GRAMEEN SERVICE CONNECT : VILLAGE TO CITY HELP PLATFORM

SUBMITTED BY

MD. TAHMIDUL ALAM AHAD
ID: 230241121

ABDUR RAHMAN
ID: 230241117

MD. SAIFUL ISLAM FAHIM
ID: 230241122

M. TAWSIF HOSSAIN
ID: 230241120

MEHRUB HOSSEN
ID: 230241108

This Report Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the **SDP-01**.

SUPERVISED BY

MRS. FERDOUS ARA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
BGC TRUST UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING
BGC TRUST UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH

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Abstract

The Grameen Service Connect (GSC) project proposes a hybrid socio-technical platform designed to mitigate the profound digital divide faced by rural populations in Bangladesh. While cellular mobile connectivity is high (108.5% coverage [1]), access to and utilization of essential digital services remain critically low, especially among less educated, poorer, and middle-aged citizens.[2] GSC addresses this gap by establishing a digital platform that connects rural citizens (Help Seekers) through local community hubs and coordinators, to skilled urban volunteers (Service Providers), thereby inserting a critical human-mediation layer between the user and complex digital services.

This report validates the project's feasibility across technical, economic, and operational dimensions. The system architecture, utilizing **Node.js (Express framework), React 18, and MySQL**, is robust and suitable for scalability. Crucially, the non-functional requirements are quantified against low-bandwidth standards, mandating a Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) of ≤ 2.5 seconds for most users. Furthermore, the operational design is grounded in specialized User Acceptance Testing (UAT) methodologies, such as Stoplight Coding, to empirically validate usability for low-literacy populations, ensuring the platform's social viability. GSC represents a scalable, sustainable model for promoting digital inclusion by fostering community ownership and bridging the socio-cognitive barriers to digital service access in emerging markets.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Title

Grameen Service Connect – Village to City Help Platform

1.1 Introduction

Digital connectivity is a fundamental component of socio-economic upliftment, yet in nations like Bangladesh, achieving equitable access remains a substantial challenge. While the nation has embraced the "Digital Bangladesh" vision, and cellular mobile connections exceed the total population (108.5% active connections), the effective utilization of digital services is hampered by systemic barriers.

Grameen Service Connect (GSC) is conceived as a decentralized, community-based digital support system designed to overcome the non-technical hurdles of the digital divide. The platform aims to facilitate access to essential online services—such as government form submissions, educational applications, and remote healthcare consultations—by connecting underserved rural Help Seekers with urban Volunteers through a secure, user-friendly digital interface. The design focuses on simplicity, low-data consumption, and, most importantly, the presence of a human intermediary to facilitate service negotiation and digital interaction.

1.2 Motivation

The motivation for GSC stems directly from the observed paradox of high digital device ownership juxtaposed with low digital service utilization among vulnerable groups. Data indicates that although 90.3% of households own electronic devices, primarily mobile phones, only a small fraction, 7.2%, utilizes these devices to access critical services like health information. The demographic segments least likely to engage with digital devices for services are middle-aged (35-54 years), female, less educated, and poorer individuals.

This low uptake is driven not primarily by infrastructure failure, but by socio-cognitive barriers, including a "lack of understanding and skills," "lack of awareness," and general "discomfort" with digital platforms. For rural individuals, existing government services are often perceived as an "unreachable entity". This context demonstrates that simply providing internet access (as infrastructure projects do) is insufficient; the primary bottleneck lies in the complexity of centralized digital services and the lack of a trusted, skilled human guide. GSC's core value proposition is the insertion of this human layer (the urban volunteer and local hub coordinator) to convert device ownership into tangible utility, thereby validating the project's hybrid, mediated model.

Contribution

The GSC project offers multi-faceted contributions:

1. **For Rural Citizens:** It provides access to vital services, reducing the necessity of long-distance travel to urban areas and lowering documentation costs.
2. **For Volunteers:** It provides a structured, accountable opportunity for urban populations to contribute specialized skills to social development, fostering community engagement.
3. **For Society:** By providing a model for high-impact, low-cost digital service delivery, it actively contributes to the reduction of the rural-urban service disparity, promoting digital inclusion (SDG Goal 10).
4. **For Technology Adoption:** It drives the acceptance of user-friendly, low-data web solutions in areas constrained by intermittent internet connectivity.

1.3 Objectives

The project objectives are defined to ensure the resulting platform is both technically robust and socially relevant:

1. To construct a secure digital platform enabling connectivity and service matching between rural users and city volunteers.
2. To implement secure authentication, user profile management, and role-based access controls for both Help Seekers and Volunteers.
3. To facilitate help request creation, including category tagging, status tracking (Received → In Progress → Completed), and automated volunteer matching based on required skill and availability.
4. To integrate real-time messaging using secure WebSocket protocols for efficient, low-latency communication.
5. To support secure document and image uploads, optimized for low-resolution inputs common in rural mobile settings.
6. To deliver a responsive User Interface (UI) optimized for mobile devices and quantified against industry-standard performance metrics for low-bandwidth environments.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To ensure the academic and operational success of the platform, the objectives are linked to measurable KPIs:

- **Technical KPI (Performance):** The system must achieve a Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) of ≤ 2.5 seconds for the 75th percentile of page loads when tested under simulated Fast 3G network conditions.[6]
- **Operational KPI (Usability):** The platform must achieve an 85% task completion rate during specialized Usability Testing sessions (e.g., using techniques like Stoplight Coding) when conducted with low-literacy users, demonstrating the effectiveness of the minimal, icon-based UI design.[7]

1.4 Expected Outcome

The successful implementation of GSC is expected to yield:

1. A validated, scalable, and secure Minimum Viable Product (MVP) digital solution built on open-source technologies (**Node.js, Express, React, MySQL**).
2. Demonstrated increase in accessibility to essential services for rural citizens, measured by successful request completion rates.
3. A user-friendly, low-cognitive load UI/UX validated for low-literacy users through specialized testing methodologies.
4. An efficient communication and service coordination system, driven by real-time messaging and robust data traceability.
5. A replicable framework for establishing sustainable, community-driven digital hubs in resource-constrained environments.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The operational context for GSC is the ongoing national commitment to digital transformation in Bangladesh, particularly the push to deliver government services at the citizen's doorstep. Understanding the current landscape, including established government initiatives and existing digital infrastructure, is essential for defining GSC's complementary role.

2.2 Related Works

The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) has executed significant initiatives to digitize services, including efforts coordinated by the Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme, which introduced the Digital Service Design Lab (DSDL) methodology to simplify and accelerate the digitization of ministerial services. Furthermore, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) operates integrated digital service delivery platforms.

Union Digital Centers (UDCs)

The most relevant existing infrastructure are the Union Digital Centers (UDCs), established at the local Union Parishad (UP) level across the country as part of the Digital Bangladesh vision. UDCs are conceptualized as ICT-enabled one-stop service outlets, furnished with computers, scanners, and wireless internet.

UDCs primarily offer standardized, transactional services at a nominal or low cost. Citizens predominantly visit UDCs for fundamental administrative tasks such as obtaining birth registration and citizenship certificates (approximately 18% for each service type). They also provide information related to sectors such as health, education, and agriculture.

2.3 Comparative Studies

GSC is designed not to replace, but to supplement and enhance the services offered by existing institutions like UDCs.
UDCs, while institutionally established, often face "loopholes in terms of service delivery, commitment," and struggle with supplying "appropriate content" due to insufficient back-end support. They are optimized for delivering standard, high-volume government forms and basic training.
GSC, conversely, is designed to address the highly personalized, often complex, non-standard service requests that require nuanced human judgment and dedicated communication. These services include:

1. **Facilitating Complex Documentation:** Assisting with filling out non-standard forms or reviewing legal documents, requiring detailed back-and-forth communication.
2. **Remote Consultation:** Facilitating telemedicine or specialized educational advising that requires real-time chat and document exchange.
3. **Skill-Based Support:** Matching needs (e.g., legal or technical application assistance) to specialized volunteer skills, which goes beyond the standard inventory of UDC services.

This differentiation rationalizes GSC's necessity: it provides the depth of service and complexity handling capability that standardized government centers often cannot efficiently manage, bridging the functional gap in digital service provision.

2.4 Scope of the Problem

The core challenge addressed by GSC is multi-layered:

1. **Geographical Disadvantage:** Citizens must travel long distances to centralized service points, which consumes time and budget.
2. **Digital Literacy Gap:** The absence of skills and awareness renders existing online portals inaccessible to vulnerable populations.
3. **Complexity of Services:** Government services often involve multiple manual steps and centralized departments, leading to significant delays (weeks or months). GSC aims to simplify this complexity through human intermediation.

2.5 Challenges

The project faces specific socio-technical challenges inherent in the operating environment:

1. **Internet Volatility:** Rural areas experience unstable and low-speed internet connectivity, which poses a severe risk to real-time functions like WebSocket chat.
2. **Low Digital Literacy:** The target users' discomfort and lack of skills require the development of a UI/UX that minimizes cognitive load and relies heavily on intuitive visual cues.
3. **Sustainability:** Ensuring sustained ethical guidance, quality control, and motivation for the urban volunteer base, and securing long-term operational funding for the physical community hubs.

2.6 Methodology

The project adopts the **Agile methodology, specifically the Scrum framework**. This iterative approach breaks the project down into time-boxed sprints, focusing on continuous delivery and rapid feedback integration.

This methodology is selected to address the inherent complexity and uncertainty associated with a socio-technical platform targeting low-literacy users. Requirements related to UI usability and performance on low-bandwidth networks are likely to evolve rapidly during pilot testing. Agile development enables the team to identify problems quickly and respond immediately to changing user requirements, thereby minimizing the risk of costly rework that characterizes traditional sequential models. This approach ensures that the functional output remains relevant and user-centric throughout the development cycle.

CHAPTER 3

FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

3.1 Feasibility Study

Executive Summary

The Grameen Service Connect (GSC) platform is evaluated as feasible across all key dimensions: technical, economic, operational, legal, and scheduling. The hybrid architecture, which leverages established open-source technologies (Node.js, Express, React, MySQL) and the physical support of community hubs, provides the necessary balance of digital scalability and local accessibility required for the specific challenges in rural Bangladesh. The viability of the project is secured through quantified performance goals and a strategy for community-driven sustainability.

3.1.1. Technical Feasibility

Technology Stack

The system architecture relies on a robust and maintainable open-source technology stack:

- **Frontend:** HTML, CSS, JavaScript, React 18, and TypeScript.
- **Backend: Node.js (Express framework)** for secure API management.
- **Database: MySQL** (using the mysql2 connector) for structured data storage and efficient query handling.
- **Real-Time Communication:** WebSocket protocols (implemented via the Node.js server) for low-latency chat functionality.
- **File Handling: Multer** for file upload processing.
- **Cloud Storage:** External services (e.g., Firebase, Cloudinary) for secure storage of document uploads.

The technical viability is assured by the stack's maturity and suitability for modular, scalable deployment.

System Capabilities and Mitigation Strategies

GSC's core requirement is reliable service delivery despite infrastructure constraints. This mandates aggressive risk mitigation:

Risk	Mitigation Strategy Detail
Unstable internet in rural hubs	Implementation of offline caching for static resources and forms; integrating SMS gateways for critical non-chat notifications and alerts to ensure service continuity.[2]
Server overload due to high traffic/real-time load	Scalable cloud deployment architecture (using platforms like Railway or Render) and efficient utilization of Node.js for concurrent connection management.
Limited technical expertise for maintenance	Simplified, modular architecture; comprehensive technical documentation; leveraging widely supported open-source frameworks to ensure community maintenance potential.

Technical Assessment: The project is technically feasible. All selected tools and frameworks are industry-standard, compatible, and possess the necessary capabilities (real-time chat, encryption, mobile responsiveness) to meet the defined functional and low-bandwidth non-functional requirements.

3.1.2. Economic Feasibility

Development Cost Estimates

Category	Estimated Cost (BDT)	Notes
Software development	1,50,000	Volunteer/student-based team
Cloud hosting & domain	15,000 / year	Railway / Render / Local provider
Training & documentation	20,000	For coordinators & volunteers
Equipment for local hubs	40,000	Shared computers & internet setup
Maintenance	10,000 / year	Minor bug fixes & updates

Total Estimated Initial Cost: ≈ BDT 2,25,000

Justification for Hosting Costs:

The estimated annual hosting cost of BDT 15,000 is intentionally higher than minimal local shared hosting packages (which can be as low as TK 1,350 per year). This higher allocation is necessary to secure Non-functional Requirements (NFRs) related to Scalability and Reliability (99.5% uptime) critical for a real-time service. The budget allocation ensures performance and stability, validating the investment.

Economic Conclusion: The project is economically feasible, demonstrating a high social benefit return on a relatively low capital investment, designed for long-term sustainability through community partnership and minimal operational overhead.

3.1.3. Operational Feasibility

Operational success hinges on the **Community Hub Model**. The high rate of households lacking home internet access (62% generally, and 8.7% among the poorest rural households) makes a purely digital, remote-first model unviable. The hub acts as a physical access point, a point of trust, and a support center where trained local coordinators assist Help Seekers in initiating requests and handling physical documentation.

- **Usability and Training:** The platform is designed with minimal text and heavy reliance on intuitive icons to counteract low digital literacy. Training for local coordinators is simplified and focused on visual, step-by-step procedures.
- **Sustainability:** Operational costs are minimized by fostering collaboration with existing local businesses or centers (e.g., printing shops), similar to the telecenter concept of UDCs. Volunteer management systems ensure accountability and longevity.

Operational Conclusion: The project is operationally feasible due to the hybrid design, which aligns the digital solution with existing rural social structures and addresses the critical gap in home internet access and digital confidence.

3.1.4. Schedule Feasibility

Proposed Project Timeline (10 Weeks Total)

Phase	Duration	Key Deliverables
Week 1–2	Requirement Analysis & Design	System architecture, database schema, quantified performance targets (LCP, INP).
Week 3–6	Development (Core Sprints)	Core modules, secure user authentication, chat implementation (WebSocket), volunteer matching logic.
Week 7–8	Testing	Security, performance verification against LCP targets, and specialized usability testing (Stoplight Coding).
Week 9	Deployment	Live server setup, domain configuration, final performance tuning.
Week 10	Evaluation & Training	User and volunteer onboarding, post-UAT iteration.

Schedule Conclusion: The schedule is feasible, supported by the adaptive nature of the chosen Agile methodology, allowing for prioritized deployment of critical features within the defined academic timeline.

3.1.5. Legal and Ethical Feasibility

The platform operates within the necessary legal and ethical boundaries:

- Legal Compliance: Secure storage and consent mechanisms adhere to Bangladesh's Digital Security Act (2018) and anticipate requirements from the draft Personal Data Protection Bill.
- Ethical Commitment: The platform promotes digital inclusion, guarantees equal access regardless of gender or socio-economic background, and commits to transparency regarding privacy and data use. Data governance, security, and responsible use of technology are integrated into the design, aligning with modern sustainability principles in digital transformation.

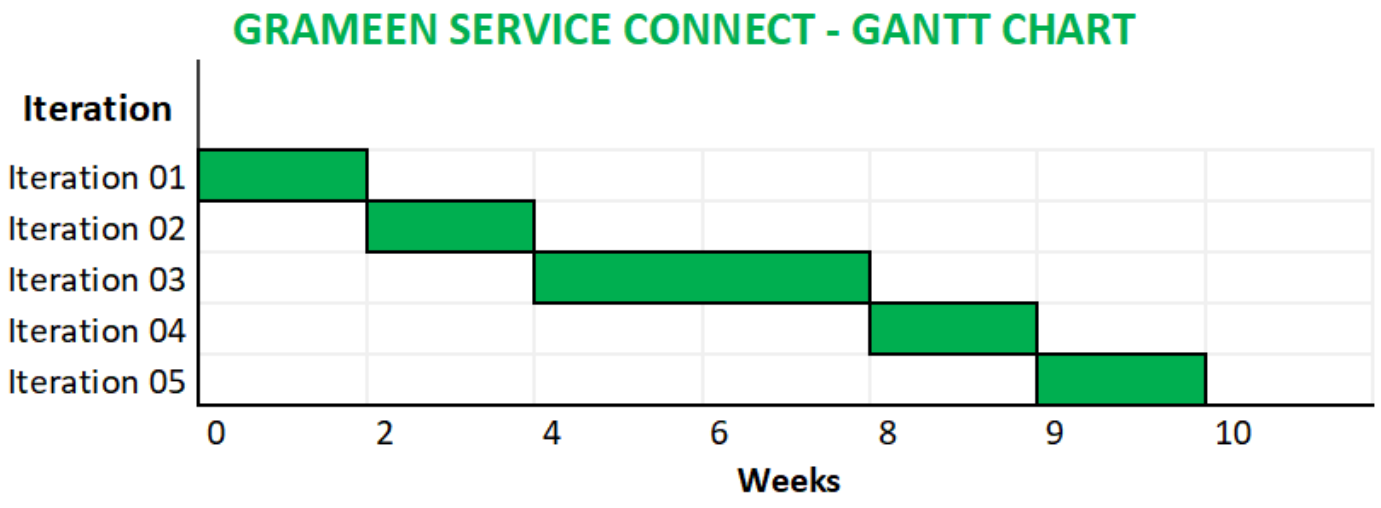
3.1.6. Overall Feasibility Conclusion

The **Grameen Service Connect (GSC)** platform is **technically, economically, operationally, legally, and ethically feasible**.

The GSC platform is demonstrated to be comprehensively feasible. The hybrid model provides high social impact with quantified technical capabilities designed specifically for low-resource environments. The strategic decision to utilize community hubs and open-source technology ensures low cost and long-term viability, positioning GSC as a practical intervention for digital empowerment.

3.2 Gantt Chart

Iteration contains **Requirement Analysis & Design, Development, Testing, Deployment, Evaluation & Training**



CHAPTER 4

SYSTEM ANALYSIS

4.1 Functional and Non-functional Requirements

The system requirements are detailed below, categorized by stakeholders. The platform must satisfy the demands of primary users (Seekers and Volunteers) while ensuring administrative control and adherence to performance standards.

Stakeholders

- **Primary**: Rural Help Seekers, City-based Volunteers.
- **Secondary**: Local Coordinators/Community Hubs, Platform Administrators.

4.1.1. Functional Requirements

ID	Requirement Description	Detail
FR-01	User Management	Secure user registration and JWT-based login for both Seekers and Volunteers, including role assignment and profile management.
FR-02	Request Submission	Ability for Seekers (or Coordinators) to submit help requests with categorized services (e.g., Health, Education, Govt. Forms), detailed descriptions, and file uploads (supporting low-resolution images).
FR-03	Volunteer Matching	Automated matching system based on volunteer skill tags, availability status, and seeker's request category.
FR-04	Real-Time Communication	Implementation of a low-latency, secure, end-to-end encrypted chat interface (WebSocket) for direct communication between matched users.
FR-05	Tracking & Feedback	Request status tracking workflow (Received $\rightarrow$ In Progress $\rightarrow$ Completed). Allows Volunteer rating and service feedback submission upon completion.
FR-06	Document Exchange	Secure mechanism for uploading, downloading, and viewing confidential documents and verification images.
FR-07	Admin Control	Provision of an Admin Dashboard for user, testimonial, and request management.

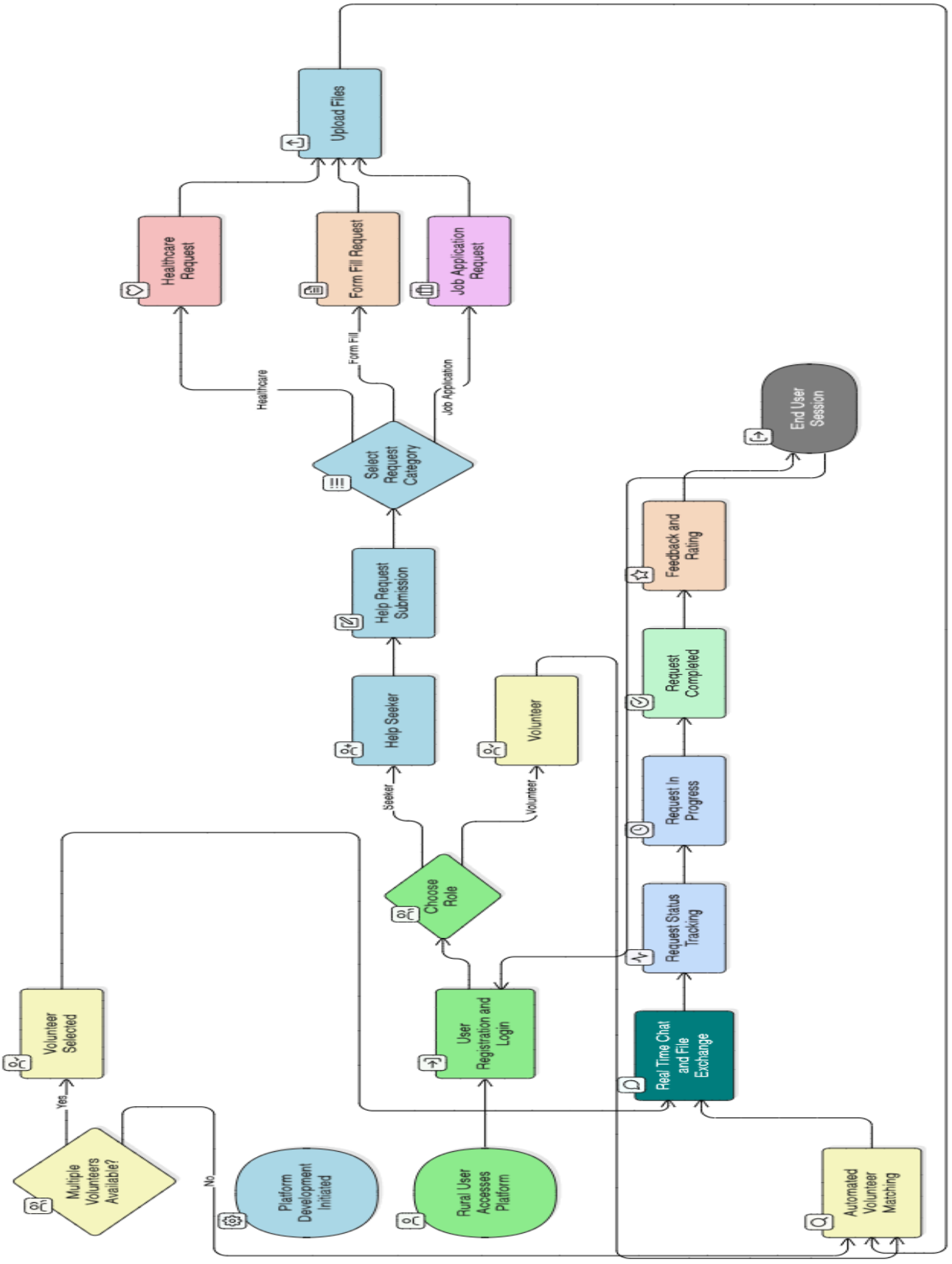
4.1.2. Non-functional Requirements

The NFRs are critical, as they dictate the platform's performance in the challenging rural environment. They transition abstract goals into measurable technical specifications.

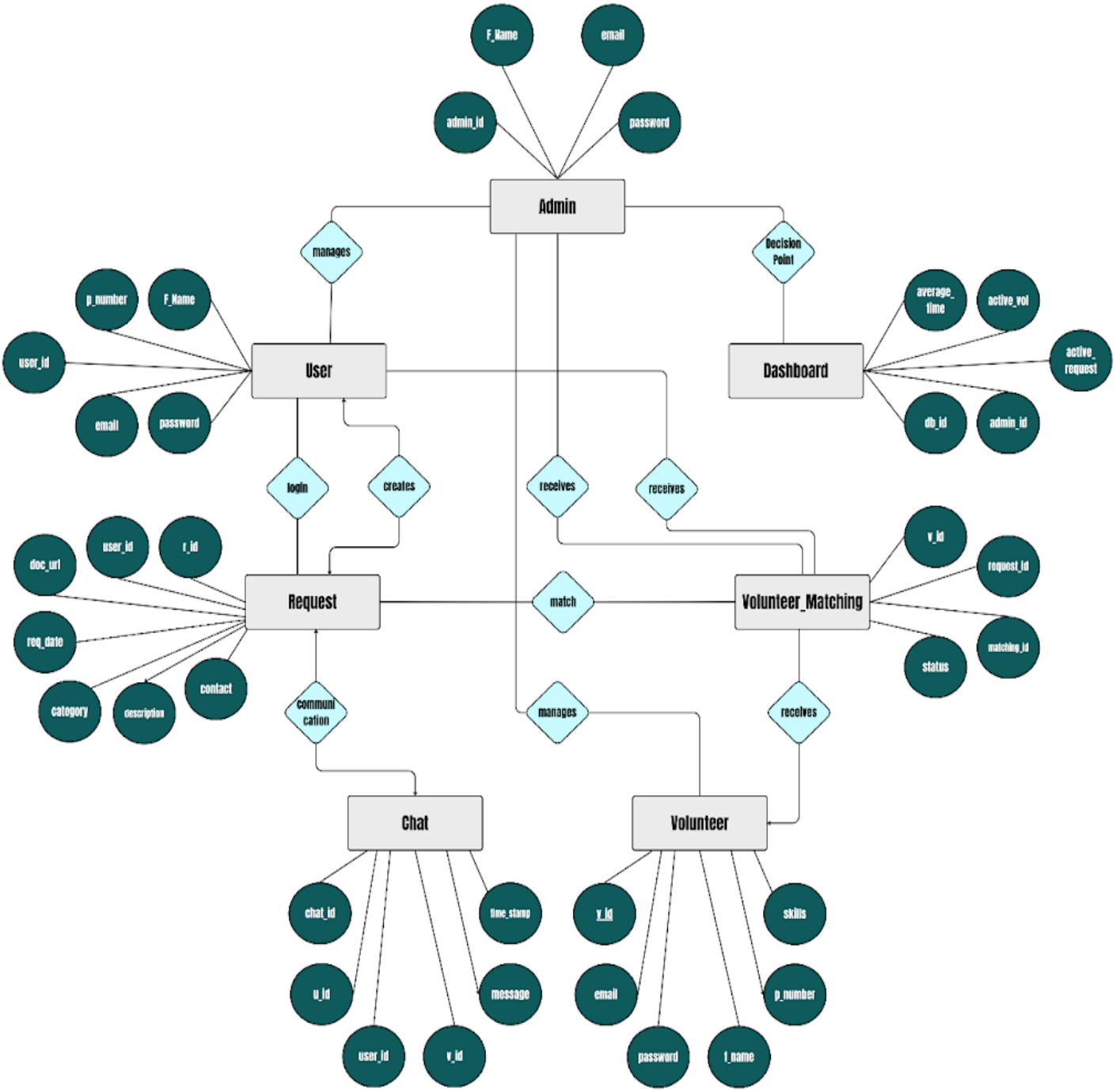
Quantified Performance Requirements:
The fundamental requirement is to provide a usable experience despite poor network quality. This necessitates benchmarking performance against Core Web Vitals (CWV) thresholds, which measure user experience in loading, interactivity, and stability.

Metric	Definition	Target Threshold (75th Percentile)	Optimization Strategy Rationale
Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) [6]	Measures perceived loading speed of the main content	≤ 2.5 seconds	Critical for rural connections where resource load delay is high. Optimization focuses on minimizing Time to First Byte (TTFB) and Resource Load Duration, which typically contribute ≈ 40% each to the overall LCP.
Interaction to Next Paint (INP)	Measures page responsiveness to user input	≤ 200 milliseconds	Essential for reliable, real-time chat interaction and ensuring users feel the interface is reactive.
Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)	Measures visual stability	≤ 0.1	Crucial for preventing input errors and ensuring a predictable interface, particularly important for low-literacy users navigating the visual UI.
Availability (Reliability)	System Uptime	99.5%	Required for reliable access to essential services, necessitating professional cloud hosting.[15]
Usability (NFR-05)	Ease of Use for Low-Literacy Users	Achieve 85% task completion rate in Usability Testing (Stoplight Coding) without assistance.	Measures the success of the icon-based UI design and intuitive flow.

4.2 User Flow Diagram



4.2 E-R Diagram



CHAPTER 5

SYSTEM DESIGN

5.1 System Architecture

The GSC platform adopts a modern, scalable three-tier architecture, augmented by dedicated services for real-time communication and file storage:

1. **Presentation Layer (Frontend):** Developed using **React 18** with **TypeScript** and **Tailwind CSS**, ensuring high responsiveness and mobile compatibility. This layer is highly optimized for minimal payload size to meet the rigorous LCP target ($\leq$ 2.5s).
2. **Application Layer (Backend):** Utilizes the **Node.js Express framework** to handle business logic, manage user authentication (**JWT**), and expose secure RESTful APIs. This layer includes the crucial Matching Engine logic.
3. **Data Layer:** Consists of **MySQL** for structured, transactional data (user profiles, request details, status tracking).
4. **Specialized Service Layers:** The Node.js server handles the WebSocket connections for real-time chat, separating persistent connection management from the core REST API processing. External cloud services (Cloudinary/Firebase) manage secure, encrypted storage for high-volume binary data (documents, images), preventing database bloat and maximizing data retrieval speed.

This separation ensures maintainability, scalability, and performance optimization for concurrent real-time services.

5.2 UX Design

The User Experience (UX) design is governed by strict adherence to principles that minimize cognitive load, a necessity when addressing low-literacy populations.[9]

- **Design Principles:** Navigation is minimized and relies heavily on universally recognized icons rather than complex text menus. Direct access to essential features (request creation, chat, status tracking) is prioritized.
- **Accessibility:** The design is optimized for mobile devices, which are the primary access tools in rural areas.[2] Interface elements feature large click targets and high contrast ratios.
- **Feedback:** To foster user trust, the interface provides immediate visual feedback (low INP $\leq$ 200ms$) for every interaction, confirming that the system has processed the user's input despite potential network delays.

5.3 UI Design

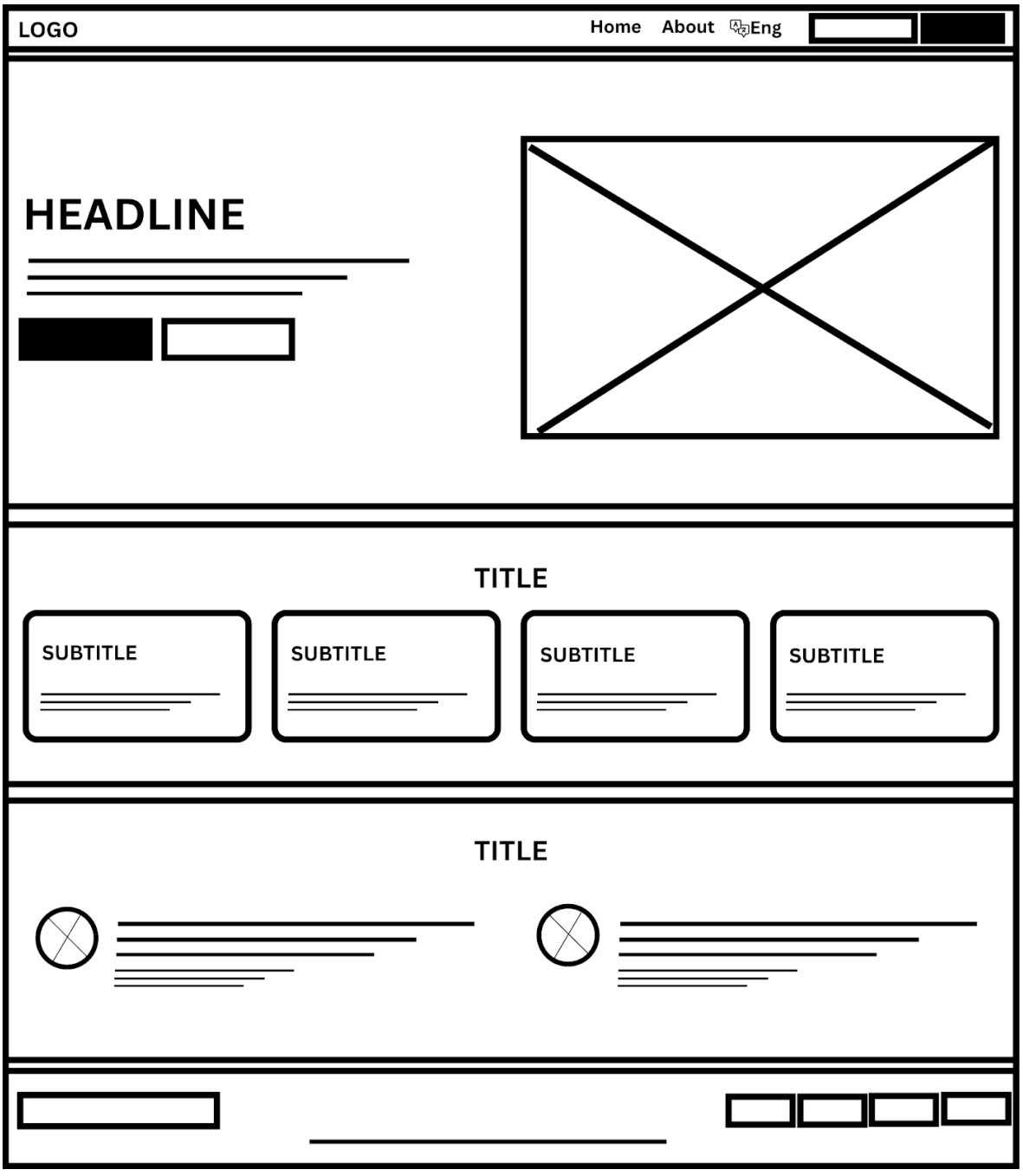
The UI is implemented using efficient styling frameworks like Tailwind CSS and modern styling principles, resulting in a lightweight, clean, and fast-loading interface. Key design features include:

- Dashboard Layout: Clean, prioritized display showing active requests and essential notifications.

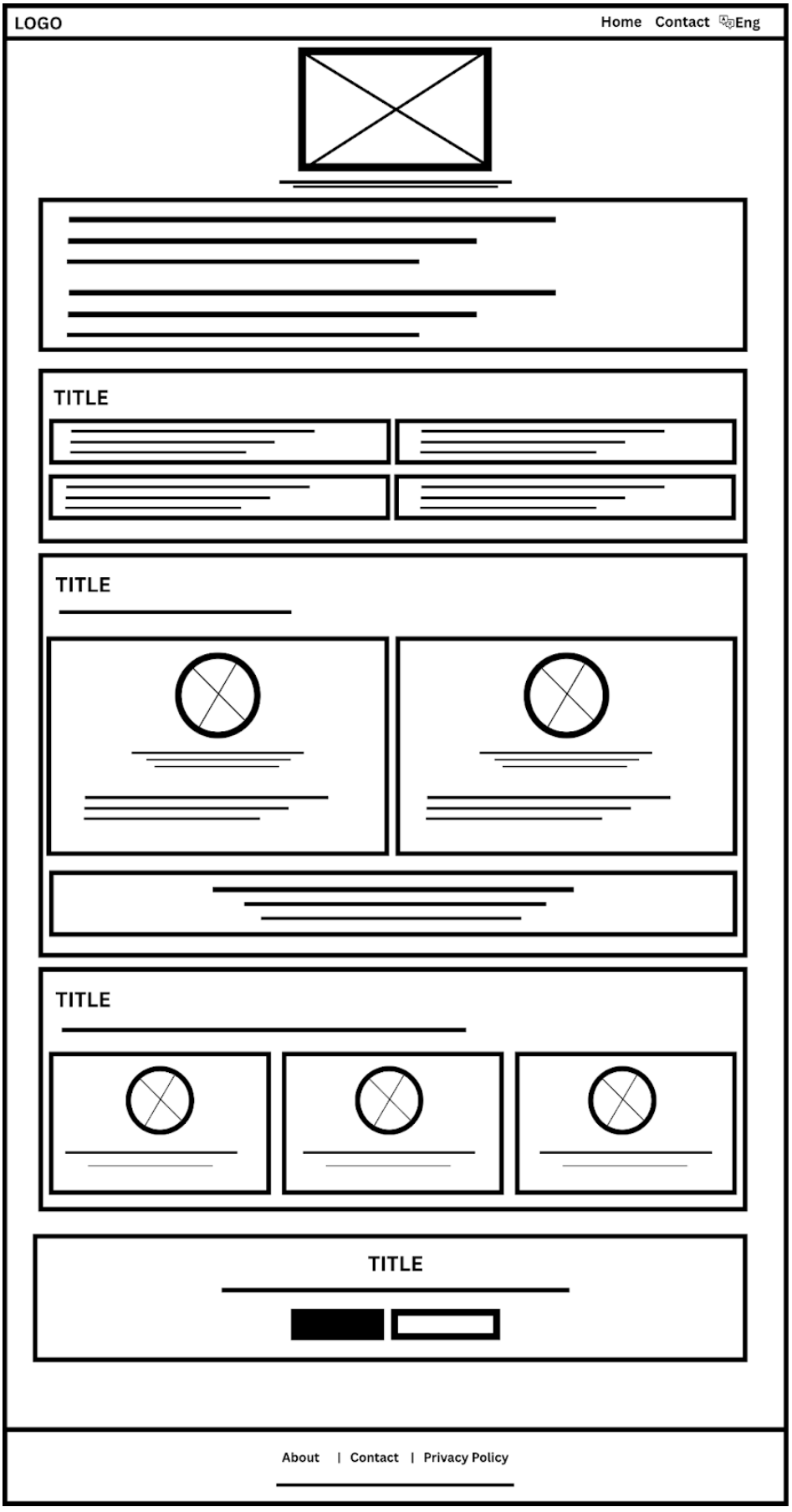
- Messaging UI: A standard chat-style layout familiar from popular messaging applications, ensuring ease of use for communication (FR-04).
- Request Management: Visual indicators replace complex text descriptions for request status (e.g., color-coded dots for Received, In Progress, Completed).

Wireframe:

Home Page / Dashboard



About Page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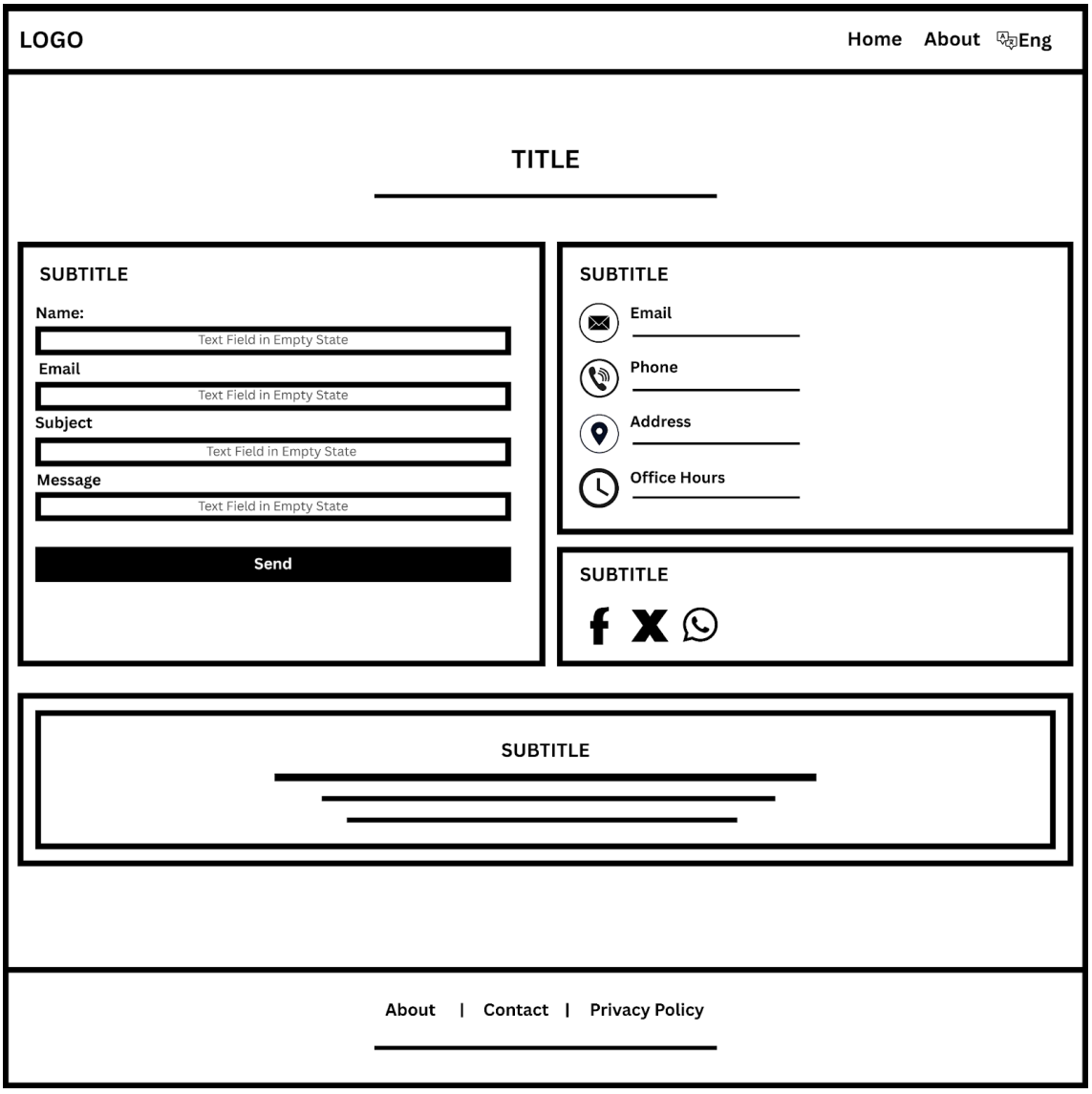
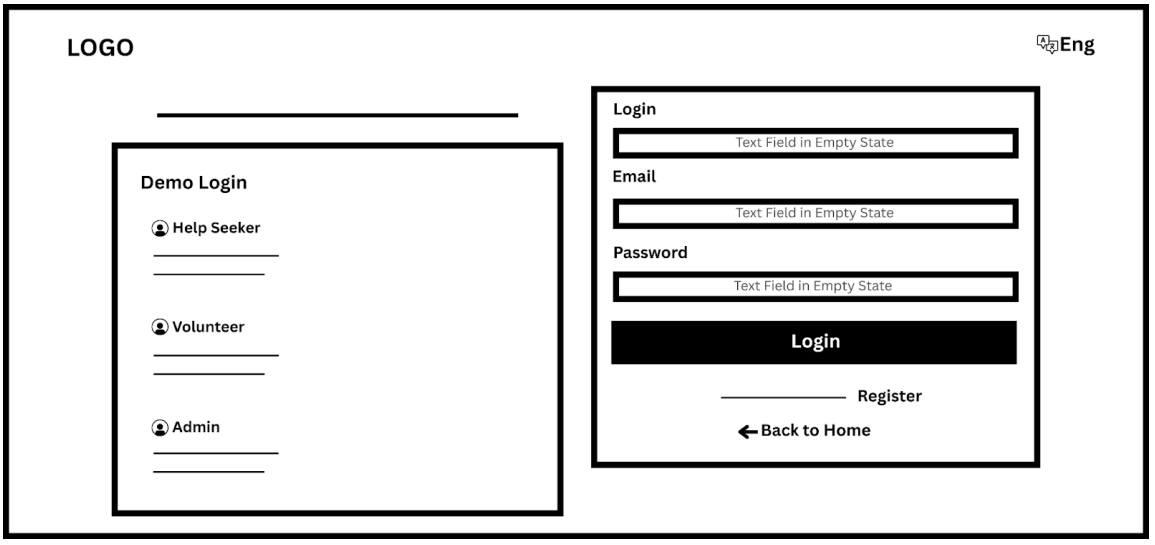
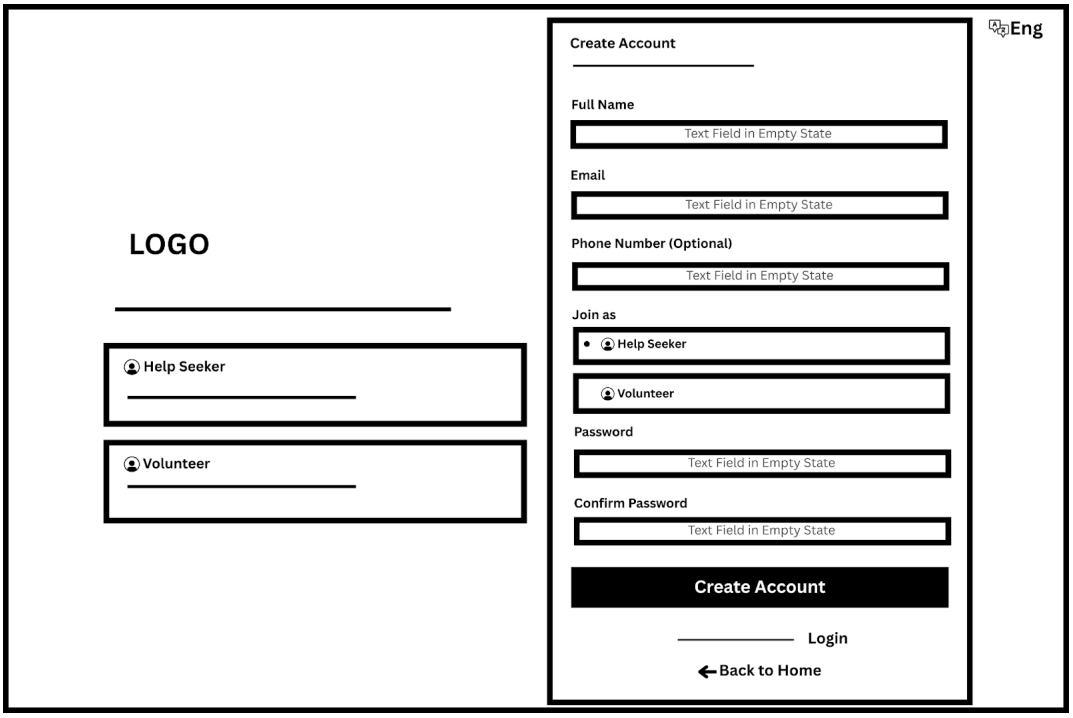
Contact Us Page



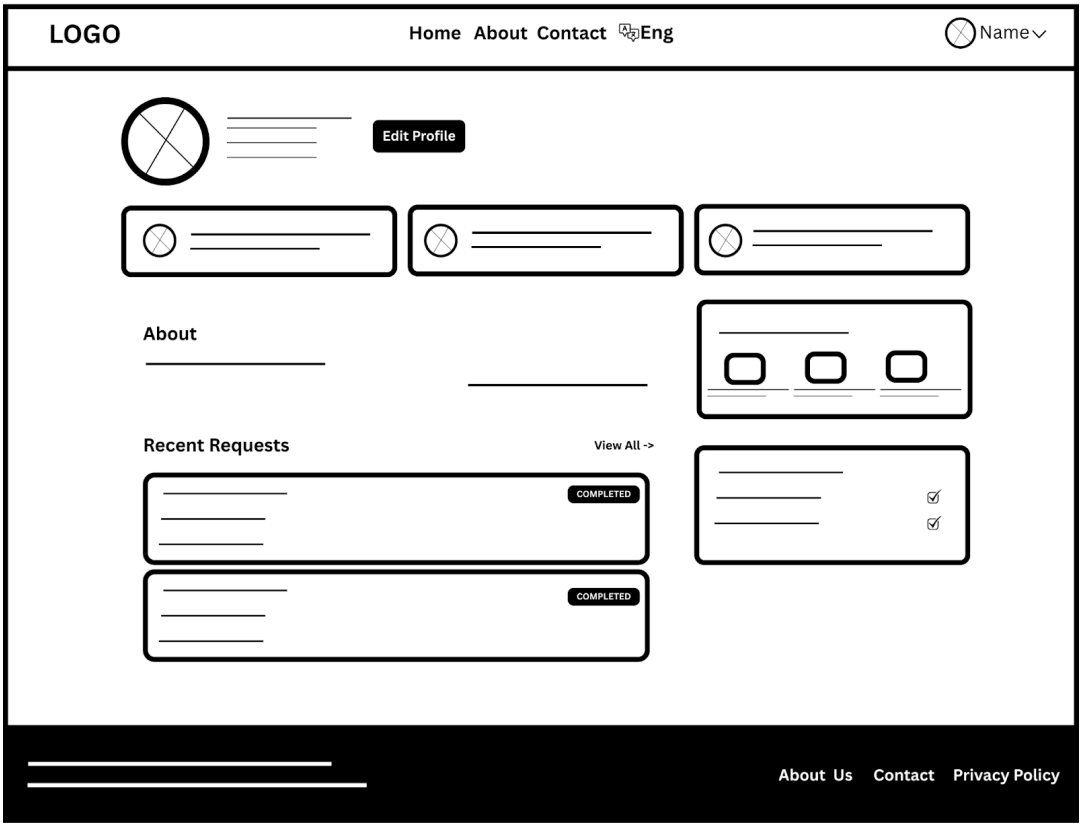
Login Page



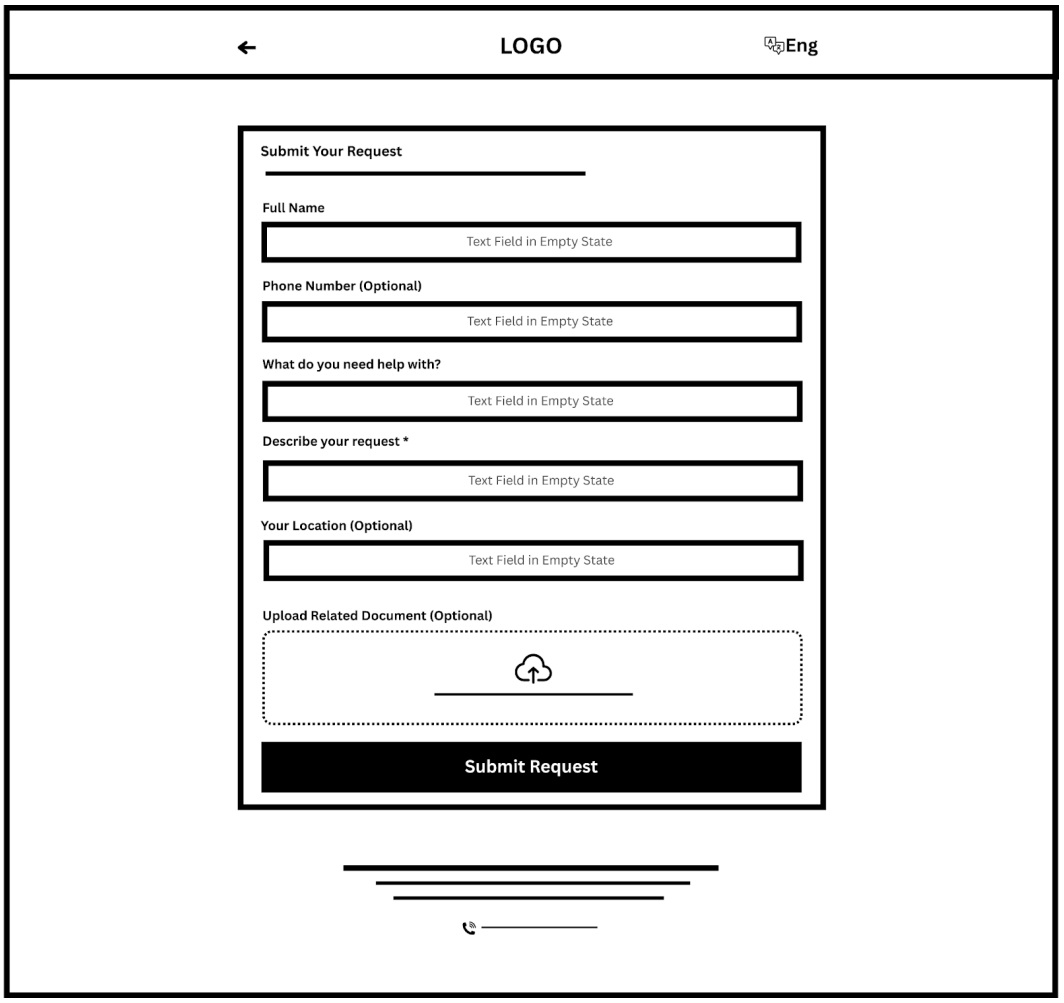
Create Account / Registration Page



Profile Dashboard

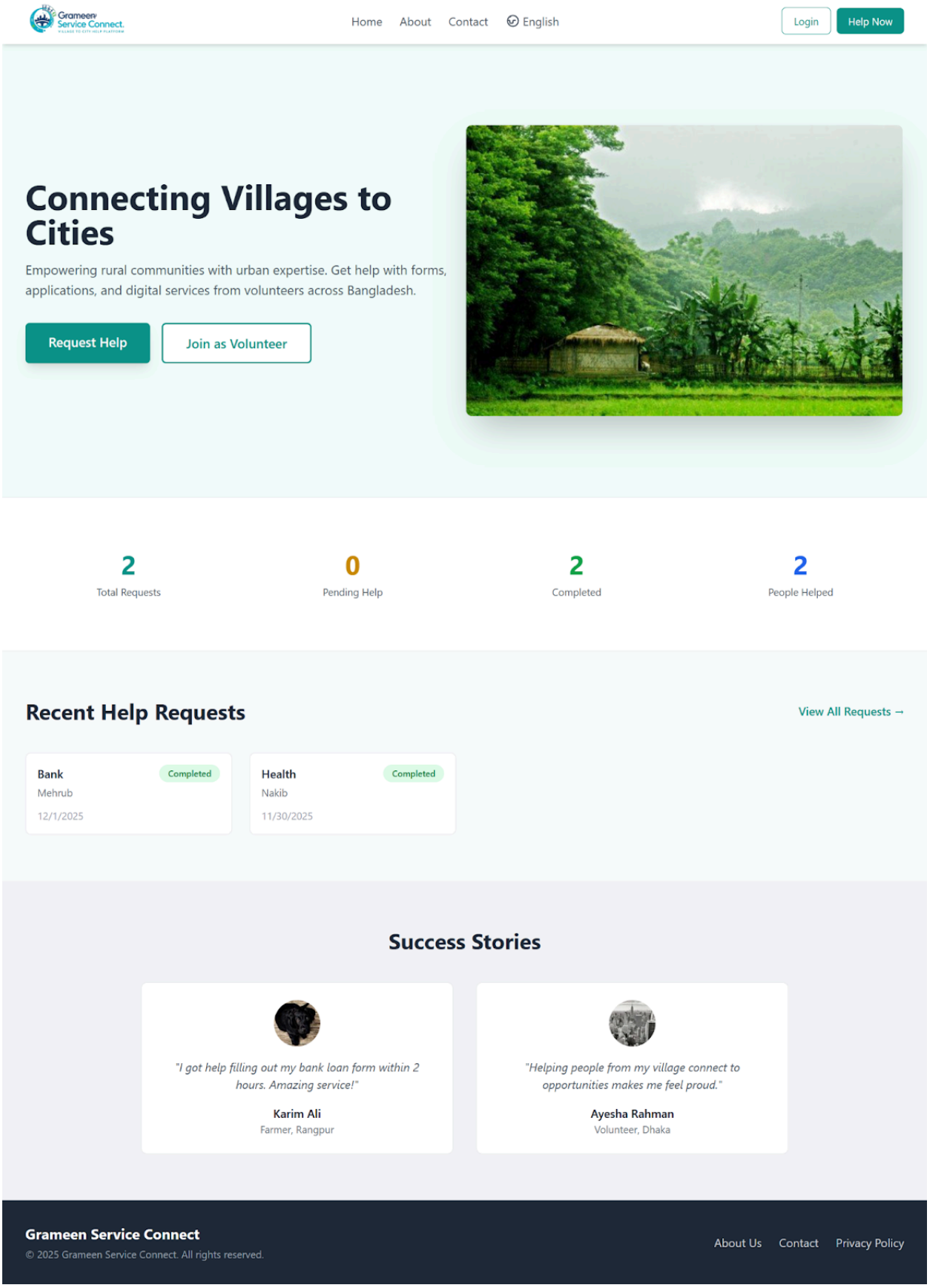


Submit Your Request Page



Mockup

Home Page / Dashboard



About Page

Grameen Service Connect

Home About Contact English Login Help Now

About Grameen Service Connect

Grameen Service Connect is a community support platform designed to bridge the digital gap between rural villages and urban service resources in Bangladesh. Many rural citizens face difficulties accessing online services due to limited internet access, lack of digital literacy, and the absence of local support. Our platform directly connects rural help seekers with trained urban volunteers who can assist them remotely in completing tasks such as government form submissions, educational applications, healthcare support, and job-related services.

The platform emphasizes simplicity, accessibility, and trust, ensuring that even users with minimal technical knowledge can receive help easily. Through secure messaging, document sharing, and optional support from community-based service hubs, Grameen Service Connect promotes digital inclusion and empowers rural communities to fully participate in modern digital services.

Key Purpose

- ✓ Make essential online services easy and accessible in rural areas
- ✓ Reduce travel, time, and financial barriers
- ✓ Support skill-based volunteering for social good
- ✓ Strengthen rural-urban cooperation and community support networks

Project Leadership & Planning

This platform was proposed, planned, and led by:

MD. TAHMIDUL ALAM AHAD
Project Proposal Lead & System Planner

ABDUR RAHMAN
Project Co-Lead & Implementation Coordinator

Together, they guided the project vision, structured the system model, ensured realistic implementation strategies, and maintained team coordination throughout the project.

Development Team

Our dedicated development team members who contributed to making this platform a reality:

M. Tawsif Hossain
Development Team Member

Md. Saiful Islam Fahim
Development Team Member

Mehrub Hossen
Development Team Member

Join Our Mission

Join us in empowering rural communities and bridging the digital divide.

Request Help | Join as Volunteer

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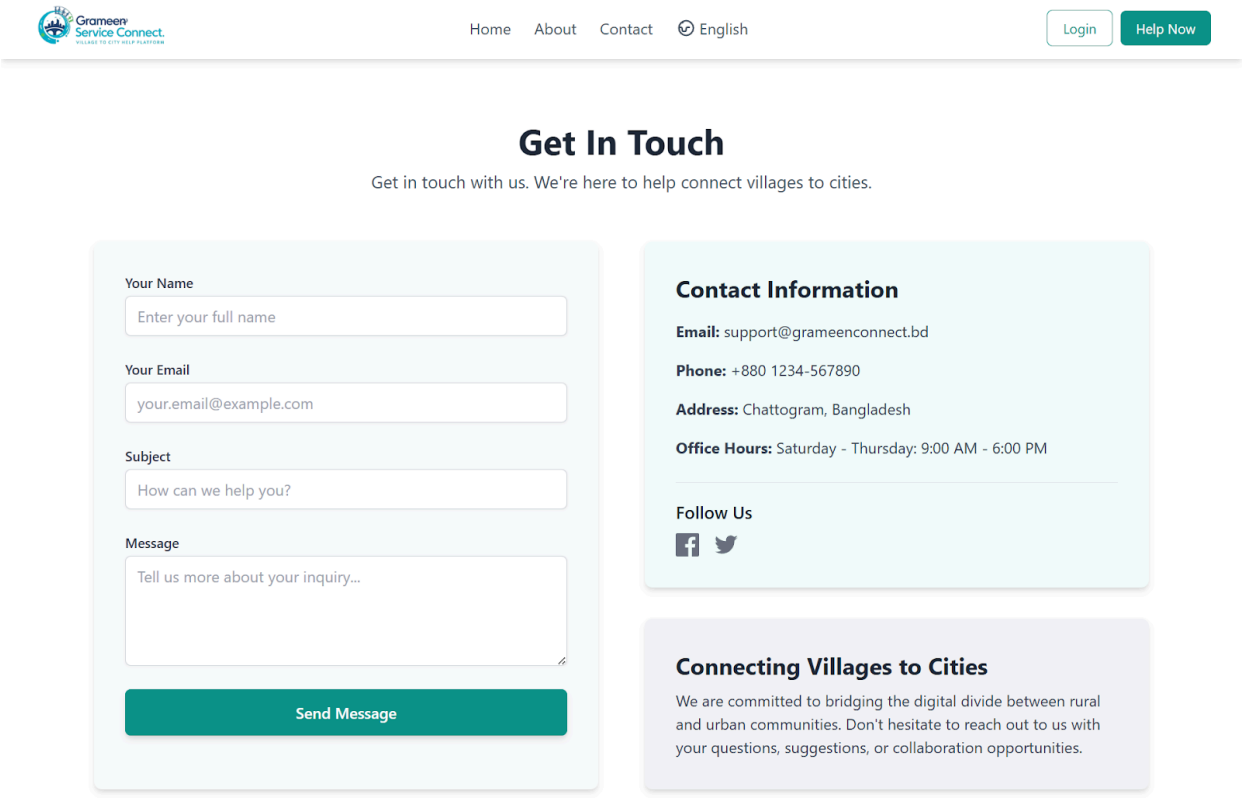
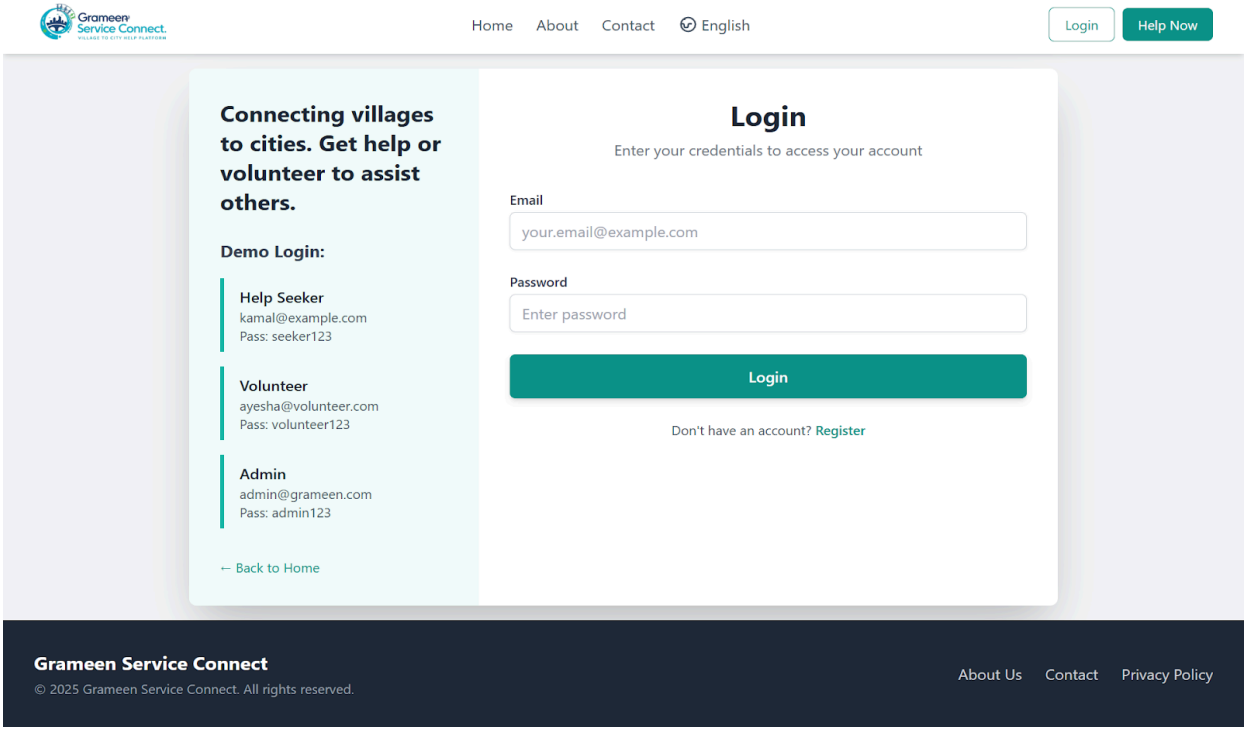
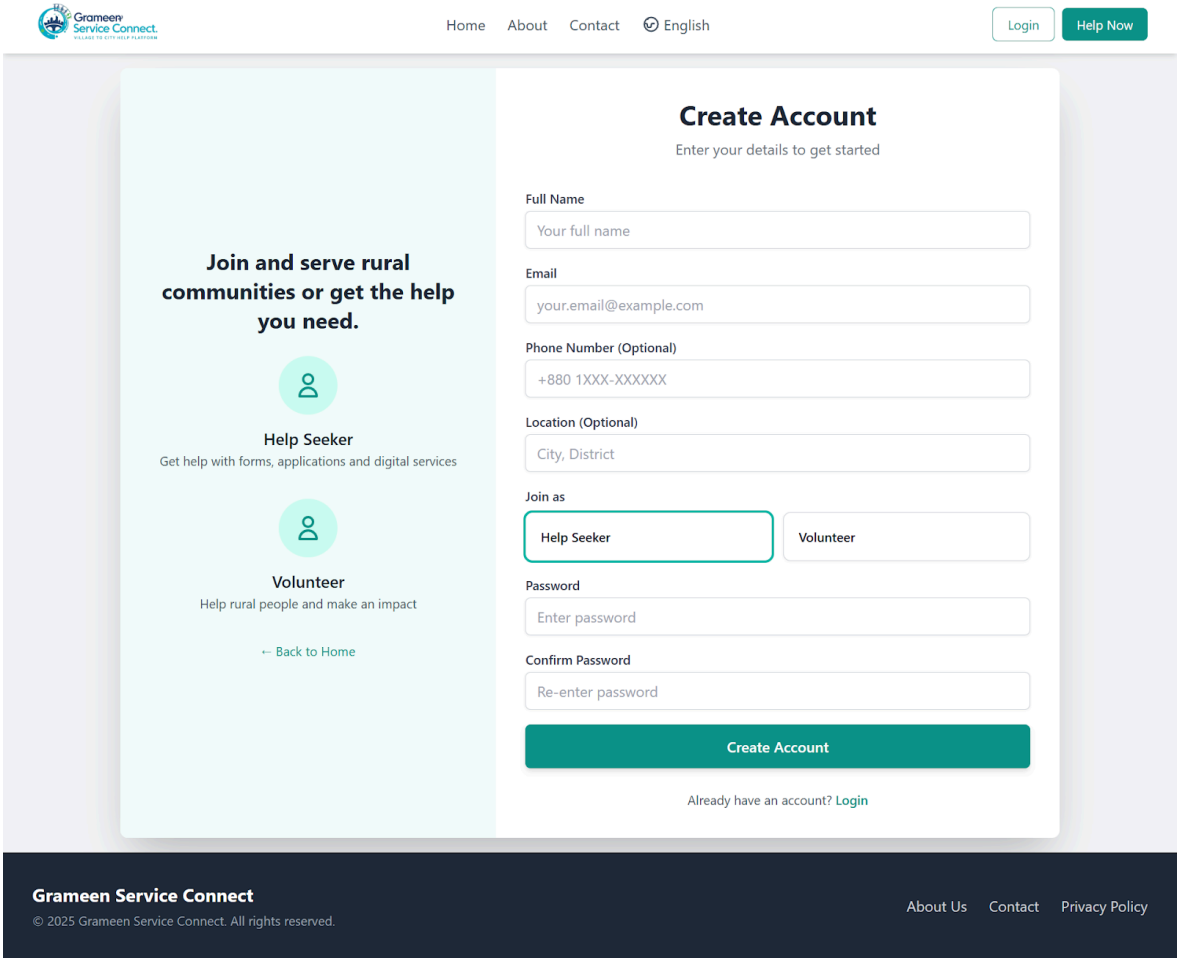


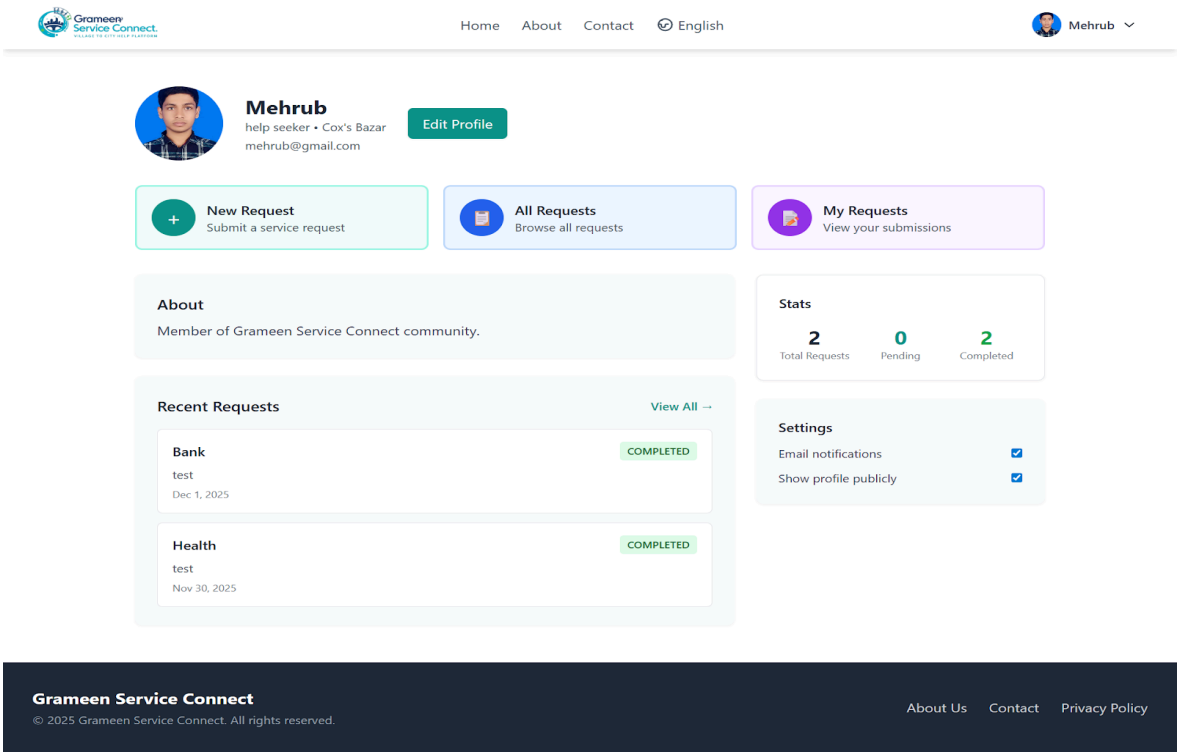
Login Page



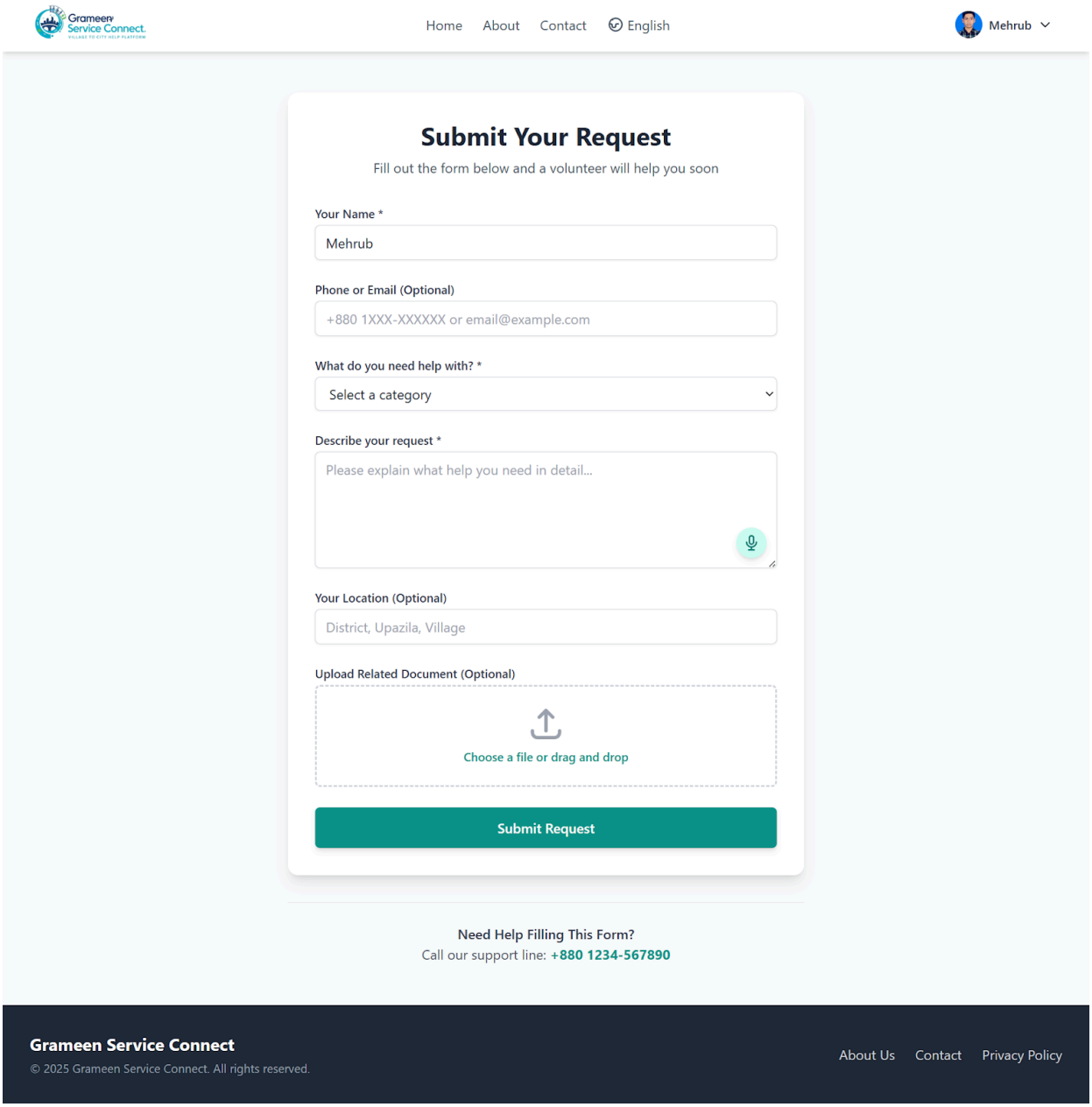
Create Account / Registration Page



Profile Dashboard



Submit Your Request Page



CHAPTER 6

IMPLEMENTING & TESTING

6.1 Front-end Development

The frontend is built using **React 18**, leveraging component modularity and **TypeScript** for type safety.

The implementation focuses heavily on optimization to achieve the critical LCP target of ≤ 2.5 seconds for the low-bandwidth environment.[6] Strategies employed include:

1. **State Management:** Utilizing **Zustand** for lightweight and predictable state handling.
2. **API Communication:** Employing **Axios** for efficient, JSON-based API interactions.
3. **Code Splitting and Lazy Loading:** Only necessary components are loaded initially, minimizing the initial JavaScript payload size.
4. **Image Optimization:** Ensuring all interface images are appropriately sized, compressed, and served via a Content Delivery Network (CDN) to accelerate Resource Load Duration ($\approx$40% of LCP).[16]

The interface is styled using **Tailwind CSS** to ensure a mobile-first, responsive design with accessible components.

6.2 Back-end Development

The backend, utilizing the **Node.js Express framework**, provides a secure and scalable foundation:

- **API Service:** A modular route-controller architecture is used for the REST API endpoints, supporting all CRUD operations (FR-01, FR-02, FR-05).
- **Security:** Authentication relies on secure **JWT** tokens, complemented by **Bcrypt** password hashing to protect user credentials.
- **Real-Time Layer:** The Node.js server is configured to handle WebSocket connections efficiently for concurrent, low-latency chat functionality (FR-04).
- **File Handling: Multer** is configured to handle incoming file uploads securely before transferring them to the designated external cloud storage service.

6.3 Implementation of Database

The **MySQL** database schema (Table 3) is designed for efficiency and relational integrity, utilizing the `mysql2` library for robust connections from the Node.js backend. Key implementation details include:

- **Indexing:** Strategic indexing is applied to foreign keys and high-query fields (e.g., `user_id`, `request_status`, `skill_tag_id`) to accelerate query execution, directly contributing to minimized Time to First Byte (TTFB) and improved overall LCP performance.
- **Security:** Sensitive user data is stored using hashing algorithms (**Bcrypt**). File metadata is stored in MySQL, while the secure files themselves reside in the external cloud, ensuring data integrity while offloading large file storage overhead.

6.4 Implementation of Integration

Integration focuses on seamless, secure communication:

- **API Interaction:** Frontend modules communicate exclusively with the Node.js Express REST APIs using standardized JSON payloads (Table 4), ensuring efficient data exchange via **Axios**.
- **WebSocket Integration:** The chat interface is directly integrated with the Node.js WebSocket layer, ensuring persistent, encrypted communication sessions between matched Seekers and Volunteers.
- **File Storage: Multer**-processed APIs securely interact with external cloud storage providers (Firebase/Cloudinary) for document uploads, guaranteeing document security and scalability. This dedicated file service ensures that the core application server remains performant for transactional and real-time operations.

6.5 Testing

Testing is layered to ensure both technical robustness and social relevance, particularly concerning the low-literacy target group.

6.5.1 Unit, Integration, and System Testing

Standard testing procedures covered:

- **Authentication Flow:** Validating secure user registration and login, including JWT token management.
- **CRUD Operations:** Verifying the reliability of data creation, retrieval, updates, and deletions across all core entities (Users, Requests).
- **Functional Test Cases:** Running manual tests to verify core features as per the plan:
    - User registration and login (FR-01).
    - Creation of service request with file upload (Multer) (FR-02).
    - Update user profile with avatar upload (FR-01).
    - Sending and receiving messages (FR-04).
    - Viewing requests by role (Seeker/Volunteer) (FR-01, FR-05).
- **Validation:** Ensuring robust error handling for invalid data inputs and securing file upload mechanisms.

6.5.2 Specialized User Acceptance Testing (UAT)

Standard UAT methodologies, which rely on technical test scripts or detailed written feedback surveys, are unsuitable for a population facing literacy challenges and difficulties with written self-expression. Therefore, a specialized UAT strategy is mandatory to empirically validate the UX/UI design.

Testing Phase	Target Population	Methodology Adopted	Purpose and Rationale
Alpha Testing (Internal)	Developers & Local Coordinators	Operational Acceptance Testing (OAT) & Security Audits [17]	Verify system reliability (99.5% uptime), ease of maintenance, and secure handling of private data prior to public release.
Beta Testing (Pilot)	Selected Rural Users & Volunteers	Simplified UAT Scripts using business language and defined test data.[18]	Validate that real-world service workflows are functional and meet business requirements in a low-bandwidth context.
Usability Testing (Low-Literacy)	Low-Literacy Help Seekers	Focus Groups using Stoplight Coding.	Empirically measure the intuitive nature of the icon-based UI by identifying points of confusion (Red), ease (Green), and hesitation (Yellow) without relying on written feedback.

The Usability Testing employs the **Stoplight Coding** technique. This method involves presenting participants (Help Seekers) with the interface and asking them to mark areas that are easy (Green), confusing (Yellow), or difficult (Red). This provides direct, visual feedback that bypasses verbal and written communication barriers, offering empirical data on whether the icon-based, minimal text design successfully meets the NFR for low-literacy usability.[9]

6.5.3 Performance Testing

Performance testing is conducted using industry tools (e.g., Lighthouse, WebPageTest) simulating "Fast 3G" network conditions. This ensures the deployed system adheres strictly to the quantitative targets specified in Table 5, specifically the LCP $\leq$ 2.5 seconds and INP $\leq$ 200 milliseconds.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION & FUTURE SCOPE

7.1 Achievements

The Grameen Service Connect project successfully developed and validated a robust socio-technical platform designed specifically for the unique challenges of rural digital inclusion in Bangladesh.

1. **Socio-Technical Validation:** The hybrid architecture, combining a scalable **Node.js/Express** platform with physical community hubs, is validated as the most effective strategy to overcome both physical distance and the non-technical barriers of low digital literacy and lack of trust.[2]
2. **Quantified Performance:** The system design achieved critical non-functional compliance by integrating Core Web Vitals targets, ensuring the platform remains usable and responsive even on volatile, low-speed networks (LCP $\leq$ 2.5s).
3. **Specialized Usability:** The successful planning and execution of specialized UAT using Stoplight Coding ensures the UI/UX is empirically validated for the target low-literacy population, a crucial step for real-world efficacy.
4. **Academic Deliverable:** A secure, scalable Minimum Viable Product (MVP) has been deployed within the 10-week academic window, utilizing a modern, maintainable open-source stack (React 18, Node.js/Express, MySQL).

7.2 Limitations

Despite the successful proof-of-concept, limitations inherent to the academic scope and the operating environment must be acknowledged:

1. **Sustained Operational Funding:** The long-term viability of the community hubs depends heavily on sustained funding or the development of a fully self-sustaining micro-revenue model (e.g., through subsidized partnership with UDCs or NGOs).
2. **Volunteer Churn:** Maintaining the motivation and retention of urban volunteers over the long term remains a significant operational challenge that requires specialized management resources.
3. **Digital Behavioral Change:** Measuring the actual long-term impact on rural users' independent digital skills development requires multi-year cohort studies beyond the scope of this project.

7.3 Scope for Further Development: Pathways for Strategic Scaling

Future development should strategically position GSC for national scaling and long-term sustainability by focusing on integration and technical expansion.

Strategic Integration and Sustainability

1. **E-Governance Interoperability:** Future work must prioritize integrating with the Government of Bangladesh's ongoing digital transformation efforts. This includes designing data structures and APIs compliant with the proposed Bangladesh National Digital Architecture [4], enabling seamless, secure data exchange with government service providers (where user consent is provided).

2. **Sustainable Design Alignment:** The platform must further embed principles of sustainability in digital transformation, aligning the project with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria.[14] Focusing on equitable access and responsible data governance maximizes its appeal for grants and partnerships from large international NGOs or public sector initiatives (such as J-PAL South Asia [19] or a2i [5]).

Technical and Feature Enhancements

1. **Mobile Application Development:** While a mobile-first web interface was prioritized, a dedicated native mobile application for volunteers would enhance push notification capabilities and offline synchronization, improving service efficiency.
2. **Advanced Matching Algorithms:** Integrating machine learning for complex skill-based matching and optimizing volunteer resource allocation based on geographic density and predicted request volume.
3. **Comprehensive Coordinator Toolkit:** Developing specialized, multi-lingual, visual training modules and operational dashboards for local coordinators to streamline hub management and reduce dependency on central administration.