

Press Release

LPG access has expanded, but only 23% rural households use it exclusively, compared with 70% of urban poor households: CEEW study

~ 73% of rural households, 87% of urban informal-settlement households, and 74% of migrant workers use LPG.

~ Less than 4% of migrant workers surveyed are enrolled in the PMUY scheme, despite a 2021 policy change meant to simplify self-declarations.

~ 80% report they would switch to exclusive LPG use at INR 400 per 14.2 kg cylinder

New Delhi, 07 September 2026: Access to LPG has expanded deep into rural India, its cities' informal settlements, and its migrant worker settlements, but formal, registered access has not kept pace, find three studies released today by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) at its flagship event, Clean Air Horizons. *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* (PMUY) and wider LPG expansion have dramatically increased access. The next generation of clean-cooking policy needs to solve sustained usage, affordability, formal access and last-mile delivery. The studies cover over 2,200 rural households across six states, over 1,100 households in informal settlements and over 1,000 migrant workers across 10 cities.

Informal connections, bought through *kirana* stores, roadside dealers or unauthorised distributors at a premium, fill the gap left behind by lack of awareness and challenges with last-mile delivery networks. Migrant workers face the sharpest exclusion: 79 per cent of migrant LPG users surveyed have no formal connection, while 11 per cent of households in urban informal settlements. Less than 4 per cent of migrant workers are enrolled in the PMUY despite the 2021 policy change meant to extend the scheme to migrant families.

On affordability, the three studies converge: at a refill price of INR 400 for a 14.2 kg LPG cylinder, at least 80 per cent of surveyed rural households, urban informal settlement households and migrant workers, report that they would transition to exclusive LPG usage. The median willingness to pay was INR 500 across the three groups. Both figures are below the current effective subsidised PMUY cylinder price of INR 642.

Access takes a different shape for each group surveyed by CEEW.

Among rural households, 73 per cent used LPG in the previous 90 days, but only 23 per cent use it exclusively; half still rely on firewood as their primary fuel, and just 47 per cent of LPG users receive doorstep delivery, leaving refill cost and last-mile logistics as the binding constraints.

Among urban informal settlement households, LPG usage is far higher, at 70 per cent exclusive use, but 31 per cent of those without a formal connection say they were turned away for lacking documentation such as proof of address. As a result, 11 per cent buy cylinders informally, paying INR 1,040 against a retail price of INR 803 at the time of the survey.

For migrant workers, access is closely tied to housing: 70 per cent of those living on footpaths or in open spaces use solid fuels exclusively, against 11 per cent of those in rented accommodation. Informal LPG users among migrant respondents pay INR 71 per kg, a premium of more than 20 per cent over the INR 59 per kg paid through formal connections.

Prarthana Borah, Fellow, CEEW, said, “Clean air is inseparable from how people cook, work and live. These studies show that providing an LPG connection is only the first step. If families cannot afford regular refills, migrants are not aware of formal connections under PMUY, or cylinders do not reliably reach rural homes, households remain exposed to polluting fuels. India's clean air agenda must therefore look beyond access to

whether clean cooking is affordable, reliable and used sustainably.”

Abhishek Kar, Fellow, CEEW, and a co-author across all three studies, said, "Clean cooking policy now has to move from connection numbers to sustained use. For rural households, refill affordability and doorstep delivery matter most; for urban poor households, documentation and payment innovations like micro-payments are needed; and for migrants, additional subsidy and awareness are the missing links. For example, a majority of migrant LPG users buy informally, paying a per-kg premium of more than 20 per cent over general users who can afford a full formal cylinder. These lived realities must guide the next phase of clean cooking action."

The three CEEW studies point to distinct, actor-specific fixes. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas should consider raising the PMUY subsidy by around INR 200 per cylinder to bring the effective price closer to the INR 400 affordability threshold (to ensure exclusive use) identified across all three surveys. Oil marketing companies in coordination with employers and contractors should assist migrants and their families in special PMUY enrolment drives, and pilot pay-as-you-go smart-meter LPG kiosks that allow partial, flexible refills in migrant-dense areas. Distributors should adopt a differentiated commission model, already [proposed by CEEW](#) in 2024, that pays a top-up to distributors serving remote or low-volume rural customers, to close the doorstep-delivery gap. Urban local bodies and housing departments should prioritise formal LPG enrolment for households in informal settlements, where residential instability is among the most important factors of continued dependence on solid fuels.

Read the full studies released at the event:

- [Subsidised, Not Sustained: Rural Cooking-Fuel Usage Trends in Six Indian States](#), by Rahul Das, Anwesha Sarma and Abhishek Kar
- [Are Clean Cooking Fuels Reaching India's Urban Poor? Access and Willingness to Pay Across 10 Indian Cities](#), by Hladinee Borgohain, Adya Sharma, Rahul Das and Abhishek Kar
- [Understanding Clean Cooking Fuel Usage Among Migrants: Evidence from Willingness to Pay Surveys in 10 Indian Cities](#), by Surya Shekhar Auddy, Varian Crasto and Abhishek Kar
- [Whose Air? Assessing Equity in India's Air Quality Policies](#) by Niharika Tyagi and Om Prakash Singh
- [Zero Waste Schools Manual](#), developed by CEEW's Zero Waste Schools Programme

Note: *The findings from the clean cooking studies, and the recommendations drawn from them, are based on self-reported responses from survey respondents, and should not be interpreted as observed behaviour or as a record of actual purchase and payment decisions for cooking fuels.*

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About CEEW

The [Council on Energy, Environment and Water \(CEEW\)](#)—a home-grown institution with headquarters in New Delhi—is among the **world's leading climate think tanks**. The Council uses **data, integrated analysis, and strategic outreach** to support public policy, transform markets, shape technology, and nudge behaviour. It addresses pressing regional and global challenges through an **integrated and internationally focused** approach. The Council prides itself on the **independence** of its high-quality research and strives to **impact sustainable development at scale**.