

# MGNREGA as a Catalyst for Rural Employment Generation: Insights from Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh

**Shruti Arora**

*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Science  
Integral University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh | [shrutiiorora30@gmail.com](mailto:shrutiiorora30@gmail.com)*

**Dr. Priyanshi Gupta**

*Assistant Professor (Economics), Department of Humanities and Social Science  
Integral University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh | [dr.priyanshi0903@gmail.com](mailto:dr.priyanshi0903@gmail.com)*

## **Abstract:**

*The given paper reviews MGNREGA in terms of being a policy tool to encourage decent rural jobs in Hardoi District, Uttar Pradesh, and conducts a severe analysis of the policy over five financial years (2019-20 to 2023-24). The study uses six key performance dimensions including; Job card issuance and worker activation, person-days employment generated with gender and social category breakdown, the achievement of the official 100 day employment guarantee, timeliness of wage payment under the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS), budget utilisation efficiency, and inter-district variation in three representative block- Sandi, Sandila and Bilgram- using solely official data in the MGNREGA Management Information System (MIS) Public Data Portal, Ministry of Rural Development Annual Reports, Uttar Pradesh State Finance Commission records and Within the framework of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal 16 paradigm of transparent, accountable, and inclusive institutions, the analysis of Hardoi shows a paradox: Hardoi has registered positive gains in women participation (more than 63 percent person-days) and SC/ST inclusion, yet structural deficiencies in 100-day guarantees of access (7.5 percent of households), still high rate of slow wage payments (27 percent transactions of the statutory 15-day limit) and inefficient grievance red Block-level disaggregation reveals a large amount of intra-district heterogeneity, which implies that data at aggregate district level hides localised governance failures. The paper states that to translate employment guarantees into real outcomes in the form of decent work necessitates governance reforms in areas of panchayat-level accountability, ABPS dispute settlement infrastructure and linkage to state livelihood missions like UPSRLM.*

**Keywords:** MGNREGA, Decent Work, Rural Governance, SDG 16, Hardoi District, Secondary Data Analysis, Wage Payment Delays, Women Empowerment

## **1. Introduction**

The Mahatma Gandhi National rural employment guarantee act (MGNREGA), which was passed in 2005 and gradually expanded to all the rural districts of India,<sup>1</sup> represents one of the largest demand-driven public employment programmes in the world. With an annual outlay exceeding Rs.73,000 crore at the national level<sup>2</sup> (MRD, 2023), the scheme guarantees at least 100 days of unskilled manual work per household per financial year, functioning simultaneously as a social protection floor and a rural infrastructure investment mechanism.

<sup>1</sup>MGNREGA was initially notified in 200 districts on 2 February 2006 and extended to all rural districts of India by 1 April 2008. See: Ministry of Rural Development, MGNREGA Operational Guidelines, 4th Edition (2013), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>National expenditure data sourced from MRD Annual Report 2023–24, Statement of Expenditure, Annex III. The Rs.73,000 crore figure refers to the Union Budget allocation for FY 2023–24.

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state of India with over 200 million inhabitants, presents a particularly significant terrain for evaluating MGNREGA outcomes. Within Uttar Pradesh, Hardoi - a predominantly agrarian district in the Lucknow division - is characterised by high agricultural dependency, acute seasonal unemployment, endemic out-migration to urban centres, and a significant concentration of scheduled caste (SC) households.<sup>3</sup> These structural features render Hardoi an instructive case for examining whether employment guarantee programmes translate meaningfully into what the ILO terms 'decent work' - defined as productive work conducted in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity<sup>4</sup> (ILO, 2015).

Existing literature on MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh has predominantly relied on household-level surveys in select villages (Dreze & Oldiges, 2009; Khera & Nayak, 2009) or state-level aggregate analysis (Shankar, Gaiha, & Jha, 2011). District-level secondary data analysis, which can bridge micro-level insights with institutional performance auditing, remains comparatively underutilised. This paper addresses that gap by constructing a five-year longitudinal dataset for Hardoi from official MIS portal records<sup>5</sup> and analysing trends and inter-block variability across six performance parameters.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 situates the study within the theoretical frameworks of the Decent Work Agenda and SDG 16. Section 3 details the data sources and analytical methodology. Sections 4 through 7 present thematic analyses. Section 8 discusses governance implications, and Section 9 offers conclusions and policy recommendations.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The ILO Decent Work Agenda

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda (DWA), articulated in its 1999 Director-General's Report, posits four strategic objectives: (i) employment creation, (ii) rights at work, (iii) social protection, and (iv) social dialogue.<sup>6</sup> Applied to MGNREGA, these translate into assessing whether the scheme generates adequate employment, upholds workers' legal entitlements (including timely wages and worksite facilities), provides income security, and enables participatory governance through social audits and gram sabha deliberations.

MGNREGA's design is broadly consonant with DWA principles. The Act mandates equal wages for men and women,<sup>7</sup> worksite facilities including creches, and first aid, and community-based social audits (Gupta, 2024, 2025). However, the degree to which these provisions translate into substantive decent work outcomes is an

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<sup>3</sup>As per Census 2011, Hardoi District had a total rural population of approximately 34.1 lakh. The SC population constitutes 27.8% of the rural total, one of the highest concentrations in the Lucknow Division.

<sup>4</sup>The ILO Decent Work framework encompasses: (i) productive work with fair income; (ii) security in the workplace and social protection; (iii) prospects for personal development; (iv) freedom to express concerns and participate in decisions; and (v) equality of opportunity. See: ILO, Decent Work Agenda (Geneva: ILO, 1999).

<sup>5</sup>The MGNREGA Public Data Portal ([nrega.nic.in](http://nrega.nic.in)) provides block-wise and district-wise disaggregated data on job cards, person-days, wage payments, and financial transactions. All Hardoi data used in this study were retrieved from the portal between April and June 2024 for FY 2019–20 to 2023–24.

<sup>7</sup>The MGNREGA Act, 2005 (Schedule II, Clause 27) mandates equal wages for men and women. Section 3(3) requires that at least one-third of beneficiaries in each district shall be women who have requested work.

empirical question that district-level data can illuminate. Scholars such as Neff, Sen, and Kling (2012) have argued that the gap between MGNREGA's statutory architecture and its operational reality reflects broader deficits in local governance capacity.

## 2.2 Sustainable Development Goal 16 and Institutional Accountability

SDG 16 - 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'<sup>8</sup> - provides the governance framework within which this paper evaluates MGNREGA delivery. Targets 16.6, 16.7, and 16.10 are directly relevant to MGNREGA's institutional architecture encompassing gram panchayats, social audit mechanisms, public data portals, and Ombudsman provisions.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework for Secondary Data Analysis

Following the analytical approach of Shankar et al. (2011) and Dreze and Oldiges (2009), this study operationalises MGNREGA performance through six measurable dimensions derived entirely from administrative records: (i) coverage, (ii) employment generation, (iii) inclusivity, (iv) guarantee fulfilment, (v) payment integrity, and (vi) financial efficiency. This framework is both replicable and auditable - a methodological advantage of secondary data approaches over survey-based studies, which face issues of recall bias, selection effects, and limited temporal coverage.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based exclusively on secondary data. It is longitudinal in scope, covering five consecutive financial years from 2019-20 to 2023-24. The choice of secondary data is methodologically justified: official administrative records from the MGNREGA MIS portal<sup>10</sup> offer comprehensive population-level data on all registered job card holders and transactions in Hardoi District, thereby avoiding the sampling limitations and coverage errors inherent in household surveys.

### 3.2 Data Sources

The following official secondary data sources are utilised:

- MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal ([nrega.nic.in](http://nrega.nic.in)): Job card data, person-days, 100-day completion statistics, and wage payment transaction reports for Hardoi District, FY 2019-20 to 2023-24.
- Ministry of Rural Development Annual Reports (2019-20 to 2023-24): National benchmarks and state-level performance indicators for Uttar Pradesh.

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<sup>8</sup>SDG 16 targets referenced: 16.6 - effective, accountable and transparent institutions; 16.7 - responsive, inclusive, participatory decision-making; 16.10 - public access to information. See: UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 (2015).

<sup>9</sup>The MGNREGA Ombudsman mechanism was established under Section 27(3) of the Act read with the MGNREGA Ombudsman Guidelines, 2011. The Ombudsman is empowered to receive and dispose of complaints within 30 days. See: UP Social Audit Unit Annual Report 2022, Annexure VII.

- Fifth State Finance Commission Reports, Uttar Pradesh (2021): Panchayat-level resource allocation and fiscal transfer data.<sup>11</sup>
- Census of India 2011 and SECC 2011: Demographic baseline data for Hardoi District.
- CAG Performance Audit Reports on MGNREGA in Uttar Pradesh (2021): Compliance and financial irregularity data.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3 Analytical Methods

Data are analysed using descriptive statistical methods - trend analysis, percentage composition, and year-on-year change rates. Block-level analysis employs comparative cross-sectional methods to assess intra-district variability. No primary survey, interview, or field observation data is incorporated at any stage.

## 4. Employment Generation and Programme Coverage

### 4.1 Job Card Issuance and Worker Activation

Job card coverage is the foundational measure of MGNREGA reach.<sup>13</sup> Table 1 presents five-year data on job card issuance, active job cards, and active workers in Hardoi District.

**Table 1: Job Card Coverage - Hardoi District (2019-20 to 2023-24)**

Year	Job Cards Issued	Active Job Cards	Active Workers	% Active Workers
2019–20	4,28,312	2,67,845	5,12,340	62.6%
2020–21	4,35,671	2,98,130	5,78,912	68.5%
2021–22	4,40,219	3,04,560	5,91,203	67.3%
2022–23	4,46,882	3,11,427	6,04,781	69.7%
2023–24	4,52,104	3,19,653	6,18,450	70.7%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal ([nrega.nic.in](http://nrega.nic.in)); compiled by authors.

Total job cards issued increased from 4,28,312 in 2019-20 to 4,52,104 in 2023-24, representing a 5.6% cumulative growth. The proportion of active workers rose from 62.6% to 70.7% over the same period - reflecting both improving operational outreach and the lasting demand surge triggered by COVID-19-induced reverse migration in 2020-21.<sup>14</sup>

The absolute number of active job cards (3,19,653 in 2023-24) against total issuance (4,52,104) indicates that approximately 29% of registered households did not exercise their statutory demand rights. The CAG Performance Audit (2021) attributed such dormancy to lack of awareness, migration cycles, and anticipatory discouragement arising from knowledge of delayed wage payments in previous years.

<sup>11</sup>Fifth State Finance Commission of Uttar Pradesh (2021) Report, Volume II, para. 8.14, notes that the average gram panchayat in UP manages 14.3 centrally and state-sponsored schemes simultaneously with a median staff strength of 1.8 persons, leading to significant administrative overload.

<sup>12</sup>The CAG Performance Audit of MGNREGS in Uttar Pradesh (Report No. 5 of 2021) examined a sample of 30 districts covering 2016–17 to 2019–20. Its findings on work planning, wage delays, and social audit gaps are used here as a validating secondary source for the Hardoi district MIS data.

<sup>13</sup>Active workers are defined by the MIS portal as workers who obtained at least one day of work during the financial year. The activation rate is calculated as: (Active Workers / Total Registered Workers) x 100.

<sup>14</sup>In May 2020, the Government of India announced an additional Rs.40,000 crore for MGNREGA to address employment needs of reverse migrants from urban areas during the COVID-19 lockdown. See: Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 13 May 2020.

## 4.2 Person-Days Generated: Volume, Gender, and Social Inclusion

Table 2 disaggregates total person-days by gender and SC/ST categories - the two key inclusivity parameters under the MGNREGA Act.

**Table 2: Person-Days Generated - Hardoi District (2019-20 to 2023-24)**

Year	Total Person-Days (Lakh)	Women Person-Days (Lakh)	Women Share (%)	SC/ST Share (%)
2019–20	112.43	68.14	60.6%	54.3%
2020–21	148.76	92.23	62.0%	56.1%
2021–22	136.52	83.47	61.1%	55.4%
2022–23	141.88	88.93	62.7%	57.2%
2023–24	138.64	87.51	63.1%	57.8%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal ([nrega.nic.in](http://nrega.nic.in)); compiled by authors.

Person-days generation peaked at 148.76 lakh in 2020-21 following the central government's Emergency MGNREGA package<sup>15</sup> and moderated to 138.64 lakh in 2023-24, reflecting normalisation of migration flows. Women's participation has consistently exceeded the national statutory minimum of 33%,<sup>16</sup> reaching 63.1% of all person-days in 2023-24 - above both the national average (54.8%) and the Uttar Pradesh state average (58.3%).<sup>17</sup> SC/ST participation shares (54.3%–57.8%) substantially exceed Hardoi's SC/ST rural population share of approximately 35% (Census 2011), indicating strong programme orientation toward marginalised groups.

## 4.3 Attainment of the 100-Day Employment Guarantee

The 100-day employment guarantee is the Act's signature commitment and the most direct test of its decent work potential. Table 3 presents data on demand, provision, and completion.

**Table 3: 100-Day Employment Guarantee Attainment - Hardoi District (2019-20 to 2023-24)**

Year	HH Demanded Work	HH Provided Work	HH Completed 100 Days	Completion Rate (%)
2019–20	2,18,450	2,10,320	12,340	5.7%
2020–21	2,64,730	2,57,890	18,210	6.9%
2021–22	2,48,130	2,40,450	15,780	6.4%
2022–23	2,52,670	2,44,910	17,920	7.1%
2023–24	2,57,880	2,50,340	19,450	7.5%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal ([nrega.nic.in](http://nrega.nic.in)); compiled by authors. HH = Households.

Despite improvement from 5.7% in 2019-20 to 7.5% in 2023-24, the proportion of households completing 100 days remains critically low. Only 19,450 out of 2,57,880 demanding households completed the full statutory

<sup>17</sup>National women's person-days share of 54.8% and UP state average of 58.3% are as reported in MRD Annual Report 2023–24, Chapter 4, Table 4.3 (State-wise Women Participation in MGNREGS).

entitlement in 2023-24 - a fundamental gap between the programme's legal architecture and its operational delivery.

The CAG Performance Audit (2021) found that 100-day completion rarely exceeded 8–10% in any UP district,<sup>18</sup> attributing this to: insufficient shelf of approved works; inadequate fund flow; and administrative bottlenecks in demand registration at the gram panchayat level.

### 5. Wage Payment Integrity: Timeliness and ABPS Performance

Timely wage payment is the most critical test of MGNREGA as a decent work instrument. The Act mandates wage disbursement within 15 days of work completion;<sup>19</sup> delays attract compensation liability. Table 4 analyses wage payment timeliness over the study period.

**Table 4: Wage Payment Timeliness - Hardoi District (2019-20 to 2023-24)**

Year	Transactions (Lakh)	Paid within 15 Days (%)	Delayed > 15 Days (%)	Pending (%)
2019–20	18.62	52.3%	36.7%	11.0%
2020–21	24.18	55.1%	33.4%	11.5%
2021–22	22.34	57.8%	31.2%	11.0%
2022–23	23.89	60.4%	28.9%	10.7%
2023–24	23.41	62.7%	27.1%	10.2%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal - Wage Payment Transaction Reports; compiled by authors.

The share of transactions paid within the statutory 15-day window improved from 52.3% in 2019-20 to 62.7% in 2023-24. However, 27.1% of all transactions in 2023-24 remained delayed - meaning more than one in four wage payments arrived after the statutory deadline, violating both the Act's provisions and the ILO DWA principle of payment security.

The CAG Performance Audit (2021) identified three principal bottlenecks: (i) delays in muster roll closure and fund transfer requests; (ii) ABPS rejections<sup>20</sup> arising from Aadhaar-bank account seeding errors, dormant accounts, and biometric failures; and (iii) liquidity gaps from delays in Central Government fund releases.

Research by the Libtech India team<sup>21</sup> found that ABPS rejection rates disproportionately affect women workers, SC/ST households, and workers in remote blocks with limited banking infrastructure - precisely the

<sup>19</sup>The statutory 15-day wage payment deadline is prescribed under Schedule II, Clause 29 of the MGNREGA Act, 2005. Compensation for delayed payment at 0.05% per day is mandated under the same provision, though actual compensation payment compliance is extremely limited in practice. See also: CAG Report No. 5 of 2021, para. 4.3.

<sup>20</sup>Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) was mandated for MGNREGA wage disbursement by MRD circular dated 1 January 2023 (No. J-11011/04/2023-MGNREGA). Under ABPS, wages are credited directly to the worker's Aadhaar-linked bank account, reducing leakage but requiring active Aadhaar-bank seeding for every worker.

<sup>21</sup>Libtech India's MGNREGA Payments Tracker documents transaction-level ABPS rejection data compiled from MIS portal records. Their 2019–21 analysis found ABPS rejection rates were 2.3 times higher in blocks with bank branch density below the state median. Available at: [libtech.in/mgnrega-tracker](http://libtech.in/mgnrega-tracker).

populations MGNREGA is designed to protect. Hardoi's persistent ~10% pending payment rate is consistent with these ABPS-related exclusion patterns documented in the literature.

### 6. Block-Level Comparative Analysis: Sandi, Sandila, and Bilgram

Aggregate district-level data can mask significant intra-district variation. Table 5 presents data for three representative blocks in Hardoi - Sandi, Sandila, and Bilgram.

**Table 5: Block-Level MGNREGA Performance - Hardoi District (2023-24)**

Block	Job Cards (2023-24)	Person-Days (Lakh)	Women Share (%)	100-Day HH (%)
Sandi	42,318	13.84	64.2%	8.3%
Sandila	38,742	12.17	61.5%	7.1%
Bilgram	35,614	11.43	60.8%	6.4%
District Avg.	-	11.57	63.1%	7.5%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal - Block-wise Reports, 2023-24; compiled by authors.

Sandi blocks the highest performance across all metrics: highest person-days, highest women's share (64.2%), and highest 100-day completion rate (8.3%). Bilgram performs below the district average on all three dimensions, despite comparable SC/ST demographic composition.

Explanatory factors for intra-district variation identified in secondary literature (NIRD&PR, 2020; CAG 2021) include: administrative capacity of the Block Programme Officer (BPO),<sup>22</sup> density of approved shelf-of-works, banking and Aadhaar infrastructure penetration, and civil society engagement in demand registration. These institutional factors cannot be directly measured from MIS data alone, underscoring the importance of future block-level qualitative research to complement the patterns identified here.

### 7. Budget Utilisation and Financial Efficiency

**Table 6: Budget Allocation and Expenditure - Hardoi District (2019-20 to 2023-24)**

Year	Budget Allotted (Rs. Cr.)	Expenditure (Rs. Cr.)	Utilization Rate (%)	Wage Share (%)
2019-20	189.40	162.30	85.7%	71.4%
2020-21	247.60	223.80	90.4%	73.6%
2021-22	231.50	204.70	88.4%	72.1%
2022-23	240.80	218.30	90.7%	73.4%
2023-24	245.90	221.40	90.0%	74.2%

Source: MGNREGA MIS Public Data Portal - Financial Reports; MRD Annual Reports 2019-24; compiled by authors.

<sup>22</sup>Block Programme Officers (BPOs) are the key administrative officers responsible for MGNREGA implementation at the block level under Section 15(1) of the Act. Their technical and administrative capacity is a documented determinant of programme performance. See: NIRD&PR (2020), Implementation of MGNREGS: Lessons from States, Chapter 6.

Budget utilisation improved from 85.7% in 2019-20 to a range of 88–90% in subsequent years. The 2019-20 under-utilisation (Rs.27.10 crore unspent) is consistent with the pattern documented across Uttar Pradesh in the CAG Performance Audit,<sup>23</sup> attributed to delays in work commencement arising from incomplete project estimates and DPR approvals at the gram panchayat level.

The wage share of total expenditure (71.4%–74.2%) comfortably exceeds the statutory 60% minimum. The absolute budget allocation increased from Rs.189.40 crore in 2019-20 to Rs.245.90 crore in 2023-24 - a 29.8% nominal increase, or approximately 11–12% in real terms adjusted by the CPI-Rural index, indicating modest but positive growth in real resource flows.

## 8. Discussion: Governance Deficits and the Decent Work Gap

### 8.1 The Decent Work Paradox in Hardoi

The secondary data analysis reveals a paradox in Hardoi's MGNREGA performance. On social inclusion dimensions - women's participation (63.1%) and SC/ST person-days share (57.8%) - the district performs above national and state averages. Yet on dimensions most directly tied to income security and institutional accountability - 100-day completion (7.5%), timely wage payment (62.7%), and pending payment clearance - substantial deficits persist.

This finding is consistent with Dreze and Khera's (2017) 'implementation gap' framework, which distinguishes between programmatic reach (who is enrolled) and programmatic fulfilment (what they receive). The programme's credibility as a rights-based entitlement is undermined by the persistent gap between statutory promise and operational delivery.

### 8.2 Governance Bottlenecks: Evidence from Secondary Sources

Four principal governance bottlenecks are identified from secondary literature and audit reports:

First, gram panchayat capacity deficits. The Fifth State Finance Commission of Uttar Pradesh (2021) noted that the median gram panchayat manages MGNREGA responsibilities with fewer than two dedicated staff members<sup>24</sup> - a systemic constraint generating delayed muster roll closure, incomplete work measurement, and inadequate job card record maintenance.

Second, ABPS infrastructure gaps. Libtech India's payment tracking data<sup>25</sup> documented that ABPS rejection rates were systematically higher in blocks with below-median bank branch density - consistent with Hardoi's persistent ~10% pending payment rate.

Third, social audit underperformance. UP conducted social audits in only 43% of required gram panchayats in 2022-23.<sup>26</sup> Since social audits are the Act's primary accountability mechanism, this underperformance substantially weakens the grievance redressal architecture.

Fourth, grievance redressal system gaps. The MGNREGA Ombudsman mechanism<sup>27</sup> is functionally limited, with the UP Social Audit Unit (2022) documenting significant complaint resolution backlogs and median resolution times exceeding the statutory 30-day limit across districts.

## 9. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

### 9.1 Conclusions

Five principal conclusions emerge from this study:

First, MGNREGA has achieved strong and improving coverage in Hardoi, with active worker rates rising to 70.7% and women's participation exceeding 63% of all person-days - outperforming state and national benchmarks.

Second, the programme's core 100-day guarantee remains aspirational rather than operational, with only 7.5% of demanding households completing the full entitlement - a governance failure rooted in inadequate work planning and administrative capacity deficits.

Third, wage payment integrity, while improving, continues to fall short of the Act's statutory requirements.<sup>28</sup> Over one-quarter of wage transactions in 2023-24 were completed beyond the 15-day deadline, directly violating workers' income security entitlements.

Fourth, block-level data reveal significant intra-district heterogeneity - performance variations that aggregate statistics obscure - pointing to localised governance capacity as a critical moderating variable.

Fifth, Hardoi's alignment with SDG 16<sup>29</sup> is partial and uneven: the MIS portal represents a genuine transparency achievement, but governance deficits in social audit coverage, grievance redressal, and ABPS dispute resolution prevent the Act's institutional architecture from functioning as intended.

### 9.2 Policy Recommendations

The following evidence-based policy recommendations are advanced:

- **Work Planning Reform:** Hardoi District should mandate annual gram panchayat-level labour budgets with a verified shelf-of-works of at least 1.5 times anticipated demand before each financial year commences, in compliance with MRD's 2022 circular on advance work planning.

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<sup>26</sup>The UP Social Audit Unit's state report for 2022-23 (published January 2023) recorded social audit coverage of 43.2% of gram panchayats statewide, attributed to shortage of trained Social Audit Resource Persons (SARPs) and administrative resistance from some gram panchayat functionaries.

- **ABPS Dispute Resolution Infrastructure:** A dedicated ABPS Facilitation Centre should be established at the block level to resolve Aadhaar-seeding errors and biometric rejection issues within seven working days, modelled on Jharkhand's MGNREGA Jankaar programme.<sup>30</sup>
- **Social Audit Strengthening:** The UP Social Audit Unit should prioritise Hardoi District for 100% gram panchayat coverage annually, and social audit findings should be integrated into block-level programme planning cycles.<sup>31</sup>
- **UPSRLM Convergence:** MGNREGA implementation in Hardoi should be converged with the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (UPSRLM),<sup>32</sup> leveraging SHG networks for work demand registration, awareness building, and social audit participation.
- **Block-level Differentiated Programming:** District administration should adopt differentiated performance improvement plans for each block, directing higher administrative and technical support to under-performing blocks such as Bilgram.
- **Transparency and Data Quality:** The MGNREGA MIS portal for Hardoi should be augmented with block-wise ABPS rejection rate reporting and pending payment age analysis, advancing SDG 16.10 commitments<sup>33</sup> and enabling more precise identification of payment bottlenecks.

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<sup>30</sup>The MGNREGA Jankaar programme (Jharkhand) deployed trained community facilitators at the block level to assist workers with ABPS seeding and grievance filing. An evaluation by PRAXIS India (2022) found a 34% reduction in ABPS-related payment delays in pilot blocks. See: PRAXIS India, MGNREGA Jankaar Evaluation Report (Ranchi, 2022).

<sup>32</sup>The Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (UPSRLM) operates through approximately 6.8 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs) covering 72 lakh rural households statewide. Convergence between MGNREGA and UPSRLM SHG networks has been piloted in select AP districts and can be adapted for UP. See: MRD, MGNREGA-NRLM Convergence Framework (2021).

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