IGF 2021 DC main session

DC-PAL Briefing Paper: DC Contributions to the IGF 2021 issue areas

1. About the DC

The Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries (DC-PAL) facilitates policy dialogue, evidence-gathering and exchange of good practices around shared access to the internet and ICT in libraries and similar community/public organisations, particularly as means of supporting digital inclusion and meaningful access to information.

2. Relevant issue area(s) and policy question(s)

- **Defining universal and meaningful access** & **barriers** (What are the key elements that constitute universal and meaningful Internet access? What are the main challenges that people face in obtaining and making full use of Internet access?)
- **Practical locally-driven policy solutions** (What lessons can be drawn (and how) from successful policy solutions to universal access and meaningful connectivity around the world, while taking into account local specificities and needs? What are the relevant practices implemented by local actors to advance universal and meaningful access?)
- **Economic and social inclusion and sustainable development** (What is the relationship between digital policy and development and the established international frameworks for social and economic inclusion?

3. DC contribution (current and future work)

A key focus of DC-PAL's current work is examining the growing body of evidence around the impacts of public access in libraries. A review of available studies and reports helps explore the extent to which public access-based measures focusing on different elements of meaningful access (e.g. physical access to connectivity/ICTs, affordability, digital skills training or support, access to relevant content) are in demand, the user groups they best help reach, and the impacts they have.

The documented broader impacts of public access (e.g. on learning, employment, access to e-government services, participation in creative and financial digital activities) help further examine the linkages between meaningful digital inclusion and other key societal and development policy goals.

Another part of this effort is looking at the range of methodologies such studies employ, linked to the policy question on how to assess and draw lessons from local digital inclusion solutions. Notably, the focus areas of studies under review range from the hyperlocal (e.g. individual library-level case studies) to subnational or national (e.g. a public library network) to transnational (e.g. public access initiatives implemented in different countries), offering a diverse and complementary set of insights and assessment methods.

In addition, DC-PAL recently updated and finalised [a two-part paper on the role of libraries in national broadband plans and policies](), and good practices and lessons learned from the local implementation of such library-based policy initiatives. The paper addresses national-level policy measures on access to connectivity, content and digital skills learning opportunities via public access in libraries. DC-PAL intends to facilitate further dialogue and evidence-gathering around this, to help better understand the implications of public access-based approaches to meaningful digital connectivity, in policy and practice.