Costa Rica

Costa Rica is undertaking its second Voluntary National Review of progress towards achieving the SDGs in 2020. With a focus this year on development accelerators and transformative action, it is a key moment to consider activities and tools which can unlock progress, for all, across the board.

Access to information – understood as the physical possibility and right for all to seek and find information, and the skills to use it – can make just such a contribution. This access can help at all levels. It supports individuals to take better decisions about how to farm, where to look for work or how to look after their own and their families' health. It gives governments the possibility to define better policies. It allows researchers to understand the world around us, establish new insights and innovate. Libraries are a key part of the infrastructure for ensuring that this is the case.

But where does Costa Rica stand today as concerns its libraries and access to information? This data sheet provides background based on data from the Development and Access to Information report produced by IFLA in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington, as well as IFLA's own Library Map of the World.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- *Costa Rica has a comparatively small public and community library field by regional and global standards. These are nonetheless well equipped and well used, indicating a potential for future development. The country has an above-average number of academic libraries for its size, but again staffing is below levels elsewhere. Further investment in staff to support students and researchers could boost skills and research performance. The country does have a strong school library field.*
- *Costa Rica performs above regional and global averages on both the equality and skills pillars of the Development and Access to Information frameworks, and is among the best in the world when it comes to rights. On connectivity, while there are high numbers of mobile broadband subscriptions and household internet connections, overall internet use remains around 2/3 of the population. Libraries can help bring more people online, and help them make use of what the internet can offer.*

LIBRARIES IN COSTA RICA

Costa Rica has 1088 libraries in total, of which over 85% - 944 – are school libraries. There are 62 public and 7 community libraries, representing 1.6 public or community libraries for every 100 000 people, compared to a global average of 6.8. There are 250 public and community library workers, representing 5 for every 100 000 people, compared to a global average of 11.8, and a regional average of 10.6. Almost all of Costa Rica's public and community libraries offer internet access. Despite their relatively low number, they are well used, with almost a million visits annually.

Costa Rica has stronger figures for academic libraries, with 1.5 per 100 000 people, compared to a global average of 1.3 and a regional average for Latin America and the Caribbean of 1.4. However, there are only 6.4 academic library workers per 100 000 people, some way below the regional average of 9.1 and the global average of 10.6. Meanwhile, the large number of school libraries – 18.8 per 100 000 people underlines the country's strong commitment to education.

These figures suggest that Costa Rica could invest more both in public and community library creation, and in staffing in all library types, in order to rise towards global averages, and help citizens continue to learn throughout life.

DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN COSTA RICA

The Development and Access to Information report draws on a range of indicators highlighting where countries stand on four key pillars of access to information: connectivity, equality, skills and rights. For meaningful access to information to be a reality for all, performance needs to be strong across all of these categories.
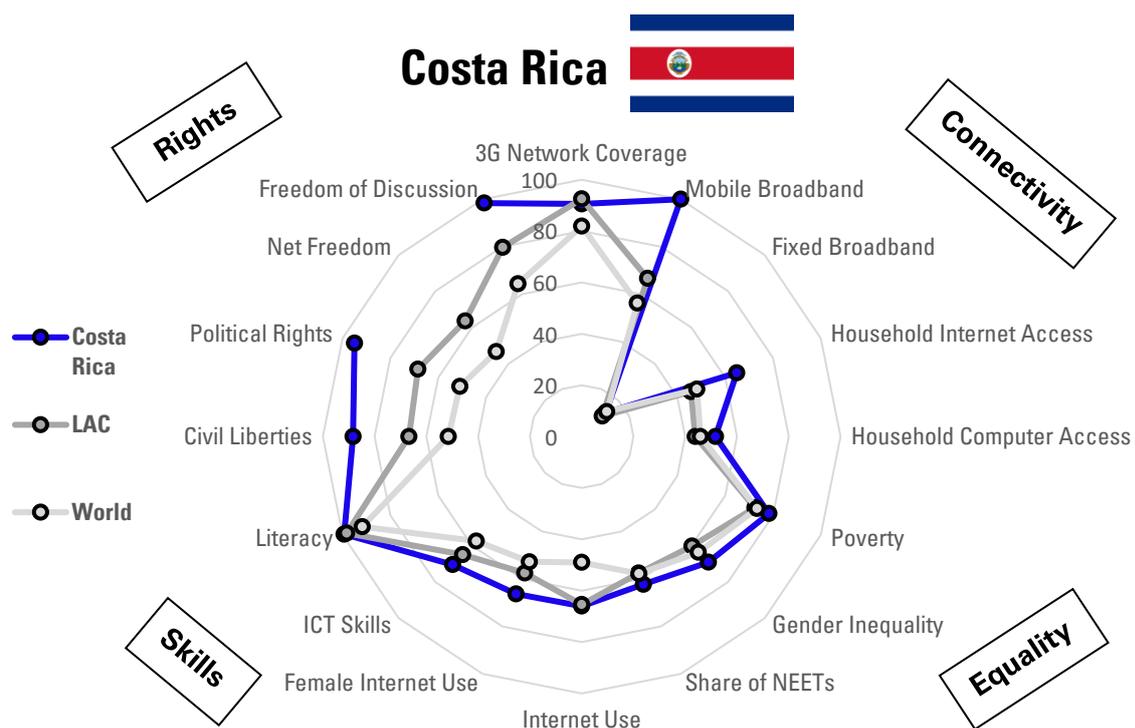
On **connectivity**, Costa Rica performs relatively well. While 3G network coverage is below regional averages, the country nonetheless scores well on household computer and internet access (52% and 64% respectively), above the figures for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as a whole, and the world. Internet use as a whole is around the regional average, at 66%, and there are over 100 mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people, suggesting that some of the population at least is making intense use of the internet.

Concerning **equality**, Costa Rica performs better than the regional average on all indicators – poverty, gender inequality and share of young adults not in employment, education or training, although of course further progress can be

made. It is worth noting that Costa Rica is one of the relatively rare countries where a larger share of the female population uses the internet than the male.

On **skills**, Costa Rica's reputation for investing in education shows up in above average (both globally and regionally) scores on literacy and on the skills pillar of the ICT development index. **Rights** represent a further positive story, with significantly better scores on civil liberties, political rights and freedom of discussion than the regional and global averages, and indeed some of the best in the world.

With the population both well-educated enjoying rights, it appears that a key challenge for Costa Rica will simply be to give more people the possibility to get online, in particular the third of the population without internet access at home. Public libraries already represent a strong core service, and are increasing working as networks. With further development, they could make a strong contribution to progress.

How to read the graph: this graph displays a range of indicators used within the DA2I framework, adjusted to fit on a scale of 0-100, where 100 is the most positive outcome in terms of access to information.

TABLE OF DATA

See below for explanations. * = or latest available year. To note, averages are calculated on the basis of available data.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	COSTA RICA	Year	LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN	Year	WORLD	Year
CONNECTIVITY	3G Network Coverage	90.55%	2016	92.52%	2016	81.92%	2016
	Mobile Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	108.05	2016	66.64	2016	56.22	2016
	Fixed Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	13.10	2016	11.21	2016	13.71	2016
	Household Internet Access	64.84%	2016	45.67%	2016	48.16%	2016
	Household Computer Access	51.67%	2016	43.88%	2016	45.88%	2016
EQUALITY	Poverty (Share of pop'n below national poverty line)	21.70%	2014	27.58%	2015*	26.69%	2015*
	Gender Inequality (0 = More equal, 1 = Less equal)	0.31	2015	0.40	2015	0.36*	2015*
	Share of NEETs	18.87%	2016	21.23%	2015*	21.12%	2015*
	Internet Use	66.03%	2016	65.40%	2016*	49%	2016*
	Female Internet Use	66.30%	2016	57.48%	2016*	52.79%	2016*
SKILLS	ICT Skills	7.05	2017	6.50	2017	5.76	2017
	Literacy	99.32%	2015	98.28%	2015	91.75	2015
RIGHTS	Civil Liberties (0 = least free, 60 = most free)	53.00	2018	40.04	2018	30.9	2018
	Political Rights (0 = least free, 40 = most free)	38.00	2018	27.38	2018	20.37	2018
	Net Freedom (0 = most free, 100 = least free)			36.36	2016	53.29	2016
	Freedom of Discussion	0.98	2016	0.80	2016	0.64	2016

EXPLANATION OF INDICATORS

3G Network Coverage: this provides a measure of whether one part of the basic infrastructure for connectivity exists, although in itself is not enough to guarantee access (users need a device and a relevant subscription to be able to get online). Source: ITU

Mobile Broadband (Mobile Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how many people can use mobile internet, opening up many – if not all – of the possibilities that internet access brings. One person may have more than one subscription. Source: ITU

Fixed Broadband (Fixed Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how widespread home or business internet access is. Fixed access is often associated with the possibility to connect computers to make more advanced uses of the internet. Source: ITU

Household Internet Access (Share of Households with Internet Access): access to the internet at home allows for access to information at any time without having to go outside, but may be controlled by some members of the family. Source: ITU

Household Computer Access (Share of Households with a Computer): this focuses on access to computers. This is crucial for people to be able to carry out more advanced activities on the internet that might be impossible on a phone, such as writing resumes or analysing data. Source: ITU

Poverty: this indicator measures the number of people living below the national poverty line, which varies from country to country. It is a measure of economic inequality in a country. The indicator is inversed in the chart (i.e. the share of people not under the poverty line). Source: World Bank

Gender Inequality: this is calculated using the Gender Inequality Index. This index uses a basket of indicators in different areas of social development including: reproductive health, proportion of women in parliament, relative shares of men and women with at least some secondary education, and labour market participation in order to provide a broad idea of the extent of gender inequality in a country. The indicator runs from 0 (most equal) to 1 (least equal) and is inversed and adapted in the chart above. Source: UNDP

Share of NEETS (People aged 15-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training): this measures the share of young people cut off from education or the job market. Being 'NEET' can bring long-term scarring effects, and so reducing numbers is a key priority. The indicator is inversed and adapted in the chart (i.e. the share of young people who are not NEET). Source: ILO.

Internet Use (Share of People Using the Internet): looking beyond household access data (which will be affected by the structure of households in general), this gives a figure for the number of people using the internet. Source: ITU

Female Internet Use: this measure, in conjunction with the share of the overall population using the internet, allows us to understand to what extent there is a gender digital divide. Source: ITU

ICT Skills: there are relatively few global metrics of ICT skills, with those that exist only focusing on certain regions. The Skills Sub-Index of the ICT Development Index created by the ITU aims to work in this direction using levels of secondary and tertiary education enrolment, plus mean years of schooling, as proxies. Source: ITU

Literacy: this measures literacy among 15-24 year olds – i.e. people who have finished formal education. While there are online resources available for people with low literacy, being able to read, type, and understand information remains a fundamental skill. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Civil Liberties: this provides an indication of the degree to which citizens of a country enjoy fundamental civic rights, including freedom of expression and association, as well as the strength of the rule of law, based on expert judgements. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 60 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Political Rights: this provides a measure of the rights people have to participate in the political process, including fair and free elections, political pluralism, and the functioning of government in general. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 40 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Net Freedom: this metric assesses the level of restrictions on rights online by both public and private actors. It draws on assessments of obstacles to access (legal, economic and practical), limits on content, and violations of rights. Scores run from 100 (least free) to 0 (most free) and so are inverted in the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Freedom of Discussion: this indicator looks at whether people are able to hold private discussions without fear of repercussions either from the authorities or society in general due to cultural restrictions or norms. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 1 (most free), and so are adapted to fit int the graphic above. Source: V-Dem dataset codebook.