical support. The venues have contributed to increasing awareness of digital technology, drawing in new users to access ICT services and contributed to increasing computer literacy in the country by training a cohort of youth especially from rural and backward areas who would not have had the opportunity for acquiring computer skills.

However it was found that the Nenasala centres are poorly patronised and their users are mostly youth. Despite the awareness raising programmes that had been conducted community awareness of these centres and the services that they offer was still low. Consideration had not been given to easy physical access when siting the venues. Community mobilisation skills of the operators were low, the information needs of the underserved communities had not been identified for content development and initiating services, and only a few venues had outreach services. The

venues had concentrated on providing computer literacy to the youth of the area to fulfill one of the objectives of the Nenasala programme and to attain financial sustainability. However financial sustainability had emerged as an issue for the centres in view of escalating utility charges, low usage, the spread of mobile telephony, competition from Internet cafes, the introduction of computer education in schools and the organization of non fee levying training programmes by other government and non government agencies.

Two other publicly funded venues of interest are the specialized information centres that have been established to provide specific information to a targeted group for livelihood development. Their model of information delivery is to use an intermediary to disseminate information by mobilizing target groups that usually have no information literacy. The Vidatha Resource Centres transfer low cost appropriate technology to micro and small scale entrepreneurs and assist them to develop, and market their produce through training, and linking with financial institutions and markets. Databases of local resources are maintained. The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centre is an ICT enabled information mechanism whose clientele are mainly subsistence farmers. The system uses networks, computer communications and interactive multimedia to facilitate information sharing. The two venues have the ability to mobilize the community they serve, and use the IT skills that have been developed in the intermediaries to transfer information through the innovative use of digital media. The major advantage that these two venues have over the others is that they are backed by national level research institutes, are group centric and have subject specific content. However they do not provide generic information services that people require.

The privately run Internet cafés and EasySeva attract a large number of users even though their charges are higher than that charged by the government subsidized tele-centres. They do not as a rule reach out to the community to meet their information needs but responded to fulfilling the social needs of communities. While the Internet cafés and EasySeva are private ventures the latter is a part of a private-public partnership and holds a franchise from a foreign company that has invested in this project.

1.7 Salient Findings

Venues use different models of information delivery to the public. Underserved communities that access information from these venues include micro and small scale entrepreneurs, small farmers, low income households and those lacking in skills to benefit from emerging economic opportunities. Public libraries that comprise the majority of the venues are reaching out to under served communities by providing access to information especially through the use of print material to a clientele that have been traditional library users. Their major users are students. There is evidence that other venues studied had brought 'new members' of underserved communities into the ambit of new information networks through targeted interventions. The best examples of this approach are the Vidatha Resource Centres and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres where increased information flows have benefited micro and small scale entrepreneurs and farmers individually and collectively. The introduction of Nenasala centres to rural communities has opened up a window of opportunity to especially the youth of poor households to acquire computer skills that are fast becoming a requirement for employment in the formal sector.

Communities have benefited from the ongoing e-governance projects that focus on providing citizen services through venues such as the Nenasala; localization through the development of UNICODE fonts that allow local languages to be used for transmitting and accessing information; and the recent introduction of Sinhala and Tamil web browsers. Other positive developments have been the emergence of alternative media and citizen journalism web sites and the links that are being forged with the diaspora to initiate development projects.

Problematic areas also exist in public access information venues. These relate to constraints to access due to their poor location, resources constraints and inadequate staff skills to fit into the new information environment especially in public libraries, and paucity of organized location and community specific information. A major finding of the study was the lack of information literacy among the users and the poor use of new ICT enabled venues as compared with public libraries. The study also showed that the staff of the venues does not have an adequate

understanding of the information needs of the communities they serve and of their role in providing appropriate services to meet these needs proactively.

While the public libraries have a professional cadre trained in providing information, and can use the community development officers attached to the local authority to identify the information needs of the people they serve and could therefore reach out to the community, their IT skills were limited despite the number of skill development programmes that were open to them. The Nenasala centres on the other hand focused entirely on providing connectivity and non connectivity based IT services including enhancing computer literacy of the communities that they serve.

It was found that the operators in a majority of venues visited were not aware of other public access venues in their own areas of operation and that they functioned as 'stand alone' entities without collaboration and networking. Further it was found that nearly 60% of the respondents did not visit other facilities.

1.8 Key Recommendations

1. No in depth evaluations of the venues have been undertaken at any of the public access information venues focusing not only on inputs but also on outputs. The National Library and Documentation Services Board has developed standards for libraries but they relate only to inputs. Evaluations have to be carried out in the context of the administrative framework within which the venues operate and focus on how and to what extent they meet the information needs of the communities that they serve. A set of standards/indicators against which performance can be measured is also required.

2. A striking feature of the public access to information venue scenario is the lack of collaboration within similar types of venues and across venues. Operators complained of lack of resources but except for one or two none of the operators of the venues studied were even aware of other public access information venues in the locality and had made no attempt to collaborate

with each other to meet community information needs. Thus collaboration and sharing of resources is imperative especially in a situation of resource constraints.

3. While ICT4D has merits, the study showed that the majority of users did not access development information at the venues studied. Publicly funded venues attempted to put the users in a 'straitjacket' and discouraged the use of Internet facilities for non-legitimate purposes but the commercial venues did not place such restrictions. Therefore the single ICT4D model public access venue should go beyond to meet the social needs of communities as well. Encouraging public access venue operators to be more entrepreneurial may result in greater use of technology. Further research is recommended in this area.

4. It is imperative that the public library system is revitalized by making the provision of public libraries mandatory and ensuring a regular financial allocation, establishing Provincial Library Services Boards where they have not been established, recruiting professional librarians, filling existing vacancies, and upgrading service conditions.

5. Automation of public libraries should be undertaken on a priority basis and the staff provided the required skills.

6. Multi stakeholder awareness raising programmes should be conducted with a view to garnering political support for public libraries, sourcing more funds and encouraging people to use these facilities.

7. The Nenasala Centre programme should be evaluated before setting up additional centres.

8. While computer literacy programmes do provide a skill development opportunity for youth of low income families, greater attention should be paid to meeting the information needs of underserved communities.

9. Content development initiatives should be based on needs assessments to capture the critical location specific information needs and involve the community as far as possible in content generation.

10. Databases developed by these specialized information venues, especially the Vidatha programme should be accessible to other information venues and they should meet the general information needs of their users either from their own resources or through referrals.

2 Methodology

2.1 Venue Selection

2 paragraphs

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.

The selection of the types of public access information venues for the research study was determined primarily by their geographical coverage, availability of ICT based services or the potential to do so, clientele that used the venues, ownership of venue (public/private), and the use of innovative approaches in dissemination of information. Consequently the types of venues selected for this study were Public Libraries, Nenasala Centres, Specialised Knowledge Centres comprising the Vidatha Resource Centres (technology) and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centers, and commercial ICT based information venues, such as Internet Cafés, and the EasySeva. The rationale for amalgamating Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres was due to the common features they displayed-both were specialized knowledge centers catering to the information needs of micro and small scale entrepreneurs and farmers respectively, both are backed by research institutes and use an information intermediary for information dissemination. Internet Cafés and EasySeva are private sector commercial ventures which are exclusively ICT based. In addition, EasySeva provides a model of a private-public partnership and franchise ownership.

There are other venues that provide access to information such as special, academic, technical, school, government, and research libraries and resource centres maintained by non government organizations. But access to these venues is limited to a selected clientele. Two venues identified in the first phase, the Gemidiriya People's Companies and the eTuktuk were excluded as public access to information services, though incorporated into the project, was not extensive in the former, and though the latter uses a combination of technology and innovative and participatory methods for information dissemination, it is still confined to a particular region.

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	Nenasala Centres	Specialised Centres*	Commercial ICT Venues**
Total number in country	1011	558	267	39
A. # in urban location	127	77	10	09
% offering ICT	0.1	100	100	100
Total # of people served (annual)	18.8mn	693,000	na	na
B. # in non-urban location	884	481	257	30
% offering ICT	0.01	216,450	100	100
Total # of people served (annual)	13.0mn	909,450	na	na

***** Vidatha Resource Centres -218; Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres - 49
****** The number of Internet Cafes is not available, but should be around 500; EasySeva-39 (31st July 2008)
A –Urban library users have been computed on the basis of an average 1,500 readers in 3 libraries, 1,000 in 7 libraries and 100 in 107 libraries x 300 days
B –Non urban library users have been computed on the basis of 50 readers x 869 libraries x 300 days. These data are may not be accurate and the same person may visit each venue several times a year.
A –Urban Nenasala – 30 a day x77 venues x300 days = 693,000 (excludes those attending computer training courses)
B – Rural Nenasala– 15 a day x 481 venues x300 days = 216,450 (excludes those attending computer training courses)

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

The Department of Census and Statistics classifies the urban sector as comprising all Municipal and Urban Council areas. The estate sector is defined as plantations (tea, rubber and coconut) of 20 acres or more in extent having 10 or more resident labourers. All other areas are considered to be rural. The estate sector is basically rural and for the purpose of this study has been included with non urban.

The number of libraries and other venues excluding Internet cafes that provide public access to information in the

country is nearly 2,000 with a per capita venue for every 20,000 inhabitants. However, 58% of these venues are in four of the most developed provinces mirroring the uneven development that exists in the country. The most economically dynamic province in the country-Western Province has 14 per cent of the libraries, Nenasala, Vidatha Resource Centres, and EasySeva and the highest number of Internet cafes while the most disadvantaged province, Uva has 7.97% of venues.

Table 1

Provincial Distribution of Public Access Information Venues (excluding Internet Cafes)

Province	Public Libraries	Nenasala Centres	Vidatha Resource Centres	Easy Seva	Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres	Tele-centres of Sarvodaya	Total - Province	% - Province
Western Province	183	42	33	3	4	4	**269**	**14.11**
Central Province	166	90	29	7	7	4	**303**	**15.90**
Southern Province	131	89	43	5	7	4	**279**	**14.64**
Northern Province	95	9	8	0	1	5	**118**	**6.19**
Eastern Province	94	65	17	0	7	3	**186**	**9.76**
North Western Province	159	59	27	7	5	3	**260**	**13.64**
North Central Province	53	66	21	5	8	3	**156**	**8.18**
Uva Province	54	72	15	4	5	2	**152**	**7.97**
Sabaragamuwa Province	76	66	25	8	5	3	**183**	**9.60**
Total	**1011**	**558**	**218**	**39**	**49**	**31**	**1906**	**100.00**

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

Basic information about other experiences with potential to make a difference to the public access landscape (tea rooms, 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: Government web portals and call centres

Description :

Web portals relating to Sri Lanka range from government to private to individual. There are several government web portals with sites for separate government agencies providing information on their functions and services. A few deliver online services and some sites allow citizens to download government forms. Some of the sites are very informative, for example sites of the Department of Census and Statistics <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/> and

the Department of Agriculture <http://www.agridept.gov.lk/index1.php>. All the surveys and the statistical data it compiles are uploaded on the former site while the latter has a substantial amount of information ranging from the services that the department offers to information on agricultural technologies, its extension activities and prices of agricultural products. The information on some sites is dated. Nevertheless the availability of basic information and some forms, which prior to the seting up of the portal had to be obtained by physically visiting the Colombo office or through a middleman for a fee is a step forward.

The government also maintains an official news portal http://www.news.lk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4574&Itemid=44), a web portal for education, national employment, jobs net Sri Lanka web portal, business portal, foreign and local investment, disaster management among others.

Lanka Gate, the Sri Lanka portal is to be developed through SOA, Web 2.0 and open standards that can be accessed from different interfaces.

The Global Technology Report 2007-2008 ranks Sri Lanka at the 58th position in the government readiness index. <http://www.insead.edu/v1/gitr/wef/main/analysis/showindexranking.cfm?vno=y6>

Sri Lanka's e readiness index has improved from 2005 to 2008 but according to a UN classification is still in the

emerging category scoring low on the web measurement index and on e-participation. (2008 <http://search.creativecommons.org/?q=Un+report+on+eGovernance&sourceid=Mozilla-search > accessed on 22nd May 2008). Barriers to moving ahead include infrastructure costs, political will and human capability.

Total number in country:

% offering ICT access:

% in urban location: not applicable

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

The availability of government information online will motivate citizens to visit venues from which information could be accessed without hassle.

Two government call centres are operational. These are the Government Information Center (GIC) and the Agricultural Information Centre of the Department of Agriculture. These are toll free trilingual call centres, the former a single point of contact for information and guidance for citizen services in the government and the latter serving the farming community. Information relating to 17 major government departments, ministries and statutory bodies that are critical to citizens can be obtained from dialing 1919 between 8 am and 8 pm daily. The web site can be searched under 19 service categories and several sub categories. The call centre provides additional information for 25 agencies as well as a referral service. The centre responds to about 1000 calls daily (Personal Communication from ICTA).

The 1920 toll free advisory service is set up by the Department of Agriculture. It gives quick advice to farmers and when this is not possible refers experts or relevant literature and responds within 72 hours. The service is geared towards developing a demand driven agricultural extension system and strengthening the research-extension-training-farmer linkage. A digital database of the queries is also maintained. The number of queries received a day is around 150-200.
(http://www.agridept.gov.lk/other_pages.php?heading=Toll%20Free%20Agri%20Advisory%20Service)

Total number in country:

% offering ICT access:

% in urban location:

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

These two services are important as they increase the confidence people have in the technology to find answers to their problems and motivate them to use public access venues to gather more information.

Other public access experience #2: SchoolNet

Description :

Most of the senior secondary schools in the country and other related organizations have been connected in a wide area network – SchoolNet (http://www.schoolnet.lk/index.php?lang=en&for=default&page_id=18).

The network includes 1,000 secondary schools, 90 computer resource centers, 17 National Colleges of Education (for teacher training), the Ministry of Education, National Institute of Education, eight provincial ICT centers and the project management offices of Secondary Education Modernization Project. Another 5,000 schools are to be connected to this fully secured and managed network by 2010.

The network allows all schools island wide access to a centralized IT network at any given time, which will enable them to communicate with the Network Operations Centre, located at the University of Moratuwa. Services include the provision of network connectivity, management, safe Internet access, and a Learning Management System to host learning materials for different course modules. The network can carry Internet Protocol (IP) traffic – voice, video, mission critical and standard class data facilitating island wide schools with seamless connectivity.

Total number in country:

% offering ICT access:

% in urban location:

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

This is an important initiative as it imparts computer education from an early age and provides

information to the student and teacher population in the country. While this initiative motivates children to make greater use of public access venues such as libraries, tele centres and Internet cafés some operators stated that their (school) student clientele has declined due to the availability of computer and Internet facilities in schools.

2.1.2 Other existing public access venues, not included in this study

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

Other venue not studied #1: Telecentres of Sarvodaya

Total number in country: 31

% offering ICT access: 31

% in urban location:

Description of the Venue:

Thirty one district tele centres and 171 Village Information Centres are operated by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, a non governmental organization established in the 1950s and having an island wide presence. Sarvodaya had established Village Information Centres (VICs) to disseminate information to rural and estate communities using traditional media. The introduction and adoption of ICT resulted in the establishment of district tele centres to function as information hubs in the district by connecting the village information centres. Tele centres feed information into the VIC that also function as ICT capacity development centres for the community. While tele centres provide digital ICT services the VICs do not have any ICT equipment for users but the operator is provided with a laptop computer, which is used to store information. The tele-centre-VIC combination is expected to overcome the infrastructure, economic and social barriers inherent in the rural sector. This information programme is tied with Sarvodaya's other community development activities.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

Preference was given to venues that are publicly funded and privately owned Internet cafés, the latter being included to find out the differences between private venues as against publicly funded venues especially in relation to usage.

Other venue not studied #2: Gemidiriya People's Companies

Total number in country: 1047

% offering ICT access: 07

% in urban location: 00

Description of the Venue:

Gemidiriya is a community driven development and livelihood improvement project implemented by the Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development with a grant from the International Development Agency and other donors. As at end of 2007, 836 villages with a population of about 800,000 had been brought under the Gemidiriya umbrella and 535 village organizations had been registered as People's Companies in accordance with the Companies Act of Sri Lanka. The project will cover 4,000-5,000 villages during a three phased 12 year period. A guiding principle of this project is giving a voice to individuals and communities to express their needs and act on them. Digital ICTs are used for in house work at the 1,047 Gemidiriya village organizations while a few of such centres provide information and ICT training to the community. Depending on the availability of infrastructure facilities it is expected to extend ICT services to all the Gemidiriya villages. Links have been forged with the Nenasala programme of the Information and Communication Technology Agency and some Gemidiriya companies are operating Nenasala centres.

Reason why it was not included in the study:

As public access venues that provide specialized information such as the Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres were selected as venue types that provided insights for developing models with their innovative approaches to disseminating information to their clientele this venue could not be accommodated in the four categories that were identified for the study.

Other venue not studied #3: eTUKTUK

Total number in country: 01

% offering ICT access: 01

% in urban location: 00

Description of the Venue:

eTUKTUK, is a mobile telecentre/radio broadcasting unit combining new and traditional technology including mobile connectivity and mixed media to provide information services to communities living in remote, underserved and un-serviced areas in Kotmale in the hill country. It is a community focused initiative operated by the Kotmale Community Radio to encourage people's participation in local media using ICT. An auto rickshaw equipped with computers, a wireless Internet connection, multimedia and loudspeakers traverse the Kotmale area by giving prior notice via the community radio. Information is disseminated through trained intermediaries who visit the villages to provide information, training and participatory programming to the community. This KCR

project has funding from several external and local agencies.

Reason why it was not included in the study:
The eTUKTUK was not included in the study as it was confined to one particular area, and the difficulty in locating and interviewing users.

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 poor who are estimated to be about 25% of the population of the country are affected by geographical isolation brought about by inadequate transport and poor telecommunication facilities, poor service delivery, information asymmetry and skewed development. The use of information by the poor to improve their economic and social conditions is limited. Venues providing such information are few and even when they are available, lack of awareness of such venues, the requisite lack of skills, time and money to use them as well as inherent inhibitions prevent the poor from accessing the services that are offered.

To ascertain how information venues met the needs of the poor in different parts of the country public access information venues in selected Divisional Secretariat Divisions (an administrative division) that had been classified as the poorest areas in the country were

included in the sample.

2.2.2 Educational level

High literacy levels with minimum gender disparities, almost universal primary school enrolment and high primary school completion rates have been brought about by proactive educational policies continued by successive governments after political independence in 1948. However, there are large numbers of people who are illiterate, who have no basic education, and are school drop outs. Very few of these groups of people will use public access information venues.

Two venues that would most likely be used by those whose educational levels were low were included in the survey. Further, to find out how these groups of people with little or no education and poor literacy accessed information, representatives of organizations that work with them were included in focus group discussions. Radio, especially community radio and television programmes and the type of audio visual material that were available in the venues were reviewed.

2.2.3 Age

The majority of people are in the working age group of 15-59 years. Between the census years of 1981 and 2001 the population between 0 and 14 declined significantly while the over 60 year age group increased. By age the most disadvantaged are senior citizens and among them women. Very few special services are available to the elderly. The information needs of this group arise from the need to obtain entitlements, improve skills, maintain good health and respond to sickness and disease as well as to lead productive lives. Children also require information in their formative years to develop their personality and skills. Almost all the public libraries cater to children.

Care was taken to include a few venues that catered to the needs of the elderly by including public libraries that had mobile services for them. For the user survey the researchers went to the venue at the time when most of the elderly were reported to come. Special attention was paid by researchers to observe if the siting of the venue was suitable for the elderly and whether it had facilities and services for them. The researchers checked the availability of facilities for children and other age groups.

2.2.4 Gender

Although there is no overt gender discrimination in the country structural imbalances inhibit and disadvantage women in various ways. There is no discrimination in having access to any of the public access information venues. However their location, hours of opening, and lack of content for women's empowerment place limits on their use of these venues.

Based on the inhibiting factors identified in previous research, the researchers observed if and how these affect women's access to these venues. The user survey also attempted to capture the use of different venues by women.

2.2.5 Location

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

In addition to the traditional urban/peri-urban and non-urban divisions, provincial and district, conflict affected and areas bordering conflict districts, varying climatic zones, and terrain impact on socio economic conditions of the population. The road and rail network and telecommunication facilities have broken down the isolation of many remote areas while the administrative structure includes Grama Sevaka (lowest level of administration) offices in nearly 14,000 villages to attend to the needs of the rural population. Extensive health care facilities and a network of schools provide essential services to the majority in the periphery. However, the difficulties faced by people vary according to the areas they live in. The government, in recognition of these difficulties and lagging local economies has undertaken several development programmes in the Grama Sevaka divisions.

In selecting the venues for the study we ensured that the following were covered, namely urban, peri-urban and rural areas, within urban areas slums and shanties, a selection of the poorest districts, seven of the nine provinces, different climatic and agro zones, and a few geographically isolated areas. However, conflict areas and adjacent villages could not be included in the survey.

2.2.6 Other inequity variables

Other Inequity Variable 1: Estate sector

Estate workers are a historically disadvantaged community. Brought in as low cost labour from South India by the British to work in tea plantations they live and work in the hill country enclave of tea estates. The majority of the labour is Indian Tamil while a small percentage of Sinhalese from neighbouring villages have also been hired by plantation companies. Labour in the rubber plantations is predominantly Sinhalese. Conditions have improved significantly since colonial times but the legacy of historical economic and social marginalization still continues.

The use of public access information venues by the estate population was studied by site visits and holding focus group discussions with librarians and Nenasala operators from those areas.

Other Inequity Variable 2: Conflict affected

Two provinces (Northern and Eastern) of the country that include eight districts and adjacent areas in the North Central and Uva provinces have been directly affected by the conflict for over two decades with the Northern Province bearing the brunt of the conflict, which has been characterized as a complex political dynamic. Conflict related poverty is high, infrastructure damage has been considerable and local institutions have not been fully functional. Insecurity is a characteristic that the people have to contend with. Information plays a crucial role in these circumstances.

In 2007 the Eastern province was brought under government control and local and sub national government elections were held in early and mid 2008. At the same time the government has been

engaged in clearing the Northern province of terrorist activity.

The security situation in the two provinces did not permit research in the area. Local government elections were held in the province after nearly two decades, which coincided with the period of the survey. We were advised that because of the existence of rival armed factions and consequent insecurity, interviewing people would be looked at with suspicion. Therefore recourse was made to discussions with officials of international agencies that have easy passage to those areas, and holding a focus group discussion with women who came to a training programme conducted by a NGO, and web resources.

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.

number of documents reviewed – over 100

The literature search was referenced by the Real Access Framework. Several types of documents were reviewed and web resources were analysed. The types of literature consulted included general literature on ICT, current ICT status particulary in developing countries, and ICT4D literature. Literature on Sri Lanka included background information on libraries with a special focus on public libraries, other types of public access venues in the country, and studies carried out on information needs of rural and urban populations as well as other research studies that point to the need for providing access to information to these groups, and the type of information that they need. In addition to research studies, evaluations, assessments of the public access to information venues, regulations, official documents and statistical data were also reviewed.

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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.

number of individuals interviewed – 22

Describe

Individuals to be interwieved for the study were selected on the basis of their expertise, their position in the ICT and information related sectors and their availability. The following types of individuals were interviewed:

Officials that could provide an overview of the library scenario e. g. Director General of the National Library and Documentation Services Board, Librarian of the Documentation Services of the National Science Foundation, office bearers of the Sri Lanka Library Association, the Chairperson of the Central Provincial Library Services Board and the Librarian of the Uva Provincial Library Services Board, Commissioner of Local Government, North Central Provincial Council, and former Librarian of the Colombo Public Library. Researchers in the field of local government, poverty and education were also consulted.

Officials at the national level in charge of other public access venues, e.g. Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology that implements the Vidatha programme, the IT Specialist and officers in charge of implementation, officers of the Information and Communication Technology Agency that has responsibility for the 1000 Nenasala project that is being implemented under the eSri Lanka programme, the Director and a few officials of the Gemidiriya Livelihood Development Programme that has incorporated ICT and information

provision into the project design and the officer in charge of ICT in the education sector at the Ministry of Education. To obtain information on the regulatory framework applicable to the ICT sector and technical developments in the sector officials from the Sri Lanka Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and researchers from the University of Colombo School of Computing were consulted.

Officials at the provincial level of administration, non governmental agencies and individuals representing the media were also interviewed.

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).

number of group interviews or focus groups - 11

Focus group discussions were held in 11 of the areas in which venues were surveyed (see below). The 133 discussants excluded the respondents of user and operator surveys. Discussions were held with two types of groups - (i) operators – public librarians and operators of Vidatha Resource Centres (ii) members of the community cutting across users as well as non users, students, teachers, state officials including field workers, micro entrepreneurs, NGOs, and community based organizations. The discussions were directed to obtain the views of the participants on the information needs of the community, use of information, the functioning of the venues, use of information and communication technology and suggestions for improving access and use.

An additional group discussion was conducted with a group of women from the Eastern Province who were in Colombo to participate in a programme of the Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum (MWRAF). This was an opportunity seized, to compensate at least in a small measure, for not surveying users 'in situ' in the Eastern Province.

Details of the focus group discussions are given below.

1. Focus group discussions with librarians from the districts of Kandy, and Nuwara Eliya and Matale (representing the estate sector) in the Central Province, 10th June 2008.

2. Focus group discussion with Technical Officers of the Vidatha Resources Centres -

Kaduwela, Kolonnawa, Maharagama in the Colombo District of the Western Province, 28th May 2008

3. Focus group discussion with members of the Women's Development Foundation Wilpotha, Chilaw in the Puttalam District, Northwestern Province, 1st June 2008

4. Focus group discussion in the Kalutara District of the Western Province with a mixed group, 15th June 2008

5. Focus group discussion in the Kalutara District of the Western Province with members of the Vidatha Societies, 15th June 2008

6. Focus group discussion in the Kalutara District of the Western Province with members of the Vidatha Societies, 15th June 2008

7. Focus group discussion in Ratnapura in the Ratnapura District of the Sabaragamuwa Province with a group of school children, 26th June 2008

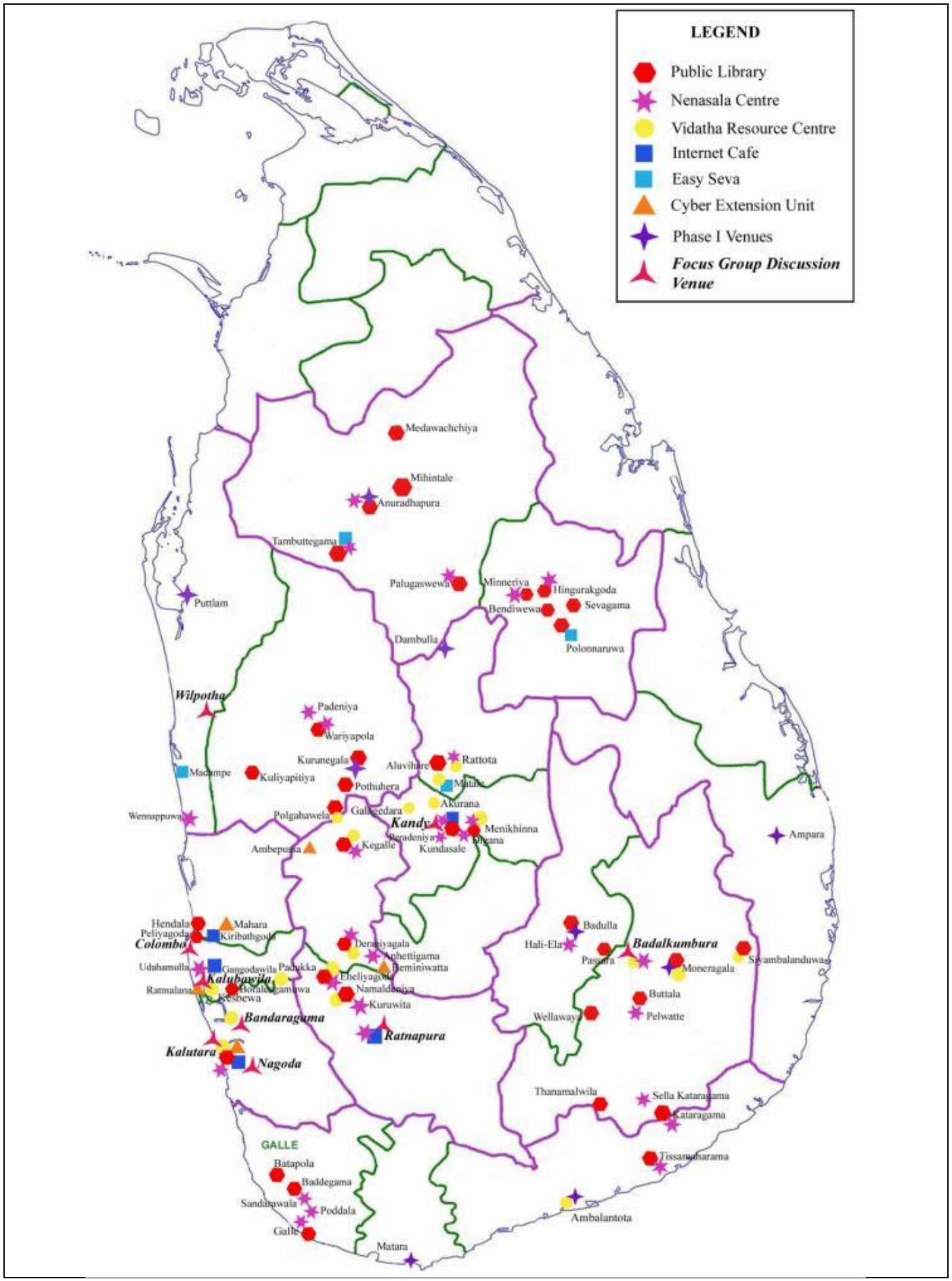
8. Focus group discussion with a group of conflict affected women from Marathamunai in the Ampara District of the Eastern Province,, 13th June 2008 (held in Colombo).

9. Focus group discussion with members of the Vidatha Societies in Bandaragama Horana, of the Western Province 4th June 2008

10. Discussion with a group of undergraduates from the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya of the Central Province, 27th June 2008

11. Focus group discussion at Badalkumbura in the Moneragala District of the Uva Province, held on 18th July 2008

Please see map showing the site visits and the locations of the participants of focus group discussions.


LEGEND
Public Library
Nenasala Centre
Vidatha Resource Centre
Internet Cafe
Easy Seva
Cyber Extension Unit
Phase I Venues
Focus Group Discussion Venue
Medawachchiya
Mihintale
Anuradhapura
Tambuttegama
Puttlam
Palugaswewa
Minneriya
Hingurakgoda
Bendiwewa
Sevagama
Polonnaruwa
Dambulla
Wilpotha
Padeniya
Wariyapola
Kurunegala
Rattota
Aluvihare
Matale
Kuliyapitiya
Pothuhera
Akurana
Polgahawela
Galagedara
Kandy
Peradeniya
Menikhinna
Digana
Kundasale
Kegalle
Ambepussa
Wennappuwa
Ampara
Hendala
Peliyagoda
Colombo
Mahara
Kiribathgoda
Udahamulla
Gangodawila
Padukka
Kalubowila
Ratmalana
Boralesgamuwa
Kesbewa
Bandaraguma
Kalutara
Nagoda
Deraniyagala
Amhettigama
Beminiwatta
Ehaliyagoda
Namaldeniya
Kuruwita
Ratnapura
Badulla
Hali-Ela
Badalkumbura
Passara
Moneragala
Sigambalanduwa
Buttala
Pelwatte
Wellawaya
Thanamalwila
Sella Kataragama
Kataragama
Tissamaharama
GALLE
Batapola
Baddegama
Sandaruwala
Poddala
Galle
Matara
Ambalantota

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).

number of site visits (includes Phase 1) - 141

Please refer Appendix 6.4.1 for other details.

2.3.5 Other

2.3.6 Surveys

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

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

	Public Libraries	**Nenasala Centres**	**Specialized Information Centres (VRC* & RAKC**)**	**Internet Café & EasySeva**
# of **urban** venues surveyed	16	09	3* + 2**	09
# of **non-urban** venues surveyed	31	32	16* + 4**	04
# of respondents in **urban** venues	476	79	41	121
# of respondents in **non-urban** venues	467	209	125	96

*VRC = Vidatha Resource Centres & RAKC = Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres

Total venues = 126: Total users = 1614.

Users were distributed as follows:

Public libraries- 58.4%
Nenasala centres - 17.8%
Specialised information centres -10.4%
Internet cafes/EasySeva – 13.4%

Survey description and comments:

The surveys were carried out during the months of May, June and July 2008. Eleven field researchers were assigned the task of conducting the interviews. They were briefed on the objectives of the project, the research process, ICT landscape in the country, and the timeframe for the study. They were requested to familiarize themselves with the research areas by reading the recommended publications and accessing relevant web sites. Logistics were discussed and payments agreed on. The questionnaire, which had been translated into local languages, was explained, discussed and clarifications provided. The CENWOR statistician was also briefed. Before commencing the survey proper a pre-test was done to ascertain if the questionnaire had been understood by the field researchers.

The venues were spread over more districts than was covered in Phase I of the project. Consequently seven of the nine provinces and 15 of the 25 districts were included in the survey.
Efforts to include locations in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in both phases of the projects were unsuccessful. The local government elections and later the provincial council election were being conducted in the Eastern Province during the period of the study. Even in the aftermath of the elections it was considered inopportune to approach persons for information on extraneous matters not pertaining to basic needs as they were not in a frame of mind to participate in surveys while they lived in fear of political violence. The Northern Province was excluded because of ongoing military operations in the area.

Collection of Information relating to the Venues Surveyed

The specifications for the selection of venues, operators, and users for the research study as set out in the research design are as follows –

(1) Select six (6) venues within each type of venue, three (3) from rural locations and three (3) from urban locations. The total sample of venues will be 6 x 4 = 24 venues.

(2) For each venue selected for the study, identify the person to be interviewed for the operator survey – The main operator or a representative – Six (6) operators per type of venue leading to a total of 24 operators.

(3) Select 40 – 50 users per selected venue, amounting to a total of 240 to 300 per type of venue, and about 960 – 1200 total users from all types of venues.

But the ground situation did not permit a strict adherence to the specifications.

On visiting venues it was found that the number of visitors to the venue on the day of the researchers' visit varied greatly from venue to venue and that it was not possible to attain the lowest target of 240 visitors per type of venue. Although in some instances repeat visits were made to the same venue this was found to be too time consuming and counter productive. Hence more venues were covered within each type to achieve the targets set for users.

One operator from each of the venues included in the study and their users were interviewed using the research instruments designed by the Centre for Information Society (CIS), University of Washington that was reviewed and revised at the researchers' meeting held in Costa Rica in April 2008.

Although it was proposed by CIS to interview around 40 – 50 of users at each of the venues studied the number of visitors to most of the venues fell short of these numbers. The user surveys were confined to the day(s) of the visit by the field research team to the venue. The number of users could vary with the day of the week and month, and the periods during which services are made available by venues but due to resource constraints and the short duration of the period of study it was not possible to spend time over the duration of a week to collect information from users at each venue. Hence the number of venues in each type was increased to attain a minimum target of users. In a way, the selection of a larger number of venues from dispersed geographical locations enabled the coverage of several variables than if the research team spent several days at one venue to reach the minimum target of users. The users were interviewed using the questionnaires.

description of the survey activities and instruments used; include limitations in the sample or application

The survey instruments were intended to provide a broad overview of the public access to information venue landscape in the country that would facilitate a comparative study. For this reason some of the responses fitted into very broad categories, for example the type of information people seek.

There were difficulties in noting the economic and social status of the respondent and the responses to this question were subjective. The operators had difficulty in responding to certain questions that related especially to users as for example the type of information sought, and their educational levels. Some of

these problems could have been overcome if the questionnaires had been piloted before they were finalized at the researchers' meeting.

The sample was selected randomly as was the case with users of public libraries, Internet cafés and EasySeva but all the users that came to the Nenasala on the day of the researchers' visit were chosen. Due to the mode of information dissemination of the Vidatha Resource Centres and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres and the very few users that visit these centres on a day, reliance was placed on the responses of the operators to gain insights in to the operation and use of these venues. The final selection is given in the following table.

Table 2

Number of Venues and their Users by Type

	Public Libraries	**Nenasala Centres**	**Specialized Knowledge Centres- VRC* & RAKC****	**Internet Café & EasySeva**	**Total**
# of **urban** venues surveyed	16	9	3*+2**	9	39
# of **non-urban** venues surveyed	31	32	16*+4**	4	87
Total venues surveyed	**47**	**41**	**25**	**13**	**126**
# of respondents in **urban** venues	476	79	41	121	717
# of respondents in **non-urban** venues	467	209	125	96	897
Total respondents	**943**	**288**	**166**	**217**	**1614**

2.3.8

*VRC-Vidatha Resource Centres

**RAKC-Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres

2.3.9 Other data gathering techniques

Other Data Gathering Technique 1: Observations

During visits to venues for conducting interviews, observations were recorded regarding their siting – approach, surroundings, suitability of the site in terms of easy access by all sections of the community, security for users; infrastructure – building, space, maintenance, cleanliness, facilities for meetings; resources – reading material, audio visual material, CDs, equipment;

and staff – attitudes towards clientele. (See Appendix No. 6.4.2 for rating).

Other Data Gathering Technique 2: Data Gathering Technique

Case studies of operators and venues were also conducted.

2.3.10 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.

1.**Upali Amarasiri**
Chairperson
National Library and Documentation Services Board
Independence Square
Colombo 7
Expertise: Library policy, planning and development

2. Dr. Gamini Batuwitage
Chief Executive Officer
Gemidiriya Community and Livelihood Development Project
Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development
Colombo.
Tele: 94-11-5555631
Expertise: Community development and rural information needs

3. Reshan Dewapriya
Head
Information and Technology Development Agency
160/24,Kirimandala Mawatha
Colombo 5.
Tele: 94-11-2369099
Email: reshan@icta.lk
Expertise: eSriLanka programme

4. **Iswari Corea**
Former Librarian, Colombo Public Library
11, Gregory's Road
Colombo 7
Tele: 94-11-2693007
Expertise: Librarianship

4. **S. Gavashkar**
Project Manager, Information Infrastructure

Information and Technology Development Agency
160/24,Kirimandala Mawatha
Colombo 5.
Tele: 94-11-2369099
Email: gavish@icta.lk
Expertise: *Nenasala* Programme

5.Niranjan Meegammana
Manager, eFusion Pvt. Ltd.
57, Wanatha Road, Gangodawila
Nugegoda
Tele: 94-11-4303458
Email: niranjan.meegammana@gmail.com
Expertise: Local Content

6. Chitranganie Mubarak
Programme Head-eSociety
Information and Technology Development Agency
160/24,Kirimandala Mawatha
Colombo 5
Tele: 94-11-2369099
Email: chitranganie@icta.lk

7. Ira Muddannayake
Senior Assistant Librarian
University of Peradeniya
Peradeniya
Email: iram@pdn.ac.lk

8. Daya Rathnayake
Chairperson
Central Province Library Services Board
Mosque Road
Kandy
Tele: 0812202603
Email: cpclibrary@sltnet.lk
Expertise: Public librarianship

9. Sunil Rodrigo
Executive Director
Dambadeniya Development Foundation
306, Negombo Road
Rammuthugala
Narammala
Expertise: Community development; rural entrepreneur development

10. Dr. Wathmanel Senevirathne
Librarian
Open University of Sri Lanka
Nawala
Colombo 5
Expertise: Information needs of communities

11. Dr. Ruwan Weerasinghe
Director
University of Colombo School of Computing
Colombo 3
Expertise: Information and Communication Technology

12. Harsha Wijayawardhane
Head, Software Development and Consultant Rural Computerization and Networking
University of Colombo School of Computing
Colombo 3
Tele: 0777872642
Expertise: Information and Communication Technology

13. J. Yogaraj
IT Consultant Vidatha Project
Ministry of Science and Technology
Galle Road
Colombo 3
Tele: 0777315206
Expertise: Rural entrepreneurship and IT

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.

Individual bias was reduced and trustworthiness was established by triangulation of data sources such as published and unpublished literature, and interviews, focus group discussions with different and a wide range of stakeholders and observations by researchers. The use of different data gathering techniques made it possible to obtain a variety of views as well as to find common threads from these heterogeneous groups.

Interviews were conducted in the language the informants were most comfortable with and the lead researcher subsequently translated the material into English cross checking with the field researchers

when clarifications were required.

Focus group discussions were limited to less than ten participants and in certain instances when more than the required number was present discussions were held in smaller groups. This helped in eliciting more information than would have been possible if the group was large.

Information sharing with the members of the research consultative committee and discussion helped reduce personal bias. The draft report was circulated for peer review, which also contributed to trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings. The preliminary findings were presented at a national research convention in April 2008 at which key stakeholders were present and their feedback was obtained. Finally the long years of experience of the researchers, their expertise in extracting, collating and analysing data and information will add to the credibility.

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.

A major limitation of the study was the inability to cover all the provinces of the country due to political instability, terrorism, military operations, and sudden work stoppages leading to closure of public and private institutions. The two provinces in which the survey could not be carried out comprise ethnic minorities that had been living amidst conflict, tension and insecurity. The communities in these areas have special information needs which cannot be addressed in traditional and formal settings.

An attempt was made to make the venue selection as representative as possible. However this was not always possible as some of the ICT based venues had ceased to operate and some others were closed temporarily while some were open only on specific days of the week leading to difficulty in synchronizing visits of field researchers and as such alternative sites had to be identified. Further as the users of specialized information venues were dispersed and had to be requested to come to the venue to be interviewed only a limited number of users could be interviewed.

Except in a few venues the required number of users was not available in any one day. As the survey was not spread out over a sufficiently long period of time to capture different types of users there may be some bias in the responses. For example the survey was carried out in the month before a critical

public examination and as such the number of students who visited the public library was high.

The length of service of operators impacted on responses especially because no records were maintained at the venues. This is mainly applicable to Nenasala centres that reported a high turnover of staff. Some operators were reluctant to divulge information.

The lack of statistical data in the venues was a serious limitation.

2.4.2 Team qualifications

1 paragraph

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

Leelangi Wanasundera was the principal researcher for this study. With a degree in economics and a post graduate qualification in library and information science she has worked as a librarian in Sri Lanka and overseas. She has been engaged in conducting research studies in Sri Lanka and in the Asian region into the impact of information and communication technology on disadvantaged groups especially women, and initiated the establishment of community information resource centres supported by the Centre for Women's Research. **Swarna Jayaweera,** Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Colombo has extensive research experience and has contributed to local and international publications. She participates in national level policy bodies and is a consultant to UN agencies and bilateral agencies in Sri Lanka and in the Asian Region on education and on gender issues. **Thana Sanmugam** has post graduate qualifications in mathematical statistics. She worked in the Department of Census and Statistics and later headed the statistics and data processing division of a statutory board. Her expertise lies particularly in designing and conducting surveys and analyzing and interpreting their results.

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?

The public access information landscape in Sri Lanka is dotted with a variety of venues located throughout the country. While the majority of these venues are maintained by public funds a few are run by non governmental organizations, agencies that have been funded by international lending agencies and venues that have been established following private sector initiatives. Some type of public access to information venues are found in all the provinces and districts but their distribution is uneven.

The most extensive public access information venues are libraries that have a history of several hundred years in its modern form and over two thousand years in its traditional form. Public library services are provided by the sub national system of government and almost all the local government entities maintain a library. The capacity of the venues to meet the information needs of the people, especially underserved and marginalized communities varies widely depending on the type of local government authority, adequacy of resources, awareness and interest of the political establishment and public officials, capacity and motivation of librarians, and user demand. The municipal council libraries are the largest and the best resourced and have extensive services reaching out to the community. The rural libraries have the least resources and most function as reading rooms. The use of digital technology in information provision by public libraries is minimal.

There are other types of libraries that serve the needs of special group(s) of users. These are academic libraries, special libraries, government departmental libraries, school libraries, technical libraries and pirivena (temple) libraries that provide limited or no access to the public.

While libraries have been a part of the information landscape for a long time there are those venues that have been established within the past few years with the specific aim of providing access to information

through the diffusion of new information and communication technology to the vast majority who live outside major cities and towns. Among these are special programmes initiated by the Sri Lankan government, non governmental organisations, and the private sector through private-public partnerships. The strategy adopted to take ICT to rural and peri-urban areas has seen the establishment of Nenasala (knowledge) centres under the eSri Lanka initiative of the government. Three other government ministries have also set up public access venues to provide sector specific information-the Vidatha Resource Centres to disseminate technical know how to small scale and micro entrepreneurs, Rural Agriculture Knowledge Centres (Cyber Extension Units) to disseminate agricultural information to farmers, and the ICT enabled information centres of the Gemidiriya People's Companies, a livelihood development and poverty alleviation project. In the NGO sector the most widespread network of tele-centres is operated by the Sarvodya Shramadana Movement that works in over 14,000 villages island wide. There are also a large number of privately owned Internet cafes and communication centres that are operating throughout the country and established long before the major government ICT programmes were launched. While all these venues have little or no services for the disabled, special projects have been commenced to provide ICT facilities including a digital listening library for those undergoing rehabilitative therapy for cognitive and visual impairment.

The rapid spread of mobile technology, the introduction of Wi-Fi and the trend towards convergence of old and new technology as used by the e-TUKTUK (mobile Internet) are changing the public access information landscape but except for the fairly extensive adoption of mobile telephony the scaling up of these initiatives and the use of advanced technology are still in the early stages.

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)?

Apart from the mountain massif in central Sri Lanka that poses considerable challenges in providing access to communities living in those areas, the geography of the rest of the country presents no real barriers to access. Penetration of telecommunications infrastructure which has increased in recent years

has provided a land line to 13.7 per 100 inhabitants, and a mobile phone to 38.2 per 100 inhabitants by the end of 2007 (Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka 2007). But telecom penetration is still low. According to the Department of Census and Statistics (2004) 16% of households had a main line, 15% a mobile phone, 15% a land line and a mobile phone, while 54% did not have a telephone. However, research suggests (De Silva and Zainudeen, 2007; Gunasinghe et al., 2006) that almost everyone at the bottom of the income pyramid had access to telecommunication services without having to spend too much time or money in getting to a phone.

The national grid provides electricity to 80% of the population and the country's road and rail network spans 13,000 kilometers. In 2004, 4% of households owned computers, which percentage has increased since then (for which no statistics are available). However these macro data conceal wide disparities among provinces and within provinces and among urban, rural and estate areas and within sectors. Telecommunications, electricity, and other services are concentrated in the Greater Colombo area of the Western province and in the major cities of Kandy and Galle. The Western province outstripped the national average and other provinces in the number of households owning computers (Department of Census and Statistics 2004), which trend would have continued even after four years. The financial and services sector agencies, the majority of which are located in the Western Province and have better access to infrastructure facilities have been in the forefront of automation but in the education sector, for example, 24% of the schools did not have electricity, 74% did not have a land phone, 94% did not have an Internet connection and 70% had no desk top computers (Department of Census and Statistics 2006). On the other hand public access points that had been established to increase citizen access to technology were mainly in rural areas and outside the Western province.

Appropriateness of technology

Some of the new ICTs are not the most widespread, the most popular or even the most appropriate to meet the information and communication needs of underserved communities. A personal computer is beyond the reach of the vast majority of the population. A few projects that have been implemented to disseminate information using a combination of technologies have been successful in involving people to provide and use information. Suitable technology for the elderly and the disabled is not available widely. The recent developments in mobile technology, the coverage of almost the whole country with mobile networks, and the exponential growth of the number of mobile phone users show that they have

been accepted by the people as being appropriate to them.

Affordability of technology and technology use

Public access information venues that had been initiated with public funds provide services free or at subsidized rates and the question of affordability in using the services of these venues therefore does not arise. However it is not only direct costs that impact on affordability. Transport costs, loss of working hours also need to be taken into account. Affordability impacts on individual or household ownership of computers, which is still low, while regular access to Internet services is constrained by low income - 50% of the total households in the country have an income of less than Rs. 16,735 a month and the monthly per capita income is Rs. 4,043. Monthly Internet access is Rs. 500 a month for a dial up connection and Rs.1, 500 for broadband, that is, 12% and 37% respectively of the monthly income. For dial up connections there is an additional telephone call charge, which is higher if the origination is from outside Colombo. Clearly these direct charges impact on access especially in the context of spiraling inflation that had reached 28% at the time of writing this report. However a 2006 study, (Gunasinghe et al. 2006) showed that more than 50% of those whose monthly income was less than Rs. 7,500 (USD70) and 88% of those whose income was less than Rs. 15,000 (USD 140) owned a mobile phone. But tariff was identified by the respondents as the main barrier to greater access. The impact on usage of a government announced levy on the monthly mobile phone bill is yet to be ascertained.

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)?

A study carried out by the Department of Census and Statistics (2004) showed that while 18 % of the population was aware about computers 10% of the population aged 5-69 were computer literate. This percentage could be higher if the very young and the elderly were excluded. The most literate were in the Western Province and in Colombo district. It also showed that while only 3 per cent could use email and Internet the majority had no awareness of these facilities. The lowest computer literacy among the general public and teachers was reported from Moneragala district in the Uva Province, which is the most disadvantaged district in the country. Overall computer literacy in the country would have improved in the intervening years with the launch of computer

literacy and awareness programmes throughout the country by various agencies, the introduction of computer education, setting up of computer learning centres in schools and the opening of computer resource centres under the Secondary School Modernization Project for students in transition between GCE Ordinary Level and Advanced Level. Training of teachers too has commenced. The capacity of specific groups to use ICT was high. A 2006 study by the Department of Census and Statistics to assess the computer literacy of teachers found that 60% were computer literate while 32% (39% male and 30% female) had the ability to use a computer and do some work on their own. A high 87% in government agencies were computer literate and were able to use the standard tools (MG Consultants, 2008). Nevertheless the capacity to use new ICTs in the general population is still very low. As access ultimately depends on the policy and regulatory framework in the country Samarajeewa (2007) argues that Sri Lanka lacks local in situ expertise that have the knowledge for reducing the policy and regulatory constraints that hold back ICT expansion and their use by the people.

While mobile phones are fast becoming integrated into the daily routine across the country there is no evidence that other ICTs such as computers and the Internet are used widely except in limited geographical settings, and sectors of the economy and by socio economic segments of the population**.** The lack of connectivity, resources to purchase hardware, capacity and relevance are the factors that contribute to this situation. All the operators without exception noted that other than youth who follow computer training courses the community shows little or no interest in using ICT to obtain information.

A major development has been the recent release of Mozilla Firefox 3.0 web browser with Sinhala and Tamil language support. The local languages portal containing the software required for this and other purposes has been developed and is available at <www.locallanguages.lk/> with the Sinhala version at <www.siyabas.lk/> and the Tamil version at <www.emathumozhihal.lk/>.

Although content development started late many initiatives have been made to fill the lacunae. The apex agency deploys funds to support grassroots initiatives using the Nenasala and other networks**.** Some examples include a cottage BPO industry for providing Sinhala language translation services and remote health service provision; an agricultural price tracking system to be

followed up with an SMS-based interface for crop price lookup. Some content, for example in agriculture, government services, education, is available in local languages and the development of Sinhala and Tamil unicode has facilitated this process. All government websites are required to be multilingual (in Sinhala, Tamil and English) and to use UNICODE fonts. These sites also have links to key local language websites in the country. A Learning Management System, Shilpa Sayura <www.shilpasayura.org> in Sinhala for high school students in various subjects has also been created. More grassroots initiatives will be required to develop location specific content.

There is no discrimination in the use of technology but socio cultural barriers do exist that impede its use. For example gender stereotypes and bias are factors that keep women from accessing technology. As was revealed from the survey and at focus group discussions**,** ethnicity juxtaposed with gender make women of the Muslim community more marginalised in using public venues to access information. Similarly lack of appropriate technology and facilities disadvantage the disabled.

The underserved communities are accustomed to getting information from a variety of sources– both formal and informal. Government information is obtained mainly by going to the relevant office and the Grama Sevaka (local level administrative officer**)**. Although service quality has improved there is no 'one stop' for information. Another source of information is the personnel of community organisations that have been formed for various purposes. However, the underserved are still excluded from many public services and have difficulty in claiming their entitlements deu to lack of information.

The government web portal has some information that the citizens seek and although still not well known among the people, the government call centres provide an efficient service by answering queries or directing callers to relevant sources (The call centre responded to 804 inquiries on the 10th of January 2008). As these are some of the first encounters that underserved communities have with using technology to obtain information, the trust they have in the technology will to a great extent depend on the accuracy of, and the speed with which, these two services provide information as opposed to the face to face contact to which they are accustomed.

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)?

- Despite the vulnerability of the Sri Lankan economy to exogenous shocks and internal disruptions to economic activity due to terrorism and consequent security responses, and monetary contraction due to tightened monetary conditions, the economy has been able to sustain a growth rate of 6% or more over several years (6.8% in 2007) although some question the composition of the GDP. The new ten year growth strategy is expected to continue this trend and realise faster growth. A feature of the economy is the changing sectoral composition with the dominance of the services sector and the declining contribution of the agricultual sector to the GDP. The telecommunications sub sector has led growth in the services sector and is forecast to maintain the growth momentum. However the importance of the agricultural sector has not diminished as it still provides employment to about a third of the workforce.

- Sri Lanka's economy which was opened up to market forces in 1977 remains one of the most liberalised in South Asia. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has been increasing since 2003 reflecting investor confidence. Foreign investment in the telecom sector, which is fully liberalized, has had a salutary effect on the provision of voice and data communication services. For example the Nippon Telephone & Telegraph Corporation of Japan owns 35.2% of shares of the government owned Sri Lanka Telecom. Malaysia and India have invested in mobile telephony. Further foreign investments are anticipated but improvements are required in the policy and business enviornment, in access to finance and infrastructure facilities, especially electricity supply**,** if investors are to be attracted to the country.

- A striking feature of the development scenario in the country is the wide regional disparities that exist. While underdeveloped local economies in two provinces could be attributed to the protracted conflict in those areas**,** lack of regional development planning, inability to exploit the resource base to the advantage of the local populace and low investment has stymied the local economies. Major investment programmes have been commenced to improve the lagging regions. Special development hubs–east, northwest and south have been identified to restore and develop

infrastructure-ports, roads, railways, housing stock; and expand vocational training and implement small and medium scale projects to promote livelihood activities in agriculture, fisheries, livestock and other rural economic enterprises.

- The current telecom regulatory framework envisages encouraging further private sector investment and creating a level playing field to maintain the competitiveness in the sector for the benefit of both the investor and the consumer, revising tariffs annually through a transparent method and managing the spectrum to ensure that it is utilized efficiently, economically and optimally. Barriers to entry have been removed and new entrants are not required to buy backbone capacity from the incumbent. Issues in the sector are seen as the reluctance of operators to share infrastructure, lack of a seamless interconnection regime, inefficient usage of the allocated frequencies, lack of fair competition within the sector, high Internet and telecommunication charges and the challenges posed by the convergence of technologies in the traditional sectors and the lack of a universal service policy. The regulatory authority is not fully independent of government.

- Reforms have been undertaken for the establishment of a suitable legal framework for ICT development. Following the TRIPS Agreement appropriate amendments have been introduced to the Intellectual Property Law of 2002 protecting computer software under the copyright regime and incorporating the same safeguards in the Intellectual Property Act No. 36 of 2003 while introducing a new provision on "fair use". The 2006 Electronic Transactions Act, mostly based on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law on e-Commerce (1996) and the Model Law on e-Signatures (2001), has been identified as technology neutral and follows a minimalist approach as regards the use of electronic signatures, the structure and technical standards associated with the accreditation of Certification Service Providers. This approach facilitates the use of electronic signatures generally, rather than advocating a specific protocol or technology. Other laws include the Payment and Settlements System Act No. 28 of 2005, Payment Devices Fraud Act No. 30 of 2006 and the Computer Crimes Act No. 24 of 2007, which criminalizes attempts at unauthorized access to a computer, computer programmes, data or information. It introduces a new regime for the investigation of offences.

Work is ongoing on data protection, and promoting institutional development for data protection,

and privacy issues. This would help to ensure that Sri Lanka complies with the required legal standards for the development of the IT Enabled Services sector and the BPO sector.

Sri Lanka is a signatory to international conventions and treaties on intellectual property such as the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the Madrid Agreement for the Repression of False or Deceptive Indication of Source on Goods, the Nairobi Treaty, Cooperation Treaty, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Convention establishing the WIPO, the Agreement on TRIPS and the Trade Mark Law Treaty.

- There is a high level of political will for diffusing ICT in the country. Having recognised the necessity of using ICT as a leverage for development, successive governments have instituted policy reforms to encourage private and foreign investment in the ICT sector to enhance infrastructurte facilities and to set up an institutional framework through an Act of Parliament for the implementation of a comprehensive programme aimed at diffusing and using ICT. The government has obtained foreign financing commitments from multilateral and bilateral donors for IT, science and technology amounting to US$ 17.3 million in loans and grants. The eSri Lanka project funded by the World Bank, and the Secondary Education Modernization Project funded by the Asian Development Bank that aims to improve secondary education from Grade 10-13 by assisting in the development of IT education and computer laboratory facilities are some of the initiatives commenced with external assistance. While the responsibility for overall programme planning of the eSri Lanka programme is with the apex agency, the priority accorded to IT is reflected in the Agency being directly under the Executive President. Government funding is made available for ICT programmes of different government agencies and a degree of independence is accorded in implementation within the overall framework. Several key ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Health have commenced their own sector specific programmes while the private sector including financial institutions, the aviation and hospitality industries are intensifying the use of ICT. Public support for ICT programmes is also high as the government insitutions that have computerized services as the Department of Motor Traffic demonstrate to citizens the possibility of obtaining hassle free efficient services from a government institution.

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

User and operator surveys, focus group discussions, extended discussions with key informants and visits to 126 venues located in a variety of administrative, geographic and climatic zones, and socio-economic settings informed the results of this research study. By administrative boundaries the study covered locations within the central government as well as sub national and local government areas. Geographic and climatic zones included the plains and mountainous areas, and wet, dry and arid zones in the country. A selected number of poorest local level administrative units (Grama Sevaka divisions), an area of urban poverty, and the more affluent urban areas of the Western and Central Provinces were included in the survey. Information was obtained from venues in the plantations sector, from venues located in the largest irrigation scheme in the country and from venues located in two of the three emerging development hubs. Individuals interviewed for the survey are differentiated by sex, age, educational level (school children, university students) and economic activity (farmers, estate workers, micro and small scale entrepreneurs, government officials, school teachers, representatives of community based organizations and non governmental organizations). Thus it was possible to assess the information needs of a wide spectrum of end users as well as operators and information intermediaries.

The survey showed that the critical information needs of communities and individuals vary considerably and consequently their needs have to be met in a targeted manner. However there are common information needs that information providers should address systematically. These relate to information on the overall economic, political and security environment, government services, and opportunities for income enhancement. The need for information on government services and government procedures and requirements emerged to be critical to underserved communities (Focus Group Discussions).

Individuals living and working in different provinces, districts or local government areas require the

same type of general information in addition to location and context specific information.
The specific information needs by inequity variables identified for this study are discussed below.

Socio economic status

Priorities of underserved communities are income generation, food security, work opportunities, health, and education of children. The most in need of information are subsistence farmers, micro and small entrepreneurs, informal sector workers and the unemployed. Farmers need information not so much on cultivation practices, which knowledge they already possess, but more on application of new research and information to respond to particular situations as for instance when an outbreak of disease occurs. An example of this type of information provision is that of the Department of Agriculture's Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres and its Call Centre. Micro entrepreneurs especially require information on the availability of local resources, efficient and low cost production processes, appropriate technology, small business management, and packaging and marketing. As the practical outcome of information provision is necessary, information on sources of credit, available marketing support, government incentives and benefits and how these are to be accessed is required. The Vidatha Resource Centre attempts to follow this chain of information dissemination. Information on available skill development programmes will be particularly useful to those who are seeking income generating opportunities in the country or overseas.

Those living below the poverty line are entitled to participate as beneficiaries in the poverty alleviation programmes of the government. Consequently their information needs pertain to eligibility, application procedures and deadlines.

Educational Level

The information needs of the individuals vary by educational level but the most in need of information are the illiterate and the neo literate who do not depend on formal sources that concentrate on print material and are inhibited from using public access information venues (Focus Groups Discussions). It was evident from the survey that the information that the school going population and those that are engaged in higher levels of study require primarily relate to the curriculum.

Age

The over 60 year age group is one of the most underserved. The services available to the elderly are limited and considering the fact that the Sri Lankan population is ageing, information that will contribute to an enhanced quality of life for the elderly will be a priority. The requirements of the older users were mainly related to keeping abreast with current events. However the literature survey showed that within this category information needs of sub populations will have to be identified and disseminated for example on health, social security and other benefits that are available to the elderly.

Sex

The Sri Lankan constitution gives parity of status to men and women but women are subjected to overt and covert forms of discrimination. Sri Lanka is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and has passed legislation to overcome some of the disadvantages that they face. Women need information that will meet their practical and strategic needs. The need for information to meet practical gender needs was seen in the dominance of women among the users of the Vidatha Resource Centres.

Location

Underserved communities require location specific information arising out of geographical characteristics, the administrative set up, socio-economic conditions, occupational patterns among others. Expressed information needs of families in the southern coastal areas that depended on fishing for a living was for the identification of fishing grounds, information on weather conditions, and prices in wholesale markets and modern methods of fish preservation. The main concern of a community in the North Western Province was how to find information to make the provincial and local governments accountable. In the Badulla district information on jobs and skill development were required especially by those who had completed secondary school education. Information on overseas job opportunities was an important need in the Gampaha district, a high migration outflow area. The survey brought out clearly that information provision has to be very focused and targeted to meet the needs of underserved communities.

Conflict affected

The priority information needs of the people in conflict affected areas differ from those in other areas of the country. Even the two districts and the adjacent areas are not homogenous and the information needs vary considerably. Discussions with key informants and focus group participants show that at a macro level information that would lead to peaceful coexistence is required to overcome decades of isolation and mistrust among communities as also information on the progress on conflict resolution. In areas that had been brought under government control the importance of obtaining correct government information was an imperative. Resettlement and relocation programmes have been initiated and lack of authentic information on entitlements was a concern that was expressed. Information on accessing new income earning opportunities that have arisen due to the large scale development programmes and projects that have commenced was also required. There is also a need for a mechanism to obtain, and provide information in confidence on various forms of abuse.

While information focused on development was identified from the survey and from focus group discussions, the user and operator surveys showed a demand for non-development focused information. Thus print material and digital content relating to entertainment were sought from the public libraries (for the former) and venues that provide ICT services particularly from commercially operated Internet cafes and EasySeva centres. The need for new forms of networking was also evident from the survey as well as other research that show the use of the mobile phone is mainly for social communication.

source of information; Survey, focus group discussions and conversations with key informants

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 study showed that the general information that underserved communities require is available, but that information is not available from any one location. All the government offices provide information that is available in the public domain but such information is fragmented and not

organized requiring the individuals to spend much time in accessing it. Transmission of information is usually face to face. Under the eSri Lanka initiative that is being implemented government processes are to be 're-engineered' to provide egovernment services. Some districts are already connected and accessing information would be facilitated when the system is in place.

At present several government agencies have a web presence and the government call centre responds to inquiries. But awareness of the existence of the call centre was not high, even among the librarians and operators of other venues.

In underserved areas and communities the most popular methods of acquisition of information are from informal sources and from face to face contact with government officials. For all government related services and information the 'last mile connectivity' was the Grama Niladhari (village officer) - the last link in the administrative hierarchy. The study showed that the few users who came in search of information on government services to the library actually referred the government gazette that carried government notifications, announcements, and job vacancies. However the focus group discussants stated that information pertaining to government services are accessed from the government office concerned and that this information was not available from any one location although some agencies had started developing 'how to' kits. Thus fragmentation is the order of the day.

The traditional media such as the radio and television broadcast several informative and interactive programmes on agriculture, environment, information technology, health, religion and culture from which citizens can gather information. The radio programmes are very popular. The newspapers, journals and magazines are also sources of information for the literate.

***Source**: Survey, focus group discussions and conversations with key informants*

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.

As stated earlier information that is required by underserved communities is available with different agencies in local languages but the main barrier to access is the lack of organization of the information and the low awareness of users as well as of librarians and operators of other venues of sources of information. The survey findings show that except for the specialized information centres and with the exception of some libraries, not much attempt is made at systematic collection, organization or maintaining reference to information sources. Some digital content is available but usage, even when access points are available, is limited due to low awareness and operator concern with non information dissemination activities. Other factors that impact on the systematic collection, organization and dissemination of information are lack of staff competency ("*librarians know only the name of the book but not its contents")* and interest, use of manual methods (most public libraries do not even maintain a catalogue), and limited facilities. Thus both the users, librarians and operators responded that the lack of content and insufficient services were the biggest barriers that users had to face. Location, hours of operation, inadequate skills in accessing information or lack of information literacy among users were the other constraints.

***Source**: Survey, focus group discussions and conversations with key informants*

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?

Nearly 60% of users of the venues studied used only one facility indicating the importance of providing as comprehensive an information service as possible at each type of venue. This percentage at over 70 was highest among users of public libraries, followed by the users of specialized information centres. In the ICT enabled centres 48.8% of urban and 22.9% of non urban Internet café/EasySeva users did not access the services of other venues while 26.6% of urban and 42.9% of general users and 38.1% of IT users of non urban Nenasala centres did not use another facility. Of those who used other venues the most popular was the public library (16.8%) followed by the school library (9.0%). Communication centres were used by 7.5%. Only 2.2% of Nenasala centre clientele used other venues.

However, the responses of operators differed. According to them the majority of users of all venues

use other facilities. More than half (58.9%) the librarians said that users go to other venues as the content that users require was not available in the library. They also go to other venues as the library does not have ICT facilities. Over 70% of librarians said that they refer users to other libraries due to lack of content and information. Users of Nenasala centres go to other venues primarily due to technical problems and 22.2% of urban and 16.1% of rural centres refer them to facilities in the vicinity for this same reason and due to lack of adequate number of computers, and to obtain information that is not available at the centre. The need to read was another reason for Nenasala centre users to go elsewhere. Vidatha centre users go to other venues to avail themselves of IT facilities, to obtain information and to follow computer training courses. According to the operators, half the users of Internet cafés and EasySeva do not go to another venue but those who do mainly do so when there are power outages, to follow training courses, to obtain information and to read newspapers. The users of the specialized centres also use other venues for further training and to obtain additional information. They also go to financial institutions as a follow up to the income generating activities commenced after training at the venue.

The free services that the library provides, the availability of study facilities, and the ability to serve a large number of users were the positive factors that were associated with public libraries. On the negative side were the lack of new technology, lack of improvement in facilities and services, poor management, lack of adequate and current content and the difficulty in accessing information. The responses also revealed user attitudes when they complained that the books have to be returned on time and that a fine is levied for past due books and the lack of freedom in a library as compared with the Nenasala centres.

Except the libraries all the other venues provide ICT based services. However the focus of these centres differed and consequently the clientele also differed. The types of venues that could be compared were the Nenasala centres and the Internet cafes and EasySeva. There was a preference to go to the former due to the lower charges that they levied for services. However, as user responses show the latter attracted a larger number of users despite the higher charges that were applied indicating that cost may not be an insurmountable barrier to access if adequate facilities and services are available and if the benefits are tangible to the user.

3.3.4 Inequity environment in the country

2-3 paragraphs

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

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

The Poor

The poorest according to the Department of Census and Statistics (2006) are those who belong to households that use kerosene oil for lighting, firewood for cooking, live in houses that do not have permanent material for the walls, floor and the roof. Low educational attainment of the household head and/or family members, and employment in low-skilled occupations in the informal sector including agricultural wage work and unpaid family labour also characterize the poor. The poor are located in all administrative districts of the country but are concentrated in the Moneragala and Badulla districts of the Uva Province, the Ratnapura and Kegalle districts in the Sabaragamuwa Province and the Nuwara Eliya district in the Central Province where poverty actually increased while poverty decreased in other areas. Pockets of deprivation exist particularly in landlocked, mountainous and less accessible regions.

Estate workers

The estate sector accounts for about 5% of the country's population. The living conditions of estate workers have improved substantially over the years due to state interventions, trade union activism, sector specific investment, and can be seen in improved housing conditions, better access to education, health care and nutrition programmes. Yet, it has not had the same development benefits that have accrued to other parts of the country despite the huge investments that have been made and lags behind in respect of many national indicators, due to the extreme conditions that the workers had to endure. The estate sector has the highest number of income receivers among the sectors, but mean and median per capita income was lower than for other sectors. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/HIES/HIES%202007/Demography%20Characheristics.pdf> <http://sundaytimes.lk/080518/FinancialTimes/ft319.html>. Male and female literacy rates are lower than the national average, educational attainment is low with nearly 11.3% of the population not having attended school as against a national average of 4.8%, a higher school drop out rate

Male and female literacy rates are lower than the national average, nearly 11.3% of the population has not attended school as against a national average of 4.8% (Department of Census and Statistics 2006). Levels of malnutrition among children are also higher. Housing conditions have improved over the years but the ownership of durable goods in communication including personal means of transport is also lower than in the rest of the country. Researchers point out that the current policy focus may not be sufficient or not in line with the problems faced by the sector. Others attribute poverty to constraints in accessing other sources of income, the adverse ratio of income earners to dependents and alcoholism. The multidimensional nature of poverty in the estate sector flows from the historical legacy of economic and social exclusion and the current dependence on the plantation management.

Persons Displaced Internally due to Conflict and the Tsunami

Conflict induced displacement has affected around 325,000 persons of whom women and children are in the majority. The tsunami of 2004 took a toll on the population in the eastern and southern parts of the country adding to the numbers of the displaced in the conflict affected areas in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Most of the displaced are living with relatives and friends, encroaching on state or private lands while about a quarter are in transitional centres maintained by the government. Return to original places of residence is dependent on personal safety, adequate shelter, ability to recommence livelihood activities, and availability of other facilities such as schools and health care.

The majority of the displaced are dependent on welfare, have inferior housing compared with others in the community they find themselves in, and have poor access to sanitation facilities. High rates of delinquency, gender based and other types of violence and pregnancies outside marriage are also reported. It is also reported that there is a high degree of dependency <http://www.neweast.lk/3year/resettlement.html>. Studies show poor nutrition and malnutrition among children with stunting and wasting. At the same time the displaced have access to education, health care services and other government services.

A survey carried out by the ILO (2007) on the tsunami affected in the country shows that the number of families living in transitional homes has reduced significantly and currently only 10% of households rely on government welfare and remittances for income. Although engaged in some

type of income generation, incomes were low with the majority earning less than Rs. 10,000 ($93) a month. Female headed households are poorer with 80% earning less than Rs. 5000 ($46) a month.

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?

There is no legislation that specifically provides for freedom of information although the constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of speech and publication to citizens (Article 10, 13(1) (a)). However, the constitution also states that this right is subject to such restrictions as may be presented by law in the interest of racial and religious harmony or in relation to parliamentary privileges, contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence (Article 15 (2)). There are several laws that impose restrictions on the access, comment and dissemination of information. Sri Lanka Press Council Law of 1973 imposes restrictions specifically on the press and by prohibiting the publication of material falling under the broad categories of obscenity and profanity, government decision making, fiscal policy, official secrets and defamation; proceedings of cabinet meetings cannot be published without prior approval and matters relating to the army, navy, air force and police and equipment or installations that are likely to be prejudicial to the security of the country cannot be published. It has also the power to inquire into complaints against the press. Other laws that have relevance to the media include the Parliamentary (Powers and Privileges) Act of 1953 and its amendments, Official Secrets Act of 1955, the Public Security Ordinance of 1947, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1979 (currently inoperative). Under the Ordinance the President has the power to issue regulations that are deemed to be necessary or expedient in the interests of public security, the preservation of public order and the suppression of civil riot or commotion, or for the maintenance of supplies and services that are essential for the life of the community. Emergency laws take precedence over all other laws except the constitution and once the state of emergency is declared its existence cannot be questioned. Much of the restrictions that have been imposed are due to the armed conflict in the North and volatile conditions in the East emerging out of conflict, and terrorism that targets civilians, economic infrastructure, temples and public places.

Although these laws have not been used in a draconian fashion their existence inhibits journalists resorting to self-censorship, especially when reporting sensitive issues in the context of the separatist conflict although some journalists are increasingly exposing malpractices. There is relative freedom in

providing information but political, ethnic, religious, cultural divides and corruption invariably lead to biased reporting especially in the print media. It is not people's interests that are always served and people's voices that are always heard. Censorship has been imposed for brief periods at various times. In addition governments bring pressure on newspapers and journalists; some independent newspapers have been closed, their editorial staff has been arrested, and extrajudicial methods resorted to silence journalists exposing corruption and human rights abuses. The situation is reported to be worse in the North especially in Jaffna. There is no free press in the North in areas under control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and in other areas journalists critical of the actions of the LTTE have been killed, intimidated and attacked (Human Rights News 2007). The Tamil press and its journalists have been caught in the crossfire between the security forces, paramilitary groups and the LTTE. The promised investigations into killings of journalists have not been carried out.

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.

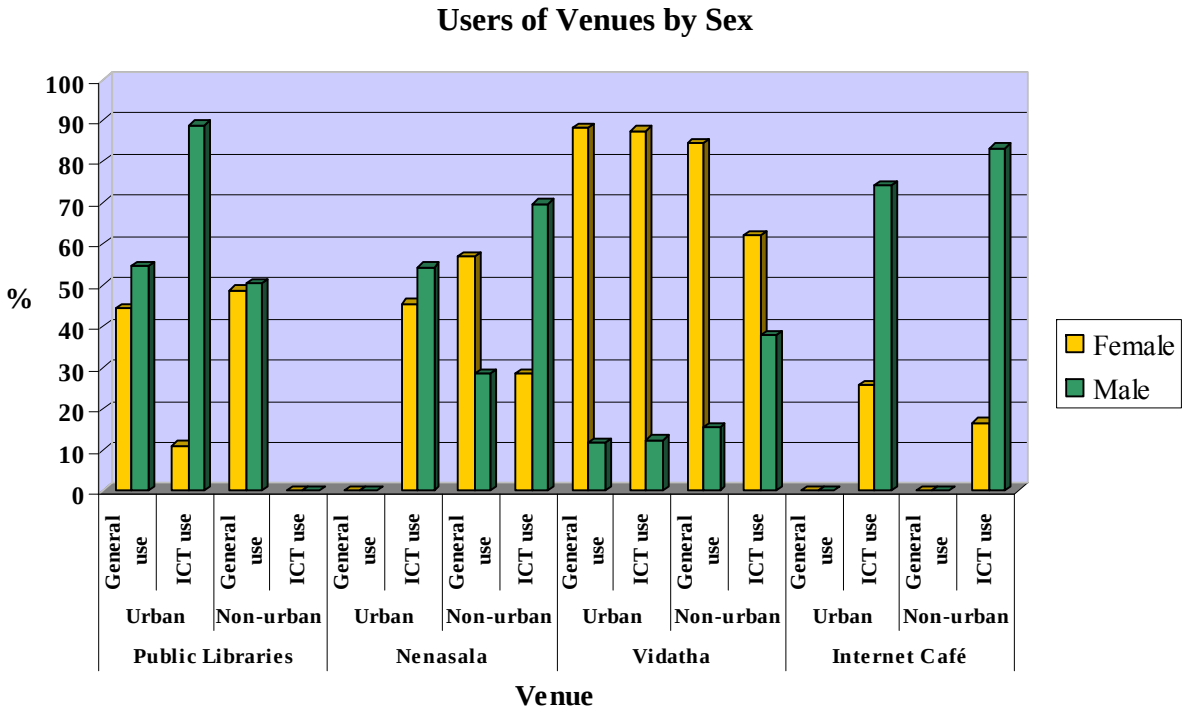
3.4.1.1 Users, by type of venue

Users profile (estimated proportion of users in each category, %)		Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Resource Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
		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	Female	44.3	11.1	48.8	0	0	45.6	57.1	28.7	88.2	87.5	84.4	62.3	0	25.6	0	16.7
	Male	54.8	88.9	50.5	0	0	54.4	28.6	69.8	11.8	12.5	15.6	37.7	0	74.4	0	83.3
	Not reported	0.9	0	0.6	0	0	0	14.3	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age	14 and under	5.8	0	12.2	0	0	7.6	42.9	14.9	0	0	0	3.3	0	5.8	0	1.0
	15-35	64.5	66.7	57.8	0	0	78.5	57.1	79.2	52.9	100.0	42.2	63.9	0	72.7	0	86.5
	36-60	24.4	11.1	25.1	0	0	13.9	0	5.0	47.1	0	48.4	29.5	0	19.8	0	11.5
	61 and over	5.4	11.1	4.9	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	9.4	3.3	0	1.7	0	1.0
	Not reported	0	11.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education level	No formal education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.1	0	0	0	0	0
	Only elementary	14.6	0	18.0	0	0	8.9	57.1	18.8	5.9	0	20.3	4.9	0	10.7	0	0
	Up to high school	70.9	77.8	74.9	0	0	84.8	42.9	76.7	94.1	95.8	76.6	91.8	0	59.5	0	46.9
	College or university	14.3	22.2	6.9	0	0	6.3	0	4.0	0	4.2	0	3.3	0	29.8	0	53.1
	Not reported	0.2	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Income bracket	Low	20.3	11.1	37.7	0	0	15.2	42.9	41.6	47.1	29.2	59.4	32.8	0	5.0	0	10.4
	Medium	66.0	88.9	57.6	0	0	79.7	42.9	50.5	52.9	70.8	40.6	65.6	0	85.1	0	80.2

(approx)	High	2.6	0	1.5	0	0	2.5	14.3	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	8.3	0	8.3
	No answer	4.1	0	1.7	0	0	2.5	0	2.0	0	0	0	1.6	0	1.7	0	1.0
	Not reported	7.1	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social status (approx)	Low	14.6	11.1	29.1	0	0	12.7	42.9	33.7	35.3	45.8	62.5	41.0	0	5.0	0	9.4
	Medium	77.9	88.9	66.6	0	0	83.5	42.9	52.5	64.7	54.2	35.9	57.4	0	86.8	0	81.3
	High	4.9	0	2.1	0	0	2.5	14.3	10.4	0	0	0	0	0	7.4	0	8.3
	No answer	0.9	0	1.5	0	0	1.3	0	2.5	0	0	1.6	1.6	0	0.8	0	1.0
	Not reported	1.7	0	0.6	0	0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caste (if appropriate)	Dominant	x															
	other																
Not relevant	other																
	other																
Ethnicity (if appropriate)	Dominant – Sinhala	87.2	88.9	86.1	0	0	94.9	100.0	93.6	100.0	79.2	95.3	93.4	0	84.3	0	86.5
	Tamil	4.9	11.1	1.5	0	0	0	0	3.5	0	0	0	1.6	0	1.7	0	1.0
	Muslim	6.6	0	8.6	0	0	1.3	0	0.5	0	16.7	0	1.6	0	11.6	0	5.2
	Not reported	0	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0	0

***Source**: Survey*

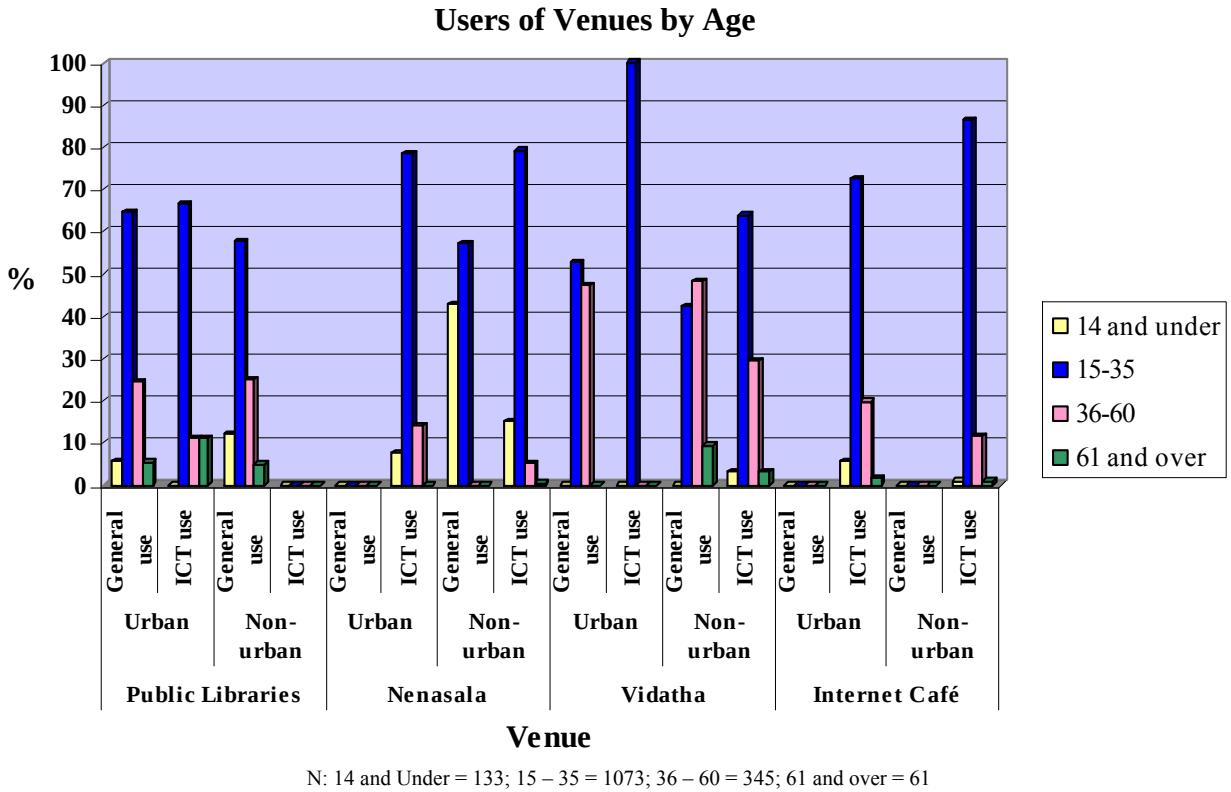
Comments, including comments on other inequity variables**.**



N: Female = 709; Male = 894

Of the total of 1614 respondents, male and female users accounted for 709 (43.9%) and 894 (55.4%) respectively (11 - 0.7% had not reported). Except in Vidatha Resource Centres and general users that went to the Nenasala, males were the majority of users. In the former venue the dominance of females is explained by the fact that most of the members of the Vidatha Societies that had been formed at community level were women. Gender differences were marked in venues that offer ICT services. In the single public library that offered ICT services females were 11.1%: in the Nenasala centres females were 45.6% in urban locations but were only 28.7% in rural locations; usage of Internet cafes and EasySeva by women was confined to 25.6% of women in urban areas and 16.7% in rural locations. Operator responses show the higher usage of these venues by males. For example according to

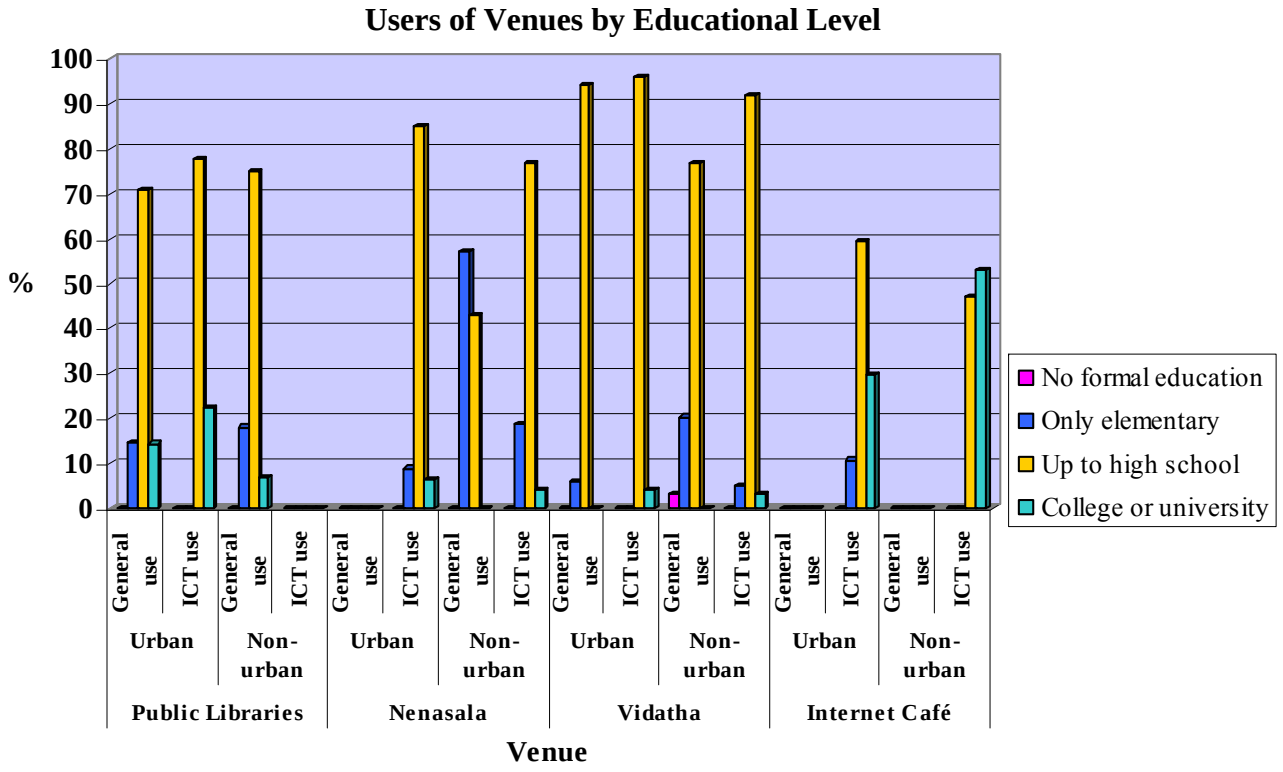
librarians, 64.7% of urban libraries were used by more than 50% of males while 17.6% of urban libraries had more than 75% of males. The trend was similar in rural libraries as well. In 75% of the non urban Nenasala centres more than half the users were males. Gender differences stark in non urban Internet cafes and Easy Seva – all users were males.



N: 14 and Under = 133; 15 – 35 = 1073; 36 – 60 = 345; 61 and over = 61

The majority of users across all venues were in the age group 15 – 35 years with the highest percentage of users in this age group patronizing rural Internet cafes and EasySeva confirming the general perception that it is the youth that are primarily attracted to use ICT services. Focus group discussions and interviews with key informants revealed that those in this age group comprised students either in school or university or those studying for technical and professional examinations. The majority of children under 14 years used the Nenasala centres and public libraries in non urban

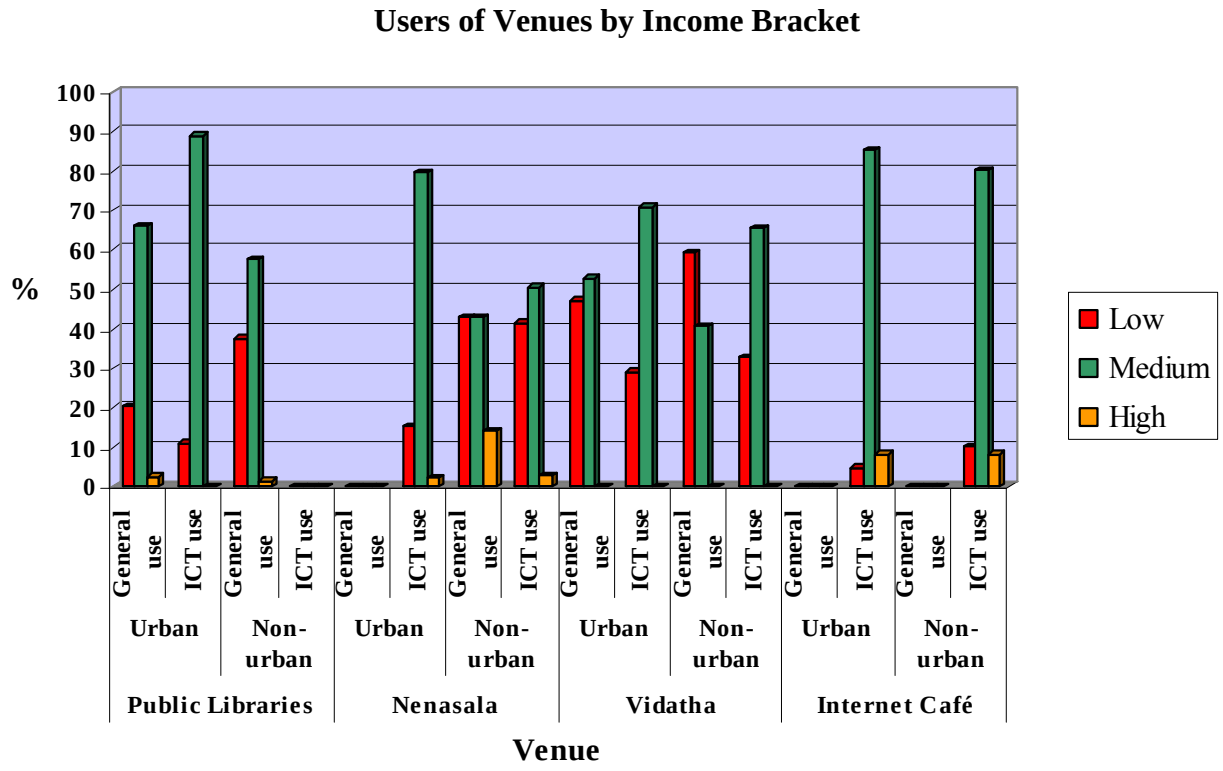
locations while their use of Internet cafes was minimal. The majority of those in the age group 36-60 used the Vidatha Resource Centres and the libraries. A few over 60 years of age also used the public libraries and Internet cafes.



N: No formal education = 2; Only elementary = 231; Up to high school = 1174; College or university = 204

The majority of users of all venues had an educational level up to high school. Urban and rural Internet cafes were used by 29.8% and 53.1% respectively of college or university educated while two (3.1%) of the Vidatha Resource Centres whose services are targeted at underserved communities users had no formal education. Users with elementary level schooling were mainly children.

Almost all the libraries had made special arrangements to meet the needs of the youth by allocating a special area for them to study (the Colombo Public Library provides seating for approximately 1000), obtaining material that would supplement the curriculum and providing reference services to them and responding to queries. Providing facilities for study is an important service that the library provides as the majority of those using the library do not have facilities for study in their home. On the other hand the emphasis placed on this category of users deprived the others of services to meet their needs.



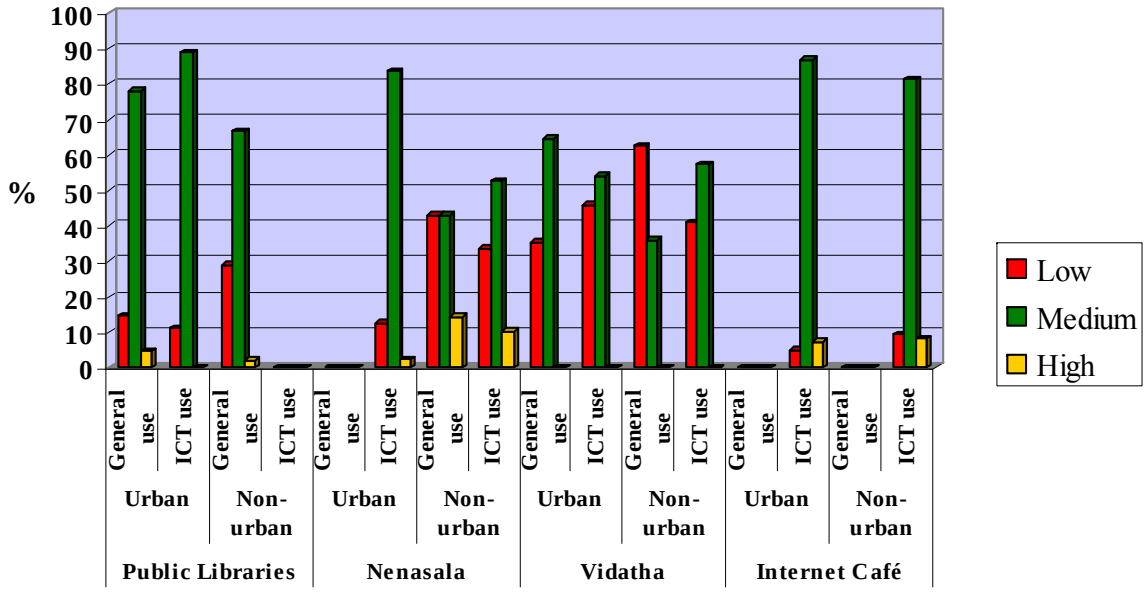
N: Low = 460; Medium = 1025; High = 46; No answer = 37; Not Reported = 46

It was difficult to ascertain the income of the users as most were not willing to disclose it. As they were interviewed outside their homes there was no

way of verifying their responses. In the case of children the income level was obtained by asking the occupation of the parents and from their responses it was possible to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the income and social strata to which the children belonged.

Most of the users in urban public libraries were either middle or lower middle income earners. More low income earners went to Vidatha Centres, as they were the main beneficiaries of those centres. Respondents in the high income bracket were rarely seen coming to public libraries, as also low income earners. However the operator responses differed. According to 11.8% of urban librarians there were more users in the high income bracket using their library. More than 50% of the Nenasala centres on the other hand had no users in the high income category but 6.5% said that 10-24% of the users belonged to this income category. Low income users predominated in public libraries as well as Nenasala centres and specialized information centres. As is to be expected the Internet cafes and EasySeva centres had the lowest percentage of users from the low income group. The majority of users of all venues except the non urban Vidatha Resource Centres belonged to the middle level social group. The highest percentage of users with a low social status (59.4%) used the Vidatha Resource Centres as they were the main beneficiaries of those centres while the lowest number (5.0% in urban and 10.4% in rural locations) used Internet cafes and EasySeva centres. Users in the high income bracket patronized the Nenasala, Internet cafes and EasySeva centres as well as public libraries.

Users of Venues by Social Status



N: Low = 383; Medium = 1123; High = 74; No answer = 21; Not Reported = 13

The majority of users of all venues except the non urban Vidatha Resource Centres belonged to the middle level income category. The highest percentage of users from the low income bracket (59.4%) used the Vidatha Resource Centres as they were the main beneficiaries of those centres while the lowest number (5.0% in urban and 10.4% in rural locations) used Internet cafes and EasySeva centres. Users in the high income bracket patronized the Nenasala, Internet cafes and EasySeva centres as well as public libraries.

3.4.1.2 Information People Seek, by type of venue

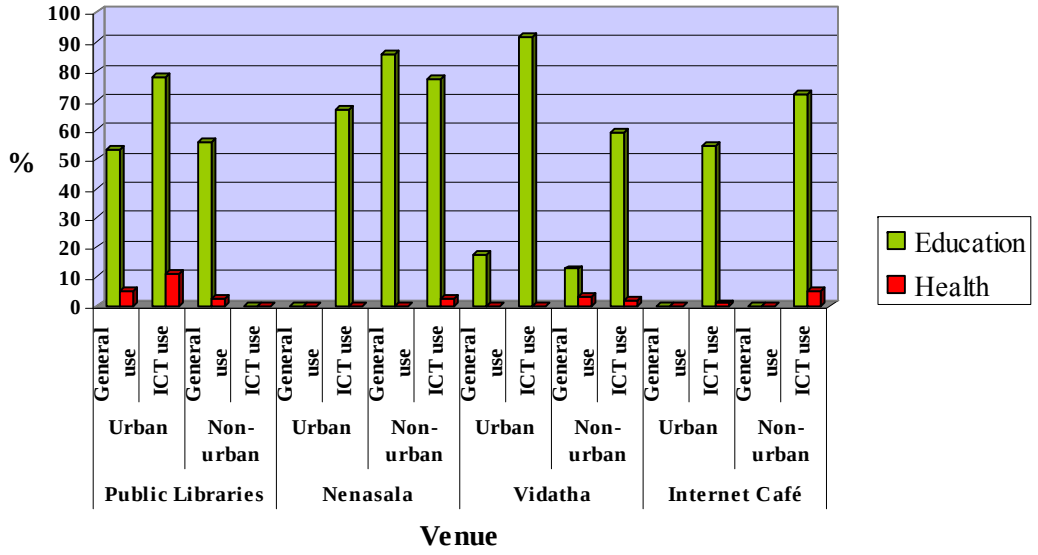
(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	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
Education	53.3	77.8	56.1	0	0	67.1	85.7	77.2	17.6	91.7	12.5	59.0	0	54.5	0	71.9
Health	4.9	11.1	2.4	0	0	0	0	2.5	0	0	3.1	1.6	0	0.8	0	5.2
Agriculture	1.7	0	2.1	0	0	0	28.6	2.0	0	0	28.1	23.0	0	0.8	0	0
Government services	20.8	33.3	36.8	0	0	16.5	0	4.5	0	8.3	0	4.9	0	6.6	0	4.2
Entertainment	38.5	11.1	37.9	0	0	11.4	0	16.3	0	0	0	6.6	0	30.6	0	45.8
News	68.5	77.8	77.7	0	0	34.2	0	15.8	0	0	3.1	3.3	0	20.7	0	26.0
Personal	16.5	44.4	15.8	0	0	30.4	14.3	16.3	11.8	8.3	37.5	24.6	0	58.7	0	46.9
Other	10.5	0	3.0	0	0	0	0	0.5	88.2	0	45.3	8.2	0	0	0	0
Not reported	0.2	0	0.4	0	0	10.1	0	7.4	0	4.2	1.6	3.3	0	4.1	0	2.1

***Source**: Survey*

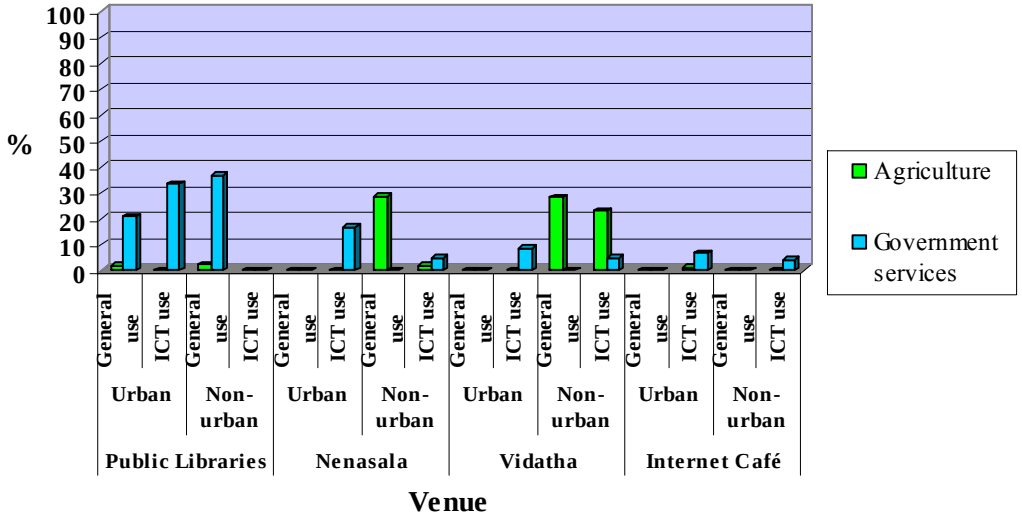
Information classified as 'other'

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	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
To study	100.0	0	71.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.0	0	0	0	0
Self employment details	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	82.8	80.0	0	0	0	0
Participation workshops	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.7	0	0	0	0	0
Participation in competition	0	0	28.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participation in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

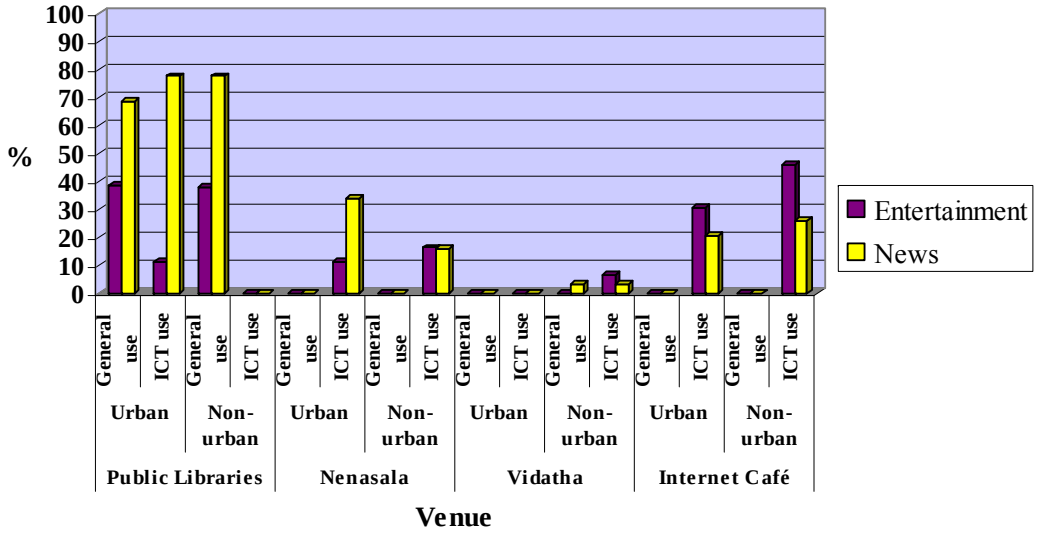
Information People Seek by Type of Venue: Education and Health



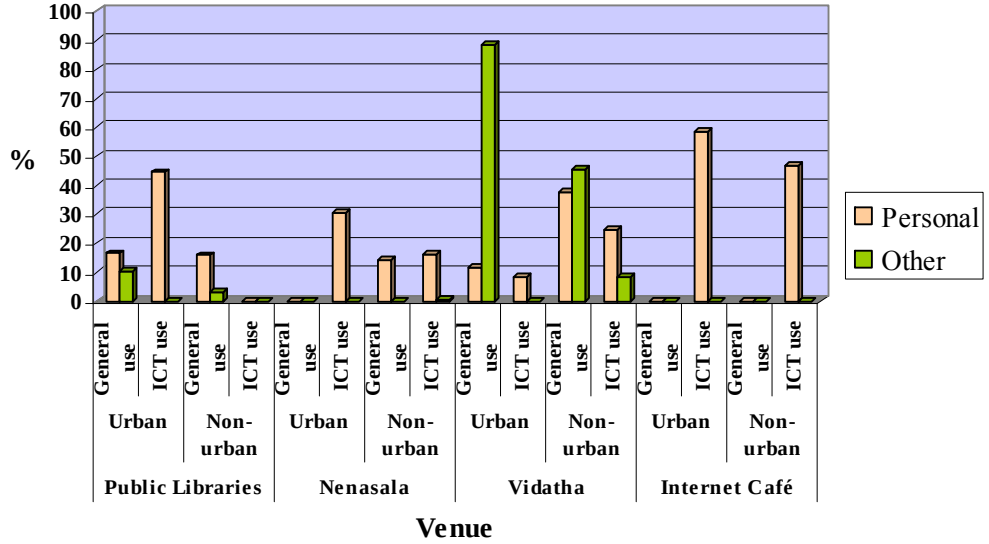
Information People Seek by Type of Venue: Agriculture and Government Services



Information People Seek by Type of Venue: Entertainment and News



Information People Seek by Type of Venue, Category: Personal and Other



The information that is sought by people varied from venue to venue and reflected the availability of content in the venue accessed by users. Over 58% of users of all venues looked for information related to education followed by 49.8% that sought news. Thirty per cent looked for entertainment, followed by 23% that engaged in searching for information of a personal nature and 3.5% was interested in agricultural information. Those who sought information on government services were 19.3%. Health information was sought by only 3.3%, possibly because most of the underserved obtain health related from the network of health facilities that reach even the remote areas.

In both urban and rural libraries the majority sought news (68.5% and 77.7% respectively). This response may be attributed to the fact that the major content that most of the non-urban libraries offer readers is newspapers. The demand for information that would support the education of users was higher (56.1%) in non urban than in urban (53.3%) libraries while the demand for entertainment (38.5% in urban and 37.9% in non urban) such as fiction was higher than for information on government services (20.8% in urban and 36.8% in non urban libraries) or agriculture or health. Specialized information is available from other sources but light reading material is primarily available from public libraries.

The Nenasala centres were used mainly for educational purposes (67.1% in urban and 85.7% of general and 77.2% IT users in non urban venues) that included the acquisition of computer skills. The demand for news came second in importance for urban and non urban Nenasala centre users. Entertainment was the reason for 11.4% of urban and 16.3% of non urban users to visit the venue. . While 34.2% of users of urban Nenasala centres looked for news this activity was lower in non urban venues at15.8%. Very few (4.5%) users looked for information on government services in non urban venues and this response may be attributed to the fact that they access the government officers direct for such information. The venue was also used for obtaining information of a personal nature by 30.4% of urban and 14.3% of non urban general users and 16.3% of IT users.

The information that users of specialized information centres sought related to education (among 91.7% urban and 59% non urban IT users and 17.6% urban and 12.5% non urban general users) and related mainly to computer education and livelihoods that included agricultural information

(23%). Information relating to agriculture was sought by 28.1% of urban and 23.0% non urban general users. Very few of the users of these two venues looked for any other type of information. In the other category the majority sought information relating to their livelihoods.

The users of Internet cafes and EasySeva in urban and non urban areas searched for information relating to education (54.5% in urban and 71.9% in non urban areas) while entertainment was cited by 30.6% of urban and 45.8% non urban users. Over a fifth (20.7% in urban and 26.0% in non urban venues) looked for news. A high percentage of users 58.7% and 46.9% used the venue to obtain information of a personal nature.

3.4.1.3 Uses of ICT, by type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Email	0	33.3	0	0	0	58.2	0	24.3	0	12.5	0	4.9	0	81.0	0	83.3
Chat	0	11.1	0	0	0	6.3	0	2.0	0	0	0	1.6	0	19.8	0	33.3
Web browsing	0	100.0	0	0	0	69.6	0	52.0	0	33.3	0	41.0	0	78.5	0	89.6
Blogs & social networking	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	0	.5	0	0	0	1.6	0	18.2	0	9.4
Commerce & business	0	0	0	0	0	20.3	0	8.4	0	4.2	0	18.0	0	16.5	0	11.5
Phone or webcam	0	11.1	0	0	0	20.3	0	11.9	0	0	0	3.3	0	4.1	0	7.3
Games	0	55.6	0	0	0	19.0	0	21.8	0	20.8	0	6.6	0	22.3	0	9.4
Other	0	22.2	0	0	0	64.6	0	73.8	0	66.7	0	59.0	0	5.0	0	11.5
Not applicable	100.0	0	100.0	0	0	0	100.0	0	100.0	0	100.0	0	0	0	0	0
Not reported	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0	0

***Source**: Survey*

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

Uses of ICT classified as 'other' by type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Computer studies	0	0	0	0	0	70.6	88.7	0	0	100.0	0	97.1	0	0	0	27.3
Type setting	0	0	0	0	0	13.7	8.0	0	0	0	0	2.9	0	16.7	0	18.2
Photocopying	0	0	0	0	0	29.4	4.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36.4
Get information relating to vehicles	0	0	0	0	0	2.0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Listen to music	0	0	0	0	0	0	2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	50.0	0	0
Watch DVD /CD	0	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Get printouts	0	0	0	0	0	2.0	2.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9.1
Download music	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23.3	0	0
Copy CD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	0
Download virus guard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0	9.1
Designing stickers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ICT facilities were available only in one urban public library that was in the sample and in this urban library all browsed the web, 55.6% played games, 33.3% sent email and 11.1% engaged in chatting, 22.2% watched CDs and 11.1% used the phone and/or the web cam. Urban and non urban Nenasala users (69.6% and 52.0% respectively) browse the web, send email, (58.2% and 24.3% respectively), use the telephone (20.3% and 11.9% respectively), while more (21.8%) non urban users than urban users (19.0%) play games. Of those who responded that they engage in 'Other' activities 70.6% in urban and 88.7% in non urban venues engage in computer studies. In non urban areas 2.7% said that they listen to music. Non connectivity related activities included photocopying documents, typesetting and taking computer print outs.

In the specialized information centres the majority, 33.3% urban and 41.0% non urban users browsed the web, and 20.8% of urban users played games. The corresponding figure for non urban users was only 6.6%. But more non urban users looked for information relating business and commerce (18.0%) than urban users (4.2%). Email was sent by more urban users (12.5%) as compared with 4.9% of non urban users. As computer training courses are provided at these venues**,** all the users who fell into the "Other' category engaged in computer studies. A few used the venues for non connectivity based activity such as photocopying.

The Internet cafes were used for web browsing (89.6% in non urban and 78.5% in urban venues), email (81.0% in urban and 83.3%), chatting (33.3% non urban and 19.8% urban). Fewer non urban users played games (9.4% non urban and 22.3% urban), while the venues were used for business and commercial purposes by 16.5% of urban and 11.5% of non urban users). More urban users (18.2%) wrote blogs and visited social networking sites than rural users (9.4%) while the 'Other' uses related to listening to and downloading music and non connectivity related uses such as photocopying and typesetting documents and copying CDs.

3.4.1.4 Frequency of Use for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	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
First visit	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.5	0	0	3.1	0	0	5.0	0	1.0
Rarely (less than monthly)	1.9	0	3.9	0	0	6.3	28.6	5.0	5.9	0	15.6	6.6	0	16.5	0	9.4
Occasional (about once a month)	10.9	0	11.1	0	0	19.0	0	7.9	23.5	0	46.9	21.3	0	22.3	0	13.5
Regular (about 2-3 per month)	42.4	33.3	32.8	0	0	44.3	28.6	34.2	58.8	8.3	25.0	4.9	0	25.6	0	31.3
Frequent (about once a week)	23.8	44.4	28.3	0	0	17.7	28.6	31.2	11.8	75.0	9.4	45.9	0	18.2	0	34.4
Daily(about every day)	18.8	11.1	21.8	0	0	10.1	14.3	16.8	0	16.7	0	16.4	0	12.4	0	10.4
Not reported	1.7	11.1	2.1	0	0	2.5	0	1.5	0	0	0	4.9	0	0	0	0

***Source**: Survey*

Comments:

Most users (34.2%) went to a venue regularly, 27% frequently, 16.9% daily and 13.7% occasionally.

The highest percentage of daily users was seen in public libraries (18.8% urban and 21.8% non urban). Frequent users were 23.8% urban and 28.3% non urban and regular users were 42.4% in urban and 32.8% in non urban areas. There were users who came rarely as well as occasionally. At the Nenasala centres, regular users predominated in both urban (44.3%) and non urban (34.2%) areas while 28.6% came to the venue regularly for general use in non urban areas. Frequent users accounted for 17.7% in urban venues and 31.2% in non urban areas. General users in non urban Nenasala centres were 28.6%.

In the specialized information centres regular visits were made for general use by 58.8% urban and 25% non urban clients, but only 8.3% urban and 4.9% non urban users came to use ICT. The highest percentage of users (49.6%) of non urban venues came occasionally for general use and constituted the majority. Users who came occasionally for ICT use was 21.3%. Frequent users were 45.9% in non urban areas. Regular users predominated in urban Internet cafes while frequent users predominated in non urban areas. Of the users of urban venues 75% came for ICT use.

3.4.1.5 Barriers to use for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres Vidatha				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
No barriers	20.8	11.1	13.9	0	0	10.1	14.3	6.4	0	4.2	1.6	11.5	0	28.1	0	33.3
Location, distance	14.8	0	25.7	0	0	41.8	14.3	21.3	11.8	8.3	40.6	16.4	0	6.6	0	10.4
Hours of Operation	25.1	0	2.4	0	0	27.8	0	17.3	94.1	91.7	48.4	36.1	0	36.4	0	1.0
Cost	1.3	0	3.4	0	0	11.4	0	10.4	0	0	0	3.3	0	39.7	0	9.4
Lack of skills/training	2.1	22.2	2.1	0	0	27.8	71.4	40.1	0	0	25.0	41.0	0	3.3	0	4.2
Not enough services	49.7	88.9	65.1	0	0	49.4	28.6	57.9	11.8	8.3	43.8	65.6	0	49.6	0	55.2
Not in right language	6.6	0	7.3	0	0	19.0	42.9	32.2	11.8	12.5	29.7	21.3	0	10.7	0	3.1
Not enough content	40.7	33.3	37.0	0	0	17.7	0	12.9	5.9	12.5	31.3	14.8	0	9.1	0	2.1
Other	24.2	33.3	37.0	0	0	34.2	0	17.3	11.8	0	10.9	14.8	0	0	0	15.6

***Source**: Survey*

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

Barriers classified as 'other' for use for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres- Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
Not enough space	31.3	33.3	61.0	0	0	71.4	40.0	0	0	0	25.0	0	0	0	0	53.3
No suitable environment	63.4	66.7	49.4	0	0	71.4	62.9	0	0	0	12.5	100.0	0	0	0	20.0
No proper security/discipline	4.5	0	0.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Problems in time management	0	0	0	0	0	7.1	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13.3
Poor management	2.7	33.3	1.2	0	0	0	2.9	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0
Problems in getting membership	2.7	0	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6.7
No follow up of program	0	0	0.6	0	0	71.4	0	0	0	0	12.5	0	0	0	0	0
No loan given for self employment	0	0	0.6	0	0	71.4	0	0	100.0	0	37.5	0	0	0	0	0
Virus problem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20.0

In all the venues except in the urban specialized information centres insufficient services were considered as the biggest barrier to access to the information that they required. Of nearly half the users of urban libraries (49.7%) and more than half (65.1%) in non urban libraries identified the

lack of sufficient services and lack of content (old material) and insufficient content (40.7% and 37.0% respectively) as barriers to access. The location was unsuitable for 14.8% of urban users and 25.7% of non urban users while opening hours were not suitable for 25.1% of urban library users. The other barriers were the lack of a suitable environment, poor management of libraries, and insufficient space.

Following the lack of sufficient services (49.4% urban and 57.9% non urban), the users of Nenasala identified the location (41.8% urban and 21.3% non urban), hours of operation (27.8% urban and 17.3% non urban), cost (11.4% urban and 10.4% non urban), language (19.0% urban and 32.2% non urban), and insufficient content (17.7% urban and 12.9% non urban), as acting as barriers. Lack of training and competence to use the venue was identified as a constraint by more non urban users (71.4% general and 40.1% IT users) than urban users (17.8%), the highest among venues. Other barriers included insufficient space, excessive heat, poor lighting, and noise. Slow Internet connections, insufficient number of computers, slow and malfunctioning computers, and irregular power supply were the other difficulties that the users had to contend with

.

In the specialized information centres hours of operation was cited as the biggest problem followed by lack of sufficient services. Similar responses were received from users of the specialized information centres. For general users of non urban venues distance was a barrier to access. More services were expected by 65.6% of non urban IT users and 43.8% of general users.

The users of Internet cafes and EasySeva cited cost (49.6% urban and 55.2% rural) as a barrier to use. The other barriers that urban users had to face were lack of services (49.6% urban), hours of operation (36.4%), and language (10.7%). In rural venues in addition to services (55.2%), location (10.4%) was a constraint. Lack of sufficient space, the poor environment and waiting time to use a computer were mentioned as barriers to access.

It is significant that in all the venues studied the highest number of users that said that they did not encounter any barriers were the respondents who used private sector managed venues.

3.4.1.6 Three biggest barriers for users accessing ICT services and information for each type of venue

(estimated proportion in each category, %)	Public Libraries				Nenasala Centres				Specialized Information Centres-Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres				Internet Cafés and EasySeva			
	Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban		Urban		Non-urban	
	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	ICT use	General use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use	General use	ICT use
No barriers	0	66.7	0	0	0	13.9	7.4	0	0	4.2	0	6.6	0	39.7	0	33.3
Location, distance	0	0	0	0	0	16.5	20.8	0	0	8.3	0	14.8	0	3.3	0	9.4
Hours of Operation	0	0	0	0	0	26.6	13.4	0	0	91.7	0	37.7	0	35.5	0	1.0
Cost	0	0	0	0	0	10.1	10.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	32.2	0	9.4
Lack of skills/training	0	22.2	0	0	0	24.1	36.6	0	0	0	0	37.7	0	2.5	0	5.2
Not enough services	0	33.3	0	0	0	36.7	62.4	0	0	8.3	0	65.6	0	41.3	0	60.4
Not in right language	0	0	0	0	0	15.2	31.7	0	0	12.5	0	13.1	0	7.4	0	4.2
Not enough content	0	0	0	0	0	17.7	7.4	0	0	8.3	0	19.7	0	4.1	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	35.4	10.9	0	0	0	0	4.9	0	0	0	12.5
Unable to say	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	2.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

***Source**: Survey*

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

The lack of adequate services was identified by users of all the venues other than urban specialized information centres (Vidatha) as one of the biggest barriers to access. Hours of opening was the main barrier that the specialized information centre users faced followed by language (12.5%) and location (8.1%). Users of non urban venues stated that lack of services (65.6%), hours of operation (37.7%) and lack of skills (37.7%) to be the three biggest barriers. Insufficient services (36.7%), location (26.6%) and lack of skills/training (24.1%) were the three main barriers faced by users of Nenasala centres. In the non urban centres these were insufficient services (62.4%), lack of skills/training (36.6%) and location.

Hours of operation were a problem for urban Internet cafe users and urban Nenasala users. The lack of content was the third most important barrier that users of public libraries, urban specialized information centres had to contend with while urban Internet cafe users found the cost prohibitive.

3.4.2 Salient initiatives to help meet critical information needs by underserved communities

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

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

3.4.2.1 Past initiatives:

The need for an institution with a wider mandate to plan and co-ordinate library services in the country resulted in the establishment of the National Library and Documentation Services Board in 1998 succeeding the Sri Lanka National Library Services Board. Two other developments of significance were the setting up of provincial library services boards to develop library services within the province.

A major initiative, the eSri Lanka programme, was launched in 2004 to provide information services to underserved communities through the use of ICT. This programme envisages the expansion of infrastructure facilities, re-engineering government processes to change the way government works and to allow for seamless connection, developing human capacity and to "promote the innovative use of ICT to meet the social and economic needs of the most vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka; to develop approaches to scale up successful applications; and to empower civil society with affordable access to information, communication, and relevant local content" (ICTA). Sectoral initiatives to introduce ICTs are also seen in agriculture, education, science and technology.

The reforms in the telecom sector leading to greater investment and the roll out of infrastructure facilities were important in meeting the information needs of underserved and vulnerable groups of people.

3.4.2.2 Ongoing initiatives:

There are no specific new proposals, plans or projects to meet the information needs of underserved communities. The above initiatives will be continued and expanded.

3.4.2.3 Historical trends and opportunities to serve information needs

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

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

Investment in the telecom sector by the government as well as the private sector is expected to continue. Some pipeline developments that would impact on public access to information are as follows:

- Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) is in the process of evolving its telecommunication network to a Next Generation Network (NGN) on IP-MPLS technology using optical fibre backbone enabling it to provide multiple services on one network. Currently SLT has been allocated test frequencies for its trial wireless network, with pilot base stations in several locations.
- Sri Lanka Telecom that is currently using ADSL technology for its broadband services is planning to access the wireless broadband frequency of another provider to provide wireless broadband applications such as IP-TV, Video on Demand, Educational Services etc. through its island-wide infrastructure. The WiMAX network would be part of its overall strategy to connect the entire island with NGN.
- Sri Lanka Telecom's high speed fibre backbone, which is now in place in the Central and Southern areas is being expanded to the Northern, Eastern and Uva regions. It uses ADSL and ADSL2/2+ connections ranging from 512Kbps to 24Mbps for last mile connectivity.
- The Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka is offering a total spectrum of 380MHz in the 5.4GHz and 5.7 GHz bands on a shared basis to licensed ISPs to establish their own links for last mile Internet access using wireless technology. (http://www.trc.gov.lk/pdf/project_proposal.pdf). It is noteworthy that of the seven criteria under which the proposals are to be evaluated the highest points have been allocated to the

rural rollout plan.

- Non voice telephony services using cable distributions networks and satellite communication networks are to be provided. (http://www.trc.gov.lk/pdf/project_proposal.pdf
- Sri Lanka Telecom established a wholly owned subsidiary company in Hong Kong to connect Asia with the rest of the world through Sri Lanka. Internet Protocol transit, Internet Protocol Virtual Private Network and international voice traffic transit services are some of the key services provided to global telecom operators and corporations in Hong Kong through this venture.
- The national fibre backbone of Dialog Telekom, the largest mobile service provider, is being supplemented by their WiMAX technology option for broadband. According to Dialog 80% of the country has been covered.
- The Telecom Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka is engaging the industry to form a public-private partnership including the Licensed Internet Service Providers Association for building a national backbone network (TRCSL 2008b).
- Nenasala centres are to be linked with a 128Kbps link.
- The apex agency for ICT development, the Information and Communication Technology Agency is currently working with the National Administration Reforms Committee to set up a framework to reform government processes under the eSri Lanka programme to introduce ICT, impart basic awareness to around 10,000 government employees and train another 4,000, set up local and intra networks, appoint Chief Innovation Officers to be in charge of the process in each government agency and provide a "single window" for government services to citizens.
- A complementary project that has been initiated is the Lanka Government Network connecting all government ministries, departments, statutory boards, provincial councils and divisional secretariats. While 325 agencies have been connected in Phase 1 another 150 are to be connected in Phase 2. On completion the government will be connected in one network with citizens having easy access to transactional level services.
- A Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) community that includes Lanka Linux User

Group <www.lug.lk> and the Open Source R&D Non-Profit Lanka Software Foundation <www.opensource.lk> as partners has emerged to advocate the use of FOSS under the umbrella community FOSS.lk.

- The One Laptop per Child project is to be introduced in all the provinces by the OLPC Lanka Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of Education and several local and foreign financial, technological and academic institutions (Sirimanne 2008). This initiative is expected to benefit two million children.
- Research and development activities are moving ahead, for example developing technologies for disaster alerts and disaster management, local language technologies, distributed computing, wireless and ad hoc sensor networks, e-learning, geographical information systems, computer visualization among others.
- In a region that has a great variety of languages, in Sri Lanka this number is limited to two- Sinhala and Tamil both of which have official status. Sinhala is spoken only in Sri Lanka while Tamil language has the advantage of it being used in South India and in several parts of the world. Tamil users are able to access the already available content in Tamil. A significant development has been the progress made in the Sinhala localization programme. Sinhala UNICODE is fully functional now making local language access possible. Optical character recognition system for Sinhala, text to speech system, Sinhala lexicon, Sinhala/Tamil font encoding conversion utility are some of the other features that have been completed or are nearing completion.
- The Google country search interface allows the searching of local language websites encoded in UNICODE, while an older but useful search service <www.sinhalasearch.com> is able to decode most proprietary Sinhala encodings on-the-fly and render search results (and the relevant page if needed) in UNICODE.
- Sinhala UNICODE Communities are promoting the use of UNICODE for Sinhala.
- Firefox 3 has Sinhala and Tamil built into it.
- The Language Technology Research Laboratory at the University of Colombo School of Computing has a wide range of Sinhala text. Projects aimed at either generating new content

or translating existing English content such as the Wikipedia are ongoing. Localizing of software applications is also being UCSC is available as a plug-in to Firefox. This has the twin objectives of making English web content understandable while at the same time improving the English language skills of the user.

- A large number of government and statutory bodies, financial institutions, private sector establishments, non governmental organizations and individuals have a web presence. Subject specific information is also available. Blogs have also started to increase in number and bilingual sites that are non political and are aimed at youth and casual users are continuing to grow.
- The spread of mobile technology has been one of the most dramatic developments in the last few years with mobile telephone owners outstripping fixed line phone owners. Competition among service providers will further drive down the price. The development of m-applications has started to expand. However the government has announced a charge on the monthly bill while it is mulling the possibility of introducing laws as a security measure for the adoption of new procedures when purchasing mobile phones and SMS cards. One mobile phone operator has already come up with a solution while public interest litigation has been filed against the regulations that will prevent the use**r** carrying mobile phones that belong to another.

Public Libraries

- A significant development in the public library arena has been the setting up of provincial library services boards. The Central Province has led the way with the establishment of the Central Provincial Library Services Board to develop and coordinate the activities of libraries within the province. This model has been followed by the Uva Province while it is reported that the other provinces are to follow suit. An impact of the operational Central Provincial Library Services Board is the greater political will seen in other provincial councils such as the North Central Provincial Council, and North Western Provincial Council that have instituted plans for library development. It is expected that the other provincial councils too would institute their own provincial boards. While a more systematic library development is anticipated due to these efforts, assured and increased budgetary allocations for libraries

should be made available as had been done already in the Central Province.

- The Sri Lanka Library Association has initiated the formulation of a Manifesto for Public Library Services in the country.
- The National Library and Documentation Services Board has commenced a programme to raise awareness on libraries and library services among the Ministers of Local Government of the Provincial Councils, chairpersons of local authorities and the public. The Sri Lanka Library Association's planned series of capacity building programmes in library advocacy and policy development to be implemented in 2009 will complement the Board initiative.

***Source**: Sri Lanka Library Association, ICTA, Central Bank of Sri Lanka*

3.4.2.4 Planned initiatives:

The development of open source software and content will be pursued by ICTA while the ICT industry has identified open source development as a growth sector. ICTA has formulated an action plan to increase FOSS awareness, encouraging FOSS usage and FOSS education. Sri Lanka is a major player in global software R & D activities and such activities will continue.

The University of Moratuwa is engaged in developing technologies for communications and disaster warning.

3.5 Economic, Policy, and Regulatory Environment

3.5.1 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

Trends:

salient trends for the next few years

The ten year plan targets a growth rate of over 8% in the medium term with broad based growth in all the economic sectors with emphasis on rural development. The telecom sector was a key driver of the services sector and a 35% growth is forecast for the ICT sector driven by services such as business process outsourcing, telemarketing, call centres, data processing and 3G services. The implementation of planned infrastructure and development projects, increased private sector investment and foreign direct investment particularly in exploring petroleum resources are expected to generate major economic benefits. The budget deficit is forecast to reach 6.4% of the GDP in 2012 although slippages are anticipated due to the failure to reach revenue collection targets. Further economic liberalization is also envisaged. Supply side improvements especially with higher food production will bring down the current very high levels of inflation to a single digit. However the current account deficit will continue with high petroleum prices. Progress will depend on an early end to the military confrontations, which are expected to continue into 2009.

***Source**: The Economist http://www.economist.com/COUNTRIES/SriLanka/profile.cfm?folder=Profile-Economic%20Data*

3.5.2 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.

The introduction of the Sri Lanka Press Council Law of 1973 enacted two years after the first youth insurrection in the south was the first attempt by the government to control the media. The law provides for the Council to inquire into complaints against the press but the inability to publish specific types of information without approval from relevant government officials is tantamount to prior censorship (Udugama, 1986 quoted in Wattegama, 2004). There are other laws that restrict the publication of certain types of information that relate to decency, morality, religious and ethnic harmony.

The Establishments Code restricts government officers from providing information to the public without

prior permission. The inability to obtain information about government transactions becomes an issue especially in the current context of corruption and the lack of good governance. The Law Commission in its Report on Freedom of Information in 1996 pointed out, ‘'the current administrative policy appears to be that all information in the possession of the government is secret unless there is good reason to allow public access (Hattotuwa, 2002) and continues “In light of a public administration predicated on a culture on non-disclosure, the very nature and quality of public discussion is significantly impoverished without the nourishment of information from public authorities.” A recent directive to all government agencies requires them to provide access to all information that is required to obtain a service from an institution, but “being open and provision (sic) of complete information to citizens with accuracy and facts” (Public Administration Circular 05/2008 dated 6th February 2008) does not spell out the type of information that could be given.

Independent broadcast media (radio and television) exist alongside government controlled media. The latter requires licenses from the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation respectively. No guidelines have been laid down for the issue of licenses, which is at the discretion of the Minister in charge of the subject. There have been instances where licenses of private broadcasting stations have been cancelled. Community radios are permitted to operate but they too are under the purview of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. However the existing community radios have a great deal of autonomy. Spectrum management is by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka.

Wireless fidelity, which is a cost effective technology for last mile connectivity can be used with a license from the relevant authority. However at present 2.4Ghz backbones are being operated in limited areas. Four operators have obtained licenses. There is considerable debate to make it legal for public use but it has remained in the grey area with the interpretation that it is legal as long as it remained within a radius of 100 meters.

TRC has issued licenses to operate CDMA telephones and the licensees have been given the mandate to link rural areas. CDMA is now oversubscribed and there is congestion due to limited bandwidth. Consequently the required quality for data transmission may not be available.

Source: *Literature review*

3.5.3 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.

Although a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Sri Lanka has close economic ties with members of ASEAN as well as other countries. The South Asia Free Trade Area came into force in January 2006 and a trade liberalization programme is scheduled for completion in 2016 although progress has been slow and there is doubt whether smaller nations such as Sri Lanka would actually benefit from the arrangement. Trade and investments have been made in Sri Lanka by both South Asian and ASEAN countries especially in the telecommunications sector, which has helped boost telecom services in the country. Three important projects are the optical fibre cable that was inaugurated between India and Sri Lanka, between Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the Sea-Me-We4 (South –East Asia-Middle East-West Europe-4) enabling Sri Lanka to secure fast telecommunication connectivity at cheaper rates with India and other South Asian countries and enhancing the quality of bandwidth in the country.

International

UNESCO is one of the agencies that take a broad view of information and communication issues. Since its experience with the NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) it has been careful not to antagonize corporate and western interests. This according to Siochru (2007) is regrettable since some issues such as media concentration in the Northern corporations is of even greater importance today. UNESCO has promoted such issues as universal access to information and quality education, and cultural diversity and freedom of expression in the WSIS process. UNESCO's stance and activities have an impact on countries such as Sri Lanka.

Of the many policies and regulations that impact on the access to information Internet governance is considered crucial to building a people–centred, inclusive and development oriented Information Society. However, the present structure with a market orientation does not allow it to be viewed as a 'public good' thus excluding from the information society those who cannot pay. Singh and Gurumurthy point out the need to factor in development priorities into the global governance structure of the Internet for an inclusive information society.

An issue that has gained relevance is that of Internationalized Domain Names. The Internet is not fully available in languages other than English (Roman script) making it alien for large numbers of people in the country and the ICAAN governed DNS has proven to be incapable to effectively providing navigation in other scripts and languages. "So far ICANN's policies indirectly favour a small number of mostly US-based registry businesses and large, globally acting registrars, none of which are located in developing countries" (Holman, 2007). Butt, Sreenivasan, and Singhe (2007) state that in response ICANN is focusing on this issue.

IP is an issue to countries in the Asian region and they will have to address copyright and its impact on access to knowledge and technology, exceptions and limitations within TRIPS, non-proprietary models, stronger enforcement of IP, the impact of provisions in bilateral agreements and participation in regional fora. The need to adopt a public interest approach to IP has been argued for as treating IP "merely as a matter of private property or private interest rights can be seriously detrimental to access to knowledge, culture and technology" (Cardoza and Liang, 2007).

Sri Lanka enacted a new Code of Intellectual Property to meet the minimum requirements placed by the TRIPS convention and complying with Article 10 (1) of the Trips Agreement requiring countries to provide adequate protection to intellectual property rights in computer programmes. Computers and computer programmes have been defined in accordance with the Model Provisions for the protection of computer software prepared by WIPO. A computer crimes law has also been enacted.

Trends:

Legal reforms, greater liberalization, local content development will continue.

Source: *Literature review*

3.6 Collaboration Practices and Opportunities Across Venues

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

i. Include reference to existing as well as potential collaboration opportunities.
ii. If appropriate, indicate any specifics that apply to Digital ICT services alone.

There are both formal and informal networks among public access venues. Strong formal networks are found among libraries, especially university and special libraries. There are subject based networks in the fields of science and technology, agriculture (AGRINET), health (HELLIS), education, culture and social sciences (SLISTINET). The Sri Lanka Library Association coordinates professional associations of different categories of librarians including public librarians. Public libraries however are not in a formal island wide network although networking arrangements exist within provinces. Many public libraries however do maintain links especially with government agencies to meet the information needs of their readers.

Other venues such as Nenasala and Vidatha centres belong to their specific groups but collaboration among different types of venues is limited. Most of the Nenasala centres have joined telecentre.org. There is an example or two of private public partnerships being developed to provide digital ICT services. But once again resource sharing is limited.

3.7 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.

The government focus has been on developing tele centres but individuals and communities of users have followed their own needs and are seen increasingly at private venues. Kiosks have been set up in fast food outlets, shopping malls and hotel lobbies. These facilities are not found outside Colombo except perhaps in a few major towns and areas that tourists frequent. While males are seen frequenting such venues it is not often that girls and women are seen using such public spaces. Such 'hanging out' will be even more unacceptable in rural locations.

3.8 Legitimate Uses

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

how local definitions and restrictions based on what is "legitimate" or "non-trivial" information or communication practices offer new opportunities or barriers to public access information venues in the country.

The survey showed that the number of users of commercial venues outstripped the publicly funded venues that have been set up to overcome digital exclusion and for developmental purposes, and that their users, more than the users of the other venues engaged in 'trivial' informational activities. In both urban and rural commercial venues more users engaged in social networking than in looking for information on business or commerce. Although information on education was sought very few looked for information of a development nature. They looked for entertainment and information of a personal nature in both urban and non urban venues. The services are both supply and demand driven and it appeared that the commercial venues with their entrepreneurial spirit were willing to take risks to make the underserved more technology savvy than ICT4D venues.

For instance the publicly funded venues did not allow or discouraged users to play games or chat but some Internet cafes had actually made special provision for users to do so. At an Internet café in the Central Province the researchers saw school boys, not yet in their teens, in their school uniform leaving the venue after playing games. "*Do you allow them to play games? Where do they get the money?"* we asked the operator. *"Of course I do. In fact I have a separate area for them. I don't know from where they get the money but they pay and I allow them to play games even for 15 minutes. Maybe they use the bus fare that their parents give and walk back home. Aren't games the best way to get children especially hooked on the computer?"* she asked us.

As PC penetration is low these could be ideal venues to initiate the underserved to the technology. The non connectivity based services that these venues provide like digital photography, laminating, videography of special events all make the user comfortable with technology and bring them closer to it. In the Polonnaruwa district, an EasySeva centre run by a husband and wife combination is having a roaring business while the publicly a funded venue in the vicinity concentrates on providing computer training.

The growth in the number of mobile phone users also point to the social role of technology. The

mobile phone growth is driven not by a development need but by a social need. For example with people constantly on the move within national borders as well as outside the mobile phone has become a cheap device to keep in touch with family members who more likely than not are providing income support to those back home.

The government could provide incentives for this type of ICT entrepreneurs to complement its ICT4D initiatives.

3.9 Shifting Media Landscape

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

3.9.1 Mobile phones

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

The mobile network of the country has been in the forefront of the telecommunications boom having 74% of the market share resulting primarily from the removal or lowering of barriers to market entry and subsequent competition. The mobile phone subscribers increased 61% year to year reaching 8.0 mn subscribers as at 31st December 2007 with 38 mobile phones for every 100 inhabitants. Moonesinghe (2006) found that 15% of households in their sample had multiple phones with 13% having more than two phones. A study by Gunasinghe, Vitanage and Nandasiri (2006) in a district in the Southern Province found that 69% of mobile phone users have two to five family members and 29% have more than five members pointing to the fact that the actual users may exceed the number of registered subscribers.

The cellular phone has become an almost ubiquitous device with people from all strata owning one. Elimination of waiting time for a telephone connection, affordability, high pressure advertising, the offering of various ‘packages’, the use of local languages for text messaging, the availability of pre

paid phone cards as well as the possibility of participating in national events such as live television programmes have drawn consumers towards the mobile phone. It has also become a status symbol. While mobile phones have been accepted across socio-economic groups the majority is not aware of their functionalities (Gunasinghe et al. 2006). However mobile phones that have more advanced features are out of reach of many, thus creating another divide.

Nevertheless mobile phones are used because they are convenient, because they provide privacy and are cheaper. The study referred to above (Moonesinghe 2006) found that they are used mainly in emergency situations, for communication with family and friends and for networking. Business and income generation were low on the list. Operators are introducing more and more functionalities and value added services such as SMS (over 5 million a day) data and Internet connectivity GPRS/EG, IVR based services, SMS based services (news alerts, information services), live broadcasts – 3G, and e-chanelling of medical specialists, but some of these services carry an additional charge. Although the vast majority of mobile phone users use it for communication purposes there is immense potential in this area as demonstrated by the Govi Gnana Kendra that enabled farmers, traders, buyers and sellers of agricultural produce to view live transaction prices at various trade stalls in their own markets as well as prices in other areas of the country thus bypassing the intermediary trader.

The public access venues that had been most affected by the widespread use of mobile phone were the Nenasala centres and the Internet cafes that saw their revenue from telephone calls dwindle in some cases by as much as 60%.

GPS though known in Sri Lanka is not used extensively mainly because of the shortage of trained personnel <http://www.pgis.lk/News-images/gis11.htm>. Very recently a mobile navigation system was launched incorporating a digital street directory of Colombo which includes Class A, B, C and D roads in the Colombo Municipal Council area and suburbs. Dialog SatNav also covers Class A and B roads across Sri Lanka. The Dialog SatNav device enables users to navigate Sri Lanka's road network using satellite positioning. The digital maps support a range of advanced features such as the identification of "places of interest" and "optimum routes". Dialog SatNav supports an advanced user interface complete with audio and visual prompts which serve to guide the user to a predefined

destination. Dialog SatNav also enables customers to view maps in 2D or 3D format and to pre-configure frequently used routes.

<http://www.dialog.lk/en/corporate/press/releases/pressRelease.jsp?id=185>

3.9.2 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).

None of the survey respondents said that they use any of the web 2.0 tools. However this is not surprising as the use of web 2.0 features in Sri Lanka is still in an incipient stage. Some of the Sri Lankan blog sites are ICT for Peacebuilding (ICT4Peace), Janapathi Blog, Kottu, Elakiri. There are a few local social networking sites one of which has been started with a grant from ICT. Web 2.0 tools have been used to set up citizen journalism initiatives– Groundviews <www.groundsview.org> and its Sinhala and Tamil blog site, Vikalpa <www.vikalpa.org>. The latter has also launched the citizen journalism YouTube channel, the Vikalpa YouTube Video Channel using a Nokia N93i phone to capture content. Sites that promote local language blogging are Sinhala Bloggers Union <www.sinhalabloggers.com> and the Sinhala Blog Syndicate <www.sinhalablogs.com> and <http://kataragama.blogspot.com/ <http://www.vikalpa.org> <http://alaiyosai.blogspot.com/> in Tamil. Another initiative, the Voices of Reconciliation Internet Radio website has been designed for radio productions by civil society for civil society.

3.9.3 Combination of different media

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

There have been some initiatives in providing information using a combination of technologies. The most well known of these is the Kothmale Community Radio that combined radio broadcasting with Internet browsing and the eTUKTUK, the mobile tele- centre and radio broadcasting service that reaches geographically and socially isolated localities in the Kothmale region of the central hill

country.

Community radio has been in existence for a couple of decades, for example the Mahaweli Community Radio and the more recent Uva Community Radio. However, although the programmers have a great deal of autonomy they are still not truly community owned as they function under a state agency. Alternative initiatives are the Matara Media House that broadcasts terrrestrially using the Uva Radio, to explore ways through which digital media and mobile devices such as the N-series Nokia phones with their built in mobile blogging, multimedia, wireless and video editing features can be used to strengthen the voice of citizens in support of democratic governance, human rights and peace. (VOR Radio <http://radio.voicesofpeace.lk/>).

Folk art forms such as kolam (masked folk drama) have been and are very popular especially in rural areas and have been used throughout history not only for entertainment but also as forms of protest and resistance. Street drama groups are of more recent origin. They usually perform in streets or other open spaces and use the most basic of costumes and props. Their skits focus on a wide range of social problems such as drug abuse, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, abuse, rights of women and children and they attempt to create awareness while entertaining the crowd. There is always a message in street drama. These specially trained troupes are able to adapt the dialogue to suit the audiences that are present.

3.10 Health Information Needs

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

3.10.1 Sources of health information

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

42.1 clinic/hospital	25.4 friend	33.5 health worker	1.9 public access venue (library, community center, etc)
1.5 Community resource	2.7 Internet at private location	2.9 Internet at public location	3.8 Other

Comments: The public health service is well developed in the country and the majority of the population avail themselves of its services. Pre and post natal care, child immunization, nutrition and general well being is looked after by the network of hospitals that extend to even remote areas. The people, especially underserved communities use state health facilities that include indigenous medical services. Most of health related information and advice is provided by the hospitals and clinics as well as by a special cadre of field based Family Health Worker responsible for the primary health care needs of communities, ante natal and post natal assistance, child immunization. Special facilities have been set up in the estate sector to cater to the entire life cycle health problems of the workers and their dependents. This is reflected in the user responses of 39.3% for the former and 27.8% for the latter making the formal health sector a source of information to a total of 67.1% respondents. In addition to these formal sources people obtain information from informal sources such as friends or relatives. As can be seen from the data, very few use other sources to obtain health related information. Of those that did, the majority (37.1%) obtained information from the newspapers, 30.6% from radio and television.

3.10.2 Types of health information

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

31.5	33.9	6.3	18.8	2.4
disease prevention	how to locate healthcare	child health information	remedies/drugs	Other

Comments: The respondents had problems in responding to this question. The 33.9% of respondents who said that they have difficulty in locating health care is due to the lack of information on who should be consulted for different types of health problems. Information on the prevention of diseases is disseminated by using the media and in instances of out break of diseases the health care authorities mount special campaigns to raise awareness. While information on child health is provided by the health facility citizens do have difficulty with regard to prescription drugs.

4 Venue-Specific Assessments

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

4.1 Venue 1: Public Libraries

4.1.1 Overall venue assessment

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

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

Public libraries constitute the most extensive network of public access information venues in the country. They are familiar, trusted institutions in both urban and non urban locations, politically neutral in the services that they provide, and extending their services to meet the needs of those who are economically and socially marginalized. The libraries are seen to present themselves differently in different localities – as a place for life long learning, a cultural centre, a community facility, a source of information, a social space but above all, a facility for study. They strive to integrate themselves into the community through activities that are traditional to the area that they serve, organizing national, cultural, and religious festivals as well as by having new and innovative programmes.

All the libraries provide traditional library services - lending and reference services and have facilities for children with a range of activities and events to encourage reading. Some libraries provide rudimentary information services but by and large the majority is still entrenched in providing traditional services and is not information oriented.

The major users of library services are students whose numbers have continued to increase steadily with the emphasis placed on education and skill development required for upward economic and social mobility. Lack of user statistics in most libraries makes it difficult to ascertain the number of library users island wide. However in the Central Province (for which statistics were available), about a third of the total provincial population are registered members or casual users of the 178 libraries in the

province. Variations however are wide even within the Provinces – in the more developed Kandy district users are about 60% of the population but in the Matale district this percentage is approximately 10% while in the hilly Nuwara Eliya district that has a concentration of estate workers, users are just 4% of the population. Still, as seen by the number of users that come to the public libraries daily they remain the most popular venue type as compared with technology equipped venues that have been established in recent years.

The libraries however have been slow to cater to emerging economic and social needs of communities, concentrating as they are on a particular segment of the population. They have not been able to keep pace with the rapid developments in technology and although several libraries had automated house keeping functions, information retrieval was manual and very few, if any of these libraries provide the public access to information using new ICT.

However it was found that librarians are deeply conscious of the need to use ICT. National level organizations, the library professional association and provincial library boards train librarians in using library software and conduct seminars and workshops focusing on the need for change to embrace new technology. Emphasis is placed on creating information awareness, information dissemination, marketing and publicizing library services among the community, and online publication of databases.

Many of the libraries operate under sub optimal conditions. Almost all local government authorities provide library services but it is not a mandatory function and is considered a welfare activity for which financial allocations and other resources are not provided on a regular and sustained basis. According to the survey respondents and focus group discussants making library services a legal requirement was a necessity if libraries are to be modernized. Yet there are more fundamental problems to be addressed if libraries are to move to a higher level of service provision. One is the administrative dichotomy that impacts adversely on staffing and politicization (See Appendix No. 9.4.3 - Structure of Local Government). The other is financial instability. Provincial Councils are dependent on grants and transfers from the central government for capital and current expenditure, and a major portion of the latter is expended on personal emoluments (Ministry of Finance and Planning 2008) while limitations on the self-generation of resources by local governments along with poor financial management by the latter (Amarakoon 2004) have adverse impacts on service provision including library services.

Therefore the development of public libraries will to a great extent depend on the interest of the political establishment and on the capacity of provincial and local governments to raise revenue, and to overcome administrative problems while the ability of the library committee and the librarian to exert pressure and influence the provincial and local administrations will be crucial in moving forward.

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)?

Public library services can be accessed by all citizens but a number of factors place limits on use. While the actual siting of the library is very often suitable, except in a few libraries buildings are poorly maintained thus making them unpleasant and inconvenient for users. Urban rural differences are seen in physical, material and human resources available to libraries.

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.

There is no discrimination in the provision of library services to citizens and they remain open to all population groups irrespective of age, gender, educational level and income. More than any other type of public access information venue the public libraries reach out to underserved communities but external factors such as transportation, security concerns especially in major cities, internal factors such as insufficient information in local languages, and user centred factors such as lack of awareness and interest and time constraints impact on access. Non urban users are particularly disadvantaged as most often rural branches libraries function mainly as reading rooms having mostly newspapers. Further those in charge are not trained and sufficiently motivated to meet the information needs of underserved communities.

The siting of the public library in the city, town or village centre provides for easy access to the majority of users. Branch libraries and reading rooms are located in the interior while other institutions such as temples are used as ‘outposts’ to provide services to those living in the interior. Specific groups, often isolated or disadvantaged or confined, and residents of inner cities, slums and shanties especially in

major cities have access to library resources through mobile services. However, physical features of the country present barriers to access as even mobile libraries find it difficult to reach some areas of the hill country.

According to the observations of researchers, the siting of all the urban public libraries was good, but of the non urban libraries the siting of three were found to be fair and five were found to be poor. They were located in proximity to public transport services, had road access and were conducive to reading. All the venues were fairly well signposted. The security of the venue especially for women and girls was rated good in 11, fair in ten and poor in one, as they inhibited use by women and girls (See Appendices: Site Observations 9.4.2). Except in a small number of large libraries no special facilities were available for the disabled.

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.

Public libraries were established and developed at a time when there was emphasis mainly on providing lending and reference services and content was organized in accordance with standard systems of classification using manual methods. The libraries aimed at fostering reading habits and supporting education and life long learning and were major public institutions that fulfilled this function. Now the public libraries are called upon to perform broader functions and engage in additional types of service delivery.

Public libraries unlike special libraries or even academic libraries serve a heterogeneous clientele whose needs vary widely. The changed economic, political and social landscape in the country demand services, which the public libraries are hard pressed to provide given the inadequate financial, human and other resources. The process of adaptation to incorporate services based on new media and responding to information needs of communities is extremely slow due to the constraints under which they function including lack of competent staff in many libraries.

In general the public library provides services to youth, mainly to students, and to the general public. The majority of students are from low-income, economically deprived families. Among other facilities,

the government has been providing free school textbooks, as an incentive to enrol children in school. But school libraries, where they exist are not well resourced[1]. As such the public library performs an essential function by providing users of this age group access to its lending and reference services. Provision of reading and study rooms helps especially those whose housing conditions are substandard. However, the study found that the library services to students were very much examination oriented thus diverting the limited resources away from other users to meeting the needs of this category of users. The availability of newspapers in all the public libraries in all three languages also helps low income communities who cannot afford to purchase them. The availability of government gazettes enables people to obtain information on government notices such as tenders, especially useful to those who are engaged in business activities, job vacancies in government service and examinations. Information on development projects that are being undertaken in the area can also be accessed in some of the libraries. However, resources available to meet the needs of those who have had no formal schooling are limited.

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.

Fees are charged by the public library only for checking out material and these too are nominal. There are substantial numbers of non members who use the library for purposes other than borrowing. The membership fee of Rs. 50-500 (US$ 0.50-5.00) per annum is affordable. Thus it is possible for individuals of low income groups to use their services. ICT services, where available, are either provided free of charge as in the USIS sponsored ICT unit at the Kandy Municipal Council Library or lower than that charged in other venues such as Internet cafes and place no excessive burden on users. The few libraries in which a Nenasala centre had been set up provide access to ICT services at below market rates.

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)

[1] There is provision in the Education Sector Development Framework Programme of the Ministry of Education (supported by the World Bank) for the improvement of school libraries under 'quality inputs' in Theme 2 'Quality of Education'.

If there are fees: What do these fees buy?

To use lending library facilities. (Reference and reading services are free of charge).

Municipal Council Libraries- Rs. 100-500 and a renewal fee of Rs. 30 (Date of estimate 31st May 2008)

Urban Council and Pradeshiya Sabha Libraries – Rs. 50 and a renewal fee of Rs. 30 and Rs. 15 respectively (Date of estimate 31st May 2008)

Indicate amount in local currency

Equivalent in US Dollars: USD 1.5; $0.5 and USD 0.3

Date of estimate 30th June 2008

and local currency name Sri Lanka Rupee

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:

Differences in services are primarily due to the organization of the public library system in the country, which follows the areas of authority of local government institutions within the sub national administration, and the demand for services. The services that should be made available by a public library are gazetted by the relevant Provincial Council in accordance with the By-Laws Act No. 06 of 1952. Accordingly public libraries are maintained for the "provision of resources and services in various media**,** to promote educational and personal development and to fulfill creative and creational requirements of persons and social groups living within the area of authority in which it functions …". Identical services are listed for all types of public libraries.

However, while services have been defined and minimum standards set, there are wide variations in services even within the same type of library and within a province. Resource allocation that is provided by the provincial administration and the revenue earning capacity of the local authority are two determinants of the level of services, while others that affect service quality are the capacity of staff, availability of equipment and technology, suitability of buildings, physical location and user interest. Some librarians who were interviewed complained of step-motherly treatment for the

library. The Provincial Councils are dependent on funds allocated by the central government and the tendency has been for the councils**,** especially urban and pradeshiya sabha (semi-urban and rural) councils to use that money for services in the province that have been mandated, are more politically visible, and are considered more critical for community life. An allocation is also made from the revenue earned by the councils but the capacity to raise revenue in town and village areas is much lower than in urban areas. At the same time the study found that sometimes even the dues (for example fines) that should accrue to the local government authority were appropriated by the Provincial Council thus depriving them of much needed funds. Lack of financial commitment is one of the major reasons for differences in service. (*Anecdotal examples of visibility: The cleaning and replacement of sewage and underground pipes that had been laid more than 100 years ago required a substantial amount of funds from the municipality. The minister in charge when informed about this had quipped, "These are underground. Where is the visibility?"- A consultant who had interviewed a local government politician. "The contribution of a library to the nurturing of the intellectual capacity of an individual cannot be quantified. Politicians in local governments are not highly educated and they do not understand the importance of a library. The library is just a place for them to provide employment to supporters." – Chamila, a Community Development Officer, from the Polonnaruwa District.*

4.1.2.5

4.1.2.6 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.

The location of public libraries follows the boundaries of local government authorities and administrative districts. By province the highest number of libraries is found in the Western Province followed by the Central Province. The two provinces that have the lowest number of public libraries are the North Central Province and Uva Province mirroring the regional disparities that exist in the country. The majority of the libraries, 697, are in rural areas. The provincial and the district distribution is given below (excludes branch libraries).

Provincial and District Distribution of Public Libraries

District	Number – Province	% of Total	Number – District	% of Total
Western Province				
Colombo	183	18.10	57	5.64
Gampaha			75	7.42
Kalutara			51	5.04
Central Province				
Kandy	166	16.42	89	8.80
Matale			39	3.86
Nuwara Eliya			38	3.76
Southern Province				
Galle	131	12.96	65	6.43
Matara			35	3.46
Hambantota			31	3.07
Northern Province				
Jaffna**	095	9.39	51	5.04
Mannar*			13	1.29
Vavuniya*			13	1.29
Mullaitivu*			10	0.99
Kilinochchi*			08	0.79
Eastern Province				
Ampara**	094	9.30	36	3.56
Trincomalee**			26	2.57
Batticaloa**			32	3.17
North Western Province				
Kurunegala	159	15.73	107	10.58
Puttalam			52	5.14
North Central Province				
Anuradhapura	053	5.24	32	3.17
Polonnaruwa			21	2.08
Uva Province				
Badulla	054	5.34	36	3.56
Moneragala			18	1.78
Sabaragamuwa Province				
Ratnapura	076	7.52	46	4.55
Kegalle			30	2.97
Total	**1011**	**100**	**1011**	**100**

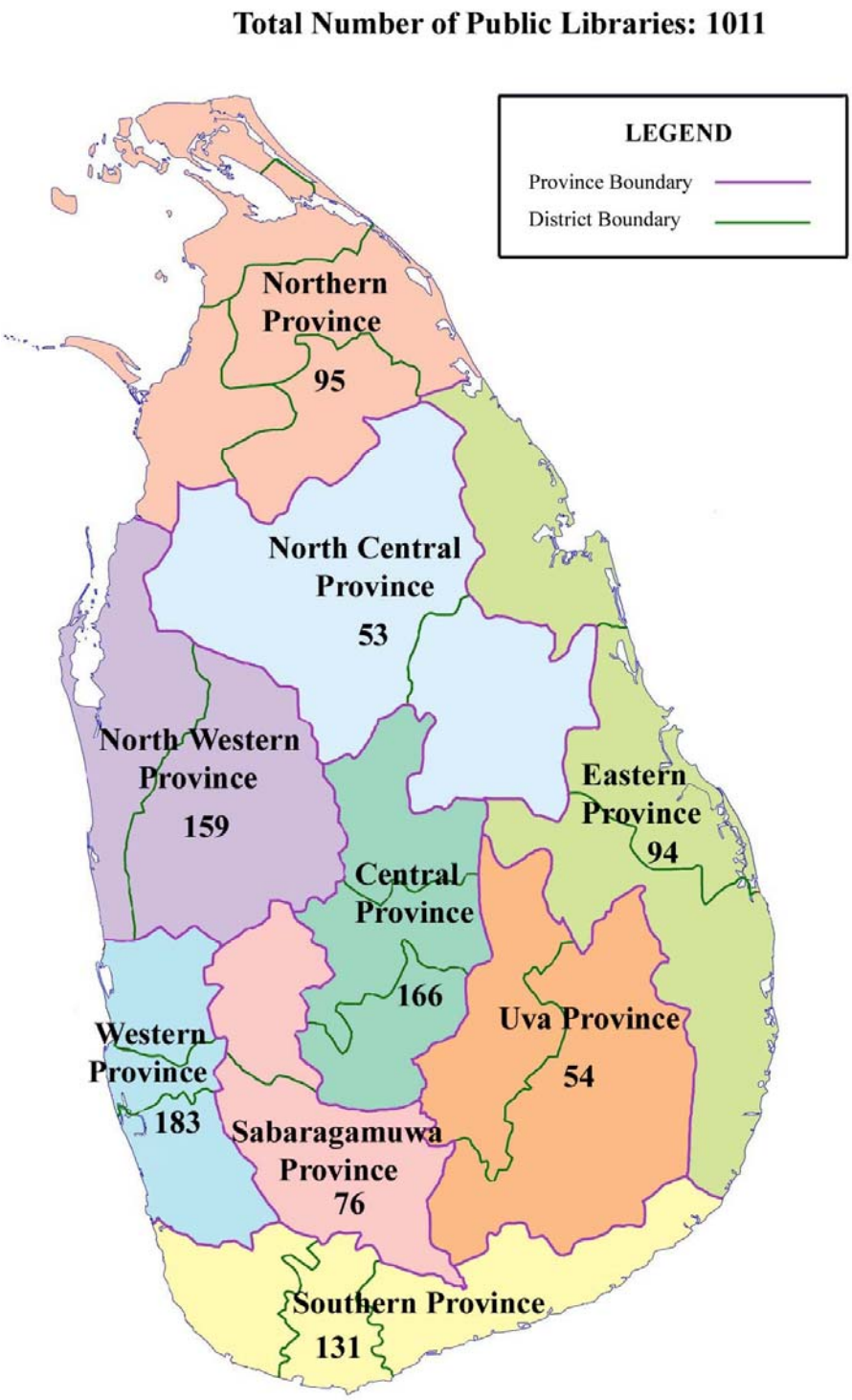
*Conflict affected - Large parts of these districts have been the within the influence of the armed terrorist group LTTE and no development work had been possible

** Conflict affected districts that are now in the mainstream after government took control..

4.1.2.7

4.1.2.7.1 Map

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



Description of map: Map of Sri Lanka showing the province and district boundaries and number of Public Libraries in each province.

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, social appropriation of technology)?

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.

The number of staff that is recruited to each library is based on the minimum standards that have been set by the National Library and Documentation Services Board. However, some of the larger libraries have more than the recommended quota of staff while others do not even have the minimum. For example the Ratnapura Public Library, maintained by the Ratnapura Municipal Council and serving about 800-900 users a day has 12 on the staff while the Kuruwita Public Library that functions under the Pradeshiya Sabha (village council) in the same district that has about 150 users a day has only one member of staff - the librarian. The Colombo Public Library has over one hundred professional librarians.

At the same time it was found that a large number of vacancies that had existed for several years had not been filled due to various reasons. For example, in the 42 libraries in the Uva Province there are only 12 graded librarians; in the Southern Province there were 56 vacancies for librarians and 80 vacancies for assistant librarians. Other libraries were in charge of 'caretakers', who had been recruited into the minor staff grade and had only a basic education. A Community Development Officer attached to each administrative district has supervisory functions over libraries. The complaint of the respondents was that these recruits, who are graduates, do not have any knowledge of library management and services and that they tend to be concerned more with compliance with various rules and regulations than with service to users.

From the focus group discussions it emerged that there is a dearth of Tamil speaking librarians and that this was an obstacle to the provision of services in predominantly Tamil speaking areas.

The numbers of librarians and other staff recommended by the National Library and Documentation Services Board for different types of libraries are given below:

Supra Grade Libraries – Chief Librarian (supra grade), 2 Librarians in Grade 1, 6 Librarians in Grade 2, 14 librarians in Grade 3, 6 book binders, 6 Library Assistants, 5 Minor Grade staff and 2 Security Personnel.

Grade 1 Libraries– Chief Librarian in Grade 1, 3 Librarians in Grade 2, 6 librarians in Grade 3, 4 book binders, 4 Library Assistants, 5 Minor Grade staff and 2 Security Personnel.

Grade 2 Libraries –Librarian in Grade 2, 5 Librarians in Grade 3, 2 Library Assistants, 2 Minor Grade staff and 2 Security Personnel.

Grade 3 Libraries –Librarian in Grade 3, 2 Library Assistants, 1 Minor Grade staff.

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.

Library qualifications could be obtained from the Sri Lanka Library Association that conducts professional training courses. Those who have completed the professional examinations could become Associates and Fellows according to defined criteria. The Association also conducts a Diploma course in Library and Information Science. Undergraduate courses in library science and graduate courses leading to a Masters degree are offered by the university system[2]. The National Library and Documentation Services Board, the Sri Lanka Library Association, the British Council Library, and the Universities offer courses in library automation. In addition, seminars and workshops are conducted to increase the digital awareness of librarians. The Sri Lanka Library Association has been training librarians in the use of the UNESCO distributed WINISIS programme for library automation, and assisting libraries with the computerization of their holdings.

Continuing education programmes are conducted by the National Library and Documentation Services Board, the National Science Foundation, the Sri Lanka Library Association and other professional bodies, and universities. Provincial Councils also conduct workshops on 'non professional' aspects

[2] A course in Information Science/library services is offered in selected National Colleges of Education to train teachers who will be in charge also of school libraries.

such as public relations, creating awareness among readers, and management.

According to the Chairperson of the National Library and Documentation Services Board, the public library system has the largest number of qualified librarians. But officials of the Provincial Councils that were interviewed were critical of the fact that entry qualifications are not sufficiently high to be able to cater to the needs of the educated clientele that come to the library. This was especially true of those who had been recruited 15 years ago without the required educational qualifications. Although these recruits had been given a basic orientation they cannot fit into the post of a librarian and consequently the libraries continue to operate as a mere collection of print material. Attempts made to change the scheme of recruitment have not met with success.

The findings of the study confirmed the views of these officials. Of the librarians interviewed only 12% had a professional qualification. Others were either part qualified or had followed short training courses in library science or had no qualification at all (8%). Further general education levels were also low. 7.7% of rural librarians had completed only primary school. Only 25% of urban and 7.7% of rural librarian had a university qualification. There were 8.3% librarians in charge of urban libraries and 23.1% in charge of rural libraries that had some secondary school education, while the majority-66.7% of urban and 61.56% of rural librarians had completed secondary school education. The majority of branch libraries that are located in remote areas do not have qualified librarians. The result is substandard services.

The focus group discussants were also critical of the lack of professionalism among staff and their lack of service orientation. They attributed lethargy and disinterest to unsatisfactory service conditions. Observations by researchers rated the attitudes of 16 librarians as good, nine as fair, and three as poor. The librarians too commented on the lack of competent staff, political interference in appointments, and the need for continuing education.

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.	Lending and reference-books, journals, newspapers, reference material	Basic services offered by all libraries. The number, subject coverage, quality, currency vary depending on the type of library, that is whether they are municipal, urban or rural libraries. Material is available in Sinhala, Tamil and English.
2.	Information and Documentation	
3.	Maintaining special and local collections, local history, rare books	
4.	Children's section	Material for children, special programmes such as story telling, competitions
5.	Audio visual material	Audio cassettes, posters. Some libraries have CDs and DVDs but no equipment
6.	Reading and study facilities	This service is very useful to students from low income families whose housing conditions and the living environment are not conducive for study.
7.	Auditorium, lecture halls	An income source for the library
8.	Photocopying facilities	These facilities are available mostly in municipal libraries
9.	Community information services, mobile libraries, branch libraries	This is one of the most useful services for the underserved. Branch libraries are opened in the interior while mobile libraries attempt to reach special groups such as the disabled, prison inmates, school children in inner cities.
10.	Holding exhibitions, conducting lectures, screening films, book launches	These events are aimed at integrating the library with the community so that it becomes a centre for acquiring and sharing knowledge
11.	**Pradeshiya Sabha Libraries**	

12.	Lending and reference –books, journals, newspapers	Stocks are limited. A typical library would have 7,000-10,000 books, less than 10 journal titles and newspapers. The stock is not weeded as the "shelves would be empty". Hardly any library maintains a catalogue.
13.	Information services from government gazettes, laws	Job vacancies, examination results, tender notices, regulations, judicial orders etc. The government call centre cannot be accessed as most libraries do not have a telephone.
14.	Facilities for study	All libraries provide facilities for study, but unlike in large libraries there is no special area due to limited space
15.	Children's section	Available in all the libraries
16.	Maintaining branch libraries	Some libraries maintain branch libraries, but they are in charge of 'caretakers'; there are no inter library facilities.

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

Please refer 4.1.2.4

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 have services that reach low income communities and those isolated due to age, disability, social problems and geographical location. The by-laws of the local authorities specifically provide for services to the disabled, hospital patients and prison inmates. The libraries are also expected to provide community information services. These extension services are provided by operating branch libraries and mobile libraries, holding exhibitions, film shows etc. The Colombo Public Library, in addition to the mobile library services that it offers, has a 'book boxes' programme for regular circulation of material. The mobile services are provided mostly by libraries in urban areas such as Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Matara, and Anuradhapura. As the Community Development Officer who has

overall supervisory functions over libraries is also responsible for community development work they facilitate the identification of the information needs of underserved communities and meeting these needs through libraries.

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:

The type of content varies from library to library but almost without exception the libraries especially in non urban areas have concentrated on meeting the curriculum needs of students and providing newspapers to the older users and government publications such as gazettes and laws to the general public.

The users as well as librarians complained of limited and outdated material that is available in the library. The allocation available to libraries especially in non urban areas for collection development was woefully inadequate but there was no evidence that any systematic attempt was being made to acquire relevant material available on a complimentary basis.

The spatial, economic, occupational and social characteristics of the communities serviced by the different types of libraries vary widely. But it was observed from the site visits and discussions with librarians and participants of focus groups that there was very little effort to meet the information needs of diverse groups. For instance libraries located in high migrant outflow areas did not provide information to prospective migrants. Similarly in agricultural areas information required by farmers was not made available except in a few cases. The libraries did not link with agencies that provided such information. However the users did not expect such a service from the library as the former went to the employment agency and the latter to the agricultural extension office to obtain the information they require.

The majority of services are provided in local languages. Printed material such as books, periodicals and audio-visual material is available in English, Tamil and Sinhala. Particularly useful are government publications including government gazette notifications, which usually people have no access to other than from a library or a post office. Librarians have developed content on their own initiative by storing

information obtained from government agencies, newspapers and other sources. Both users and librarians expressed concern regarding the lack of new and up to date material and the delay in getting such material on the shelf no sooner they are released. The allocation available to libraries especially in non urban areas for collection development was woefully inadequate but on the other hand the librarians were not proactive in obtaining new information which is available free of charge or from the Internet at little or no cost, especially if a Nenasala centre, an Internet café or EasySeva is located in proximity to the library. The necessity for instituting cooperative arrangements was stressed by a few librarians.

Other Content Needed:

It is necessary to have a wider range of informational material and to develop location specific content. Since government agencies, especially the institutions dealing with health, agriculture, small enterprise development, produce informational material that is distributed widely, the libraries can easily have access to them if the librarian is sufficiently interested. The participants at the focus group meetings were of the view that a variety of databases relating to the area should be available to the people. For example, what are the services available in the area and who provides them, what are the resources in the locality, what is the market for a particular product? This is the type of information that has to be generated for use by the community.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

The National Library provides assistance to authors and publishers in Sri Lanka to publish selected manuscripts, by purchasing a certain number of copies of new publications, and assisting new writers to improve the quality. The Provincial Councils also provide assistance to authors in the area for content development.

***Source**: http://www.natlib.lk/*

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.

Printed material such as books and periodicals, audio-visual material is available in English, Tamil and Sinhala. Information on some government services is available. Information on livelihood activities is not available extensively while some information on health and education is available in local languages at this venue. Information and services are primarily provided in local languages.

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)?

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

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

The majority in both urban (68.5%) and non urban (77.7%) libraries seek news (mainly from newspapers) at the library followed by information that is required for educational purposes (53.1% in urban and 56.1% non urban areas). Entertainment (reading of novels, short stories and other light reading material) accounted for 38.5% of use in libraries located in urban and 37.9% in non urban areas. While 20.8% of urban library users and 36.8% of non urban users sought information on government services, those who looked for information on health and agriculture were few. The librarians of urban libraries stated that all look for entertainment, followed by information for educational purposes and government services. In rural libraries users are mainly concerned with education and news, government services and entertainment.

Almost all the libraries had made special arrangements to meet the needs of the youth/students by allocating a special area for them to study, obtaining material that would supplement the curriculum and providing reference services to them and responding to queries. Providing facilities for study is an important service that the library provides as the majority of those using the library do not have facilities for study in their home. On the other hand, as pointed out by some users the emphasis placed on this category of clientele had the tendency to draw attention away from meeting the needs of other users.

4.1.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

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

An equal number of users accessing the services of urban and rural public libraries totaling of 934 were included in the survey. The were more males than females in both urban and non urban locations while those who used ICT in the urban location that offered ICT facilities were 88.9% compared with 11.1%

females. In both locations the majority were in the age group 15-35. Those using ICT were also in the same age group. Over 70% had studied up to high school level while there were a few university educated among the users in urban and rural libraries. The majority stated that they received an average income and were of average social status.

Regular users of the library predominated with 42.4% of urban and 32.8% of non urban users visiting the library regularly, 23. 8% of urban and 28.3% coming frequently and 18.8% urban and 21.8% non urban users using to the library daily.

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 regular users are able to locate material, while some are able to use the catalogue where there is one. They are also able to request for information from the library staff. However many are not able to do an extensive search for information without assistance from library staff. The majority of users do not request specialized information since most are students who are totally examination oriented and newspaper readers. The librarians were of the view that the information seeking capacity of users was low and that they need to be made aware of the importance of using information for socio-economic advancement. Although only one of the libraries in the sample offered ICT facilities, the librarians were of the view that their users require computer training. They also stressed the need to increase community awareness of libraries and to involve them with outreach activities that the libraries organize.

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: The public libraries do not offer any training courses to users.

ICT specific training courses: None

4.1.3.11 Integration into daily routines

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

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

The services that public libraries offer are standard, with standard hours of opening and except in the case of mobile library services usually requiring the people to come to the library. The public libraries provide reference services, answer queries and assist users to find material and information that they require. The public library has been a valued institution and is a major public venue that promotes the reading habit in people and fosters a reading culture even to a limited extent. The availability of a children's section in almost all the libraries with story hours and other activities attempt to foster their interest in reading. The library has a range of publications from light reading to quick reference and to more serious subjects. The students especially have integrated the library into their daily routine. Many use the library even for a short period. . For example, in non urban areas if the library is located near a bus halt users drop in at the library while waiting for transportation. An interesting finding of the study was the integration of library into their daily routine by women who accompany their children to school and spend their time at the library reading until it was time to pick them up. A visit to the library is a part of the daily routine for the large number of readers who come to the library to read the newspapers.

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 public libraries is that it is a place for learning, and a place to acquire knowledge. The public libraries in the country are not patronized by the elites but mostly by ordinary citizens. For the elderly especially and the rural people they provide a social space, the equivalent of the village boutique where people engage in conversation over a cup of tea. It was observed by the researchers and whispered by an elderly library user in a provincial library that the venue had become a

meeting place for young girls and boys.

The library has been an established institution in the locality that many identify with. It had been and still is an institution that has helped people in their education. Several librarians informed us that the library has been used by three generations of people while a reader told the researcher "*If I do not come here daily I feel sick.*" Many in the urban areas value the library as a place of educational, recreational and cultural activity. However in some urban areas the users lamented the decline in library services looking back to an era when the library was the most important community institution. At a time when economic interests are prioritized the value of the library lies in the fact that it is an institution that gives free access to knowledge. Readers who could not afford to buy books for their children said that the library is of immense service. Many said that although the Internet provides information on anything and almost everything it can never compare to a library where you browse through the shelves, pick up a book, and read it. They said that the service that a library and a librarian provide cannot be quantified or given a value.

However, many are critical of the physical facilities of most of the libraries, the poor maintenance and the general lack of a welcoming atmosphere. It was also observed that some of the buildings did not have the requisite ambience, they were in need of repair and drab and that lighting and ventilation were poor.

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.

Users of the library are from all fields of endeavour and all walks of life. The information gathered at the public library would have enhanced their knowledge that would have helped them in their educational path, or honed their skills that enhanced their capacity to earn incomes, or provided them information that enabled them to engage in more leisure time activities. Several respondents stated that it was the public library that helped them to be successful in their examinations and bring them to their present position. Some, in gratitude, assist 'their' libraries in various ways.

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 people are appreciative of the services rendered by the library, and have faith that it is possible to rely on the information it provides. However the lack of current up to date information is a major constraint to keeping that trust.

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 public libraries and their users could benefit from the introduction ICT for in house and user services. A comparatively large number of people use this venue but they use other venues to obtain information especially relating to livelihood activities.

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)?

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 3.5 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 public libraries are maintained by the local authorities, as it is a subject allocated to the sub national administrations. The local authorities operate under the supervision of the Commissioner of Local Government of the Department of Local Government of the Provincial Councils. Despite the increasing responsibilities placed on the provincial and local governments they have not been able to

generate sufficient revenue to provide services that the constituencies demand and have been dependent on fiscal transfers from the central government. Financial transfers are made by the central government based on the recommendations of the Finance Commission. However the declining fiscal situation of the central government –high budget deficits, high level of public debt and debt servicing- has had a negative impact on local government activities. Persistent budget deficits affect local governments indirectly through high interest rates and slow expansion of local economic activities from which the local government derives an income. The ability of the Provincial Councils and local governments, except in one or two provinces, to raise revenue and generate income is limited due to the low level of economic activity in the province and districts. Of the total revenue of the provincial councils, the Western Province accounted for 66% followed by Central, Southern and Northwestern provinces. There is a large revenue-expenditure gap making the Provincial Councils dependent on central government transfers (See Appendix No. 9.4.4: Budget Outturn for Provincial Councils). According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2007) as much as 80% of the expenditure was incurred on salaries and wages with the health and education sectors absorbing the major portion of personal emoluments. In this situation and in the absence of special library development projects and foreign grants for libraries the annual allocation available to the library is low. It was evident that in a situation of financial constraints the library, considered to be a low priority in most provinces, had to contend with little or no allocations for developing content.

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 3.5 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.

One of the greatest drawbacks to public library development in the country is the lack of a legal framework for the operation and management of public libraries. The only library institution that has been set up by an Act of Parliament in Sri Lanka is the National Library and Documentation Services Board. A significant development has been the steps taken to organize the library services in a systematic manner within the provincial administration. The Central and Uva Provincial Councils have, by statute, formed a Provincial Library Services Board and three District Library Services Boards.

There is provision for the establishment of a Divisional Library Service Board in each of the Divisional Secretariats. Only the Central Provincial Library Services Board is operational at present. Local government authorities periodically issue regulations pertaining to libraries setting out their responsibilities and functions.

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 3.5 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.

Political support for public library development is limited as seen by the financial allocations made for library development. The librarians attributed this to low educational levels of elected representatives who are more interested in executing projects that are visible than in investing in information and knowledge but when the Chief Minister of the Council is a professional it has been possible to obtain the support of the Council for library development as in the case of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa libraries. However, it has to be stated that all local government authorities maintain a library despite it not being a mandatory function.

The librarians attempt to rally the community around the library by forming user societies. These groups assist the librarians in many ways such as by organizing shramadana (free labour) campaigns for cleaning, organizing special events, and collecting books from local elite. A user society in a library in the Anuradhapura district purchases books for the library by collecting a minimum of one rupee ($0.01) from each member monthly.

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 are no networks that link public libraries island wide. However, as stated earlier, attempts have been made to organize libraries in two provinces in a network. The Sri Lanka Library Association has a sub group of public librarians.

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.

There is no significant private sector participation in the provision of public library services. Ad hoc donations are received from philanthropists from time to time, and from international agencies, and international non governmental organizations. A major initiative that was made in special circumstances was the coming together of individuals, private sector and non governmental organizations and the Sri Lanka Library Association to restore and rebuild more than 52 libraries that were damaged by the tsunami of 2004.

The Sri Lanka Disaster Management Committee for Libraries, Information Services and Archives (SL DMC for LISA) was established with the assistance of the National Library and Documentation Services Board, UNESCO, IFLA and a number of Sri Lankans, the Department of National Archives, Sri Lanka Library Association, the National Institute for Library and Information Sciences, National Science Foundation, Ministry of Culture, Education & Higher Education to rehabilitate libraries, archives and information services destroyed or damaged by the tsunami.

4.1.5 For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams

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

4.1.5.1 Budget

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

Total Budget for Fiscal Year 2008

Local currency –Sri Lanka Rs.(amount (local currency)) 4,140,000

Approx. equivalent in USD 38,691 based on exchange rate of USD 1=Rs. 107 on date 30th June 2008.

As the budgetary allocation varies from library to library it is not possible to give a composite amount.

The budget given below is for the Colombo Public Library.

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 (2008)	1,516,330,000,000	
Education	Rs.72,592 mn.	
Other (omit name) - _health	Rs. 51,741 mn	
-Transport & communications	Rs. 50,995mn	
-Public libraries	Na	

Other Comments:

It is not possible to disaggregate the amount of funds that are allocated to public libraries as the allocations are made by the local authority concerned.

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:	97.01	From the Municipal Council
International donors:		Irregular. Equipment and books are donated for which it is difficult to impute a value
National donors:		Irregular. Equipment and books are donated for which it is difficult to impute a value
User fees/services:	1.4	
Hiring of venue		Negligible

facilities	
Recoverable charges	1.25
Other - Sale of obsolete items, tender documents, staff loan interest	0.34

Source: Annual Report, Colombo Municipal Council 2007

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?

The Finance Commission that was established with the setting up of Provincial Councils recommends the percentage of the national budget that should be allocated to the Provincial Councils based on the population, road mileage, and economic activity among others. The Provincial Council makes the allocation to each local government authority that comes within its purview. The local governments derive revenue from taxes, duties, license fees and other fees such as court fines, land development fees (See Appendix No. 6.4.5: Revenue Sources of Provincial Councils). A study by Amarakoon (2002) found that despite a 27% annual growth in revenue collection in the period 1998-2001 by the Colombo Municipal Council its revenue remained at 0.4 per cent of the GDP during the same period. The main source of revenue for the Colombo Municipal Council is the tax on residences and business premises, which accounted for 33% of the total revenue. Allocation of these revenues is determined by the local government concerned and while a budgetary allocation is made for the library, it was alleged that the first item to be pruned when there is a shortfall in revenue was that of the library (Focus group discussions and discussions with librarians).

Another revenue stream that is available is the money that is allocated to each Member of Parliament from the decentralized budget to be used at her/his discretion and interest. The library cannot rely on this source of funds as disbursements are dependent on the Member of Parliament. For example, the Polonnaruwa public library has a very modern facility for which the funds have been provided by the

Member of Parliament. But this same level of commitment is not found in many other areas.

Two provincial councils – the Central and Uva Province Library Service Boards, are required by statute to provide an annual fixed financial allocation for libraries in keeping with the instructions and standards determined by them to be distributed among the libraries in their respective provinces (Sri Lanka Government Gazette 1996; 2004). All the monies voted by the Central Government, the Provincial Councils, donations, and money earned by the Councils are to be maintained in a Library fund. The statutes also provide for setting aside a minimum of 1 % of the self generated income of every Local Authority to the library.

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?

If users want to avail themselves of lending library facilities they have to become members by paying a membership fee. This is a nominal charge and the total amount collected as membership fees thus varies with the number of members. The membership and usage fees of the Colombo Public Library, which serves a higher population amounted to Rs. 1.35 mn whereas in the Anuradhapura Municipal Council in the North Central Province the membership fees amounted to Rs. 85,000. A charge is made for photocopying if such facilities are available. The users are required to reimburse the cost of publications lost, pay a fine for delaying to return a book, and for violating the rules and regulations of the library. These amounts are credited to the local authority concerned. Some librarians interviewed complained that they do not have access to this money to be used for library development.

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)	26.8	Salaries of permanent staff are paid either by the central government or the provincial government and the salaries of casual staff

		are paid by the local authority.
Building infrastructure	1.8	Maintenance, capital outlay
Utilities	4.7	
Staff Training	0	
Computers/technology		Shown under capital outlay
Purchase of publications	5.3	
Stationery	0.3	
Book binding	0.8	
Furniture and fittings	0.3	Capital outlay
Machinery, equipment	10.0	Capital outlay
Maintenance	10.0	
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

Two institutions provide finances for the libraries. The Provincial Council pays the salaries of the staff and allocates money for the purchase of material and computer technology for the library. The local authority meets the expenses connected with staff training, payment of rent/maintenance of buildings that are owned and utilities The major share of the expenses are for staff salaries, purchase of material and in instances where the library premises do not belong to the local authority, for rent.

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?

There have been no dramatic changes in funding. According to Amarakoon (2002) funding streams especially from the central government have declined as a percentage of the GDP. However a marginal

increase in the total amount of transfers for current and capital expenditure is seen in 2006 and 2007.

4.1.6 Case example for public libraries

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

Shri Sumangala Public Library is located in the town centre of Wariyapola, in the North Western Province. A single storey old fashioned building with two large halls houses the library. The reading room provides accommodation to about 30-40 users. The second hall has the book shelves, the photocopier, the binding area and work space for the librarian and the assistant. Palingumenike, the librarian, said that as the area is cramped and insufficient the Provincial Council has agreed to extend it especially because this library was selected as the best in the area. Membership stands around 3,800 from 21 *Grama Sevaka* divisions. The library caters to children, youth and the elderly, has books in all three languages, newspapers, and government gazettes. Both lending and reference services are provided. It is open all days of the week and the librarian and her assistant take turns to take a day or two off.

The leadership provided by the librarian has resulted in the setting up of readers' clubs comprising the readers of the eleven libraries that are maintained by the *Pradeshiya Sabha*. The clubs are joined in a network. The main purposes of these clubs are to develop the libraries in the area, look into service deficiencies and through *shramadana* (voluntary sharing of work), clean and maintain the premises, organize competitions among the readers' clubs and raise funds for the purchase of books. A system has been developed to circulate books among the eleven libraries.

The majority of users are students from the nearby school with which the library maintains close relations. A special effort is made to encourage traders and small scale entrepreneurs to use the library. The elderly use the library not only to read the newspapers and other material but also to socialize. In addition to providing information to readers and answering their queries the librarian listens to the problems of her users, especially the elderly. There are times when she counsels teenagers as well.

The librarian looks to the day when she can have a computer and Internet facilities.

Case Study

From Small Beginnings

The Dambulla library opened in 1968 but it took ten long years to get it up and running. A temporary librarian was appointed in 1978 and she started work with one book rack, a table, four chairs and 60 books. But she had 97 members and that was remarkable for this rural area. Today the library is thriving with over 15, 000 books, periodicals, newspapers and a special section for the library. But what is remarkable about this library is the proactive measures taken to meet the information needs of the community using digital technology.

Dambulla is a UNESCO World Heritage site famous for its cave temples that date back to the first century BC. The surrounding caves of which there are about 80 had been used by monks for meditation. It was a place of significance to Buddhists and a tourist destination, but now Dambulla has also gained visibility as the largest wholesale vegetable market in the country – the Dambulla Dedicated Economic Zone - with the farmers empowered with access to pricing information.

Over 90 percent of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. A felt need was to provide agricultural information to farmers to improve their productivity. The Dambulla Public Library has been following the standard library practices of serving its members who come to the library. At a farmer information programme held by AGRINET (Agricultural Information Network of Sri Lanka) in 2006, the Dambulla Library was selected to implement the information service aimed at farmers in the area. The library was designed as a venue for farmer communities to access information, engage in discussion, articulate their information needs, and collect and disseminate indigenous knowledge. As the library does not have specialized knowledge it networks with specialist agencies and the local agricultural office, the economic centre and other local officials. At the seminar held to introduce the concept to the farmers it was found that none of them had used a library before.

Mathuwathie, the Librarian says “the farmers who came to the first programme took membership by paying the one time fee of Rs. 27 (US $0.30), and more have joined since then. There are 2,375

members now. They ask questions, demand answers and have got used to reading". She does not have all the answers of course but connects with the hotline of the Agricultural Department and other specialists. She has built up a network from which she could obtain assistance such as information and resource persons.

The library had no computers, a fax or a photocopying machine. But after initiating the programme the *Pradeshiya Sabha* had given a computer (she doesn't mind that it was an old one that had been repaired) and had agreed to increase the present allocation of Rs. 200,000 (US$ 2000) in 2009. "Our request for a Nenasala was not accepted but if we get one I can do much more work for the community" said Mathuwathie.

A section of the Dambulla Public Library

The periodicals section of an urban library

The reference section of an urban library

4.2 Venue 2: Nenasala Centres

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?

The Nenasala centres have been set up under the national eSri Lanka programme that was launched in 2004 to diffuse and promote the use of ICT across the country. These centres provide affordable access to ICT services to rural communities through the 558 centres that had been set up (as at 31st July 2008). Following the traditional concept of the 'tank, temple and village' where community activities revolved around agriculture and the temple, in the initial stages of the project the majority of the centres were set up in temples, churches and mosques as they also provided a low cost option to the setting up of the venues. In later years private sector entrepreneurs, community organizations and a few public libraries have been the recipients of the Nenasala centres. The majority of these venues are located in rural areas.

As it was recognized that the revenue earning capacity of the venues would be limited due to low population density and the low ability and willingness of the people to pay for services the operations of the centres are subsidized during the initial four years on a reducing scale so that they can function without financial problems while the community begins to accept and use their services. However, financial sustainability has become an issue as several centres had suspended their services due to escalating costs and low usage. Residuary businesses had been started by some operators to supplement the income they earn from their core business.

The study found the centres had concentrated on drawing youth into the centre and that their major activity had been the provision of basic computer training to the youth of the area. The youth, who were mostly from underserved communities and had no financial resources, have benefited from this learning opportunity. However the number of information seekers who came to the centre was limited. Outreach programmes to encourage the community to use ICTs or ICT based information services were minimal and many in the community were not aware of the Nenasala centres or of the services that they offered.

The technology still appeared to be rather alien to the communities in which they had been established. Users were confined to young people who realized the need for computer literacy and were aware of the potential of the Internet.

The majority of Nenasala centres appear to be dependent on external resources and 'handholding'. The survey showed that a few 'champions' had emerged and that they stood out due to their innovativeness and efforts to provide community services but most were content to concentrate on providing computer training.

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)?

One criterion for the establishment of the Nenasala is that it serves small rural communities with a population between 2,000 and 5,000. Nenasala centres are required to be established in proximity to a market with at least 15 wholesale vendors and a secondary school with at least 300 children, so that they will be accessible to people of all age groups, occupations, men and women. In fulfillment of the project objectives over 85% of the venues were located in rural areas and in lagging provinces such as Uva, Sabaragamuwa and Nuwara Eliya. The lowest number was in the Western Province. There is no discrimination in access to any population group.

The venues are established with the specific objective of introducing new ICT to the community. Although awareness programmes had been conducted prior to the establishment of the centre usage is still low. Deficiencies in basic infrastructure facilities such as frequent power outages, slow connectivity, malfunctioning of equipment caused frustration with resultant loss of users (Survey).

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.

There is no discrimination in access to different population segments as the focus of the programme is to

provide ICT services to disadvantaged communities and to diffuse technology especially in rural areas. The objective of the project was to introduce technology to communities by locating the centres in rural areas. However the actual siting of the venue was found to be far from optimal. Forty two per cent of users of urban and 21.3% of general users, 14% of ICT users of non urban venues identified location as a barrier to access. The operators too were aware of the unsuitability of the location as 42.9% of urban and 40% of non urban venues stated that location impacted on access.. The researchers too observed that the siting of only 45% of the rural Nenasala centres was satisfactory. It was seen that several venues had to be reached after a long walk by foot up a hill or by climbing a flight of steps making it difficult for the elderly and the disabled to access the services; some were tucked away and not visible from the main road; and name boards were not displayed prominently (Observations – Appendix No. 9.4.2). The siting of the venue in places of religious worship had been a policy decision because of the close relationship theses institutions have with the community. While most temples and churches had a separate area for the venue and had recruited laypersons as operators**,** women had difficulty in accessing those venues that had been sited in mosques. Further it was stated at the focus group discussion with Muslim women from Kalmunai in the Eastern Province that women are rarely seen at any public access venue including the Nenasala centres.

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.

ICTs are new to the majority of underserved communities and from that perspective the technology may not be appropriate without adequate awareness creation and demonstration of its use. It was seen that while youth are embracing the technology**,** use by the adult population is negligible. The lack of familiarity with the technology was identified as a barrier to access by 28.2 % urban and 25.6% non urban users, and 42.9% of urban and 33.3% of non urban operators.

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.

An upper limit has been set on charges that are to be levied and as the centres are subsidized for a period

of four years the operators are obligated to provide services at a rate lower than that charged for similar services in cybercafés and other facilities. A payment voucher system that was made available in the first two years of the project provided free access to services to children and adults of low income families. However, 11.5% of urban and 15.7% of non urban respondents stated that cost affected access.

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?

There are no user or registration fees that are charged from users. The charge is for actual services rendered.

Equivalent in US Dollars:

Date of estimate

(and) local currency (name) Sri Lanka 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:

Charges are levied for Internet access, email, telephone calls, and other digital services that the venue provides.

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 40 per hour for Internet access (upper limit)

Equivalent in US Dollars: $0.40

Date of estimate 30th June 2008

(and local currency name Sri Lanka rupees)

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.

A special effort had been made to establish the centres in areas that were underserved and in provinces and districts that are relatively underdeveloped. The following table shows the distribution of venues by province and district.

Table

Provincial and District Distribution of Nenasala Centres

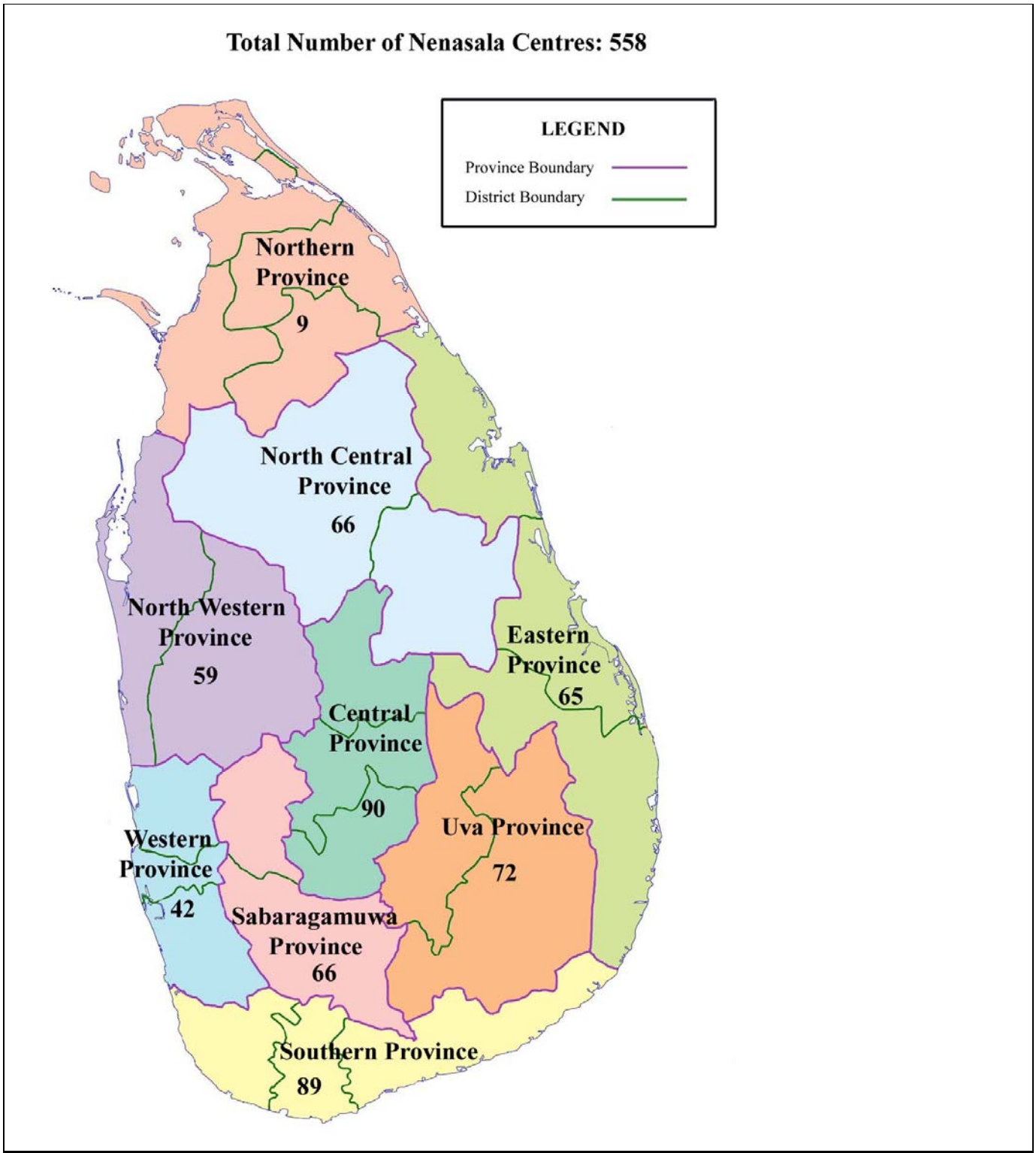
District	Number – Province	% of Total	Number – District	% of Total
Western Province				
Colombo	42	7.53	11	1.97
Gampaha			13	2.33
Kalutara			18	3.23
Central Province				
Kandy	90	16.13	46	8.24
Matale			19	3.41
Nuwara Eliya			25	4.48
Southern Province				
Galle	89	15.95	29	5.20
Matara			31	5.56
Hambantota			29	5.20
Northern Province				
Jaffna**	9	1.61	4	0.72
Mannar*			0	0.00
Vavuniya*			5	0.90
Mullaitivu*			0	0.00
Kilinochchi*			0	0.00
Eastern Province				
Ampara**	65	11.65	32	5.73
Trincomalee**			17	3.05
Batticaloa**			16	2.87
North Western Province				
Kurunegala	59	10.57	42	7.53
Puttalam			17	3.05
North Central Province				
Anuradhapura Polonnaruwa	66	11.83	42	7.53
			24	4.30
Uva Province				
Badulla	72	12.90	42	7.53
Moneragala			30	5.38
Sabaragamuwa Province				
Ratnapura	66	11.83	39	6.99
Kegalle			27	4.84
Total	**558**	**100**	**558**	**100**

*Districts in which military operations are ongoing

** Conflict affected areas brought under government control in late 2007

4.2.2.5.1 Map

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



Description of map:

Map of Sri Lanka showing the number of Nenasala centres in each province. (Number as at 31st July 2008)

4.2.2.6 Other factors affecting access

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

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

Barriers to Access

Barriers	Urban Users %	Non Urban Users		Urban Operators %	Non Urban Operators %
		General Use %	ICT Use %		
Operational					
Hours of opening	27.8		17.3	11.1	22.6
Time allocation	7.1		2.9		
Poor Management			2.9		
Infrastructure					
Slow connectivity	5.9				
Insufficient computers					25.0
Unsuitable environment	71.4		62.9		
Premises – Space, Ventilation	71.4	40.0			50.0
Services					
Insufficient services	49.4	28.6	57.9	22.2	74.2
Language	19.0	42.9	32.2	11.1	25.8
Content	17.7		12.9	11.1	19.4
Cost	11.4		10.4	33.3	9.7
Lack of training	27.8	71.4	40.1	33.3	9.7

The other factors that affected access and acted as barriers related to operational aspects such as poor management, hours of opening (opened half day or on the week end or on specific days of the week, or closed early - between 5pm and 6 pm as compared with Internet cafes that are kept open late), management of the centre by a part time operator, lack of sufficient staff and high staff turnover; infrastructure deficiencies such as slow connectivity, frequent power outages, hardware problems;

problems with premises – cramped and lacking in ventilation and adequate lighting; and service conditions that included insufficient services and sufficient content not being available in local languages, indicating the lack of adequate Nenasala community linkages.

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, social appropriation of technology)?

The capacity and the willingness of the communities to use new technology are quite low. Macro data (Department of Census and Statistics 2004, 2006) show that computer literacy in the country was below 10%.[3] Despite promotional campaigns and the distribution of free vouchers the opportunity costs for adults to come to a centre was high. However parents recognized the importance of ICT for education and employability of children and actively support them to use ICT.

The Nenasala centres have been established to reach people who have had little experience in using formal, organized venues of information access. Due to very low computer literacy their capacity to access digital sources of information is low. However the awareness, training and outreach programmes that are being held should improve their capability. The users themselves recognized their lack of competence - 27.8% of urban ICT users, 71.4% of general users and 40.1% of ICT users in non urban areas. Operators (71.4% urban and 66.7% non urban) interviewed opined that the users require training in using ICT.

Most of the services are provided in local languages e.g. instructional CDs, government information, training. Yet, 19.0% of urban users, 42.9% of rural ICT users and 32.2% of general users in rural areas were not able to access the information that was required in their own language. Much more content**,** especially location specific content is required to make the venue attractive to a cross section of the people that it served.

The e-Society Development Initiative of the Information and Communication Technology Agency funds projects that aim at content development, including grass root initiatives. For example a project titled Shilpa Sayura has created a learning management system relevant to the school curriculum to help

[3] The 2007-08 Network Readiness Index places the individual readiness of Sri Lankans at the 88th position.

students in grades 6 through 11. This initiative helps children especially in those schools that are disadvantaged by lack of teachers, libraries and other facilities.

The venue has great potential to provide services that would help people to find information especially in relation to government services, their income earning activities, location of markets, and health problems among other needs. For people whose family members have migrated either internally or overseas the communication services that this venue offers are a great boon. The computer training programmes that have been offered have enabled youth to find employment, start small scale enterprises, and have facilitated income earning activities.

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.

Each centre has a minimum of two permanent members of staff. Part time staff is recruited when required. Volunteers are encouraged to provide services and gain experience. Staff turnover is reported to be quite high in these centres as many work as volunteers and leave after gaining experience while salaries of hired employees are low (Survey, Focus Group Discussions).

4.2.3.2 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).

(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.

The Nenasala centres are operated either by the owner, a hired employee or a volunteer. The need for managerial, technical and logistical support for Nenasala operators was recognized when the Nenasala programme was designed. Consequently when the project was launched eight tele-centre support institutions were selected to either provide comprehensive support to tele-centre operators or to provide specific services such as connectivity, maintenance, software, and training. The support institutions

were also expected to facilitate the development of content and participate in awareness-raising. These support institutions are being replaced by Regional Impact Teams for greater effectiveness.

The majority of the operators had completed secondary school and although the majority of the staff does not have formal training**,** it was observed that they are able to assist the users when they visit the venue. Qualified personnel are recruited for conducting training courses.

ICTA conducts orientation and training programmes for operators as well as periodic refresher programmes. Regular discussions are held with operators of a province. The very best Nenasala operators are sponsored for visits to South India to study the tele centres such as those set by the Swaminathan Institute. While the overall capacity to manage the centre is high or satisfactory poor community use shows that their outreach programmes need improvement and more dynamism.

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*
17.	Communication services	This is a source of revenue, which has declined in recent years due to the spread of mobile phones and competition from private communication centres and Internet cafes
18.	Internet, email	Email is used more frequently than web browsing
19.	Government information	Web based information and government call centre
20.	Content for school children	Examples – content centred on the Grade 6-10 school syllabus
21.	Access to online information	Mostly by school children and university students
22.	Access to offline information	This includes educational and instructional CDs developed by various government agencies and preloaded by the ICTA, computer and English language

		education for children.
23.	Web designing, blogs	Not extensive and not in all centres
24.	Desk top publishing	Some type of desk top publishing is carried out in all centres
25.	Computer training	A major source of revenue
26.	Scanning of documents	Limited use
27.	Printing, laser printing	A moderately used service
28.	CD writing	Limited use

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

The services that the Nenasala provide can be grouped into three, namely (1) those that are dependent on telecommunications facilities and connectivity, and services based on information accessed from the Internet; (2) services such as computer training and to a lesser extent English language training that can be done offline but could benefit from connectivity for practical demonstrations, and (3) other services that are not dependent on connectivity. Most of the Nenasala centres have the ability to provide all the services listed above as a standard set of equipment has been supplied to them. However the demand for such services varies considerably across centres.

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 objective of this programme is to introduce the technology to un-served and underserved areas and as such most of the centres have been established in those areas. However, the study found that there are very few outreach programmes that the centres conduct. The operators recognize the need to reach out to the people who do not have access to information to improve their living standards but do not have the personnel, experience and resources to do so.

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:

The Information and Communication Technology Agency provides digital information that has been developed by government ministries, departments and statutory agencies. Several operators (e.g. http://www.samadielibrary.org) have uploaded content developed by them. Information on government portals is accessible to users from this venue.

Other Content Needed:

What is urgently needed is location specific information that would assist people meet their day to day information needs and draw people to the Nenasala centres.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

ICTA encourages the development of local content through its Community Assistance Programme.

Source: <www.icta.lk>

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.

The majority of services are provided in local languages while the operators assist users if the information they require is in English. More and more information is being generated in Tamil and Sinhala**,** and sectors that are critical to the people as well as the economy such as agriculture have informative web sites that can be accessed easily. The government call centres provide information in all three languages. Educational material developed under an ICTA funded project has been given to some centres.

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)?

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

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

The survey showed that the overwhelming majority (67.1% in urban areas and 85.7% of general users and 77.2% of ICT users in non urban areas) use the Nenasala to gain IT for educational purposes, mainly computer education. In urban areas 30.4% used the venue to obtain news but in non urban areas

this category of users was 15.8%. Government information was accessed by 16.5% but in non urban areas only 4.5% responded that they come to the venue to obtain information about government services. The venue was used to meet the need for personal information by 30.4% in urban areas, while this percentage was 14.3% among general users and 16.3% among ICT users in non urban areas. General users in rural areas (28.6%) came in search of information on agriculture but only 2.0% used ICT for this purpose. ICT users who looked for entertainment in non urban areas (16.3%) were higher than those in urban areas (11.4%).

Eight nine percent (88.8%) in non urban areas and 69.2% in urban venues used the Nenasala only for training purposes. Of the others the majority in both urban and non urban areas (67.1% and 51.0% respectively) use the centre for web browsing. For instance, one respondent was searching for information on aliens while several were looking for employment and for information to expand their business. As is to be expected, sending email **(**58.2%) and using the venue for business and commerce (20.3%) was higher in urban than in non urban areas (24.3% and 8.4% respectively). Telephoning or using a web cam was done by 20.3% in urban and 11.97% in non urban areas. It was observed by researchers however that the use of a web cam was not very extensive. Computer games were played by both urban and non urban users (19.0% and 21.8% respectively). Listening to music, chatting and blogging were done by only a few in both urban and non urban areas.

4.2.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

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

A total of 288 users comprising 79 urban and 209 non urban users from seven urban and 22 non urban Nenasala centres respectively were interviewed. Gender differences were marked particularly in rural areas as fewer women (45.6% in urban and 28.7% in non urban areas) than men (54.4 in urban and 69.8% in non urban areas) used the centre for ICT related activities. The majority of ICT and general users were less than 35 years of age, largely in the 15-35 age group. All the users had a basic education, the majority of ICT users had a secondary education but there were only a few users with a college or university education (urban 6.3% and non urban 4.0%).

There were more users from low income groups in non urban centres than in urban centres (41.6% as compared with 15.2%) but middle income users were higher in both these types of locations (urban

79.7% and rural 50.5%). The majority was identified as having a middle/average social status while over a third of the users in non urban areas and 12% in urban areas were from low income families.

Users in both venues come regularly but there were more frequent users in non urban venues than in urban venues. Daily users accounted for 10.3% in urban and 18.2% in non urban areas. However**,** of those in non urban areas who used the venue for general purposes such as for taking phone calls, photocopying documents, etc., 66.7% came regularly and 33.3% came frequently.

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 Nenasala centres have been established to reach people who have had little or no experience in using formal, organized venues of information access except perhaps from sources indicated earlier. Due to very low computer literacy their capacity to access digital sources of information is low. While 6.7% of the operators stated that there was no necessity for training of users as their users were computer literate, all the others operators confirmed the need to increase the IT skills of users.

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:

ICT specific training courses:

Training courses in basic computer literacy, MS Office, multi media, web designing, graphics designing, and computer hardware are available at these venues. There are special courses for children. Some of the venues are accredited to the University of Colombo School of Computing to provide training for the Computer Driving License examination. ICTA certification is available for courses that follow its syllabus. Training courses are also conducted under the national e-literacy initiative of ICTA to increase computer skills in the country.

However it should be noted that no courses pertaining information access and use had been offered.

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.

The venue has great potential to provide services that would help people to find information especially in relation to government services, their income earning activities, location of markets, health problems and other crucial needs. The reengineering programme of the government currently carried out by ICTA should facilitate the access of information to government information. A few are using the Internet facilities at the venue for business development. For people whose family members have migrated either internally or overseas the communication services that this venue offers were reported to be a great boon. As noted earlier, specialist medical consultation is now available in areas that have a concentration of a specific disease while some venues have installed software that enables the monitoring of basic health status such as blood pressure.

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.

The venue has still not integrated itself into the community. The majority of users is not from elite families but is from households with average or low socio economic status. However the ability to use the facilities at the centre gives the users self confidence in moving especially into formal sector employment.

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 computer training programmes that have been offered have enabled youth to find employment, start small scale enterprises, scale up enterprises and facilitated income earning activities. Giving ownership of the venue to those in the community has opened up opportunities for appropriation of technology by

underserved groups.

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?

A major issue had been the use of these types of venues to access Internet sites that are not suitable for children and young adults. However operators have worked to gain their trust. Pornographic and adult sites are usually filtered. In addition the operator/staff keeps a close watch on the children and this has contributed to some extent in dispelling these perceptions. The trust is evident in the large number of children that are trained at this venue. The provision of access to government information and follow up to such information increases trust in the information.

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)

The greatest need is not global information but information that is location specific, group specific, and livelihood specific. The opportunity that exists in this area is immense and untapped.

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)?

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 3.5 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.

Slow expansion of local economies affects the use of these venues by underserved communities. Recognizing the need to revitalize the lagging regions the government has initiated several infrastructure (electricity, road development, and telecommunications), livelihood and social development projects

through the central and sub national governments with financial support from bilateral and multilateral agencies. These projects should have a positive impact on the Nenasala through better connectivity, increased transport facilities and a higher amount of disposable income by creating income earning opportunities.

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 3.5 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 regulatory framework is conducive for the development of telecommunications and telecom based services as well as for the expansion of mobile telephony. The reduction or elimination of bottlenecks in connectivity with the penetration of telecom services into rural areas should have a positive impact on the use of the venue as they will overcome connectivity problems that were identified as a barrier to access. On the other hand the greater use of mobile phones to access information will have further adverse impact on the revenue earning capacity of the venue.

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 3.5 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 overall national environment is very supportive for the success of this type of venue. The Nenasala project is a part of a wider development programme aimed at using new ICT as a lever in the development of the country. ICT enabled services are being used and developed in most of the economic sectors. The programme is directly under the purview of the Executive President, it has high visibility, is well resourced with an institutional framework for its implementation. A multi stakeholder partnership has been developed. Progress achieved in the other components of the programme will have a positive impact on the sustainability of this venue.

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)?

As these venues have been established by the apex agency for ICT development in Sri Lanka they have

been organized in a district and island wide network. Regular meetings and training programmes are conducted for the operators. They are also members of telecentre.org a consortium supported by the International Development Research Centre, Microsoft and the Swiss Development Agency for Development and Cooperation to strengthen telecentres around the world.

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.

A number of agencies participate participate directly or indirectly in implementing this programme. They are:

1. ICTA – responsible for programme planning and management, disbursement of capital and subsidies, ensuring compliance, project oversight and quality assurance and training.
2. Tele centre operators who manage the tele centres and provide specific services.
3. Regional Impact Teams - that have been selected through a competitive process and are required to provide support in setting up telecentres, managerial and technical support, training and capacity building for operators, provide content where possible, and ensure that the telecentres fulfill their five service obligations to the community.
4. Managing agent - to implement and manage the voucher scheme.
5. The World Bank – that provided the bulk of the finance.
7. A voluntary eSociety Focus Group from civil society representing varied interests to provide inputs to the programme.

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)?

The budget varies from venue to venue.

Total Budget for Fiscal Year

Local currency name amount (local currency)

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

These venues are subsidized for a period of four years with the amount of subsidy declining each year as the centre generates sufficient revenue to sustain itself. A rate of return of 6% is anticipated over a ten-year period based on the premise that the revenue will accrue mainly from telephone services. However this revenue stream has declined for most centres with the spread of mobile phones and competition from Internet cafes and communication centres that have sprung up in all parts of the country and even other Nenasala centres located in proximity. According to one operator his income from telephone calls had declined by about 60% in the past year. The increasing acquisition of mobile phones especially by low income households will make the revenue earning capacity from telephone services even worse. At the same time escalating costs including that of utilities have resulted in the closure of several of the venues that were visited for the survey.

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	Rs. 1,516,330, 000 000	
Education		
Other (name)		
Public libraries		

Other Comments:

describe

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:	100	The Nenasala progamme is implemented with a loan from the World Bank
National donors:		
User fees/services:		
Own funds		

Other Comments:

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?

The Information and Communication Technology Agency supplies equipment and pays connectivity charges on a reducing scale over a period of four years. Each venue is expected to generate sufficient revenue to cover costs and have a surplus.

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?

User fees are charged while free services and discounted rates are given to users from low income households to encourage use. The voucher system that was operational to provide free access for a specified period of time is also a form of subsidy to the venues.

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)	16.2	Usually only the salary is paid and volunteers

		are recruited; else the owner operates
Building infrastructure	6.7	Payment of rent
Utilities	4.2	Electricity, water
Staff Training	-	Usually borne by ICTA
Computers/technology	47.2	Provided by ICTA. Has to budget for replacement from the second year onwards
Insurance	4.5	Paid by the owner
Other- air conditioning	2.2	The majority of venues are not air conditioned
Other-office furnishings	2.2	Paid for by the owner
Other-connectivity	2.2	Subsidized by ICTA
Other-incidentals	14.6	
Total	100%	

Other Comments:

The budget that is given above is for the first year of operations as determined by the Information and Communication Technology Agency.

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 facility that has been obtained from the World Bank is for the establishment of 1,000 centres. After a recent evaluation the Bank has expressed satisfaction with the progress of the project and there is a possibility of obtaining another loan for a further extension.

4.2.6 Case example for venue 2:

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.

Insert Case Example and Photo here.

A flight of stairs leads to an air conditioned room that has several computers, a 'four-in-one photocopier' and a scanner. The computers are being used by young boys to access the Internet. The training room that provides accommodation up to twenty is also in use and an employee of the Nenasala centre is attending to computer repairs in the workshop. The balcony provides a good view of a communication centre further down the street and an information centre run by a NGO a few feet away from the venue, three banks, shops and a few government offices. The public library of Tissamaharama cannot be seen but Nishantha, the Nenasala operator said that it is in a poor state.

Tissamaharama is classified as a rural area according to its population. It is in proximity to Yala, a popular wild life sanctuary in the country and a religious site that attracts thousands of people every year and draws large crowds during the festival season. A few hotels provide accommodation to visitors. The 2004 tsunami destroyed villages in the interior and a year later a flood damaged several hundred acres of paddy land. The area is recovering from these natural disasters and the government has started several development projects in the district including the construction of a sea port south of Tissamaharama at Hambantota.

The Nenasala was opened about three years ago. Awareness programmes had been carried out to introduce the Nenasala to schools, government officers and the community. Nishantha had visited the schools nearby to inform them about the centre and the voucher system that would enable the children from poor families to use the centre without payment.

Children and youth including university students are his best customers and the numbers have increased over the years. But he said that few girls come to the centre even though he has a female assistant. He

attributed this to the social practice of young girls normally not visiting these places alone and their disinterest in technology. The school children use the Sinhala content that has been especially developed to supplement the school curriculum under a project of ICTA (Information and Communication Technology Agency). Older children search for jobs, download music and ring tones. Adults do not come regularly. He has had promotional campaigns with banks and had offered them free email but the response had been poor. "They are not interested in accessing information". The few times he attempted to provide information had ended in failure. After seeing the agricultural CDs some of the farmers had said that there was no new information for them and what they need are specific answers to specific problems and fair prices for their products. A few tourist guides use email to keep in touch with their clients, but that is also for short periods.

"I get my income mainly from the training courses that I conduct and the communication services but the latter has declined by about a third due to competition, availability of more computers and Internet access in public institutions, schools and due to mobile phones being available to many in the area. Our charges are 50 percent less than what the communication centres charge. And yet some ask for free services thinking that this is a government facility! I have a permanent member of staff but there is a high turnover as they leave after being trained. After meeting the ever increasing utility bills the maximum that I can pay the staff member is Rs. 4500 a month (US$ 45)".

So what is his strategy? His services are focused on training and his financial viability is dependent on that. But again he has his problems. Free computer training is provided by NGOs and that erodes his business. Recently however a NGO had contracted him to provide a different kind of training -computer hardware training to a group of girls and that had helped.

He has ideas to improve the situation. As there is no culture of information use and low information literacy awareness-raising using concrete examples as to how information could help people would be essential. He gave the example of Indian information centres that are reported to have tied up with a US company to provide information on the location of fish so that fishermen can go straight to the location to fish without wasting time. "People have to see the benefit of information centres" he stressed.

The Nenasala at the
Colombo Fort Railway Station

A computer training
programme in progress

The disabled owner of the Koslanda Nenasala teaching a kid to use the computer. He was the recipient of an award at eAsia Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2007.

4.3 Venue 3: Internet Cafés and EasySeva

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?

Internet cafés. established by entrepreneurs were the first in the country to provide access to Internet facilities in the country. The majority of these started in the metropolis around 1997 and spread gradually to other urban centres with increasing Internet penetration. As Net2Phone facilities provided international call facilities at a fraction of the cost of traditional overseas calls the major use of the Internet cafés in the early days was to communicate with relatives and friends overseas. Where browsing facilities were available the venues were used for email and sometimes for chatting. Today Internet cafés provide a variety of other services and the cafés are to be found in non urban areas as well. The exact numbers are not known but there are a large number of Internet Cafés throughout the country. Despite the establishment of state subsidized facilities Internet cafés attract more users than the former and consequently earn more revenue.

The EasySeva is a combination of an Internet Café and a telecentre that aims to reduce barriers to entry and adopt a market driven approach to set up community information centres and develop entrepreneurs in the ICT sector. 3G HSDPA is used for rural applications. These centres are equipped with computers and VoIP phones and offer the public Internet facilities, and basic computer training. Health and financial products are to be made available in course of time. The project started in 2007 and 39 centres had been set up as at 31st July 2008. It is expected to scale the EasySeva model throughout the country and unlike the telecentre model the entrepreneurial model of EasySeva is expected to provide last mile connectivity using wireless technology on a sustainable basis.

Financed by USAID and implemented by a US based firm, the Synergy Strategies Group in partnership with Sri Lankan private sector companies, the EasySeva is a part of a franchise.

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)?

Internet cafés are found mainly in urban and semi urban areas. There are only a few Internet cafés in rural areas because of lack and poor connectivity, and low profitability due to low purchasing power as well as lack of a perceived need for Internet based services. The Easy Seva centers have been set up in small townships outside the Colombo district.

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.

There is no age, gender, or class discrimination in access to these venues. However they are more accessible to citizens in non rural areas, hardly accessible to people with disability, and children under 14 years can use the venue only under supervision. It was observed that the Internet cafés were operating from a central locality with easy access although 6.6% of urban users and 10.4% of non-urban users and 25% of urban operators said the location created barriers to access. Unsuitable approach through crowded streets (Nugegoda), siting inside markets (Ratnapura), steep flight of steps to reach the venue were some of the problems related to access. Most of the venues were cramped in one room with insufficient lighting and ventilation (Observations).

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.

The majority of the Internet cafés are located in urban areas and those who visit these venues have had some degree of orientation to the technology. Even the users of EasySeva located in semi-urban areas are able to use the facilities. The staff at these venues provides assistance to users when necessary.

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.

Due to the large number of competing venues the Internet cafés are compelled to keep their charges as low as possible although their fees are still higher than what a Nenasala and other government sponsored facilities and venues would charge. The EasySeva centres also offer their services at market rates. However 39.7% of urban users and 9.4% of non urban users said that cost was a factor that made it difficult to use the venue.

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?

Access to the Internet

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 40-50 per hour

Equivalent in US Dollars: 0.40-0.50

Date of estimate 27th June 2008

and local currency name Sri Lanka 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:

The services offered in different areas are standard connectivity based services such as Internet and email access; communication services such as telephone facilities; non telecom dependent services such as CD writing, photocopying of documents, typesetting, laminating, and desktop publishing.

4.3.2.5 Geographic distribution

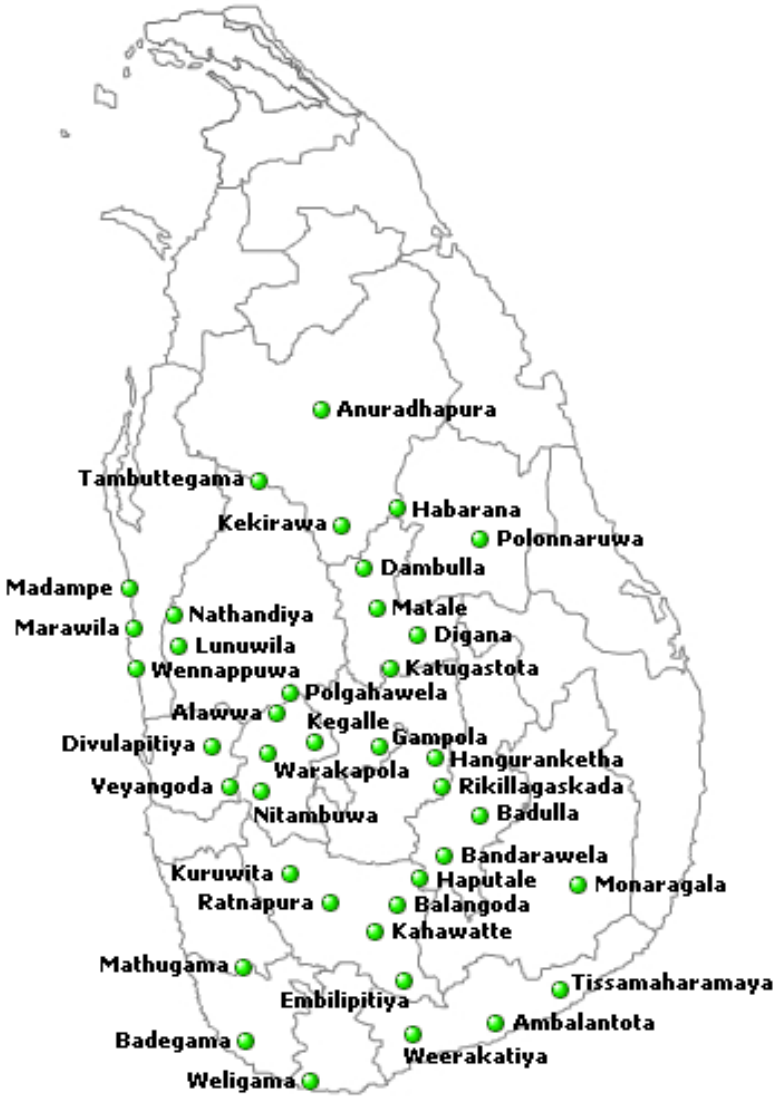
What is the distribution of the venues in terms of their geographic location?

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

As data for Internet Cafés are not available the information is provided only for EasySeva. Thirty six of the 39 centres that had been established up to 31st July 2008 were located outside the Western Province where IT penetration is the lowest. Twelve of these have been established in the poorest provinces of Uva and Sabaragamuwa, five in the Southern Province, five in the North Central Province and seven in the North West. Seven are in the hill country. The Northern and Eastern provinces have not been covered due to the conflict situation.

4.3.2.5.1 Map

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



Description of map:

Map of Sri Lanka showing the location of EasySeva centres

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)?

Users have the capacity to use the facilities as only 3.3% of urban users and 4.2% said that they lacked training. Thirty three percent of operators in non-urban areas said that lack of skills impacted on use. As these venues are located in city and town centres and many have been exposed to new ICTs they are able to access their services without difficulty for sending email, using the Internet, and obtaining digital services such as document formatting and desktop printing among others. Many play games, either online or offline. Usually Internet cafés do not provide information services but the EasySeva has plans to provide health care services and financial products.

4.3.3.1 Staff size

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

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

The average number of staff in these venues is two. The larger Internet cafés may have up to four and the smaller cafés one.

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.

The staff usually does not have any formal training but have the skills to manage the centre and to assist the users if necessary. They are customer oriented and are able to anticipate user needs (Observations)

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.

Services Offered	*Comments*
Internet Cafés and Easy Seva	

4.3.3.3.1 Internet access	Core business
4.3.3.3.2 Email, chat with web cam	Core business
4.3.3.3.3 Communication	Core business
4.3.3.3.4 Scanning, Photocopy	Good source of revenue
4.3.3.3.5 Digital photography	
4.3.3.3.6 Graphic designing, CD/DVD writing	
4.3.3.3.7 Training Easy Seva only	Not provided by all venues
4.3.3.3.8 Government information	
4.3.3.3.9 Health information	To be provided
4.3.3.3.10 Financial products-micro loans and other financial services	To be provided
4.3.3.3.11 SIM card based electronic payment system	To be provided
4.3.3.3.12 Online training	To be provided

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

Standard services offered by the venue.

The EasySeva venues are enabled with 3G mobile broadband connectivity based on Dialog's HSDPA network.

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.

Internet cafés do not have any outreach programmes to reach underserved communities. These are purely commercial ventures that provide access and do not commit resources to proactively serve

underserved communities. The EasySeva plans to provide community services in health and finance.

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:

Mostly web based content is available

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

EasySeva has plans to build content related to health and financial services.

Source:

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.

The users can access web based information that is available in local languages. In addition services could be obtained from the government call centres.

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)?

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

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

As in other venues the main purpose of using Internet cafés and EasySeva is to obtain information for educational purposes (54.9% urban of users and 71.9% non urban users. While in urban areas personal reasons were cited by 58.7% for using the venue in non urban areas the percentage for this purpose was 24.6. More non urban users (45.8%) used the venues for entertainment than users (30.6%) of urban venues. Those who sought news at 26% were marginally higher in non urban locations than the 20.7% in urban areas. It is noteworthy that the number of people who sought information on agriculture, health and government services was few.

The main activity that was carried out in non urban areas was web browsing (89.6%) while the

comparative figure for urban locations was 77.7%. Sending email was the next most frequently performed activity. More urban users than non urban users played games (22.3% and 9.4% respectively). The use of social networking sites was not extensive at 18.2% in urban areas and low (9.4%) in non urban areas. Of the 'other' activities listening to music (42.9%), downloading music (28.6%) and virus guards (14.3%) were done by urban users. While operator responses did not contradict the above findings they also revealed that in urban areas users access social networking sites, visit blog sites or write blogs, and use the web cam while 50% of urban operators and 75% of non urban operators said users searched for information related to commerce and business.

4.3.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

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

Both urban and non urban venues were frequented by males (90% and 81% respectively), youth in the age group 15-35 years (72.7% and 86.5% respectively), those with an education up to high school level (59.5% and 46.9% respectively), and belong to the middle income level category (85.1% and 80.2% respectively) and have an average social status (86.8% and 81.3% respectively).

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.

The majority of users said that they had the capacity to use the venue but the majority of 16.5% urban and 25% non-urban operators considered that users require some type of training, especially in using the Internet.

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 specific training courses: Basic computer training is offered by some of the venues.

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.

These centres are open daily and till late in the evening and in addition to telecom based services offer many non-connectivity based services such as photocopying, printing, typesetting, laminating and telephone services required by people. The centres are run efficiently and although the number of computers was found to be insufficient to meet the demand (Discussions with operators) the venue did not turn away users as they were in working order. It was observed that the operators were courteous and had good public relations. For these reasons, it was found that some of the users were willing to pay for the services and in fact spend even two to three hours at the venue browsing the web.

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.

Almost all the premises visited were too small and cramped for people to hang out. But the ability to use ICT services gives the users a certain degree of self confidence. However there are Internet cafés in the metropolis that have an excellent ambience, are spacious and provide additional facilities such as space to relax and 'hang out'. But it is mostly tourists and upper income groups that patronize these 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.

The availability of digital ICT facilities has enabled the development of community web sites devoted to entertainment, and enabled users to build virtual communities especially with the Sri Lanka diaspora, engage in discussion, and post online resources. The community is also able to participate in ecommerce as there are a number of sites that offer free advertising space that people can take advantage of. A study of Internet cafés in Colombo (Vidanage, 2004) showed how the

Tamil diaspora had forged links with the local Tamil community using computer-mediated communications.

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?

The users did not have problems relating to trust in these venues.

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)

As these are purely profit oriented ventures, Internet cafes did not go beyond providing access to Internet based services. The proposed health and financial services of EasySeva will meet critical information needs of communities.

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)?

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 **3.5 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 expansion of infrastructure facilities consequent to changes in the regulatory regimes, investments in telecommunication facilities leading to more and better services as well as the higher level of economic activity following the implementation of development programmes especially in lagging regions including the former conflict ridden area of the Eastern Province should open up more business opportunities for these venues. The anticipated government control of the entire Northern Province will boost economic activities providing a further impetus to growth. Proposals have been made to provide

state of the art IT centres in these areas.

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 **3.5 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.

These types of venues operate within the existing legal and regulatory framework described in this report. Liberalisation, encouragement given to private investment and small scale entrepreneurship will have positive impacts on these venues, especially the EasySeva.

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 **3.5 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.

As there is encouragement for private sector involvement in the ICT sector there is political support for this type of venue. Foreign investment is encouraged in the sector.

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)?

The Internet cafés are not in any network but the EasySeva is a part of a franchise.

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.

EasySeva is the result of a private public partnership among Qualcomm, Dialog Telekom, US Agency for International Development, the National Development Bank and the Synergy Strategies Group of USA.

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 fiscal year

Local currency name amount (local currency)

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

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		
Education		
Other (name)		
Public libraries		

Other Comments:

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 (name)
Other (name)
Other (name)

Other Comments:

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?

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?

All services are charged and fees are determined in accordance with the costs incurred but taking into account the competition from venues that provide similar services or some services as communication centers.

4.3.5.6 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)		
Building infrastructure		
Utilities		
Staff Training		

Computers/technology	
other (name)	
other (name)	
other (name)	
other (name)	
other (name)	
other (name)	
other (name)	
Total	100%

Other Comments:

The data given above relates to an EasySeva center in the Polonnaruwa district. Other operators were not willing to divulge information.

4.3.5.7 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?

There are plans to extend the number of centres beyond that planned originally.

4.3.6 Case example for venue 3: Venue Name

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.

Insert Case Example and Photo here.

Price schedule at the Matale EasySeva centre

Workstation at the Matale EasySeva centre

Users playing games at an Internet Cafe

4.4 Venue 4: Specialized Information Centres -Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres

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?

These two venues, the Vidatha Resource Centres and Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres have been established to provide information to defined communities to improve their livelihood activities. The former, under the Ministry of Science and Technology aims at introducing and disseminating information on appropriate, low cost technology to micro and small scale entrepreneurs while the latter, which is an extension activity of the Department of Agriculture, targets the farming community.

Both these venues have recognized that the majority does not have computer literacy, that they will not come to a venue to use it regularly, and that information has to be routed via an intermediary. The Vidatha Resource Centre has adopted the strategy of reaching the targeted population through community mobilization and the establishment of Vidatha Societies at the Grama Niladhari (lowest level of administration) division. Information is given directly to the community by the technical and field officers while training is also conducted at community level. This programme has the backing of three national level research institutes –the Institute of Industrial Technology, Arthur C. Clarke Centre

for Modern Technologies and the National Engineering Research and Development Centre.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centre is the cyber extension arm of information dissemination to farmers carried out through scheduled visits, mass media, video programmes, posters and printed material, field demonstrations and field clinics. These knowledge centres use the electronic media to disseminate information to extension workers as well as to farmers. The availability of research based content in local languages is one of the advantages that these centres have. The setting up of these centres had also been a response to the discontinuation of the agricultural extension service that had provided intermediary services to farmers. However it is questionable as to whether the cyber extension unit can completely replace the extension officers.

The model adopted by these two venues appears to be effective in disseminating information to disadvantaged communities whose literacy levels are low, who do not have the capacity to take advantage of digital technology to access information, have time constraints and are not information literate. The critical issue facing underserved communities is that of increasing productivity, improving the quality of their products and moving out of poverty and subsistence level existence by increasing their income levels. The availability of content that is generated by the relevant national level research institutes and its dissemination by these two venues leads to an improvement in the quality of life low income families through increase in productivity and income**s.**

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)?

Both types of venues are located in semi-urban areas that have connectivity and other infrastructure facilities. However the Vidatha Resource Centres have formed Vidatha Societies at the lowest administrative level and both venues have outreach programmes to reach those in the periphery.

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.

There is no age, gender, or class discrimination in access to these venues. The services are available to

all population groups and are especially directed at the rural population. The use of the services provided by the Vidatha Resource Centres by women is particularly high.

While all the main Vidatha centres provide digital ICT services only a very few of their village level societies have ICT services and as such the majority still does not have access to digital ICT primarily because of the lack of infrastructure facilities.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are equipped with the necessary hardware and connectivity and are in charge of trained personnel. Access to ICT is only from the centre but the availability of a hot line enables farmers located anywhere in the country to obtain an immediate response to their queries.

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.

The main objective of the Vidatha Resource Centre (VRC) is to transfer technology that is easy to use and cost effective by disseminating information that would assist those who are at subsistence level to commence or improve current livelihood activities. The Centres identify local resources that could be used as raw material for income generation, and introduce new equipment to their users. The type of information dissemination programmes conducted varies according to the skill levels of the members, their aptitude and interest. In 2007, 156 technology transfer programmes were conducted benefiting 3082 men and women. Over 50% of the technology transfer programmes are accessed by adults, a majority of whom are women. However women show interest in technology that is related to food processing and they have to be encouraged and motivated to access skill development in non traditional areas. Youth are the major beneficiaries of the computer training programmes that are offered by the VRC.

The VRC also uses the traditional media, the radio to popularize its programmes. A three minute programme is broadcast daily in Sinhala and Tamil and a 30 minute programme is broadcast every fortnight. Science and Technology Officers conduct the programme while successful entrepreneurs are introduced with the primary objective of recognizing the successful and motivating others.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres use digital technology to take the agricultural extension services that were an integral activity of the Department of Agricultural to another level. The

intermediary, the Agricultural Instructor, trained in the use of digital technology uses the knowledge gained to develop locally appropriate information products for the farming community. 'Progressive' farmers are also trained in using the technology.

The Vidatha programme and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres aim at disseminating information on research based appropriate technology by using a human interface and via different media that can be understood by the literate, the neo literate and the illiterate, the progressive and the not so progressive farmers and entrepreneurs.

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.

Except for the very low fee that is charged by the Vidatha societies for membership and some services, access to all services including computer training are provided free of charge. The services provided by the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are also free of charge.

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?

No registration is required to use the services of the two centres, but there is a nominal membership fee charged from Vidatha Society members.

Indicate amount in local currency Rs. 10 per month

Equivalent in US Dollars: $0.10

Date of estimate 27th June 2008

and local currency name Sri Lanka 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:

Vidatha Resource Centres offer similar types of services but variations occur due to location specific conditions. The information disseminated through the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres varies according to the agro climatic zones and cropping patterns.

4.4.2.5 Geographic distribution

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

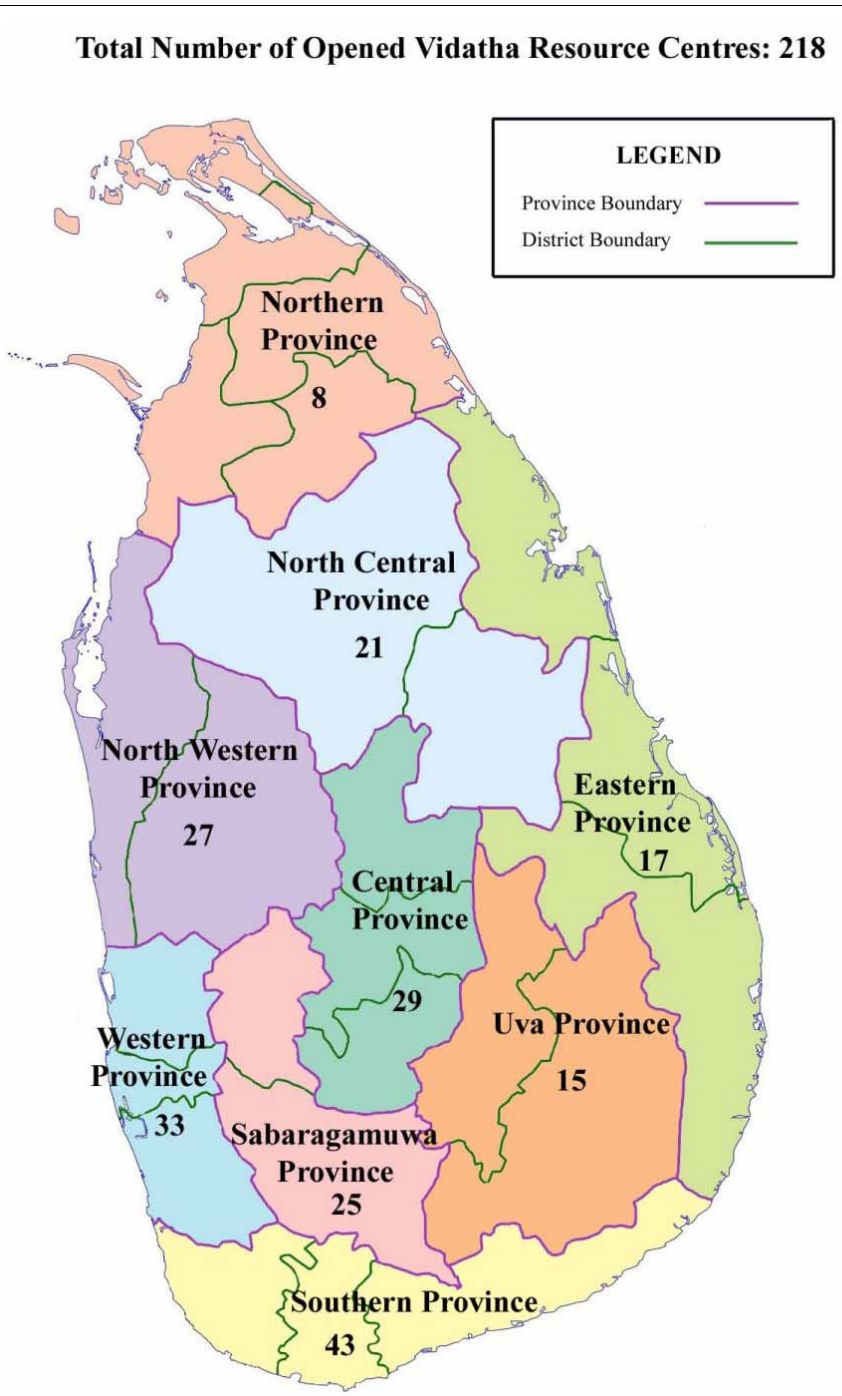
Complement any details not already included in section 2.1: Venue Selection.

The Vidatha Resource Centres function in seven of the nine provinces and in 22 of the 25 districts. Of these the lowest number is in Colombo followed by conflict affected districts. Only two have been established in the estate sector because the majority of families are engaged in plantation work. These centres are to be set up in all the 352 Divisional Secretariat Divisions in the country.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres, which were established in 2006, are operative in 19 of the 25 districts. Except for one centre all the others are in non urban areas.

4.4.2.5.1 Map

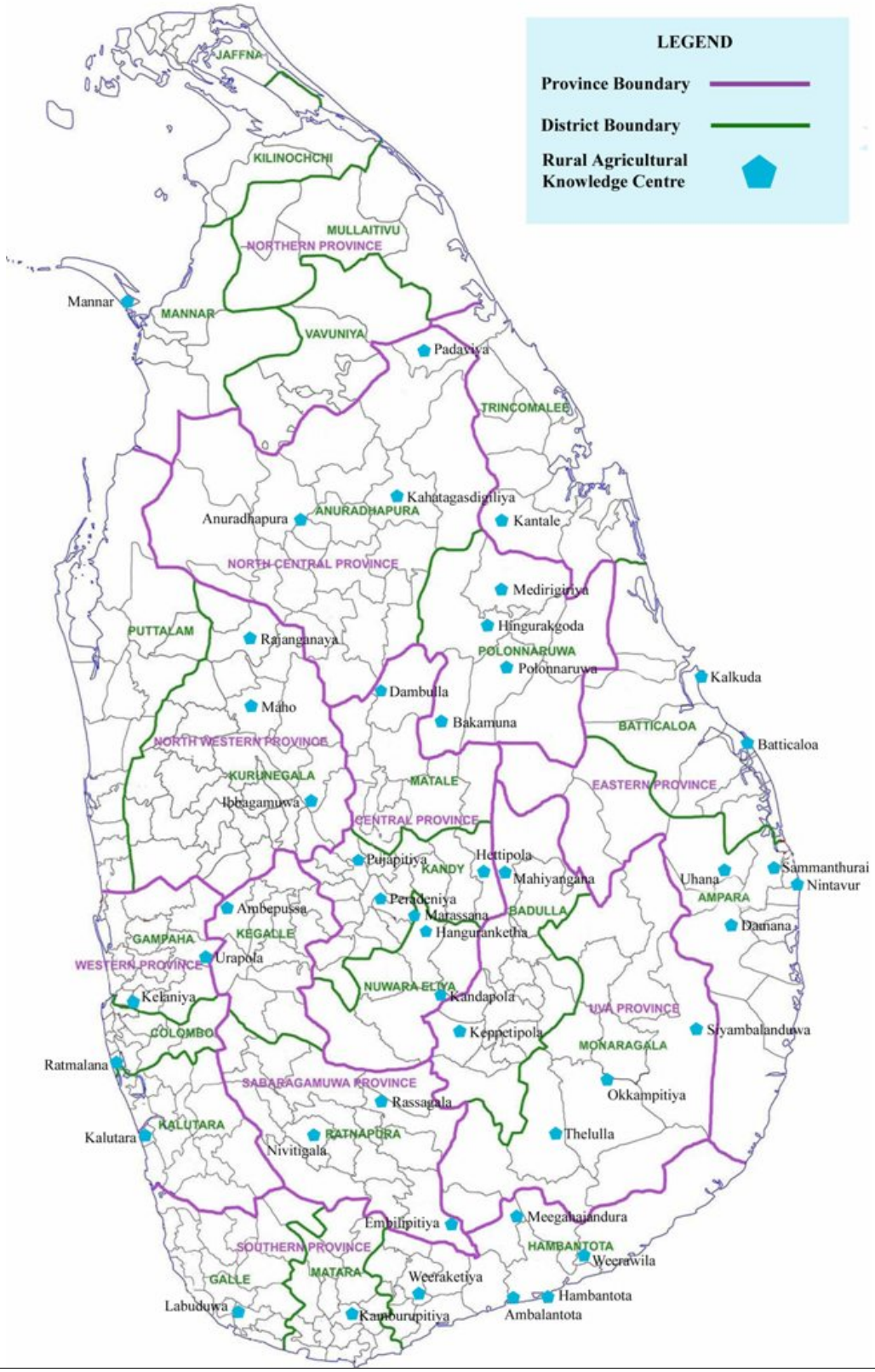
If available, insert a map that displays the geographic distribution of this type of venue in the country (expand to the size you need).



Description of map:

Map of Sri Lanka showing the province and district boundaries and number of Nenasala centres in each province

Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres



Description of map:

Map of Sri Lanka showing the locations of Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres

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, social appropriation of technology)?

Although poor, and sometimes illiterate and most often not exposed to information and formal skill development programmes the micro entrepreneurs have been engaged in productive activities and therefore have a degree of skills and understanding that facilitate the knowledge transfer process. The information dissemination methods used are effective (observed by the researcher at one programme that taught the use of rice flour in making bread and pastries) and the participants had the capacity to absorb the new information disseminated to them. The content is specific and relevant to each group. Both the entrepreneurs and the farmers have got accustomed to consulting the venue staff to obtain information relating to their livelihood activities.

Many have appropriated the technology to their advantage to become successful entrepreneurs. The users have trust in the technology as their usefulness has been demonstrated and publicity given to entrepreneurs who have applied the technological processes for their enterprise with the aim of recognizing the successful and motivating others.

With a history of agricultural extension work behind them, the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres provide locally relevant content to the farming community, which it has used to increase productivity and revenue. The farmers have trust in the technology offered to them especially because of the long association they have had with the Department of Agriculture and its field officers.

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.

Vidatha Resource Centres a have a full time Science & Technology Officer in charge, a full time a Field Officer (for community mobilization, identification of needs and field work) and a Computer Operator to impart basic computer literacy and to maintain the local data base. Temporary staff and resource

personnel are hired when a specific need arises. All centres do not have their full quota of staff.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centre is staffed by an Agricultural Instructor and field officers. A common complaint was the insufficient number of field officers to go to remote areas to disseminate information.

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.

The Technical Officer of the Vidatha Resource Centre and the Agricultural Instructor of the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are both graduates recruited according to the qualifications laid down by the government and are therefore competent to perform the duties assigned to them and help users. In fact their main responsibility is to assist those who come to their centres and users in the community.
The full time staff that is recruited to the VRC is provided a three day orientation on the concept of the Vidatha movement, community mobilization techniques and the basic services of the VRC. The Vidatha staff that was interviewed showed a high degree of motivation and commitment to the programme and to meeting the needs of the Vidatha Society members.

The graduate Agricultural Instructors who manage the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres have participated in training programmes in Sri Lanka and overseas in agricultural extension work while the Department of Agriculture has conducted training courses to improve their computer skills and the use of multimedia. They too displayed much enthusiasm for the programme and were highly motivated to assist the farmers.

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 (*Vidatha Resources Centres*)	*Comments*
1. Access to Information	Mainly related to micro and small scale

	enterprises
2. Internet, Email	
3. Training	Basic computer training
4.Technology transfer-simple, appropriate technology	Through training, demonstration
5. Referral to R & D institutions, certification	National level agencies
6. Entrepreneurship training	Conducted by VRC staff and other resource persons
7. Marketing support	Through direct intervention with supermarket chains, providing publicity through radio and television programmes and holding and participating in exhibitions
8. Credit facilities	Has arranged for loans at concessionary rates of interest through the state banks
9. Awareness raising on utilization of local resources and organic waste	
10. Development of data bases	Local resources, society members, products
(Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres)	
1. Internet, email	
2. IMM CD ROMs and Information Database of Various Agriculture Crops	
3. Training	

4.	On site development of low cost audio visual material	
5.	Web based information	<www.agridept.gov.lk>
6.	Farmer database	To establish direct links between the farmer and the wholesale buyer
7.	Toll free telephone consultancy service	Farmers can have direct contact with agricultural researchers

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

All the Vidatha Resource Centres have similar programmes but the content may change according to the needs of each locality and the resource base. The services of Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres may vary according to agro climatic zones, the specific locality, and the type of crop(s) cultivated.

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.

The Vidatha programme is targeted at poor and low income households with the objective of transferring new technology that would provide them the opportunity to engage in micro, small and medium enterprises using local resources. A majority of participants in the societies, and hence in training programmes, is women. Additional income derived from engaging in producing for the market is reported to have had a positive impact on the household with the emergence many family enterprises. Computer literacy programmes are provided free of charge.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres reach the farming community through their dissemination programmes, which traditionally had been provided to farmers through Agricultural Extension Officers. This information has been digitized and the Agricultural Instructors, and field workers now make this information accessible to farmers who can also learn at their own pace and convenience if they so desire.

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:

Due to infrastructure deficiencies in rural areas offline methods of information delivery using CDs in local languages prepared by the Ministry and its science and technology institutions and those developed by other government departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Industrial Development Board, and non governmental agencies and individuals are used. Information from the Internet is collated and disseminated in local languages. A project is underway to document indigenous technology and upgrade it. It is proposed to have an online database of this technology.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres contain technical information on each crop mainly on CDs. Each CD has a separate link for video films pertaining to each crop. Most of the CDs contain a variety of multimedia presentations (video, sound /voice-overs, animations, graphics and text). All media are interactive enabling users to review the sections, as they desire. Each page is printable and farmers are able to get a print on request.

Location specific audio visual material, and a farmer database (name of the farmer, type of crop, extent, expected yield have been developed. There is also a database of research papers and articles published by local authors.

The farmers and the general public can access the web site <www.agridept.gov.lk> to obtain agriculture related information as well as agricultural statistics, news and a list of recently published books. The users of this venue have instant access by phone and email to agricultural research officers located at the Agricultural Research Station at Gannoruwa, Peradeniya to assist in problem solving.

Local Initiatives to build needed content:

Agricultural Instructors have been disseminating information to farmers using traditional methods of dissemination. The Department has trained them in the use of new technology and they are now involved in developing location specific information, identifying crop related problems that occur during each season for review by agricultural research officers.

***Source**: Survey*

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.

Users can access web based information that is available in local languages. In addition the government call centres can be accessed from these venues.

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)?

(iv) 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 majority of users of these venues use it for educational purposes – to obtain information on new processes, and products. The Vidatha centres provide computer education to youth of the area. The survey findings indicate that 59% were engaged in this activity.

4.4.3.8 Number, type, and frequency of users

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

The majority of users of the Vidatha Resource Centres were women while men were more frequent users in the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres. By age group those between 15 and 35 years predominated but there were substantial numbers in the age group 36-60 as well. A large number had studied up to high school level while there were three in the sample who had a university degree. Almost all the users in urban and non urban locations had a low or medium income while 62.5% in non urban areas were considered to be of low social status while the majority in urban areas had an average or middle socio economic status. The majority of urban and non urban users use the venue frequently.

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.

The survey results show that the majority had the capacity use the centres as only 25% of general users and 40% of users of ICT based services said that they require training. However all the operators of Vidatha centres stated that they users require training in using ICT. The centres are focused on assisting those who are not information literate in obtaining the information they need to carry on successful livelihood activities.

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: Vidatha Resource Centres:

Training courses are conducted either at the main office or at a community venue depending on the type of course. The training courses include

1. General technology transfer programme – i. Food technology ii. Manufacture of dustless chalk iii. Low cost housing technology iv. Manufacture of cement/soil building blocks v. Manufacture of white coconut oil extraction
2. Special programmes – e.g. Manufacture of plates, cups and saucers using banana leaves and its trunk, fuel saving wood hearth, low cost housing **(**etc omit.), improvement of quality of the products of Vidatha entrepreneurs.

   The Ministry of Science Technology issues a Good Manufacturing Practice Certificate.

   It is expected to obtain certification of the Sri Lanka Standards Institute after the entrepreneurs gain experience and the quality of their products improves.

ICT specific training courses: Computer literacy and more advanced courses are provided on request.

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.

Vidatha Resource Centres: As the training courses are conducted and information disseminated in the community the members have little difficulty in participating in them. It has transpired that the majority of participants in these training programmes are women. Therefore the training programmes are conducted at times that are convenient to them. Women make substantial contributions to family survival and engage in income generation in different ways while performing domestic tasks. Any skill enhancement that can be used to increase productivity and earnings, and save time would contribute to an improvement of the quality of life of women and their families.

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.

The participants of the training programmes value the services provided to them and are confident of their usefulness. People do not have the luxury of 'hanging out' at these venues, but the time spent at training programmes and at regular meetings of the society give them the space to discuss common issues. This was highlighted at the focus groups discussions where the participants agreed that meeting at the venue provides them the opportunity to understand common problems and arrive at solutions through cooperation. Some of the difficulties faced with the venue related to location of the venue often at a government office and the hours of opening which followed the office hours of the government.. Researcher observations showed that while the siting of all the urban venues surveyed was good the siting of half the venues in the non urban was not good.

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.

The Vidatha programme aims at developing the entrepreneurial capacity of low income people by introducing them to, and training them in the use of new technology utilizing locally available resources. The programme has been successful in developing a large number of small and medium scale entrepreneurs. Some of the products that have been developed are dehydration of vegetable and fruit found in abundance and wasted in villages, manufacture of plates, cups and saucers using banana leaves, manufacture of dustless chalk, value added products from the *kitul* palm (being undertaken in most of the districts that has the palm), production of fuel saving wood hearths, making bakery products using rice flour (substituting for wheat flour which sells at a premium). As a special project *kitul* processing villages have been set up to enable those engaged in the trade to function as a group. Low cost houses have also been constructed using the technology transferred to them.

Although the farmers are not Internet savvy a selected group of farmers are being trained to use

digital technology. Nevertheless they use the information that is provided to them to decide on the type of crop to grow, to identify markets, verify prices and plan for the cultivation season.

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 participants of the Vidatha programmes that disseminate information on the utilization of available resources value the services provided to them. The awareness raising efforts of the Ministry through radio, television and print media give the programme high visibility and the fact that this is a government project makes it acceptable to users. The participants of the computer training programmes appreciate the ability to gain proficiency in the use of new digital technology.

The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are also well accepted by the community they serve as this service is backed by a government institution that had been disseminating information to the farmer community and addressing their problems over a period of time.

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)

The venues could provide access to the general information the users require by connecting with other relevant information providers.

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)?

The Vidatha programme is government sponsored and implemented with funds allocated to the Ministry of Science and Technology by the Treasury. It has the personal backing of the Minister in charge. As a number of incentives are offered for small scale entrepreneurs and the programme benefits from the expertise of several institutions its chances of success are high. However in the event of a change of government or the minister there is no guarantee that the programme will maintain the same momentum.

As non-plantation agriculture engages a third of the workforce and there has been and there is emphasis

on improving the productivity of the agricultural sector to increase farmer welfare (as well as that of the consumer) successive governments have invested in the agricultural sector by funding research and, among others, disseminating information to farmers. The government has a ten year plan to transform subsistence agriculture to a commercially oriented and highly productive sector which will improve competitiveness and increase exports. In the context of escalating food prices and a looming food crisis the government has renewed its efforts to increase agricultural production. The study found that it was not only the farmers that came to the centre but also householders to obtain information especially on home gardening. The Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres therefore are expected to play a crucial role in increasing agricultural production and productivity.

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 3.5 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 overall fiscal strategy of the government is to promote pro-poor and pro-growth strategies to reduce poverty and inter and intra regional economic disparities. The focus of the government on implementing projects to revitalize the rural economy and reducing taxation on locally produced goods and providing a range of other incentives will have a positive impact on this type of venue as it focuses on local entrepreneurship development. As a result there will be a greater demand for the information services provided by of the Vidatha centres.

The domestic agricultural sector is also a priority. In the face of rapidly escalating food prices, the current emphasis is on 'grow more food'. As other services required to enhance agricultural production such as irrigation, marketing support are also being developed, both the local and national economic environment is conducive for the development Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres and for them to make an impact.

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 3.5 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 are no specific laws and regulations that apply to these types of venues. The regulations that

apply to digital ICT sector are applicable to them as well.

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 3.5 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 political support for these types of venues is high especially for the development of the agricultural sector.

Apart from economic imperatives the voter base of political parties is predominantly in rural agricultural areas and programme that directly affect them can garner political 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 is no formal network but a number of agencies participate in implementing the Vidatha programme. They are the Industrial Institute of Technology, Arthur C. Clarke Centre for Modern Technologies, National Engineering Research and Development Centre. There was a high degree of cooperation between the Vidatha Resource Centre and the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centre surveyed.

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.

Some centres have established contacts with non governmental agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, super market chains and the Nenasala centres. A commercial bank has come forward to provide start up credit at concessionary rates of interest.

4.4.5 For publicly funded venues only: Revenue streams

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 .

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	Rs. 1,516,330,000.000	
Education		
Other (name)		
Vidatha Resource Centres	Rs. 300,950,000	Recurrent expenditure=Rs. 123,650,000 Capital expenditure=Rs. 177,300,000
Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres (budget not available separately)		

Source: http://www.treasury.gov.lk/BOM/nbd/nbdheadseven/133/133-2007EstimatesEnglish.pdf

4.4.5.3 Sources of funding

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

Sources of funding:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Government sources:	100	
International donors:		See below
National donors:		
User fees/services:	0	

Other Comments:

The government funds the Vidatha programme while the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are funded by international donors. Initially CARP funded 23 of the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres while the Rice Granary Area Programme (GAP) with International Rice Research Institute (IRRI),

Philippines funded the balance 22. Recurrent expenditure is met by the Department of Agriculture under the Head Agricultural Extension and Training. No separate heads are available for this programme.

4.4.5.4 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?

Funds are allocated by the Treasury to the Ministry of Science and Technology for the Vidatha Programme and to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Services and then to the Department of Agriculture.

4.4.5.5 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?

None

4.4.5.6 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.

Vidatha Resource Centres (2007 estimate)

Cost Categories for Operation:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Staff (salaries, benefits)	31.2	All Paid from the Ministry allocation
Building infrastructure	34.1	
Utilities	5.8	
Staff Training	No separate allocation	
Computers/technology	No separate allocation, under acquisition of assets	
Services		Negligible

Transfers	Negligible
Total	

http://www.treasury.gov.lk/BOM/nbd/nbdheadseven/133/133-2007EstimatesEnglish.pdf

Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres

Cost Categories for Operation:	Approximate % of total budget	Comments
Staff (salaries, benefits)	NA	Department of Agriculture with funds allocated by the central government
Building infrastructure	NA	Department of Agriculture
Utilities	NA	Paid by the Divisional Secretariat Division
Staff Training	NA	Under international funding
Computers/technology	NA	Under international funding
Services	NA	
Transfers	NA	
Total		

Source: http://www.treasury.gov.lk/BOM/nbd/nbdheadseven/285/285-2007EstimatesEnglish.pdf

4.4.5.7 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 Vidatha programme is due to conclude in 2008, but it is likely that the programme will be extended for a further period. As the Rural Agricultural Knowledge Centres are a part of the agricultural extension activities of the Department of Agriculture and due to the priority given to agriculture funding will be provided by the government to continue the programme.

4.4.6 Case example for venue 3: Venue Name

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.

***Ganga Ihala* Vidatha Resource Centre**

The first activity of the VRC was to develop a data base on the area that included natural and other resources and the needs of the *Ganga Ihala* community. The training programmes were developed based on the data. This is an area where the *kitul* palm grows and the centre conducted a training programme for the *kitul* tappers to introduce a new treatment (kasper) that would increase the yield of the palm tree. Some of the other training programmes that were conducted were basic computer and hardware training; designing and making antennas; using a yoghurt-making incubator; and preparation of drinks using the fruit available in the locality.

Appropriation of technology is demonstrated by a ninth grader who devised an electronic ballot box. This device has been sent to the National Science Foundation to be assessed while another who followed the antenna designing and production course has started his own small enterprise. Start up capital is available from the state banks at very low rates of interest.

Vidatha Resource Centre Name Board

An instructor explaining a production process to a group of participants at a training programme

A user at the Matale Centre

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?

The study showed that despite the emphasis placed on the use of information for socio economic development the highest demand by users of the venues studied was for information on current events followed by information that is required for educational purposes and entertainment. Survival or 'functional' information that is required for livelihood improvement and on administrative and legal requirements that have to be complied with primarily for engaging in livelihood activities and personal purposes were not readily available at these venues necessitating people to expend a considerable amount of resources to obtain such information. There was a dearth of location specific information that could be used for improving incomes and the local economy.

5.1.2 Where people go

Where do people go for public access to information and communication in the country, especially underserved communities?

Usage statistics indicate that the majority of the population and underserved communities do not use public space to access information (less than a tenth of the total population of the country use these venues). Of the four venues studied, the public libraries attract the largest number of users. In addition, people obtain information from two other sources, namely institutions-government, non government and private; and individuals who act in their official capacity and are both service providers and information providers such as the Grama Sevaka, the Family Health Worker,

Agricultural Instructor, Samurdhi Officer, and informal contacts such as the monk of the village temple. Younger family members are also consulted.

People also use the information disseminated through traditional communication media such as the radio and television. Government call centres and the increasing number of government agencies that have a web presence, and the content that is being generated in local languages provide an opportunity for communities to access 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).

Physical access emerged as one of the critical factors in the use of public access to information venues. The location of public libraries was found to be better than the other venues but the siting of several rural libraries was not satisfactory. The siting of the government sponsored Nenasala centres had been done without adequate attention being paid to providing easy access to older age groups, and within easy reach of a majority of users. This impacted particularly on the use of such venues by women and the disabled. Terrain too posed challenges to access.

It was found that the information literacy levels of users as well as non users with whom discussions were held were low. Their capacity to look for information, especially in ICT enabled venues was limited. While most of the users of commercially run venues had the ability to use the venue the capacity of other users to access ICT services was reported to be low.

The legal and regulatory environment in the country for the provision of ICT enabled public access to information venues was favourable. Foreign direct investment in the telecommunications sector has increased resulting in the development of infrastructure, contributing to the growth of land line and mobile telephones but due to the low threshold penetration is still comparatively low. However the increasing number of mobile users could serve as a base for the greater adoption of IT.

5.1.4 Role of ICT

What is the role of ICT in public access to information and communication? What untapped opportunities exist?

The potential of ICT to provide better access to information to the public is extremely high. Three barriers that have to be overcome are lack of connectivity, low capability and paucity of content. The venue that has the most potential to provide access to information using ICT is the Nenasala centre primarily because it has connectivity and has the ability to tap into the available content and will benefit from the egovernment programme when it is completed. However the capacity of operators to reach out to underserved communities, and identify their information needs were limited. The potential to further enhance the information dissemination capability of specialized information centres also exists. ICT can be used to develop local databases on resources that would facilitate the development of small and medium enterprises. However application of ICT was found to be very poor in public libraries although automation of back office functions has commenced. Any strategy to provide relevant information and an efficient service to the public should include upgrading the public library system through the use of ICT. This is a challenging task given the poor physical facilities, low computer skills and low political will for the development of libraries. But the investment of resources in public libraries will give a high return.

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?)

The study clearly showed that there are efficiency gains to be made if the information that is

scattered and largely disorganized is organized focusing on the user and adopting strategic measures to overcome barriers to access. Investing in the capacity development of information providers, enhancing the information literacy of communities to enable them to identify the most appropriate source for the information they require, and accelerating the present government programme of providing e-government services would be some of the areas in which additional resources could be invested.

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?

While the existence of appropriate legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks that provide for the establishment and operation of public access information venues was important the study found that leadership was a critical factor in the success or failure of venues in achieving their primary objective of meeting the information needs of the communities they serve. Operators that had superior leadership qualities had overcome resource constraints to a great extent and their innovativeness had drawn the communities to the venue to use its service. It was seen that empathy, adopting a participatory approach to the development of the venue, establishing a mechanism to get feedback from the community, and forging links and cooperating with agencies that generate information that is vital for the people are factors that contribute to success in meeting the information needs of the people. Digital ICT can facilitate this process by building up of networks within localities, communities, and across livelihood activities. Issue based information networks are also of critical importance.

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?

One of the weaknesses of the local public access to information landscape was the lack of awareness, linkages and coordination between and among information providers. In this context

ICT can play a significant role by connecting information providers in an electronic network. Mobile applications could be developed to reach 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. No in depth evaluations have been undertaken at any of the public access information venues. The National Library and Documentation Services Board has developed standards for libraries but they relate only to inputs. Evaluations have to be carried out in the context of the administrative framework within which the venues operate and a set of indicators used to assess how the venues meet the information needs of the community.

2. A striking feature of the public access to information venue scenario is the lack of collaboration within similar types of venues and across venues. Operators complained of lack of resources but except for one or two none of the operators of the venues studied were even aware of other similar venues in the locality and had made no attempt to collaborate with each other to meet community information needs. The venues functioned as 'stand alone' units. Thus collaboration and sharing of resources is imperative especially when resources are scarce.

3. While ICT4D has merits, the study showed that the majority of users did not access development information at the venues studied. Publicly funded venues attempted to put the users in a 'straight jacket' and discouraged the use of Internet facilities for 'non-legitimate' purposes but the commercial venues did not place such restrictions. Therefore the single ICT4D model of public access to information should go beyond to meet the social needs of communities as well. Encouraging venue operators to be more entrepreneurial may result in a greater use of technology. Further research is recommended in this area.

4. It is imperative that the public library system is revitalized by making the provision of public libraries mandatory and ensuring a regular financial allocation, establishing Provincial Library

Services Boards where they have not been set up, recruiting professional librarians and filling existing vacancies and upgrading service conditions.

5. Automation of libraries should be undertaken on a priority basis and the staff provided the required skills.

6. Multi stakeholder awareness raising programmes should be conducted with a view to garnering political support for libraries and other venues, sourcing more funds and encouraging people to use these facilities.

7. The Nenasala Centre programme should be evaluated before setting up additional centres.

8. While computer literacy programmes do provide a skill development opportunity for youth of low income families, greater attention should be paid to meeting the information needs of underserved communities.

9. Content development initiatives should be based on needs assessments to capture the critical location specific information needs. The involvement of the community, to the extent possible, will give ownership to the project and prevent it from being a purely top down exercise.

10. Databases developed by specialized information venues, especially the Vidatha programme should be in the public domain and made available to other venues while they should meet the general information needs of their users or provide referral services.

6 Appendices

Please attach on the next pages any other relevant information, resources or materials that can help understand public access information venues in the country.

6.1 List of Countries Included in the Research

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Brazil
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Egypt
Georgia
Honduras
Indonesia
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Malaysia
Moldova
Mongolia
Namibia
Nepal
Peru
Philippines
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Turkey
Uganda

6.2 Overview of Research Design

The Center for Information & Society (CIS), in partnership with the Information School of the University of Washington, has as part of its core mission the investigation of how inequities in our global society can be reduced through improved access to information and communication technologies (ICT). As part of its research activities, CIS has brought together interdisciplinary teams of researchers to examine the needs, readiness and success factors for public access to information and communication venues through digital ICTs in 24 countries around the world.

Project Goal:

- Understand information needs, and opportunities to strengthen institutions that offer public access to information and communication, especially to underserved communities, and especially through the use of digital ICT: What are the needs, barriers, opportunities and success factors for public access to information and communication to help human development in countries around the world? For the purpose of this study, research is primarily focused on Libraries and Other institutional venues for which access to information has a significant role. This research includes understanding venues where digital ICT is currently offered, *and* also where ICT is not currently offered but there is potential and strong institutional support to include ICT (for example, some public libraries where digital ICT services are currently not offered, but there would be strong interest in offering them).

Libraries include public libraries and other types of libraries that are open to the public. **Other venues** include national initiatives that offer public access to information, either with ICTs (telecentres, cybercafés and the like) or without ICTs (post offices, community centers and similar) and are of significant importance in local contexts.

Project Purpose:

- Inform policy and funding decisions: Inform funders and government decision makers about future program direction and funding allocations

- Contribute to public knowledge: Disseminate results of in-depth country and comparative analyses, including research design and analytical models

To inform project design, CIS adapted the Real Access framework (Bridges.org), analyzing public access to information and communication through a total of 14 research categories grouped under the dimensions of **Access**, **Capacity & Relevance** and **Enabling Environments**. Adaptation was done in consultation with research partners around the world for the purposes of this study.

The implementation of this project is organized as a two-phase process:

Phase 1: Nov 07 – Feb 15, 2008

During Phase 1, a **Draft Country Report** will be prepared by local research teams in each country. The Draft Country Report includes a Country Profile, a Country Assessment and an early draft of Lessons & Recommendations.

The *Country Profile* is a collection of 50 general descriptive data points drawn from readily accessible sources; CIS pre-populates the reports for each country, and offers them for validation and comments by local teams. Country Profiles provide primarily statistical data that is intended to offer a quick snapshot of each country, including geography, political environment, demographics, economy, education and ICT infrastructure.

Using a common approach to define research processes, local teams will conduct initial fieldwork to inform a *Country Assessment*. The Country Assessment includes both a scan of

information needs, especially for underserved communities; and an assessment of public access to information and communication venues (with or without digital ICT services) and their environment, resulting in a better understanding of gaps, opportunities, and readiness of public access to information initiatives in each country.

During Phase 1, each country team will also complete an early draft of *Success Factors and Recommendations* focused on strengthening public access to information in the country, and identify potential themes and issues for further study in Phase 2.

Phase 1b: Feb 15-Mar 15, 2008

During this period, CIS will conduct a preliminary comparative analysis based on the Draft Country Reports from all participating countries, and suggest feedback and guidance for Phase 2 of the study. The comparative analysis will look for salient trends, emergent themes, patterns, and threads across regions. During this period, next steps will be determined for in-depth country research for Phase 2.

Phase 2: March 2008 – August 15, 2008

Phase 2 will involve a deeper assessment of public access to information and ICTs across all 24 countries. In particular, CIS is interested in deeper probing of the emerging themes and scenarios identified in Phase 1. A **Final Country Report** will include high level analysis, success factors and recommendations to strengthen public access to information and ICTs in each country. Final comparative analysis across countries, with analytical models and scenarios, will be completed by CIS after receiving the Final Country Reports.

Findings will be disseminated publically through reports, academic publications, conferences and consortiums. Each country team is expected to produce at least one publishable paper on their research and findings, plus additional papers emerging out of the comparative analysis and global findings. Publications will be part of the public domain, with the CIS web site, partners' sites, and other publication channels to be identified.

6.3 Annotated Country Profile (Form 2)

Attach here an updated copy of the annotated Country Profile (Form 2).

#	**Question**	**Definition**	**Source**	**Data**	**How accurate is this data point, based on your team's knowledge? (Highly Accurate, Somewhat Accurate, Not Accurate)**	Optional: Please comment on the accuracy of this data point (e.g., more accurate or more current data points and sources, explanation of accuracy rating)	**What is the importance of this data point to our central research questions? (High, Medium, Low)**	**Please comment on the importance of this data point to the research questions. How does this data point relate to public ICT access? What are the possible interpretations of this fact with respect to public ICT access? What is the context around this fact that leads to a deeper understanding of the local public ICT landscape? *(Please comment only on data points that are relevant to public ICT access based on your knowledge. For all other fields please type "no comment".)***	Optional: Please provide notes on data point analysis (e.g., sources)
Geography		-	-	-					

1	Size of the country (total km^2)	area (km^2)	2007 CIA World Factbook	65,610	Highly Accurate		Medium	The development of infrastructure will be less costly than if the country was large.	
2	Size of the country (land)	area (km^2)	2007 CIA World Factbook	64,740	Not Accurate	62,705	Low	No comment	Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report for the year 2007
3	Size of the country (water)	area (km^2)	2007 CIA World Factbook	870	Not Accurate	2,905	Low	No comment	Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report for the year 2007
4	Physical features of the country	description	2007 CIA World Factbook	Mostly low, flat to rolling plain; mountains in south-central interior; lowest point: Indian Ocean 0 m. highest point: Pidurutalagala 2,524 m	Highly Accurate	Has diverse geographical settings such as mountains and valleys, a long coastline, wetlands, dry areas	Medium	The hilly areas present challenges for infrastructure development especially telecommunications and transportation facilities. People living in mountainous areas are relatively isolated due to inadequate services and more often than not are information deprived.	-

5	Labels for primary political/geographic divisions	(e.g. state or province, county, district)	2007 CIA World Factbook	Sri Lanka is divided into nine administrative provinces- Central, Eastern, North Central, Northern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, and Western. Each of the provinces is further divided into districts of which there is a total of 25.	Highly Accurate	The Northern and Eastern Provinces were merged temporarily in 1987 under the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. In 2006 the Supreme Court ruled that the two provinces should be de-merged.	High	A 1987 constitutional amendment set up elected Provincial Councils. While certain powers have been devolved to the provinces, some are held concurrently with the central government. The councils cannot exercise any power in respect of telephones, wireless, broadcasting, posts and telegraphs, which are under the central government. In addition to fiscal transfers from the central government and proceeds of loans advanced by the government and any other receipts the councils have power to generate revenue by way of taxation and other means. The provincial councils have	

								supervisory powers over the three tier local government institutions. The responsibility for public libraries lies with the latter. The public libraries are financed from the revenues obtained by the local authority and allocations made by the provincial council. However, except in large cities and some urban areas avenues for revenue collection are limited and libraries are cash strapped. In the circumstances the introduction of ICT into these venues would be extremely difficult.	

6	Top 5 largest cities by population (millions)	total population per city (2007 est.)	World Gazetteer	Colombo, 0.7; Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, 0.2; Moratuwa, 0.2; Jaffna, 0.05; Negombo, 0.1; Chāvākachchēri, 0.06; Kopay 0.07: Kotte, 0.1; Trincomalee, 0.05; Kandy, 0.1; Kalmunai, 0.1	Somewhat Accurate	Data for Jaffna and Trincomalee are based on a special enumeration carried out by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2007.	High	Most of the infrastructure facilities and services are available in these cities: higher investment has led to higher economic activities and output. Public access points such as libraries are well resourced compared with those in smaller towns, ICT access is available in some while there are plans to introduce ICT into others. On the other hand central government sponsored ICT access points such as the Nenasala and Vidartha centres, which provide subsidized services, are primarily established in non urban areas.	
7	National political map	map	University of Texas Archives	See worksheet "Figures_Charts"	Highly Accurate		Medium	No comment	
8	National terrain map	map	University of Texas Archives	See worksheet "Figures_Charts"	Highly Accurate		Low	No comment	

Political Environment									
1	Overview of country's political system	description	Economist Intelligence Unit	Sri Lanka's has an Executive presidency based on the French model. The executive branch consists of the president is the head of state, with executive powers. Elected for a period of six years by universal adult suffrage, the president may dissolve parliament 12 months after the last legislative election. The national legislature is a Unicameral legislature; the 225 members are directly elected for six years by a system of modified proportional representation. There has also been extensive development of local governments. Under the 13th amendment to the constitution, passed in November 1987, extensive powers have been devolved to nine directly elected provincial	Somewh at Accurate	Sri Lanka has an Executive presidency based on the French model. The executive branch consists of the president, who is the head of state, with executive powers. Elected for a period of six years by universal adult suffrage, the president may dissolve parliament 12 months after the last legislative election. The national legislature is a unicameral legislature consisting of 225 members with 196 directly elected and 29 appointed by each party according to the island wide proportional vote the party obtains. There has also been extensive development of local government. Under the 13th amendment to the constitution passed in 1987 a new layer of governance at the provincial level was introduced and powers were devolved to the	High	The Executive President has substantial powers. When both the executive and the legislature are from the same party, the system operates without problems because, as chief executive, the president wields control over parliament. When two different parties occupy the presidency and the parliament then, a tug of war usually results. Currently both the executive and the legislature belong to one party. The lead ICT Agency in the country is directly under the President, which facilitates programme implementation.	-

				councils with a view to meeting Tamil demands for greater autonomy; elections were held in seven provinces in July 2004 and delivered significant gains to the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA). Polls were held in the Eastern Province in 2008 but no provincial council elections have been held in the Northern Province.		directly elected nine provincial councils with a view to meeting the demands of the Tamil minority for greater autonomy. Another unit of devolution is the system of local government that had been functioning from 1936 (from ancient times in a different form). Currently there are municipal councils (constituted for cities and large towns), urban councils (for other urbanized areas) and pradeshiya sabha (for semi urban and rural areas).			

2	Overview of country's government structures	description	Economist Intelligence Unit	Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every six years. In the November 2005 presidential election the United Peope's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) candidate, Mahinda Rajapakse, secured a narrow victory, winning 50.3% of the popular vote. Parliamentary elections are due by October 2010. The 2004 parliamentary elections were won by the UPFA—a coalition of the PA and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front)—that secured 46.4% of the votes, gaining 105 seats in the 225-seat parliament, but fell short of a majority. In June 2005 the JVP left the government, reducing it to a minority. A split in the JVP has weakened the government further although the	Somewh at Accurate	Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every six years. In the November 2005 presidential election the United Peope's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) candidate, Mahinda Rajapakse, secured a narrow victory, winning 50.3% of the popular vote. Parliamentary elections are due by October 2010. The 2004 parliamentary elections were won by the UPFA—a coalition of the PA and the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, People's Liberation Front)—that secured 46.4% of the votes, gaining 105 seats in the 225-seat parliament, but fell short of a majority. The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) with 9 seats also supports the government while sitting in the opposition. In June 2005 the JVP left the government, reducing it to a minority. The main political	Medium	The proportional system of representation has resulted in political instability leading to wheeling and dealing. Bitter political rivalry has led to a dissipation of energy and the adoption of short term measures aimed at providing palliatives to pressing problems. Currently the government depends on small parties for survival. Crossovers are common and while this results in an increase in the number of ministers, changing of ministerial portfolios often leads to change in direction. Institutions too are affected when officers perceived to be loyal to or have been	-

				breakaway group provides tentative support to the government. The main political organizations are as follows: Governing coalition: the UPFA, now based mainly around the PA, which itself is built around the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Other main parties: the JVP-now split into two, the United National Party (UNP), the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).		organizations are as follows: Governing coalition: the UPFA, now based mainly around the PA, which itself is built around the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Other main parties: the United National Party (UNP), the JVP-now split into two, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). After the liberation of the Eastern Province, the breakaway LTTE group from the East entered mainstream politics as Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) and secured a majority in the Provincial Council at the elections held in 2008. The LTTE cannot be considered a part of the democratic structure as it operates outside mainstream politics through terrorist attacks on civilians		appointed by one set of politicians are replaced when another group comes into power. Political instability affects the public administration and all programmes e.g. the ICT road map underwent changes in leadership, focus and emphasis when the government changed in 2004.	

						and armed confrontations with the military.			
3	Total annual revenues for national government (billions US $)	2007 revenues (billions of US$)	2007 CIA World Factbook	Rs. 565 bn US$4.883	Somewh at Accurate		High	Transfers to the Provincial Councils and hence to local government entities that maintain libraries are dependent on the revenue generated by the government	Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka Statistical Abstract - 2007 http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract_2006/abstract2006/table%202007/CHAP%2011/AB11-02.pdf

4	Total annual expenditures for national government (billions US $)	2007 expenditures (billions of US$)	2007 CIA World Factbook	Rs 842 bn US$ 6.827	Somewhat Accurate		High	Development has been under duress with social and political instability overstretching successive governments to deal with multiple emergencies forcing many development efforts to be scaled down or deferred. It was during a period of relative lull in armed confrontations that many ICT infrastructure projects started and the current eSri Lanka programme was initiated.	Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka Statistical Abstract - 2007 http://www.statistics.gov.lk/Abstract_2006/abstract2006/table%202007/CHAP%2011/AB11-02.pdf
Demographics									
1	Total population	number of people (millions) (2006) (2007)	WB	19.8/20.01	Highly Accurate	20.01 (2007)	High	The small population limits the size of the market and the labour force.	Population estimates are based on a partial census conducted in 2001. The last complete census was in 1981.

2	% population non-urban	%	UNSTATS	79	Highly Accurate		High	Poverty in Sri Lanka is mainly a rural phenomenon. The Government has recognized rural development as a priority and expects to use 50% of the decentralized budget on infrastructure development such as roads. Extension of the road network will have a positive impact on access to ICT.	-
3	% population urban	%	UNSTATS	21	Highly Accurate		High	ICT investment is primarily in urban areas where there is a concentration of economic activities and population density is high.	-
4	Population breakdown by age	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	0-14 years: 24.3% (male 2,596,295/female 2,495,949) 15-64 years: 67.9% (male 6,947,310/female 7,259,271) 65 years and over: 7.8% (male 765,507/female 861,983)	Somewhat Accurate	The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided. Details are as follows: 0-14 years 26.6% (male 2,692,000/female 2,605,000) 15-64 years 70% (male 6,544,000/female 6,469,000) 65 years and over 6.4% (male	High	The majority of the population is in the 15-64 year age group, which is the most productive group. The majority in this group are also trainable. Providing information and ICT access could	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.

						590,000/female 684,000)		lead to productivity gains.	
5	% of Population 0-14 years old	% of population (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	24.30%	Somewhat Accurate	0-14 years 26.6%	High	14 years is when the compulsory education cycle ends. Tthe Government policy of providing computer education from year one will have a positive impact on computer literacy in the population.	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
6	number of males 0-14 years old	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	2,596,295	Somewhat Accurate	Males 0-14 years 2,692,000	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.

7	number of females 0-14 years old	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	2,495,949	Somewhat Accurate	Females 0-14 years 2,605,000	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
8	% of Population 15-64 years old	% of population (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	67.90%	Somewhat Accurate	15-64 years 67%	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
9	number of males 15-64 years old	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	6,947,310	Somewhat Accurate	Males 15-64 years 6,544,000	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.

10	number of females 15-64 years old	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	7,259,271	Somewhat Accurate	Females 15-64 years 6,771,000	High	There are gender issues in access to information, using public access venues, and ownership of ICT equipment.	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
11	% of Population 65 and older	% of population (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	7.80%	Somewhat Accurate	65 years and older 6.4%	High	This group will have special needs when using public access venues	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
12	number of males 65 and older	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	765,507	Somewhat Accurate	Males 65 years and older 590,000	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.

13	number of females years old	number of people (2007 est.)	2007 CIA World Factbook	861,983	Somewhat Accurate	Females 65 years and older 684,000	High	No comment	Department of Census and Statistics is the primary source of information for population data. The 2006 mid year population (estimate) differs from the data provided.
14	Population pyramid by age and sex	2007	US Census Bureau	See worksheet "Figures_Charts"	Highly Accurate		High	No comment	
15	% total population of each ethnicity	for each group >1% of total population (2000 Census)	2007 CIA World Factbook	Sinhalese 73.8%; Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%; Indian Tamil 4.6%; Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%; other 0.5%; unspecified 10%	Somewhat Accurate	Ethnic composition may have changed due to out migration and loss of lives due to conflict. Accurate statistics are not available.	Low	There is no discrimination in access to education and training but ethnicity surfaces gender issues in access to education and ICT e.g. women in the Muslim community have lower levels of literacy, are more conservative and are less mobile than women of other ethnic groups. Indian Tamil women in the plantations have low levels of literacy, have little or no education and lack control over resources	-

								including their earnings. Location of public access venues and content development have to address these inequalities.	
16	Languages spoken	for each group >1% of total population (2000 Census)	2007 CIA World Factbook	Sinhala (official and national language) 74%; Tamil (national language) 18%; other 8%	Not Accurate	Sinhala and Tamil are both official languages. English is the link language. 92% of the population speak Sinhala while 81% is able to read and write the language. Tamil is spoken by 20% while 15% are able to read and write. English is spoken by 15% of the population and 19% are able read and write. (Please note that this data are for 18 districts only and	High	Sinhala and Tamil languages have parity of status. It is mandatory for all official information to be made available in these two languages. Public access venues that are maintained by public institutions have to cater to the information needs of all ethnic communities in their own language. This underscores the	http://www.priu.gov.lk/Cons/1978Constitution/AMENDMENTS.html#Thirteenth%20Amendment

						excludes the seven districts in the North and East where the main language spoken is Tamil).		importance of localization in its broadest sense.	

17	Description of population speaking each language	Description	Economist Intelligence Unit	Sinhala; Tamil; English	Highly Accurate	While there are three distinct ethnic groups they are in no way homogenous; they are divided by origin, religion, location and region. The Sinhalese, the original settlers, are of two types-up country and low country. After being evicted from the Northern Province in 1990 by the LTTE the majority of the Sinhalese live in the other eight provinces. Sinhala is spoken by the majority of the population. Of the Sinhalese only 2% could speak Tamil and 16% English. Tamil is predominantly spoken by Tamils who are of Dravidian origin having cultural ties with Tamil Nadu in South India. They are distinguished by their origin - Sri Lankan Tamils had migrated in the somewhat distant past while the Indian Tamils were brought to Sri Lanka by the British as plantation	High	There is no discrimination based on ethnicity in access to ICT. However differences in educational attainment, disposable income, political capital and influence available to each ethnic group will have differential impact on access.	-

						labour in the 19th century. The latter are confined to the tea plantations in the hill country. The caste system, which is based on religion, is fairly rigid as compared with the Sinhalese whose caste system, which assumes importance mostly when marriages are arranged by parents, were based on occupations. Indian Tamils are deemed to be low caste by the Sri Lankan Tamils. Only about 40% of the Tamil population lives in the North and the East. A third of Tamils living outside the North and East could speak Sinhala and 24% English. There are three groups of Muslims- Sri Lanka Moors, Indian Moors and Malays who trace their ancestry to Arab traders. They speak either Tamil or Sinhala depending on where they live. The majority live in the Eastern Province and			

						after their expulsion from the North by the LTTE in 1990 a substantial Muslim population lives in the North Western Province. Others are concentrated in urban locations throughout the country engaging primarily in trading. Of those living outside the North and East 84% spoke Tamil, 39% Sinhala and 24% English.			
Economy									

1	Current GDP (Absolute) (2007)	Billion US$	Economist Intelligence Unit	101.3 (PPP); 29.1 (OER)	Highly Accurate	83.21 (PPP) (2007 est.); 25.78 (2007 est.)	High	No comment	http://indexmundi.com/sri_lanka/gdp_(purchasing_power_parity).html; http://indexmundi.com/sri_lanka/gdp_(official_exchange_rate).html
2	Real GDP growth in last year (2007)	%	Economist Intelligence Unit	6.1	Not Accurate	6.8% in 2007	High	Data show that there is a correlation between economic growth and growth in land line and mobile phones.	Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 2007
3	Consumer price inflation rate	%	Economist Intelligence Unit	17	Highly Accurate	28.8% in June 2008	High	Although monetary and fiscal policy objective is to maintain inflation at 10.4% consumer prices continued to increase steeply in 2007 to reach nearly 19%. The oil price shocks have impacted negatively and inflation is running around 28-30% currently. Inflation is a major impediment to the ability to pay for ICT equipment and services, fees for	-

								public access, and training.	
4	Economic highlights from EIU (paragraph from EIU)		Economist Intelligence Unit	Although suffering a brutal civil war that began in 1983, Sri Lanka saw GDP growth average 4.5% in the last 10 years with the exception of a recession in 2001. In late December 2004, a major tsunami took about 31,000 lives, left more than 6,300 missing and 443,000 displaced, and destroyed an estimated $1.5 billion worth of property. Growth, partly spurred by reconstruction, reached 5% in 2005 and more than 6% in 2006 and 2007. Sri Lanka's most	Highly Accurate	The growth rate was 6.8% in 2007		Increased economic activity increases the potential for diffusion of ICT among the population.	Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 2007

				dynamic sectors now are food processing, textiles and apparel, food and beverages, port construction, telecommunications, and insurance and banking.					
5	Economic Policy (first paragraph form EIU)	Description	Economist Intelligence Unit	According to provisional estimates released by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), total government revenue for 2007 stood at SLRs. 565bn (US$5.3bn), up by 18.3% over 2006. Total revenue fell short of about Rs. 35 billion of the annual estimate of SLRs.600bn budgeted for 2007. Tax revenue was up year on year by 18.9% to SLRs. 509bn in 2007. Non tax revenue increased by 12.8% to Rs. 56 bn. In a bid to raise additional revenue, the government passed three		Sri Lanka's development policies and its macroeconomic policy management have ebbed and flowed in response to ideological policy shifts in economic thinking and prevailing political economy constraints. Since 1977 Sri Lanka has been following neo liberal economic policies - market – oriented policies, promoting export led growth and economic diversification, encouraging foreign direct investment and deregulating the financial sector and continuing its programme of achieving strong macroeconomic	High	Market oriented economic policies, privatization and encouragement of foreign direct investment have had a salutary effect on infrastructure development and diffusion of ICT.	*Source: Weerakoon, Dushni, The influence of development ideology in macroeconomic policy reform process In Economic Policy in Sri Lanka Issues and Debates edited by Saman Kelegama, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004, pp. 54-70* and Central Bank Annual Report 2006, p. 17.

				financial bills in early September aimed at raising an estimated SLRs.4.5bn. These included a rise in the excise duty, calculated by the Customs Department at the point of imports, to 10%. The excise duty charged on motor vehicles with engine capacities of 1600-2000cc was doubled to 5%, while the excise duty on vehicles with capacities exceeding 2000cc was raised to 7.5%. The subscriber levy rate on mobile telephones was also raised from 2.5% to 7.5%. The bills were criticised by the opposition United National Party (UNP) as anti-business.		'fundamentals' and structural reforms. A more popular and expansionary policy was adopted in the late 1980s and early 1990s that included an ambitious poverty alleviation programme. Despite mixed results Sri Lanka has signed on to the core issues of 'second generation reforms' that include an increased role for the private sector in education and health care, and substantive components of labour and land law reforms. The structural reforms are complemented by orthodox medium term fiscal and monetary frameworks. The policy thrust of the current ten year development policy framework is aimed at infrastructure and knowledge based accelerated economic progress to provide an enabling environment to promote growth and reduce regional			

						economic disparities and poverty on a sustainable basis.			
6	Current GNI per capita	GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US$ in thousands) (2006)	World Bank	1.3	Highly Accurate	1.599 (2007)	High	GNI has an impact on investment for development activities	Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual Report 2007

7	Current % of population living below national pov. line	% living below national poverty line	UNDP	25	Highly Accurate	22.7 (2007)	High	From an investment point of view a quarter of the population living below the poverty line further limits the market that is already small due to population size. However poverty is in part due to the disempowerment of the poor and the use of ICT with correct public policies and a pro-poor development perspective and strategy could help people out of poverty. There are examples of how the rapid diffusion of mobile technology has helped the poor in improving their livelihood activities.	ADB and Sri Lanka 2008 Fact Sheet http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact_Sheets/SRI.pdf
8	Current % of population living below $2/day	% living below $2 /day	UNDP	41.6	Highly Accurate			As above	

9	Current % of population below national poverty line by region	Below national poverty line (2001)	Country Website	Rural, 24.7%; Urban, 7.9%	Highly Accurate		High	The data show skewed development with resources concentrated in urban areas. Rural livelihoods are concentrated in primary occupations that give poor returns. Existing rural urban disparities also are reflected in access to health services and education. Public access to ICT is aiming at overcoming exploitative market structures, improving livelihoods and providing better government services to reduce disparities.	
10	GINI coefficient	A value of 0 represents perfect equality, and a value of 100 perfect inequality (2006)	UNDP	33.2	Not Accurate	National -48; Urban -55; Rural -44; Estate -41	High	No comment	Source: Department of Census and Statistics

11	Current % of unemployed population	of people ages 15-64	World Bank	8.5	Not Accurate	6.0 (2007)	Medium	No comment	Source: Department of Census and Statistics Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2006/2007 http://www.statistics.gov.lk/HIES/HIES%202007/main1.pdf
Education									
1	Total enrollment in primary education	The ratio of enrolled children of the official age for primary school to the total population of that age. (2004)	UNDP	97.5 (2006)	Highly Accurate		High	A high enrolment rate had always been recorded. Completion rates are 80% for boys and 84% for girls at the end of the compulsory education cycle in Grade 9. A population with a basic education will have the ability to acquire ICT skills and use ICT services. High enrolment and retention will enable the children to take advantage of computer education that is provided in schools.	-

2	National literacy rate	A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life. % of population ages 15+. (2000-2004)	UNESCO	92.5 (2003/2004)	Somewh at Accurate		High	High literacy levels make it possible to train and motivate people to access and use information	Overall - 92.5&; Males 94.5%; Females-90.6% Source: Central bank of Sri Lanka (2008) Annual report for the year 2007
ICT Infrastructure									
1	National electrification rate	The number of people with electricity access as a percentage of total population (only includes regional averages). (2005)	World Energy Outlook	66.00%	Highly Accurate	77% (2007)	High	There is an electricity-supply deficiency. Grid electricity does not reach over two million households. Although the rural electrification rate is 77%, grid extensions to remote regions are costly. Lack of electricity has an obvious impact on access to ICT, marginalizing the already marginalized.	ADB and Sri Lanka 2008 Fact Sheet http://www.adb.org/Documents/Fact_Sheets/SRI.pdf

2	Landline coverage	Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants. (2007)	International Telecommunication Union	9.01	Somewhat Accurate	13.1 as at 31st December 2007	High	The growth in landlines, mainly due to expansion in wireless network with CDMA technology has reduced somewhat telecommunications disparity between urban and rural areas and helped low income groups to own a telephone due to lower fixed cost. However over 45% of landlines are concentrated in one province - the Western Province. One reason attributed to this is the high opportunity cost due to the small number of prospective subscribers, low usage and difficulty in collection. Lack of competition in the sector is also a reason. High cost of connectivity slowed down growth until CDMA was	http://www.trc.gov.lk/pdf/statover1.pdf

								introduced in 2005 after which the fixed line sector grew substantially. The landline sector is not competitive with waiting time for connection and high prices. This indicator measures ownership and not use. As those in the lower quintiles use public phones and phones belonging to others usage would be much higher. Cost of connectivity and usage is still an issue. According to IFPRI growth effects of telecom penetration were strongest when penetration was 5-15%	

3	Cell phone subscriptions	Mobile telephone subscribers per 100 inhabitants. (2006)	International Telecommunication Union	25.88	Somewhat Accurate	38.2 as at 31st December 2007	High	Cell phone penetration has outstripped that of landlines and has benefited consumers in remote areas. Apart from its social use as a means of personal communication the relatively widespread use of the cell phone has potential for supporting multiple channels for different message types enabling either mass notification or personalized messages for example in emergency situations, in vulnerable areas. Contactability drives acquisition. A current limitation is the limited use of local languages but researchers are at work to find solutions. There is potential to take technology to the lower quintiles of society.	http://www.trc.gov.lk/pdf/statover1.pdf

4	Cell phone cost	Cost of a 3-minute local call during peak hours (US$). (2005)	International Telecommunication Union	0.33	Not Accurate	US$ 0.12	High	The availability of different types of payment plans makes it easier for those with an uncertain or limited income to own a mobile phone. Competition among the providers has led to the offering of different types of 'packages' especially to market segments that are price sensitive. However the lack of a CPP regime is a limitation. Limited content is now available via the mobile phone including in local language. Quick supply, improvements in technology, and rapid expansion in coverage have facilitated social inclusion. The availability of pre paid facilities helps control expenditure, removes monthly rental and reduces	-

								payment hassles.	
5	Broadband Cost relative to income	Lowest sampled cost (US$) per 100 kbits/s as a percentage of monthly income (GNI) (2006)	World Economic Forum	3.89	Highly Accurate		High	Broadband cost is still high relative to income of individuals and revenues of public access points. Broadband has spread to all cities. More broadband options are available using WiMax but is mainly limited to those who have bandwidths	-

								ranging from 2Mbps to 10Mbps.	
6	Internet hosts (per 10,000 inhabitants)	The number of computers in an economy that are directly linked to the worldwide Internet network. This statistic is based on the country code in the host address and thus may not correspond with the actual physical location. (2004)	World Economic Forum	1.06	Highly Accurate		High	Although the number of computers linked to the Internet is low shared use could increase the number 2-3 fold.	-

7	Total International Internet bandwidth	Mbps (2006)	International Telecommunication Union	499.00	Highly Accurate		High	Improvements to international bandwidth with the commissioning of an optical fibre submarine cable with India and the Maldives have secured fast telecommunication connections with South Asian countries at cheaper rates. A project providing integrated single port connectivity conveying multiple services has also commenced. 3G technologies have also been introduced. These developments will enhance bandwidth and improve quality of service.	-
8	International Internet bandwidth per inhabitant	bit/s (2006)	International Telecommunication Union	23.86	Highly Accurate		High	The bandwidth per inhabitant impacts on the speed.	

9	Percent of homes with personal computers	%	International Telecommunication Union	4.00	Highly Accurate		High	A 2004 study found that ownership of computers was concentrated in the Western province, and in urban areas. The lowest number was in the estate sector. Since the study was conducted this number would have increased substantially. A low-cost PC has been introduced by the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka to enable lower middle to low income groups to own one. Computer sales are believed to have increased year on year by about 19% (statistics may not be accurate).	Source: Department of Census and Statistics
10	Personal computers per 100 inhabitants	Self-contained computers designed to be used by a single individual.	International Telecommunication Union	3.54	Highly Accurate		High	The limited number of people having personal computers would increase the demand for	-

		(2005)						services from public access venues	
11	Internet users per 100 inhabitants	People with access to the worldwide network (2006 data)	International Telecommunication Union	2.05	Somewhat Accurate	2.2 (2006)	High	The number of Internet users has increased over the years but the majority is still confined to urban centres. While Internet use in rural areas also has increased due to various programmes and projects that have been undertaken, more awareness-raising is required on using the Internet.	World Bank ICT at a Glance http://devdata.worldbank.org/ict/lka_ict.pdf

6.4 Other Appendices

Province	District	Geo-physical characteristics	Climatic conditions	Distinguishing characteristics	Economic activities	Types of underserved communities	Public access information venues	Educational facilities - Universities

6.4.1 Characteristics of Survey Areas

North Central	Anuradhapura (pop. 0.8mn)	Plains. Undulating terrain.	Dry zone	Historical importance, major irrigation works, Mahaweli Development Project Wild life sanctuary	Agriculture -paddy, vegetables	Traditional and new settlements Villagers living in areas bordering the North and East	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
	Polonnaruwa (pop. 0.0.4mn)	Plains. Undulating terrain.	Dry zone		Agriculture -paddy, vegetables	Traditional and new settlements Villagers living in areas bordering the North and East	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-
North Western	Puttalam (pop. 0.7mn)	Coastal belt. Flat to slightly undulating terrain.	Dry zone / Semi arid zone	Lagoons Hosts a sizeable IDP population	Fisheries; Shallow sea fishing, prawn Coconut cultivation	Internally displaced communities; fisherfolk	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-
	Kurunegala (pop. 1.5mn)	Plains. Rolling and undulating terrain.	Dry zone / Wet zone	Transport hub linking the north. A landmark is the Ethagala rock 116 meters in proximity to the city	Coconut cultivation, Paddy cultivation		Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
Western The most developed province	Colombo (pop 2.4mn)	Coastal belt. Rolling, undulating and flat terrain.	Wet zone	Capital. Natural harbour Cosmopolitan city	Manufacturing industries – e.g. Food, beverages & tobacco, Textile, wearing apparel and leather	Slum and shanty dwellers. Informal sector workers	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres,	• University of Colombo • University of Sri Jayewardenepura • University of Moratuwa • The Open University of Sri Lanka • University of the Visual & Performing Arts • General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University
	Gampaha (pop 2.1mn)	Coastal belt. Rolling, undulating and flat terrain.	Wet zone / Dry zone	The international airport, free trade zones are located here	Manufacturing industries – e.g. Chemicals, petroleum, rubber and plastic, Textile, wearing apparel and leather; Coconut cultivation	Migrant workers, rural communities	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	University of Kelaniya
	Kalutara (pop 1.1mn)	Coastal belt. Rolling and undulating terrain.	Wet zone	South of Colombo, famous for fruits,	Rubber cultivation; Fisheries	Fisher folk	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource	Nurses Training School

				Buddhist temples			Centres, EasySeva	
Central	Kandy (pop 1.4mn)	Central highlands. Steeply dissected, hilly and rolling terrain.	Wet zone	Capital of the province, home to the Sacred Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth), and associated annual cultural pagent. Last King reigned here, religious monuments. Holiday resort	Tea cultivation; Tourism	Kandyan peasantry Estate workers Traditional craftsmen	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	University of Peradeniya
	Matale (pop 0.5mn)	Central highlands. Steeply dissected, hilly and rolling terrain.	Wet zone	Place where Buddhist scriptures – Pali Canon was written. Sigiriya rock fortress and Dambulla rock caves	Tea cultivation; Cocoa and pepper cultivation;	Estate workers	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-
Southern	Galle (pop 1.04mn)	Coastal belt. Undulating and flat terrain.	Wet zone	Fortified by a fort – a built by the Dutch invaders, harbour. Capital of the province. Devastated by the 2004 tsunami	Tourism; Fisheries; Manufacturing industries – e.g. Food, beverages & tobacco, Textile, wearing apparel and leather	Informal sector workers, Farmers,	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	University of Ruhuna located in the adjoining district
	Hambantota (pop 0.5mn)	Coastal belt. Undulating and flat terrain.	Dry zone / Semi arid zone	Proximity to national parks, temples.	Salt industry; Fisheries; Paddy cultivation; Subsidiary crops, e.g. green gram, cowpea	Farmers, Informal sector workers, fisher folk	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-
Uva One of the two poorest proinvces	Badulla (pop 0.8mn)	Central highlands. Mountainous, steeply dissected, hilly and rolling terrain	Wet zone	Area of scenic beauty, ancient temples; paradise for eco tourists	Tea cultivation; Paddy cultivation	Estate workers	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	Uva Wellassa University
	Moneragala (pop 0.4mn)	Plains. Rolling, hilly and undulating terrain	Wet zone / Dry zone	Largest district by size but one of the poorest districts, home to a brutal insurgency in the late 1980s. Kataragama , a town in the district is sacred to Hindus	Agriculture – subsidiary crops, e.g. green gram, cowpea; Sugar industry	Farmers Villagers in areas bordering Eastern province	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-

				and Buddhists				
Sabaragamuwa One of the two poorest proinvces	Ratnapura (pop 1.1mn)	Plains / Central highlands. Rolling and undulating terrain. / Steeply dissected, hilly terrain	Wet zone	Famous for gems, rain forests, national park, and Sri Pada (temple)	Gem mining; Rubber cultivation	Estate workers	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka
	Kegalle (pop 0.8mn)	Plains. Rolling and undulating terrain.	Wet zone	Famous for the elephant orphanage, 'Sri Lankan Robin Hood' who lived during the British period	Rubber cultivation; Coconut cultivation	Plantation workers	Public libraries, Nenasala Centres, Vidatha Resource Centres, EasySeva	-

Geo-physical characteristics

Coastal belt: below 30 metres,

Plains: between 30 and 300 metres

Central Highlands: above 300 metres.

Climatic conditions (Yearly precipitation - millimeters)

Wet zone: greater than 2000 mm

Dry zone: between 1260 mm and 2000 mm

Semi arid zone: less than 1260 mm

6.4.2 Site Observations

	Site	Infrastructure	Security	Resources	Staff Attitudes
Non Urban Public Libraries	Good - 75%	Fair - 64%	Good - 61%	Poor - 54%	Good - 57%
Urban Public Libraries	Good - 100%	Fair - 57%	Good - 71%	Fair - 71%	Good - 86%
Non Urban Nenasala Centres	Good - 45%	Fair - 50%	Fair - 50%	Fair - 50%	Good - 60%
Urban Nenasala Centres	Good - 100%	Fair - 83%	Fair - 50%	Good - 50%	Good - 83%
Specialized Information Centres	Good - 50%	Fair - 60%	Fair - 80%	Fair - 60%	Fair - 50%
Specialized Information Centres	Good - 100%	Fair - 83%	Fair - 67%	Fair - 67%	Good - 67%
Easy Seva and Internet Café	Good - 67%	Fair - 100%	Fair - 100%	Fair - 75%	Good - 75%

Public Library

	Location	Province	Urban/Non Urban	Site	Infrastructure	Security	Resources	Staff Attitudes
1	Digana	Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
2	Menikhinna	Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
3	Rattota	Central	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair	Poor
4	Bendiwewa	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Poor	Good	Fair	Fair
5	Minneriya	North Central	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Fair
6	Medawachchiya	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
7	Hingurakgoda	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
8	Polonnaruwa	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
9	Sevagama	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Good
10	Thambuttegama	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
11	Pothuhera	North Western	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
12	Polgahawela	North Western	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
13	Wariyapola	North Western	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
14	Eheliyagoda	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
15	Namaldeniya	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair
16	Deraniyagala	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair
17	Batapola	Southern	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
18	Baddegama	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
19	Tissamaharama	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Poor
20	Kataragama	Uva	Non Urban	Good	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor
21	Passara	Uva	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair

22	Wellawaya	Uva	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
23	Buttala	Uva	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
24	Thanamalvila	Uva	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
25	Hali Ela	Uva	Non Urban	Poor	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
26	Homagama	Western	Non Urban	Good	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair
27	Maharagama	Western	Non Urban	Good	Poor	Fair	Fair	Good
28	Boralesgamuwa	Western	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good

Non Urban Public Libraries

Overall Rating	**Good - 75%**	**Fair - 64%**	**Good - 61%**	**Poor - 54%**	**Good - 57%**
Good	75	4	61	7	57
Fair	7	64	36	39	32
Poor	18	32	4	54	11

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
34	Kandy	Central	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
35	Matale	Central	Urban	Good	Poor	Good	Poor	Fair
33	Anuradhapura	North Central	Urban	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
31	Kurunegala	North Western	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
32	Kegalle	Sabaragamuwa	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
30	Galle	Southern	Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
29	Badulla	Uva	Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good

Urban Public Libraries

Overall Rating	**Good - 100%**	**Fair - 57%**	**Good - 71%**	**Fair - 71%**	**Good - 86%**
Good	100	29	71	14	86
Fair	0	57	29	71	14
Poor	0	14	0	14	0

Nenasala Centres

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
15	Kundasale	Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
1	Minneriya	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
2	Thambuttegama	North Central	Non Urban	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair
14	Hingurakgoda	North Central	Non Urban	Poor	Good	Fair	Good	Good
18	Palugaswewa	North Central	Non Urban	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Good
3	Padeniya	North Western	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair
5	Wennappuwa	North Western	Non Urban	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair
16	Wariyapola	North Western	Non Urban	Fair	Good	Good	Good	Good
4	Malandeniya	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair
6	Anhettigama	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair

7	Eheliyagoda	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Fair	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair
8	Sandarawala	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
9	Sella Kataragama	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
11	Kirivehera	Southern	Non Urban	Poor	Poor	Poor	Fair	Good
13	Tissamaharama	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good
19	Poddala	Southern	Non Urban	Poor	Fair	Poor	Good	Good
20	Kiribathavila	Southern	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair	Poor
10	Kandegedara	Uva	Non Urban	Poor	Fair	Poor	Fair	Good
12	Hali-Ela	Uva	Non Urban	Poor	Fair	Fair	Good	Good
17	Udahamulla	Western	Non Urban	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Non Urban Nenasala Centres

Overall Rating	**Good - 45%**	**Fair - 50%**	**Fair - 50%**	**Fair - 50%**	**Good - 60%**
Good	45	35	20	40	60
Fair	15	50	50	50	35
Poor	40	15	30	10	5

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
21	Malwathu Viharaya	Central	Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
22	Getambe Viharaya	Central	Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Good	Good
24	Sarvodaya	Central	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Good
23	Kegalle	Sabaragamuwa	Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Good
26	Ratnapura	Sabaragamuwa	Urban	Good	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair
25	Galle	Southern	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good

Urban Nenasala Centres

Overall Rating	**Good - 100%**	**Fair - 83%**	**Fair = 50%**	**Good - 50%**	**Good - 83%**
Good	100	17	33	50	83
Fair	0	83	50	50	17
Poor	0	0	17	0	0

Specialized Information Centres

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
10	Rattota	Central	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor
1	Polgahawela	North Western	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
2	Eheliyagoda	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair
3	Namaldeniya	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair
4	Deraniyagala	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
6	Beminiwatta	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
7	Ambepussa	Sabaragamuwa	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good

5	Padukka	Western	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair
8	Bandaragama	Western	Non Urban	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
9	Kesbewa	Western	Non Urban	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

Non Urban Specialized Information Centres

Overall Rating	**Good - 50%**	**Fair - 60%**	**Fair - 80%**	**Fair - 60%**	**Fair - 50%**
Good	50	30	20	20	40
Fair	50	60	80	60	50
Poor	0	10	0	20	10

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
11	Matale	Central	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Fair	Fair
12	Akurana	Central	Urban	Good	Fair	Good	Poor	Good
16	Menikhinna	Central	Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Poor	Poor
13	Kegalle	Sabaragamuwa	Urban	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
14	Mahara	Western	Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good
15	Ratmalana	Western	Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good

Non Urban Specialized Information Centres

Overall Rating	**Good - 100%**	**Fair - 83%**	**Fair - 67%**	**Fair - 67%**	**Good - 67%**
Good	100	17	33	0	67
Fair	0	83	67	67	17
Poor	0	0	0	33	17

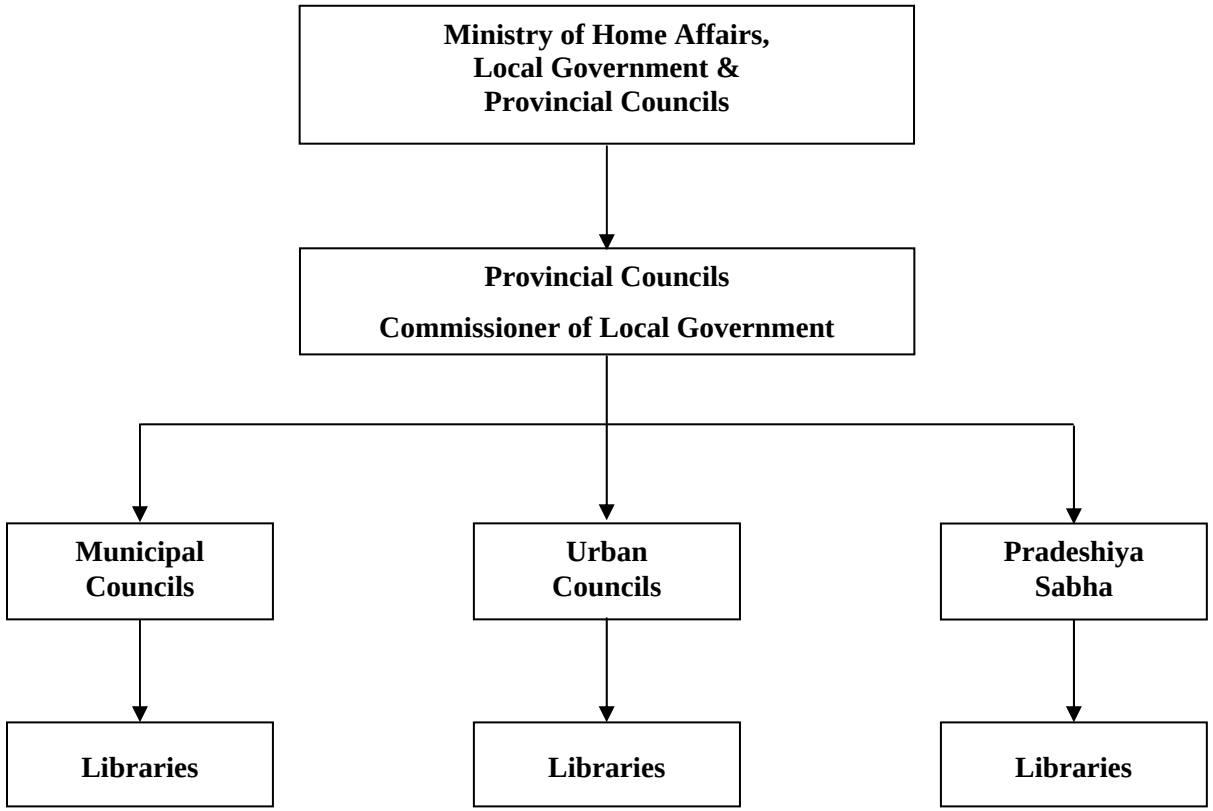
Easy Seva and Internet Café

	Location	**Province**	**Urban/Non Urban**	**Site**	**Infrastructure**	**Security**	**Resources**	**Staff Attitudes**
1	Thambuttegama	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair
2	Polonnaruwa	North Central	Non Urban	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Good
3	Ratnapura	Sabaragamuwa	Urban	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair	Good

Easy Seva and Internet Café

Overall Rating	**Good - 67%**	**Fair - 100%**	**Fair - 100%**	**Fair - 75%**	**Good - 75%**
Good	67	0	0	25	75
Fair	0	100	100	75	25
Poor	33	0	0	0	0

6.4.3 Relationship of Public Libraries to Sub National & Local Governments



6.4.4 Budget Outturn for Provincial Councils

Rs. million

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total revenue	13522	16132	19481	23876
Tax revenue	1544	13818	16586	21473
Non-tax revenue	1978	2314	2895	4395
Total expenditure	56964	73009	94470	122414
Current expenditure	463087	59132	76428	101149
o/w personal emoluments	36079	46479	60497	82111
Capital expenditure	10656	13877	18042	21265
Central government transfers	45848	59696	79029	88317
Block grants	35982	47107	62342	70742
Criteria based grants	803	817	790	1208
Matching grants	3110	273	221	205
Province specific development grants	3854	5561	7345	6995
Foreign grants for special projects	4988	5937	8331	9167

Source: Annual Report 2007, p. 130

6.4.5 Revenue Sources of Provincial Councils

Taxes	**Duties**	**License Fees**	**Miscellaneous**
Value Added Tax	Stamp duty on transfer of properties	Motor vehicle license fees	Court fines
Betting Tax		Liquor license fees	Fauna & flora fees
Lotteries Tax		Arrack & toddy rents	Land development fees
Prize Competition Tax		Possession, transport, purchase and sale of liquor license fees	Fauna & flora fees
Mineral Rights Tax			Weights & measures
Toll collection Tax			Charges
Land & Building Tax			Medical Ordinance fees
Drugs & Chemical Tax			Court fees on documents

6.4.10 Etuktuk-The Barefoot Internet

The Kothmale region in the central hills of Sri Lanka in the Kandy district is breathtakingly beautiful. The air is salubrious. Tea plantations and terraced paddy fields add to the beauty. It is Saturday. A three wheel taxi with a heavy load winds its way slowly to a

remote village. The main road is good but the interior roads are not. Sometimes there are only dirt tracks. There is excitement in the village and the reception those in the auto get makes the difficult drive worth it.

This is where more than 60,000 people who were displaced by the Mahaweli irrigation project were relocated in the 1980s. This is also an area where Indian Tamil labour brought by the British to work on the tea plantations lives. Geographically, socially, politically and technologically isolated the majority lives in poverty. But the taxi brings a whole new world to their doorstep. Carrying a self contained telecentre and a broadcasting unit that has a laptop, a battery operated printer, a scanner, a camera, and a CDMA–enabled wireless connection to provide Internet access and a 1000W generator for electricity the taxi is the mobile Internet – the eTukTuk that is the operated by the Kothmale Community Radio out of its Community Multimedia Centre.

The origins of the eTukTuk dates back to February 1989 when the Mahaweli Authority and the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation set up the Kothmale Community Radio (KRC) mainly to help the people who had lost their land and livelihoods to adapt to the new environment, provide information on the cultivation of new crops, and self employment opportunities and also to link the displaced who were scattered in the area. The development of KRC was gradual with many successes and failures along the way. At the beginning the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, which bore all the costs of the project, limited transmission to three hours, three days a week. But today it broadcasts from 5am -2pm and 5pm-8:30pm Monday to Friday and 5am- 1pm on weekends. While financial management still rests with the Corporation, 75% of the operational costs of the KCR are derived from the morning broadcast which has been commercialised giving it a degree of financial independence.

When Internet facilities were introduced to the country in the mid 1990s the KCR seized the opportunity to integrate the radio and the Internet to provide information to the community. With UNESCO support the technical capacity of the radio station was upgraded.

First it was shifted from its location on a remote hill to a more accessible place. A 64 Kbps microwave connection, a telephone line, a server computer and three computers, two of which were for the community, with Internet access were installed. The staff including volunteers was trained. The transmission area covered 60 villages and three small towns and 17 schools within a radius of 20 kilometers. Approximately 200,000 people lived within this area. Additional access points were set up in two other cities.

Health, human rights, international and local news, educational programmes were aired by broadcasters that comprised educated youth from the plantation and farming areas. It gives pride of place to local culture - songs, dances- that are normally not broadcast over mainstream channels. Community queries received by mail, drop-ins and sometimes by phone are responded to by browsing the Internet or reading the CD ROMs. A 'Radio Browsing the Internet' programme was introduced to provide immediate replies in Sinhala and Tamil and discussions were initiated based on the information gathered from the web.

The operation of the Kothmale community radio for nearly 20 years has made it an integral part of the community. The high level of community participation is mainly due to the strategic decisions taken to develop programmes based on research into community needs, the type of outreach programmes that would be required, identification of enthusiastic volunteers from different ethnic groups, and the use of local languages for disseminating information and discussion.

There are many success stories. In a country where ethnic tensions have been high the KCR had been able to facilitate communal harmony by recruiting both Tamils and Sinhalese from the locality to work side by side, broadcasting in both languages and developing programmes that are appropriate to all communities. "People all over Sri Lanka are talking about peace, but this community radio has been doing it from the beginning," P. Pavitheran, an announcer at the Kothmale Community Radio (KCR) had

told IPS (http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38019). Many youth have been able to gain knowledge and experience that helped them in their studies and employment by participating in the local media.

Although it may be argued that government run community radio stations are not truly participatory those who work at KCR refute this claim. The SLBC provides a high degree of independence in programming and as the staff is from the community they are able to identify with the community and develop programmes that reflect community needs and aspirations of the people, especially youth. The radio station is mobile – it visits different villages to gather stories and information and this is a learning experience not only for the broadcaster but also for the villagers who have the opportunity to learn about others in the vicinity.

It was against this backdrop that the eTUKTUK came to the scene on the 29th of April 2006. The eTUKTUK, a mobile telecentre/radio broadcasting unit, is an initiative of the Kothmale Internet Listeners Club receiving support from UNESCO, Pan Asia Networking ICT R&D Grant, Suntel Ltd. (a mobile phone service provider), Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, Information Communications Technology Agency of Sri Lanka, and the MJF Charitable Foundation**.**

KCR did not believe that the formidable geographical, infrastructure barriers as well as low levels of literacy should deprive the already deprived communities access to information. Tele centres were being established in areas that had connectivity and had transport facilities. But wouldn't mobile telecentres be feasible? Using complementary technologies the eTUKTUK takes the telecentre to people living in remote and un-serviced areas. While tele-centre equipment is inside the auto, the roof rack carries a loudspeaker and the mobile broadcasting unit. Narrowcasting of radio programmes is achieved via two loud speakers mounted on the roof rack. Trained intermediaries accompany the eTUKTUK interacting with the community, training where necessary, disseminating information and engaging in participatory programming. The weekly route of the eTUKTUK, the location and time that it will arrive

in a community is announced over the radio. Events that are being organized in the villages or tea estates and at the Kothmale Multimedia Centre such as training programmes are also announced via the loudspeakers.

As those who are involved in eTUKTUK say the key to making technology less formidable to those who are isolated is to take it to them, demonstrate its usefulness in their own environment using real life examples. By focusing on those sectors of the community that are marginalised through ethnicity, gender, and poverty who may feel that they are far removed from the technological world the eTUKTUK is able to contribute to a better life for them.

Acknowledgements

The chief researcher, the research team and the Centre for Women's Research thank the Centre for Information & Society, University of Washington, USA for giving them the opportunity to participate in the research project. It has been a rewarding experience despite the strenuous work and tight schedules.

We particularly value the intellectual stimulus provided by the CIS team, fellow researchers of the other 23 countries.

We thank the field researchers for undertaking the difficult field work and keeping to schedule despite the many obstacles that they faced including long treks in the mountainous areas. This study would have been possible without their commitment.

The Project Manager provided the necessary back up and ensured that all logistical matters were taken care of. Her professional inputs are also appreciated.

The CENWOR Statistician for data processing.

This study has been a learning experience especially for the lead researcher. We hope the follow up activities that we intend to undertake will contribute to better services to the community from public access to information venues.

For almost a year a group of strangers has worked together and developed friendships. To me, that is one of the most valuable outcomes of this project.