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| Setting Up Internet Cafes in Informal Settlements |  |
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# TUL555: Internet Cafes in Urban Slums

## Concept

The following are five one-hour lesson outlines intended for training workers in the slums in setting up an internet cafe. Each lesson has an objective and ten to fifteen main points that the lecturer can then amplify upon. Lesson two may require a computer technician as a guest lecturer or as an assistant to the lecturer.

The aim of inclusion at the Masters level is for each student to be familiar enough to motivate and set up training for ministry leaders in the slums.

**Reference website:** [**www.cybermissions.org/icafe/**](http://www.cybermissions.org/icafe/)(use as course text, a CD of the training material is also available for $19.95 plus p&h and can be freely duplicated for the students.)

**Lesson 1** – *The Digital Divide, The Internet and The Poor*

**Objective:** *By the end of this lesson the student will be able to articulate his/her understanding of the digital divide, and of the effect of information scarcity among the poor, as an economic, social justice and spiritual issue and show how Internet cafes in urban slums can help to ameliorate these conditions.*

1. The rich have much greater access to information and to information technology than the poor, this gap in digital information is known as the digital divide, and is between “information rich’ and information poor’ communities.
2. The poor tend to highly value information - and even to hoard it
3. The poor thus have much less information and it also tends to be not as well shared
4. The poor lack vital information on education, health, business and government policy – most of which is readily available online.
5. The digital divide is exacerbated by corrupt monopoly telecommunications forms in many developing nations (e.g. Indonesia where it can cost up to $300 a month for dial-up and $1200 USD a month for a very basic broadband connection)
6. The attitude that digital information is a luxury that the poor do not deserve (and not a necessity or commodity) is behind much such thinking.
7. Some regimes are afraid of the poor having access to information and opinion and block ‘bloggers’ and even restrict search engines such as Google.
8. Thus establishing an internet café in an urban slum can be a powerful act of economic and political justice.
9. The Internet café also allows people to do private research into issues of conscience and faith and can lead to people finding out about the gospel through the multitude of good Christian websites online.
10. This access to the gospel and to online Christian training material (for free or at very low cost) opens up possibilities for evangelism and church-planting in the urban slum context.

## **Lesson 2** – *How An Internet Café Works (may need a local tech guy to explain some of these concepts)*

**Objective:** *By the end of this lesson the student will be able to articulate a basic understanding of the practical issues behind the establishment and operation of a successful Internet café in an urban slum.*

1. An internet café is a computer network known as a LAN or *local area network* – all the computers are connected together as a group, and then they are also connected to cyberspace.
2. A cheap way to set up such a network is to have one good fast server, and then have the rest of the computers as ‘thin clients’ (very basic computers that run off the server).
3. One commonly used combination is to have Windows 2003 on the server and then to use Linux Thin Client Protocol to make Windows available to up to 50 thin clients (older computers) in the computer center. This also greatly reduces the amount of expensive software that needs to be bought.
4. This enables the Internet café to use older recycled computers in the Internet café and greatly reduces the costs of establishing a computer center in an urban slum. You need less expensive computers and less expensive software so the costs drop by around 90%.
5. To prevent hacking and other problems you need to have a firewall and other security measures, so one computer is generally set aside as a ‘firewall’ computer.
6. You also need to protect the computers from power surges, spikes and blackouts / brownouts. You must have surge protectors and enough UPS (uninterrupted power supplies) or you will destroy your computers very quickly.
7. You also need virus checkers, and spam blockers and you can get content filters that stop customers from being able to visit pornographic websites – see [www.safefamilies.org](http://www.safefamilies.org)
8. Meraki routers – can help you set up wireless in your community as well see http://meraki.com/
9. Having services such as instant messaging, headphones, webcams and VOIP (Skype) so people can talk to their friends and families overseas is very popular. They do not cost that much to set up in your Internet café. See [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)
10. You can reduce software costs by using open source software such as OpenOffice instead of Microsoft Word – see [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) and open source is getting much better now.
11. If the Internet is often down or is very expensive you can operate the icafe as a learning center.

**Lesson 3** – *The I-Café And Its Transformational Operation In The Community*

**Objective:** *By the end of this lesson the student will be able to review ways in which an Internet café can operate as a transformational presence in an urban slum.*

1. Provision of Internet services and information services such as medical information
2. Provision of access to government forms and information esp. in India and Philippines where e-government is growing
3. Provision of economic information and small business facilities such as fax, photocopying, Quickbooks, Excel etc.
4. Ability to contact relatives overseas by Skype and establish contacts that can provide help to the community
5. As a homework and study facility enabling students who do not own computers to make educational progress
6. As a place to learn about information technology and to practice the use of International English
7. As a sign of hope and of investment and interest in the community
8. As an aid to community organizing efforts such as email and fax campaigns
9. As a place for contacting the community and for friendship evangelism
10. As a way to support the presence of Christian workers in the community through revenue earned from the Internet café, a well-run icafe can support up to 3 indigenous Christian workers.
11. As a physical facility to hold bible studies and to begin planting a church in the community
12. As a means of online theological education by extension e.g . through the free courses and downloads at Antioch Internet Bible International – [www.aibi.ph](http://www.aibi.ph)
13. Need to have a planned vision for outreach to the community
14. Can integrate with other transformational efforts in the community and even become a shared facility between groups
15. Bring in community leaders to the vision and help them to understand the importance of bridging the digital divide and of helping to keep the icafe in their community.

**Lesson 4** - *Evangelism and Church Planting From Internet Cafes*

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**Objective:** *By the end of this lesson the student will be able to articulate the steps needed in order to undertake evangelism and church planting using an Internet café as a ministry platform.*

1. An Internet café tends to draw community leaders and curious learners – people with high information needs that are ideal for friendship evangelism and church-planting and who are often people of influence (men and women of peace) within the community.
2. Some people will be ‘regulars’ who come in three or more times a week to check email, make these your first priority for friendship evangelism.
3. Show genuine interest in them, provide excellent customer service, be friendly and professional, pray each day for openings, leadings and divine appointments.
4. Create a quite area where people can go with you for a chat and a cup of tea. Make friendship a possibility.
5. Run activities and programs in the Internet café that involve some dialogue and opportunity to make friends in a face to face fashion e.g computer classes, English classes, PowerPoint classes etc.
6. Use low traffic times (e.g. the mornings) for special groups who may be available then e.g. a women’s bible study.
7. If possible (non-offensive) have Christian material on the computers that they can ‘accidentally’ bump into, and use some of the excellent Christian screen-savers that are available.
8. Make a friend then ask ‘who else do you know who might be interested in knowing about Jesus Christ?’ – develop lists of possible contacts and referrals then follow them up, taking the person who recommended them with you where possible.
9. Ask them to a seeker-sensitive bible study (such as an Alpha course or chronological bible study or whatever is culturally relevant)
10. Aim to turn the bible study into a house church and then to a larger church format.
11. Keep creating friends with regular users of the Internet café and keep asking for referrals and start as many bible studies as you can.
12. Take particular care with the training of faithful, reliable and godly bible study leaders so that you can multiply your efforts.
13. Be prepared to divide groups when they become too large but do not ‘force’ the division unless you have good leaders who are trained to take over the new group
14. Avoid loud rap music and noisy games that create a non-Christian atmosphere and which make conversation and relationship-building nearly impossible. The icafe should be a place of quality, peace and professionalism.
15. Remove any idols that may be on the premises, have a time of spiritual cleansing of the facility and have a group of intercessors that pray regularly (at least weekly) for the ministry, for the equipment, the finances and the staff. (Satan seems to especially attack relationships, technology and finances). Keep the ministry covered in prayer!



## **Lesson 5** – *Running The Internet Café As A Small Business And Sign Of Hope*

**Objective:** *By the end of this lesson the student will be able to develop a basic business plan that will enable them to successfully operate the Internet café in the community.*

**Reference Website** : <http://www.cybermissions.org/icafe/cd/index.html> - under Small Business Training

1. The Internet café needs to run as a successful small business in order to pay bills such as rent and phone and Internet access and to provide wages for staff.
2. *Quote:* “Cash is like oxygen – you need it to survive - but no one lives just to breathe.” Having a good cash flow is essential but it is not the main aim of your ministry - which is to serve Christ in the slums.
3. *Many ministry Internet cafes fail to live up to their potential because of poor financial management.*
4. Each Internet café should be associated with a proven businessman or entrepreneur who can help it to run well as a small business.
5. Paul seems to have worked in a small business with Priscilla and Aquilla making tents to support the ministry. Priscilla and Aquilla were probably the ones with the best business skills and so Paul worked under them in their business, despite his being an apostle. This is known as ‘being vulnerable to one another’s strengths’ and allowing people who have high-level skills in a particular area to take the lead in that area.
6. One way of doing this is to do a business plan that helps you to see where the money will be needed and how you can run the business successfully “People don’t plan to fail, they just fail to plan”
7. *Work through the following three worksheets in class – if you do not get them all finished have the remainder as ‘homework”*
*  [Project analysis worksheet](http://www.cybermissions.org/icafe/cd/icafe%20manual/small%20business%20training/Project%20analysis.pdf)
*  [How to do an analysis of successfull Internet cafes in your area](http://www.cybermissions.org/icafe/cd/icafe%20manual/small%20business%20training/Analysis%20Of%20Successful%20Internet%20Cafes%20In%20Your%20Area.pdf)
*  [Sample Business Plan Template](http://www.cybermissions.org/icafe/cd/icafe%20manual/small%20business%20training/Business%20Plan%20Template%20For%20Community%20Internet%20Cafes.doc)