

For Immediate Release

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***Saubhagya* and *Ujjwala* make on-ground impact in Bihar; reliability and affordability remain key bottlenecks - CEEW study**

Patna (18 December 2018) – In 2018, 76 per cent of Bihar’s rural households relied on grid electricity as the primary source of lighting, up from 20 per cent in 2015, according to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), which recently published its findings from the second round of India’s largest multidimensional energy access survey. This increase in the use of grid electricity has led to a more than four-fold decrease in the proportion of households using kerosene as the primary source of lighting – from 68 per cent in 2015 to 16 per cent in 2018. Further, 40 per cent of rural households in the state used Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) as primary cooking fuel in 2018, up from 14 per cent in 2015. Using LPG for cooking reduces the health risks due to indoor air pollution caused by using traditional fuels such as biomass, dung cakes, and agri-residue. The government’s schemes including *Saubhagya* and Pradhan Mantri *Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)* have played an important role in improving energy access in Bihar. However, reliability and affordability remain key concerns.

The findings were published in ‘Access to Clean Cooking Energy and Electricity – Survey of States’ (ACCESS), an independent CEEW study supported by the Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation and the National University of Singapore (NUS). The study, based on a CEEW-ISEP-NUS survey, covered more than 9,000 households, in 756 villages and 54 districts, across India’s six major energy-access-deprived states. Following up on the first round of the ACCESS survey conducted in 2015, The Council revisited the same households in the six states in mid-2018 to evaluate the changes in their energy access situation over the past three years. In Bihar, more than 1,500 households in over 125 villages from 9 districts were surveyed.

Abhishek Jain, Senior Programme Lead, CEEW and the lead author of the study, said, “The ACCESS study provides a nuanced understanding of the evolution of energy access in rural Bihar. While connections are no more a challenge in Bihar, the state’s discoms should focus on dealing with issues of affordability, reliability, and quality. Also, nearly 40 per cent of grid-electrified rural households in Bihar reported not having received an electricity bill in the past one year or ever. The discoms must improve their billing and collection efforts.”

Tauseef Shahidi, Research Analyst, CEEW, and co-author of the study, added, “It is encouraging to note that the proportion of rural households with LPG connections in Bihar has increased from 17 per cent to 55 per cent since early 2015. However, even today, only 22 per cent use LPG exclusively for their cooking needs. The steep recurring expense of refills and easy availability of free-of-cost biomass remain critical challenges to the sustained use of LPG in rural areas of the state.”

**State of access to electricity**

Between 2015 and 2018, 8.6 million rural households in Bihar moved up from the bottom of the electricity-access ladder. However, 37 per cent of Bihar’s rural households still had either no or extremely poor electricity access. The Council’s study found that the increased access to electricity has not completely translated into reliable and quality power for many rural households. A majority of rural households with poor electricity access experienced five or more days of blackouts in a month, at least four days of voltage fluctuation in a month causing damage to appliances, or at least seven days of low voltage restricting appliance usage in a month.

In the last three years, Bihar's rural households have witnessed notable improvement in the duration of power supply with median value increasing from 8 hours in a day to 15 hours a day. Fifty-five per cent of electrified rural households received four or more hours of electricity between sunset and midnight, up from 29 per cent in 2015. With more grid connections and improved power supply, only 0.3 per cent of the rural households used diesel microgrids or diesel-powered gensets in 2018, significantly lower from 13 per cent of the households in 2015.

### **State of access to clean cooking energy**

Bihar witnessed a marked improvement in rate of LPG connections, which increased from 17 per cent in 2015 to 55 per cent in 2018. The proportion of rural households using LPG as exclusive cooking fuel increased from 4 per cent in 2015 to 22 per cent in 2018. Also, the proportion of rural households using LPG in Bihar that had LPG delivered to their doorsteps increased from 19 per cent in 2015 to 45 per cent in 2018. Households that did not get home deliveries travelled the median one-way distance of five kilometres to procure LPG, marginally lower than six kilometres in 2015. This implies that while LPG penetration has improved, more efforts are required to improve last mile distribution of LPG in rural Bihar.

Of the households that did not have an LPG connection, 80 per cent expressed interest in getting one, according to The Council's study. However, high upfront costs as well as recurring costs remained significant barriers for rural households to take an LPG connection in Bihar.

Further, The Council's study found that about 56 per cent of rural households that received an LPG connection in the last two years, received it under the *PMUY*. As of September 2018, Bihar was ranked among the top three states in India in terms of providing new LPG connections under *PMUY*.

The Council's study covered the districts of Bhagalpur, Khagaria, Kishanganj, Nawada, Patna, Purwa Champaran, Samastipur, Siwan, and Supaul in Bihar.

### **About CEEW**

The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) is one of South Asia's leading not-for-profit policy research institutions. The Council uses data, integrated analysis, and strategic outreach to explain – and change – the use, reuse, and misuse of resources. The Council addresses pressing global challenges through an integrated and internationally focused approach. It prides itself on the independence of its high-quality research, develops partnerships with public and private institutions, and engages with wider public.

In 2018, CEEW once again featured extensively across nine categories in the '2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report', including being ranked as South Asia's top think tank (14th globally) with an annual operating budget of less than USD 5 million for the fifth year in a row. In 2016, CEEW was also ranked 2nd in India, 4th outside Europe and North America, and 20th globally out of 240 Think tanks as per the ICCG Climate Think Tank's standardised rankings. In 2013 and 2014, CEEW was rated as India's top climate change think-tank as per the ICCG standardised rankings.