

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?	what is the biggest barrier you face while using it?	Imagine this situation: If government service is available only online. What device do you usually rely on for online serv.		Have you ever used any digital government service?	Do you agree with the statement: Rural citizens lack access to digital public service?	what would help rural citizens the most?
22/01/2026 21:33:18	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	No	Agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 21:33:19	18-25	Semi-urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer	No	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
22/01/2026 21:33:34	Below 18		daily	complicated websites	Complete it myself	Smartphone	I wasn't aware such services exist	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
22/01/2026 21:36:13	18-25	Rural	daily	complicated websites	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
22/01/2026 21:36:15	18-25	Rural	daily	poor internet connectivity	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	Yes	Neutral	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 21:38:07	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 21:39:15	Below 18	Rural	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	No	strongly agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 21:40:27	18-25	Rural	daily	poor internet connectivity	Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone	No	Agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 21:47:36	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 21:50:05	18-25	Urban	daily	complicated websites	Complete it myself	Smartphone	No	strongly agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 21:51:12	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 21:51:46	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
22/01/2026 21:53:23	18-25	Rural	daily	lack of digital knowledge	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
22/01/2026 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
22/01/2026 21:56:04	18-25	Urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 21:58:39	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	No	Neutral	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 22:00:43	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 22:04:16	18-25	Urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 22:07:01	Below 18	Rural	daily	language difficulties	Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer	Yes	strongly agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 22:17:44	18-25	Rural	daily	poor internet connectivity	Unable to access it	Smartphone	No	Neutral	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 22:17:53	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	No	Agree	Local assistance centers
22/01/2026 22:14:31	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 22:29:59	26-38	Urban	Rarely	language difficulties	Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Better internet connectivity
22/01/2026 23:17:32	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 00:23:44	18-25	Rural	occasionally	No major issues	Unable to access it	Smartphone	No	strongly agree	Better internet connectivity
23/01/2026 00:47:38	18-25	Rural	daily	poor internet connectivity	Ask someone for help	Laptop/computer	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
23/01/2026 07:52:39	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 07:52:50	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Ask someone for help	Smartphone	Yes	Agree	Better internet connectivity
23/01/2026 07:53:44	26-38	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Better internet connectivity
23/01/2026 08:10:24	18-25	Urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	I wasn't aware such services exist	Neutral	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 08:24:41	26-38	Semi-urban	daily	lack of digital knowledge	Complete it myself	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Better internet connectivity
23/01/2026 08:27:14	18-25	Semi-urban	daily	No major issues	Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Laptop/computer	Yes	Neutral	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 08:27:31	18-25	Rural	daily	lack of digital knowledge	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	No	Agree	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 08:30:38	18-25	Urban	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 09:35:26	18-25	Semi-urban	daily	poor internet connectivity	Visit a cyber cafe / CSC	Smartphone	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training
23/01/2026 10:11:33	18-25	Rural	daily	No major issues	Complete it myself	Laptop/computer	Yes	strongly agree	Digital literacy training