

# Chapter 19

## Public Access ICT in Bangladesh

**Ananya Raihan**  
*D.Net, Bangladesh*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to information worldwide changed dramatically with the widespread acceptance of the Internet and when new types of public access information venues using ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), such as telecenters and cybercafés rapidly emerged. These changes in information access are creating a significant effect on the population of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a small, densely populated nation in Southeast Asia bordered by India, Myanmar, and the Indian Ocean. The land area covers 147,570 sq km and is composed primarily of flat, alluvial plains that support a population estimated in 2007 to be 145 million people.

Following the partition of India in 1948, and the departure of British control of India, a divided Pakistani nation emerged as West Pakistan and East Pakistan. The arrangement continued until East Pakistan gained its own independence following an armed conflict. It then emerged in 1971 as the parliamentary democracy called Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh economy grew at an average annual rate of 5% from 2001 and increased to 6% in 2007, but the country also suffered financial setbacks in the 2008 international economic upheaval. The GDP in 2007-2008 reached US\$79 billion, and the per capita GNP was US\$499. Bangladesh has transformed into a trade-dependent nation.

There is a commonly voiced perception that Bangladesh continues to experience political instability and harbors a considerable degree of corruption. The population suffers from widespread

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-771-5.ch019

poverty and related socio-economic issues, and, according to most estimates, 40% to 50% of the population lives below the poverty line.

In addition to the severe economic and educational constraints, three-fourths of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture as their mainstay. There are few non-agricultural jobs beyond the urban areas. But access to these venues is further constrained by a pronounced gender inequity, and nearly half of the population is female.

The degree to which ICTs are used is deeply affected by the socio-economic and educational realities in the country; human capacity building is a major issue for the huge population. The literacy rate among males is said to be 47.9%, while the rate for females is only 41.4%. An estimated two-thirds of the population has little or no formal education. People under the age of 25 years make up more than half of the population (57.72%), while only 6.22% are over the age of 60.

Bangladesh is one of 25 countries participating in this study, which was designed to assess the public's access to information and communication venues, as well as to examine the role of ICTs across the overall economic, political, and regulatory framework of the country. The study placed an emphasis on the information needs of underserved groups and communities. This study was supervised by the Center for Information and Society (CIS) of the University of Washington and was conducted in collaboration with the government of Bangladesh. The intent of the overall project was to examine both the extent to which the general population has access to public information and the conditions that characterize the nation's communication landscape. Of particular concern were the information needs of underserved communities, the public access to information and communication venues, and the role of ICTs. The researchers assessed how the venues function, how they serve user needs, how they meet operational constraints, and how they realize successes.

At the completion of this study, the researchers concluded that ICTs play only a limited role in the ability of the public to access the information venues in Bangladesh, and it is imperative that the role must be expanded. There is little evidence of networking among the public access venues, and that also must be expanded to make it possible for any given bit of information to become available across a variety of interested locations. The study recommends a comprehensive plan be prepared for creating a broad range of e-government services to be available through public access venues.

The transfer of information will affect greater numbers of people when that transfer is available through the animation of public access venues through trained operators, and ICTs through a combination of voice, pictures, and text. Getting information to large numbers of people would be nearly impossible in Bangladesh except through ICTs, which can provide great value to huge numbers of illiterate people.

The majority of the potential venue users have extremely limited finances, which is why ICT-based venues should operate with minimal fees or be free to users. The study recommends making Internet connectivity in all public access venues free. Universal Service Funds or free connection vouchers issued from the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) could be introduced.

The research team noted the inadequacy of available data, particularly for public libraries and cybercafés. The in-depth interviews with experts and venue operators played an important role in capturing information related to those venues, and the team concluded that a comprehensive venue census would probably resolve the issue by offering comprehensive and reliable data about the current state of public access venues.

The technical support system for the public access venues must be improved and be available through a common network to serve all such venues.

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/public-access-ict-bangladesh/55841](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/public-access-ict-bangladesh/55841)

## Related Content

---

### A Practitioner-Centered Assessment of a User-Experience Framework

John McCarthy, Peter Wrightand Lisa Meekison (2005). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 1-23).

[www.irma-international.org/article/practitioner-centered-assessment-user-experience/2861](http://www.irma-international.org/article/practitioner-centered-assessment-user-experience/2861)

### Does Anybody Read SMS-Advertising?: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of Mobile Users' Attitudes and Perceived Ad-Clutter

Claire Gauzente (2010). *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction* (pp. 13-29).

[www.irma-international.org/article/does-anybody-read-sms-advertising/42154](http://www.irma-international.org/article/does-anybody-read-sms-advertising/42154)

### The Politics of Establishing ICT Governance for Large-Scale Healthcare Information Infrastructures

Gro-Hilde Ulriksen, Rune Pedersenand Gunnar Ellingsen (2017). *International Journal of Social and Organizational Dynamics in IT* (pp. 48-61).

[www.irma-international.org/article/the-politics-of-establishing-ict-governance-for-large-scale-healthcare-information-infrastructures/186757](http://www.irma-international.org/article/the-politics-of-establishing-ict-governance-for-large-scale-healthcare-information-infrastructures/186757)

### K-Nearest Neighbors Regression and Applications

Dayanna Ortiz-Villaseñor, Gabriel Trujillo-Hernández, Oscar Real-Moreno, Moises J. Castro-Toscano, Leonardo Daniel Medina-Madradoand D. Barrera-Román (2025). *Exploring Psychology, Social Innovation and Advanced Applications of Machine Learning* (pp. 295-316).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/k-nearest-neighbors-regression-and-applications/371670](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/k-nearest-neighbors-regression-and-applications/371670)

### Fabrication of Dental Implants Using MIMICS Software

G. Krishnakanth, M. Malini Deepikaand M. Yuvaraja (2023). *Perspectives on Social Welfare Applications' Optimization and Enhanced Computer Applications* (pp. 151-156).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/fabrication-of-dental-implants-using-mimics-software/328005](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/fabrication-of-dental-implants-using-mimics-software/328005)