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Contact: Arsheen Kaur, [arsheen.kaur@ceew.in](mailto:arsheen.kaur@ceew.in) (+91 9891021997)  
Mihir Shah, [mihir.shah@ceew.in](mailto:mihir.shah@ceew.in) (+91 8585918854)

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

Lucknow (26 November 2018) – In 2018, 59 per cent of rural households in Uttar Pradesh (UP) relied on grid electricity as the primary source of lighting, an almost three-fold increase since 2015, according to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) which published its findings from the second round of India's largest multidimensional energy access survey last week. The proportion of rural households using kerosene as the primary source of lighting also reduced from 72 per cent to 30 per cent over the last three years. Further, 64 per cent of rural households in the state used Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking in 2018, up from 33 per cent in 2015. Rural households relying on LPG as the primary cooking fuel increased to 37 per cent in 2018, up from 17 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 *Ujjwala Yojana* have played an important role in improving energy access in the state in recent years.

The Access to Clean Cooking Energy and Electricity – Survey of States (ACCESS), an independent CEEW study supported by the Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF) and the National University of Singapore (NUS), 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 Uttar Pradesh, more than 3,000 households in over 250 villages from 18 districts across Uttar Pradesh were surveyed.

Due to Uttar Pradesh's vast geographic area and diversity across its regions, significant variations in the state of energy access were found. Only 20 per cent of rural households in Banda district reported reliance on grid electricity as the primary source of lighting as compared to 95 per cent in Muzaffarnagar district. Further, only 28 per cent of electrified rural households were equipped with meters in Aligarh district as compared to 66 per cent in Varanasi district. There was also stark disparity in the use of solar home systems and lanterns, as only two per cent of rural households in Muzaffarnagar district reported using them in contrast to 30 per cent in Sitapur district.

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 Uttar Pradesh. While Saubhagya would ensure connections for households, Uttar Pradesh's discoms should focus on dealing with issues of low-voltage and day-long blackouts. With as many as 40 per cent of rural electrified household not paying anything at all for their supply, the state needs to improve metering rates along with billing and collection efforts."

Sasmitha Patnaik, Programme Lead, CEEW, added, "While access to LPG connections and its use as the primary fuel for cooking has improved significantly in Uttar Pradesh in the last three years, the LPG distribution network needs to be strengthened further to achieve the envisaged goal of home delivery for all households. Affordability of LPG also needs to be addressed through targeted subsidies, considering it is a concern highlighted by over 93 per cent of the households stacking LPG with traditional fuels."

## **State of access to electricity**

The Council's study found that in the last three years about 30 per cent of rural population in Uttar Pradesh gained better electricity access, moving from no or very poor access. However, 42 per cent of the rural households still had either no electricity connections or had very poor electricity access. The study further found that nearly 20 per cent of unelectrified households in the state—highest among the six states covered in the survey—would prefer to remain unelectrified even if they received connections with no upfront cost. The reasons for refusing cost-free connections could include inability to afford regular electricity consumption, unwillingness to pay high-value in irregular lumpsum bills, prevailing illegal connections, or unreliable electricity supply.

Further, there has been a notable improvement in the duration of power supply from 8 hours in a day in 2015 to 12 hours in a day in 2018. Sixty-eight per cent of electrified rural households received three to four hours of electricity between sunset and midnight in 2018, up from 38 per cent in 2015.

Affordability of basic electricity emerged as an important issue for rural households in the state. This could be addressed significantly by shifting households from unmetered to metered connections.

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

Uttar Pradesh witnessed a marked increase not only in LPG connections, but also in its use as the primary cooking fuel, up from 17 per cent in 2015 to 37 per cent in 2018. The Council's study found that the proportion of rural households in the state that had LPG delivered to their doorsteps increased significantly from 9 per cent in 2015 to 29 per cent in 2018. Households that do not get home deliveries travel the median one-way distance of five kilometres to procure LPG, lower than seven kilometres in 2015. This implies an increased presence of distributorships in rural areas.

Of the households that do not have an LPG connection, 83 per cent expressed interest in getting one, according to The Council's study. However, high installation cost and high recurring costs remained significant barriers for households to take an LPG connection.

The potential reason for the high use of LPG in UP, despite the hardships of procuring it, is the high cost of purchasing biomass in the state. Of the six surveyed states, UP had the lowest proportion of rural households relying completely on free biomass.

The Council's study covered the districts of Aligarh, Azamgarh, Banda, Bareilly, Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Jhansi, Kannauj, Mainpuri, Mirzapur, and Muzaffarnagar in UP.

## **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.