MGNREGA Worker Reductions During the Aadhaar e-KYC Rollout: Evidence and Risks from Andhra Pradesh

30th November 2025

About the Report

This report analyses the sharp decline in MGNREGA workers in Andhra Pradesh during the Aadhaar-based e-KYC rollout in October–November 2025. It examines worker numbers during the critical 42-day period from 8 October to 19 November 2025 (Data downloaded on 19th November), when e-KYC became compulsory. Drawing on official MIS data and a review of the Ministry's January 2025 SOP, it documents district-wise reductions, examines whether mandated due-process steps were followed. The report aims to present clear, evidence-based findings to inform urgent corrective action and protect the rights guaranteed under MGNREGA.

About LibTech India

We are a team of engineers, social workers and social scientists who are interested in improving public service delivery in India. We have been working as a team in multiple states of the country including Karnataka for the last 10 years, though individually some of us have been involved for more than a decade.

1. Key Findings

1. **Large-scale drop occurred during the e-KYC drive:**
   Total workers fell by **14.2 lakh (11.4%)** and active workers by **6.2 lakh (6.4%)** between **8th October and 19th November 2025**. (Section 3.1)

2. **Several districts recorded particularly high reductions**

   Districts such as **East Godavari, West Godavari, Tirupati, Kakinada, and Annamayya** saw some of the **highest net reductions (18–27%)** during this period.
   (Section 3.1)

3. **The timing aligns exactly with the compulsory e-KYC window:**
   The steepest worker reductions occurred during the 6 weeks registration and mandatory e-KYC period, with no other policy change explaining this pattern. (Section 4)

4. **High e-KYC completion coexists with high reduction:**
   e-KYC completion stands at **79% (total workers basis)** and **86% (active workers basis)** — yet deletions rose sharply, indicating completion pressure rather than genuine data correction. (Section 3.1 and 3.2)

5. **How the net reductions occurred:**
   Frontline staff, under daily monitoring and facing authentication failures, network issues, and a one-month deadline, appear to have relied on MIS-based deletion actions more than additions or corrections, resulting in a net fall in worker numbers during the e-KYC drive. (Section 6)

6. **SOP due-process safeguards were bypassed:**
   Required steps — **draft lists, Panchayat display, Gram Sabha verification, worker notification, and objection windows** — were not followed, violating the January 2025 Deletion SOP. (Section 4)

7. **Gram Panchayats were sidelined:**
   Although the SOP assigns a central role to Panchayats and Gram Sabhas in protecting workers, they were **not involved** in the deletion process, contradicting the Ministry's stated commitment to decentralisation. (Section 4)

8. **The pattern matches the 2022–23 ABPS transition:**
   The state previously experienced mass wrongful deletions during the ABPS rollout, suggesting a **structural problem with Aadhaar-linked compliance systems**, not isolated administrative lapses. (Section 7)

9. **There is no evidence in the MIS or field interactions suggesting widespread ineligibility:**
   Field-level accounts and absence of due-process documentation indicate that many deletions were **procedural rather than eligibility-based**. (Section 5)

10. **Exclusion is arising from system design, not worker behaviour:**
    Barriers like migration, lack of connectivity, biometric mismatch, and NMMS errors disproportionately affect workers who are present and eligible but unable to complete complex technological steps. (Section 6)

2. Background and Context

2.1 MGNREGA as a Rights-Based Programme

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a rights-based law guaranteeing up to 100 days of wage employment each year to rural households willing to do unskilled manual work. It is demand-driven: when work is demanded, it must be provided within 15 days or the worker is legally entitled to an unemployment allowance. For vulnerable groups—especially SC/ST communities, landless workers, and Adivasi households—MGNREGA is a crucial safety net that reduces distress migration and income insecurity.

2.2 The 2025 e-KYC Job Card Renewal Campaign

In 2025, the Government of India introduced a new "Job Card Renewal with e-KYC Feature" campaign linked to the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app. Two circulars issued on 10 September 2025 and 26 September 2025 directed all States and UTs to undertake job card renewal using an Aadhaar-based e-KYC feature through NMMS:

The 10 September circular launches the campaign in pilot districts and introduces e-KYC within NMMS as the mandatory process for job card renewal, to be completed in pilot districts by 30 September 2025. It states that renewal "through the e-KYC feature is to be carried out for all workers registered under each job card."

The 26 September circular extends this campaign to all districts and requires that the entire campaign be completed by 31 October 2025, again emphasising that "every worker listed in a job card undergoes e-KYC" and that the process will be undertaken by local functionaries using the NMMS app.

2.3 Changes to NMMS Attendance and Face Authentication

Simultaneously, the NMMS app was updated so that:

Each worker must complete a one-time e-KYC, during which a reference Aadhaar-linked face photo is captured.

Daily attendance photos uploaded via NMMS are matched against this reference image; only if the face matches is attendance recorded.

2.4 Historical Precedent: The ABPS Deletion Wave (2022–23)

During the 2022–23 rollout of the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS), Andhra Pradesh had already experienced one of the sharpest contractions in its MGNREGA workforce, with [nearly 78 lakh workers deleted](#) within a single year. That episode demonstrated how Aadhaar-linked compliance drives can produce large-scale removals when adequate safeguards are not in place. The current e-KYC–linked reductions appear to follow a similar pattern of abrupt, technology-driven drops in worker numbers.

Unless the State is alert and proactively enforces due process, there is a significant risk that the present exercise will replicate the exclusionary effects seen during the ABPS transition.

2.5 Transition to the Current Data Analysis

These declines occurred during the rollout of compulsory e-KYC and face-authenticated attendance through NMMS. It is important to note that e-KYC is a one-time renewal requirement, whereas NMMS face authentication is a separate, daily attendance verification process.

3. Evidence of Worker Reductions in Andhra Pradesh

Using the MGNREGA MIS for Andhra Pradesh, we examined changes in the number of workers during the e-KYC rollout period. The analysis covers 42 days—from 8 October 2025 (early phase of the renewal campaign) to 19 November 2025 (after e-KYC became mandatory for attendance from 1 November).

3.1 Total Workers:

	Total workers (in Lakh)
Oct 8th 2025	124.7
Nov 19th 2025	110.5
Drop	14.2 (11.4%)

Table 1: Overview of Total Workers

Table 1 shows that in just 42 days, from 8th October to 19th November 2025, the MGNREGA workers in Andhra Pradesh saw a sharp **11.4% drop**. The total count fell from **124.7 lakh** workers on October 8 to **110.5 lakh** on November 19 — a reduction of about **14.2 lakh** workers in a very short period.
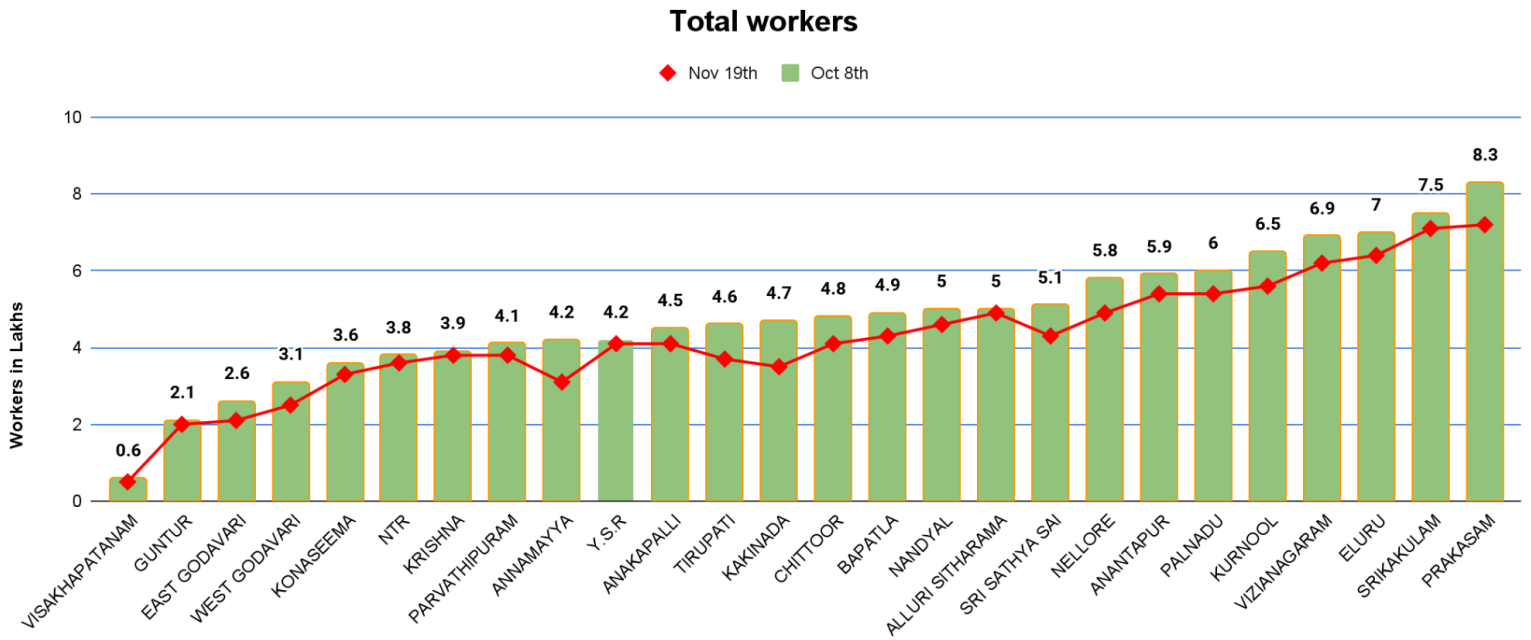
Total workers

◆ Nov 19th   ■ Oct 8th

Fig 1: District-wise Total Workers comparison

Figure 1 shows that **Annamayya recorded a 27% drop**, followed by **Kakinada at 25%**, **Tirupati at 20%**, and both **East and West Godavari around 18%**. These districts together account for a large portion of the **14-lakh decline**. This period coincides closely with the rollout of compulsory e-KYC; no other major policy change is known to have been introduced.

At the other end, few districts have **performed relatively well**, seeing much smaller reductions. **Alluri Sitharama Raju** (**ASR) shows a very mild 1% drop**, followed by **Krishna (2%)**, **YSR (4%)**, **Visakhapatnam (5%)**, and **Guntur (5%)**. The Annexure 1 will provide detailed district-wise breakdowns.

Statewide, **e-KYC completion stands at 79%** as on November 19. Some districts show strong readiness — **Parvathipuram Manyam (87%)**, **Vizianagaram (83%)**, **Annamayya (82%)**, **Bapatla (82%)**, and **Srikakulam (80%)** are among the top performers. A few districts lag behind: **YSR (69%)**, **Guntur (70%)**, **Krishna (72%)**, and **Nellore (73%)** will require targeted attention. The Annexure 2 will provide detailed district-wise breakdowns.

3.2 Active Workers:

	Active workers (in Lakh)
Oct 8th 2025	96.4
Nov 19th 2025	90.2
Drop	6.2 (6.4%)

Table 2: Overview of Active workers

Table 2 shows that between **Oct 8 and Nov 19 (42 days)**, the number of **active MGNREGA workers** in Andhra Pradesh fell from **about 96.4 lakh** on Oct 8 to **about 90.2 lakh** on Nov 19 — a reduction of **~6.20 lakh**, or approximately **6.4%**.

Important Note on Interpretation of Reductions

The MIS records both **worker additions** and **worker deletions**. This report does **not** analyse those fields directly. Instead, it uses the change in total and active worker counts between **8 October and 19 November** to calculate the **net reduction**.

A net reduction occurs when **deletions exceed additions**.

The sharp fall of **14.2 lakh total workers** and **6.2 lakh active workers** therefore indicates a **deletion-heavy pattern**, even though the exact number of formal MIS deletions may differ. The net reduction provides the most reliable picture of the overall impact of the e-KYC drive on worker availability during this period.
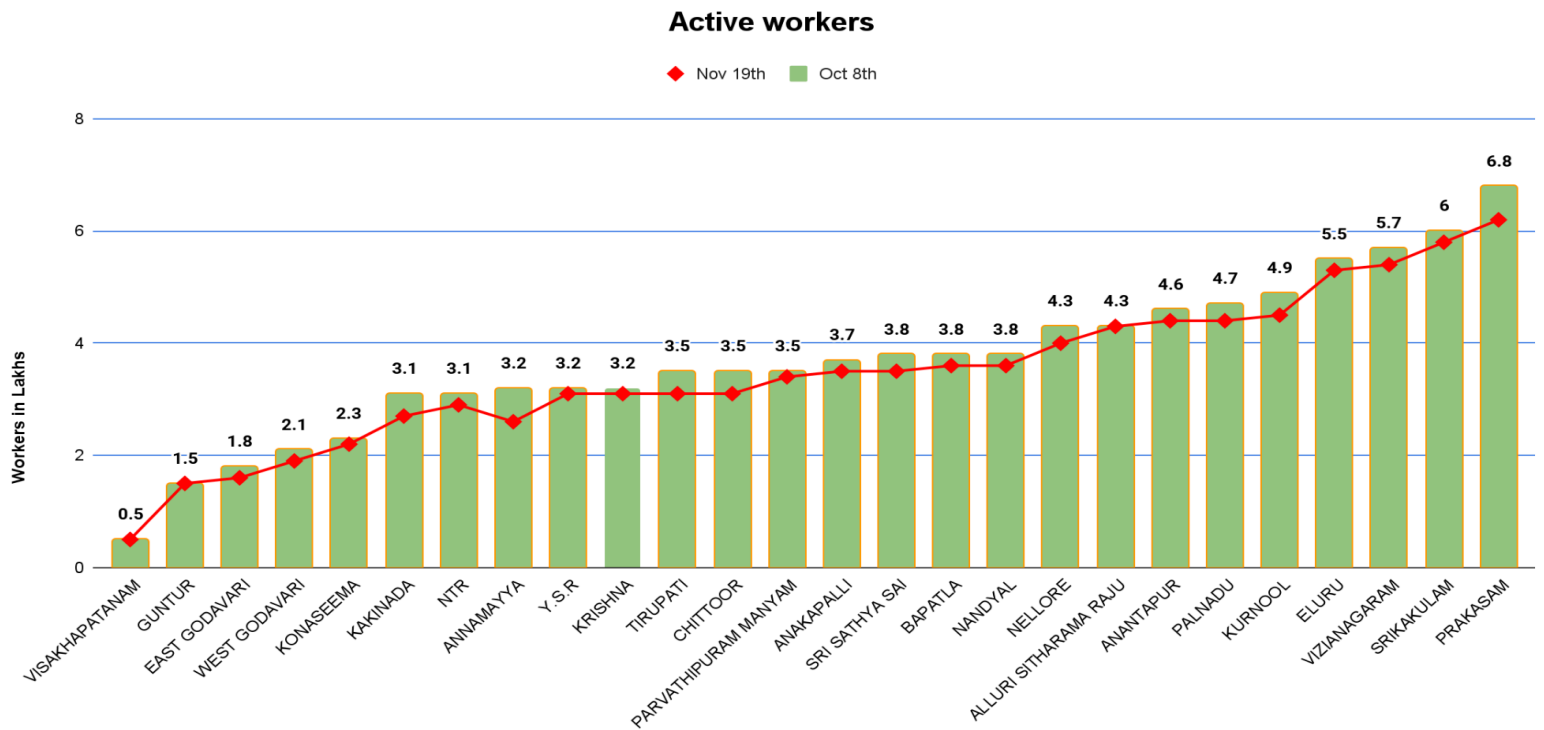
Active workers

◆ Nov 19th   ▮ Oct 8th

Fig 2: District-wise Active Workers Comparison

These district-level patterns in total worker reductions are mirrored—though at a slightly lower scale—in the trends for active workers. The same cluster of districts that showed the steepest declines in total workers also recorded sharp falls in active workers.

While total workers indicate all individuals registered, *active workers* are those who have worked at least one day in the last 3 years.

Fig 2 shows that the hardest-hit districts during this period were **Annamayya (19%), Kakinada (12%), Tirupati (11%), West Godavari (10%), and East Godavari (9%)**, all of which saw sharp declines in their active worker counts. These districts together form the core of the statewide reduction

Alluri Sitharama Raju(ASR) was the most steady, with just a **0.5%** drop—only about **0.02 lakh** workers. **Krishna** and **Visakhapatnam** also remained relatively unchanged, both recording modest **2%** declines, equivalent to drops of roughly **0.07 lakh** and **0.01 lakh** workers. The Annexure 3 will provide detailed district-wise breakdowns.

The state-level **e-KYC completion percentage stands at around 86%** as of November 19. Districts like **Parvathipuram Manyam (91%), Anakapalli (90%), Konaseema and ASR (89%), and NTR (88%)** are

among the best performers. Even in districts with relatively lower percentages, e-KYC completion remains above the 80% mark. The Annexure 4 will provide detailed district-wise breakdowns.

Together, these numbers show steep reductions during the exact period when e-KYC became compulsory for job card renewal and attendance.

These sharp reductions raise an important concern: were the workers legitimately removed under the Ministry's SOP, or were these reductions driven solely by e-KYC status?

4. Procedural Violations: How the Deletion Process Conflicts with the SOP

To understand the legality of the mass removals, it is important to examine the Union Ministry's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued on 24 January 2025. Until this point, the Ministry of Rural Development had never issued a detailed SOP on worker deletions; the January 2025 SOP was released only after sustained pressure from civil society organisations following the large-scale deletions during the 2022–23 ABPS transition. The SOP lays down the only permissible reasons and mandatory steps for deleting a worker. From our field work in multiple districts, the e-KYC–linked removals in Andhra Pradesh do not follow this process at all.

To begin with, the SOP clearly lists the only legitimate reasons for deleting a worker. These include permanent migration, the Gram Panchayat becoming urban, duplicate job cards, forged documents, the death of all household members, or voluntary surrender. **Failure to complete e-KYC is not one of the approved grounds.** Removing workers because their e-KYC could not be completed has no basis in the SOP.

The SOP also requires the administration to publish a **draft deletion list at least thirty days in advance**. This list must be displayed publicly — at the Gram Panchayat office, the Anganwadi centre, the ration shop, and the post office — and workers must be notified through SMS or voice calls. However, during the e-KYC exercise in AP, no such lists were displayed, circulated, or announced anywhere.

Another core requirement of the SOP is that any proposed deletion must be brought before the **Gram Sabha or Social Audit Gram Sabha**, where the list is read out and the community is allowed to question or object. A formal Gram Sabha resolution is required to approve deletions. This process was completely bypassed. Gram Sabhas were not informed and no discussions were held.

Workers also have a right under the SOP to file objections within thirty days and receive a written acknowledgement, and then, if necessary, to appeal within ninety days. But since workers were never told that their names were being considered for deletion, they had no chance to object, explain their situation, or appeal.

Finally, the SOP requires the administration to physically mark job cards as "CANCELLED," record the reason, and collect these cards from households. Available evidence suggests that these steps were bypassed, and workers appear to have been removed through the MIS based primarily on e-KYC status.

Taken together, these patterns strongly suggest that the deletions contributing to the net reductions did not follow the legally required procedure. Overall, the available evidence indicates that the process diverged from the procedures mandated by the Ministry's SOP.

5. A Note of Caution

This report does not claim that all worker removals contributing to the net reduction were wrongful. Some removals may be legitimate—such as permanent migration, deaths and duplicate job cards.

However, given the scale and timing of reductions, and the patterns observed across districts, **a significant portion of the net reduction appears to be driven by non-genuine deletions**, and **occurred without adherence to the due-process safeguards mandated in the January 2025 SOP**.

Our concern is not with the existence of genuine deletions, but with the serious risk of **wrongful exclusion** caused by bypassing legally required procedures.

6. How the Reductions Actually Happened

To understand the 2025 reductions, it is useful to revisit the experience of the 2022–23 ABPS transition. During that period, frontline officials were expected to meet Aadhaar-related compliance targets under close monitoring. When authentication failures, seeding mismatches, and other Aadhaar issues slowed progress, many frontline officials relied on the fastest available option in the MIS: **delete workers whose Aadhaar problems could not be resolved quickly**, because each deletion immediately improved the district's compliance percentage on dashboards.

A similar pattern is visible in 2025 — but under **far greater pressure**.

In 2025, frontline officials were given a **very compressed timeline of just 6 weeks** to complete e-KYC for the entire active workforce, and e-KYC became essential not only for job card renewal but also for NMMS-based attendance. We observed that this created intense pressure for districts to show rapid progress, often through daily monitoring on state and central dashboards.

Completing e-KYC during October–November 2025 was extremely difficult because of:

- peak migration

- weak or no network connectivity

- face/fingerprint authentication failures

- incorrect Aadhaar seeding

- repeated NMMS application errors

Faced with these constraints and continuous dashboard monitoring, frontline officials again turned to the action that produces the quickest "improvement":
delete workers who could not complete e-KYC in time.

MIS deletion actions appear to have been used as an administrative shortcut — **not** the result of documented field verification.

A deeper contradiction also emerges in the design of the 2025 exercise. On one hand, the Union Government introduced a detailed Deletion SOP to prevent wrongful or undocumented removals and ensure accountability. On the other hand, the same e-KYC campaign was launched with a **very compressed one-month timeline** for completing Aadhaar verification for the entire active workforce — a timeline that made it practically impossible for frontline staff to comply with the SOP's safeguards. This tension between strict due-process requirements and high-pressure, short-duration compliance drives creates conditions where wrongful deletions become almost inevitable, regardless of which tier of government is implementing the instructions.

This dynamic also helps explain why large-scale deletions are concentrated in only a few states. As of mid-November, the national e-KYC completion rate is still around **38%** (MIS as on 30th Nov2025), indicating that most states are progressing slowly. In such states, frontline staff face less pressure and therefore do not resort to deletion shortcuts to improve dashboard indicators.

By contrast, **Andhra Pradesh moved unusually fast on e-KYC**. It is the **number one state in the country in e-KYC completion**, and at the same time, national MIS data shows that **Andhra Pradesh also accounts for the highest number of deletions in India**. AP alone accounts for roughly [60% of all deletions recorded nationally](#) during the 10 October–12 November period.

As per MGNREGA MIS, this stark overlap — **the highest e-KYC completion** (If we ignore the smaller North Eastern states) **and the highest deletion count occurring in the same state** — strongly suggests that it is not e-KYC itself that triggers deletion waves, but the combination of **e-KYC + compressed timelines + aggressive administrative pressure**, which was uniquely intense in Andhra Pradesh during this period.

7. Conclusion

The experience of Andhra Pradesh during the October–November 2025 e-KYC drive shows a repeated pattern of exclusion whenever Aadhaar-linked processes are implemented rapidly in NREGA. As in the 2022–23 ABPS transition, large numbers of workers were removed not because they were verified as ineligible, but because they were unable to navigate technical requirements, authentication failures, or compressed timelines. The inability to follow the January 2025 Deletion SOP in real-world conditions underscores a structural mismatch between technology-led compliance systems and the lived realities of rural workers.

This episode also contradicts the stated commitment of the Ministry of Rural Development, government of Andhra Pradesh to strengthen Gram Panchayats. The Deletion SOP explicitly locates key safeguards — public display of lists, scrutiny, and verification — at the Panchayat and Gram Sabha level. Yet, in practice, Panchayats were completely bypassed during the deletion process. When the very institutions meant to protect workers' rights are sidelined, wrongful exclusion becomes more likely.

Preventing such exclusion requires aligning technological reforms with the rights-based design of NREGA and restoring the role of local institutions mandated to protect workers.

8. Recommendations

1. Request withdrawal of mandatory e-KYC and NMMS requirements

The State Government should formally write to the Union Government seeking a review and withdrawal of compulsory e-KYC and NMMS attendance requirements in NREGA. The recurrence of mass deletions during both the ABPS and e-KYC transitions demonstrates that these technology-driven compliance conditions create barriers that frontline staff and rural workers cannot reasonably meet, leading to avoidable exclusion from a legally guaranteed programme.

2. Run a reinstatement campaign through public display of deletion lists

The State Government should launch a time-bound campaign to reinstate all workers who were removed without following SOP procedures. This requires **public display of deletion lists at Gram Panchayats**, allowing workers to see their names, raise objections, and be restored quickly. Such a campaign aligns with the Deletion SOP and ensures that no worker is denied employment due to procedural failures or technical barriers.

3. Revive structured consultations with workers and civil society organisations

The State Government should convene structured consultations with workers, civil society organisations, NREGA practitioners, and technologists to document ground-level experiences with Aadhaar-linked processes and digital attendance systems. Andhra Pradesh has a strong precedent for such engagement: until 2014, the State facilitated the **Andhra Pradesh NGO Alliance (APNA)**, a platform through which civil

society organisations regularly provided feedback on NREGA implementation and suggested improvements. Reviving a similar mechanism would enable continuous feedback, strengthen accountability, and allow the State to communicate grounded, evidence-based insights to the Union Government.

ANNEXURE 1:

S.No.	Districts	Oct 8th (Total workers in Lakhs)	Nov 19th (Total workers in Lakhs)	%Drop
1	ANNAMAYYA	4.2	3.1	27.3
2	KAKINADA	4.7	3.5	25.2
3	TIRUPATI	4.6	3.7	19.6
4	EAST GODAVARI	2.6	2.1	18.7
5	WEST GODAVARI	3.1	2.5	17.6
6	NELLORE	5.8	4.9	15.5

7	SRI SATHYA SAI	5.1	4.3	15.2
8	KURNOOL	6.5	5.6	14.8
9	CHITTOOR	4.8	4.1	14.4
10	PRAKASAM	8.3	7.2	13.8
11	BAPATLA	4.9	4.3	11.9
12	PALNADU	6	5.4	11.4
13	VIZIANAGARAM	6.9	6.2	10
14	ANANTAPUR	5.9	5.4	8.6
15	KONASEEMA	3.6	3.3	8.5
16	ANAKAPALLI	4.5	4.1	8.4
17	NANDYAL	5	4.6	8.2
18	ELURU	7	6.4	8
19	NTR	3.8	3.6	5.9
20	PARVATHIPURAM MANYAM	4.1	3.8	5.7
21	SRIKAKULAM	7.5	7.1	5.5
22	GUNTUR	2.1	2	5.1
23	VISAKHAPATANAM	0.6	0.5	4.6
24	Y.S.R	4.2	4.1	3.5
25	KRISHNA	3.9	3.8	2.4
26	ALLURI SITHARAMA RAJU	5	4.9	0.7
	Total	124.7	110.5	11.4

ANNEXURE 2:

S.No.	Districts	Total No. of Workers in lakhs	e-KYC Done	eKYC %
1	PARVATHIPURAM MANYAM	3.8	3.3	87.1
2	TIRUPATI	3.7	3.2	84.8
3	ANAKAPALLI	4.1	3.5	84.4
4	ALLURI SITHARAMA RAJU	4.9	4.1	83.1

S.No	Districts			
5	VIZIANAGARAM	6.2	5.1	82.8
6	ANNAMAYYA	3.1	2.5	82.3
7	BAPATLA	4.3	3.5	81.6
8	VISAKHAPATANAM	0.5	0.4	81.2
9	CHITTOOR	4.1	3.3	80.6
10	SRIKAKULAM	7.1	5.7	80.1
11	WEST GODAVARI	2.5	2	80
12	EAST GODAVARI	2.1	1.7	79.9
13	ELURU	6.4	5.1	79.7
14	KONASEEMA	3.3	2.6	79.3
15	NANDYAL	4.6	3.6	78.9
16	PRAKASAM	7.2	5.6	78
17	KURNOOL	5.6	4.3	77.6
18	NTR	3.6	2.8	77.1
19	PALNADU	5.4	4.1	77
20	KAKINADA	3.5	2.7	76.8
21	SRI SATHYA SAI	4.3	3.3	76.7
22	ANANTAPUR	5.4	4.1	76.6
23	NELLORE	4.9	3.6	73.2
24	KRISHNA	3.8	2.7	71.9
25	GUNTUR	2	1.4	70.1
26	Y.S.R	4.1	2.8	69.1
	Total	110.5	87.2	78.9

ANNEXURE 3:

S.No	Districts	Oct 8th (Active workers in Lakhs)	Nov 19th (Active workers in Lakhs)	%Drop
1	ANNAMAYYA	3.2	2.6	18.6
2	KAKINADA	3.1	2.7	11.6

3	TIRUPATI	3.5	3.1	11.2
4	WEST GODAVARI	2.1	1.9	9.6
5	EAST GODAVARI	1.8	1.6	9.4
6	CHITTOOR	3.5	3.1	9.3
7	SRI SATHYA SAI	3.8	3.5	9.3
8	PRAKASAM	6.8	6.2	8.6
9	NELLORE	4.3	4	8.5
10	KURNOOL	4.9	4.5	7.5
11	PALNADU	4.7	4.4	7
12	BAPATLA	3.8	3.6	5.6
13	NTR	3.1	2.9	5.4
14	VIZIANAGARAM	5.7	5.4	5.3
15	ANANTAPUR	4.6	4.4	5.1
16	ELURU	5.5	5.3	5.1
17	NANDYAL	3.8	3.6	4.8
18	KONASEEMA	2.3	2.2	4.2
19	ANAKAPALLI	3.7	3.5	4
20	Y.S.R	3.2	3.1	3.6
21	PARVATHIPURAM MANYAM	3.5	3.4	3.4
22	GUNTUR	1.5	1.5	3
23	SRIKAKULAM	6	5.8	2.5
24	VISAKHAPATANAM	0.5	0.5	2.3
25	KRISHNA	3.2	3.1	2.3
26	ALLURI SITHARAMA RAJU	4.3	4.3	0.5
	Total	96.4	90.2	6.4

ANNEXURE 4:

S.No.	Districts	Total Active Workers in lakhs	e-KYC Done	eKYC %
1	PARVATHIPURAM MANYAM	3.4	3.1	91.3
2	ANAKAPALLI	3.5	3.2	89.7

3	KONASEEMA	2.2	2	89.4
4	ALLURI SITHARAMA RAJU	4.3	3.8	89.1
5	TIRUPATI	3.1	2.8	88.5
6	NTR	2.9	2.6	87.7
7	VIZIANAGARAM	5.4	4.7	87.5
8	VISAKHAPATANAM	0.5	0.4	87.4
9	WEST GODAVARI	1.9	1.7	87.4
10	BAPATLA	3.6	3.1	87.2
11	NANDYAL	3.6	3.2	86.8
12	SRIKAKULAM	5.8	5.1	86.6
13	ELURU	5.3	4.6	86.5
14	CHITTOOR	3.1	2.7	86.4
15	EAST GODAVARI	1.6	1.4	86.3
16	ANNAMAYYA	2.6	2.2	85.6
17	GUNTUR	1.5	1.2	83.8
18	PRAKASAM	6.2	5.2	83.7
19	KAKINADA	2.7	2.3	83.6
20	PALNADU	4.4	3.7	83.6
21	ANANTAPUR	4.4	3.6	83.5
22	KRISHNA	3.1	2.6	82.9
23	KURNOOL	4.5	3.7	82.8
24	SRI SATHYA SAI	3.5	2.9	82.3
25	Y.S.R	3.1	2.5	82.1
26	NELLORE	4	3.1	79.5
	Total	90.2	77.3	85.7