

New Study by CEEW and US Mission India Unveils Key Barriers and Solutions to Expanding Access to Clean Cooking Fuels in Rural India

New Delhi, 30 October 2024: A new study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), supported by the US government, reveals significant disparities in the availability of home delivery for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders and explores its underlying reasons. The study, *Improving India's Clean Cooking Fuel Supply: Recommendations to Enhance Last-Mile LPG Accessibility*, conducted as part of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Cleaner Air and Better Health project, highlights the need for enhanced efforts to ensure equitable access to clean cooking fuels, which play a crucial role in reducing air pollution and improving health outcomes.

LPG is a clean-burning fuel that significantly reduces harmful household air pollutants compared to traditional solid fuels such as firewood and charcoal. Increasing doorstep access (home delivery) to LPG, especially in rural areas, would lead to uptake in LPG use. Through this route, India can reduce emissions, improve public health, and contribute to global efforts to mitigate climate change.

The CEEW study found that while 72 per cent of urban distributors provide widespread home delivery, only 52 per cent of rural distributors can do the same. Addressing this issue is critical to supporting India's broader climate and health goals by ensuring the sustained use of clean cooking fuels and reducing harmful emissions from solid fuels. The first-of-its-kind study is based on a survey of LPG distributors across six states – Assam, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. It highlights how different types of distributors with varying business models face distinct challenges despite receiving the same commission.

The findings underscore the importance of developing innovative solutions to improve LPG access in rural India. These include differentiated commission structures to support distributors in underserved areas, digital technologies to streamline operations, and stronger collaboration between government agencies and the private sector. Such measures are vital to advancing India's clean energy transition and contribute directly to global climate goals.

"The United States is committed to addressing the root causes of air pollution while supporting India's clean energy transition. By improving access to clean cooking fuels in rural areas, we have the potential to reduce harmful emissions, protect public health, and mitigate climate change," said the Director of USAID/India's General Development Office, Mark Tegenfeldt.

Shalu Agarwal, Director of Programmes at CEEW, added, "India has shown commendable progress in empowering millions of women with access to LPG connections. But the story of clean energy access goes beyond connections. It's about timely and doorstep availability of clean fuel, even in remote areas. CEEW's research suggests that we must embrace digital technology, staggered commissions, innovative business models and collaboration across Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to improve last-mile delivery of LPG. As a leader in the Global South, India's success in overcoming these challenges can serve as a model for other developing nations."

The CEEW study's recommendations align with the US-India partnership's broader efforts to combat climate change, improve health outcomes, and promote inclusive economic growth. By ensuring equitable access to clean energy, India can continue to lead by example, demonstrating how innovative, locally driven solutions can address some of the world's most pressing challenges.

Read the full study, *Improving India's Clean Cooking Fuel Supply: Recommendations to Enhance Last-mile LPG Accessibility*, [here](#).

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About CEEW

The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) is one of Asia's leading not-for-profit policy research institutions and among the world's top climate think tanks. 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 the wider public. CEEW has a footprint in over 20 Indian states and has repeatedly featured among the world's best-managed and independent think tanks. Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @CEEWIndia for the latest updates.

About USAID

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is the US government's premier international development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results across the world. USAID works to help lift lives, build communities, and advance democracy. Its work advances US national security and economic prosperity, demonstrates American generosity, and helps countries with their development journey. In India, USAID is collaborating with the country's growing human and financial resources through partnerships that catalyse innovation and entrepreneurship to solve critical local and global development challenges.

About CABH project

Cleaner Air and Better Health (CABH) is a five year (2021 to 2026) project supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It aims to strengthen air pollution mitigation and reduce exposure to air pollution in India by establishing evidence-based models for better air quality management. The project is being implemented by a consortium led by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and includes Asar Social Impact Advisors, Environmental Design Solutions, Enviro Legal Defence Firm, and Vital Strategies.