

Topic: Rural Citizens Lack Access to Digital Public Services

Step 1: Observation

Context

The situation observed focuses on how rural and semi-urban citizens access digital public services such as government portals, online forms, and digital schemes.

Observations

- Most users rely heavily on smartphones rather than laptops or computers.
- Poor internet connectivity is a frequent issue, especially in rural areas.
- Users experience confusion while navigating complicated government websites.
- Many users are unaware that certain government services are available online.
- Dependence on others (family members, cyber cafés, CSCs) is common.

Observation notes recorded through a digital survey of 30+ users.

Step 2: User Identification

User Groups

1. **Rural Citizens**
 - Role: End users of digital public services
 - Expectations: Easy access, local language support, reliable internet
2. **Government Service Providers**
 - Role: Design and maintain digital portals
 - Expectations: Efficient service delivery, security, scalability
3. **Local Assistance Centers (CSC/Cyber Cafés)**
 - Role: Intermediaries helping citizens access services
 - Expectations: Clear systems, steady demand, simple processes

Step 3: Interviews / Survey

A survey with open-ended and multiple-choice questions was conducted with over 30 respondents from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas.

1. How often do you have access to the internet?
2. What is the biggest barrier you face while using digital public services?
3. What would you do if a government service is available only online?
4. Which device do you usually use for online services?
5. Have you ever used a digital government service?

Key Insights

- Poor internet connectivity and lack of digital knowledge are major barriers.
- Many users strongly agree that rural citizens lack access to digital public services.
- Digital literacy training and better internet connectivity were the most suggested solutions.

Step 4: Pain-Point Analysis

Category Identified Pain Points

Functional Complicated websites, poor connectivity

Emotional Frustration, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes

Systemic Lack of digital literacy programs, language barriers

Critical Pain Point

Lack of reliable access and digital literacy for using online public services.

Step 5: Root Cause Identification

Problem: Rural citizens struggle to access digital public services.

1. Why do they struggle?
→ Poor internet connectivity and complex websites.
2. Why is connectivity poor?
→ Inadequate digital infrastructure in rural areas.

3. Why are websites complex?
→ They are not designed for first-time or low-literacy users.
4. Why is user-friendly design missing?
→ Limited focus on inclusive and rural-centric design.
5. Why is inclusive design not prioritized?
→ Lack of ground-level user feedback during system design.

Root Causes Identified

- Weak digital infrastructure in rural areas
- Lack of digital literacy training
- Non-inclusive design of government portals

Step 6: Wicked Problem Understanding

This problem is classified as a **Wicked Problem** because:

- It involves multiple stakeholders (citizens, government, service centers).
- There is no single solution (infrastructure, literacy, and design all matter).
- Improving security can increase complexity, while simplifying systems may reduce security.
- Social, economic, and technological factors are interconnected.

Step 7: Reflection

Through this lab, initial assumptions such as “internet access alone is enough” were proven incorrect. User perspectives highlighted that awareness, confidence, and usability are equally important. Jumping directly to solutions without understanding user pain points can lead to ineffective designs. This lab helped develop skills in observation, user research, empathy, and problem analysis.

Timestamp	Age group	Where do you live?	How often do you have access to the internet?	Imagine this situation: what is the biggest barrier you face while using digital government services? A government service is available only online. What device do you usually rely on for online service. Have you ever used any digital government service?	Do you agree with the statement: Rural citizens lack access to digital public services?	what would help rural citizens the most?
22/01/2025 21:53:18	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone No	Agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 21:53:19	18-25	Semi urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer No	strongly agree Digital literacy training
22/01/2025 21:53:54	Below 18	Urban	daily	complicated websites Complete it myself	Smartphone I wasn't aware such services exist	strongly agree Digital literacy training
22/01/2025 21:56:13				complicated websites Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
22/01/2025 21:56:15				poor internet connectivity Ask someone for help	Smartphone Yes	Neutral Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 21:56:37				No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 21:59:15				No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone No	strongly agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 21:59:27				poor internet connectivity Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone No	Agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 21:47:36	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 21:50:08	18-25	Urban	daily	complicated websites Complete it myself	Smartphone No	strongly agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 21:51:12	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	Agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 21:51:46	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Laptop/computer Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
22/01/2025 21:52:23	18-25	Rural	daily	lack of digital knowledge Ask someone for help	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
22/01/2025 21:55:16	26-38	Semi urban	daily	complicated websites Complete it myself	Laptop/computer I wasn't aware such services exist	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 21:56:04	18-25	Urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge Ask someone for help	Smartphone Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 21:56:39	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues Ask someone for help	Smartphone No	Neutral Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 22:00:43	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	Agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 22:04:16	18-25	Urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 22:07:01	Below 18	Rural	daily	language difficulties Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer Yes	strongly agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 22:11:44				poor internet connectivity Unable to access it	Smartphone No	Neutral Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 22:17:53				No major issues Complete it myself	Laptop/computer No	Agree Local assistance centers
22/01/2025 22:14:31				poor internet connectivity Complete it myself	Laptop/computer Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 22:29:59	26-38	Urban	Rarely	language difficulties Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
22/01/2025 23:17:52	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	Agree Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 00:05:44	18-25	Rural	occasionally	No major issues Unable to access it	Smartphone No	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
23/01/2025 00:47:58	18-25	Rural	daily	poor internet connectivity Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
23/01/2025 07:52:39	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Ask someone for help	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 07:52:50	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Ask someone for help	Smartphone Yes	Agree Better internet connectivity
23/01/2025 07:53:44	26-38	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
23/01/2025 08:12:24	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Complete it myself	Laptop/computer I wasn't aware such services exist	Neutral Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 08:24:41	26-38	Semi urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge Complete it myself	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Better internet connectivity
23/01/2025 08:27:14	18-25	Semi urban	daily	No major issues Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Laptop/computer Yes	Neutral Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 08:27:31	18-25	Rural	daily	lack of digital knowledge Complete it myself	Laptop/computer No	Agree Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 08:30:38	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Laptop/computer Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 09:56:26	18-25	Semi urban	daily	poor internet connectivity Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training
23/01/2025 10:11:33	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues Complete it myself	Laptop/computer Yes	strongly agree Digital literacy training