

Unelectrified Households in Electrified Villages

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Prime Minister recently announced that all inhabited villages in India now enjoy electrification.

\n

- But a household level look highlights several disparities and thus needs deeper attention.

\n

\n\n

What is the claim?

\n\n

\n

- As of April 1, 2015, the official count of unelectrified villages was around 18,000.

\n

- But recently, PM announced that all inhabited villages now enjoy electrification.

\n

- It signalled a significant milestone in the country's development.

\n

- It is an achievement that will raise aspirations in the remotest districts.

\n

\n\n

What is the concern?

\n\n

\n

- The existing definition to declare a village electrified is coverage of a mere 10% of households.

\n

- This is, along with the common facilities such as schools, panchayats and health centres.

- \n
- However, these broad-based statistics fail to bring out several disparities.
- \n
- These include:
- \n

\n\n

- \n
- i. the actual number of households in villages that have power connections
- \n
- ii. number of hours they get reliable power
- \n
- iii. the per capita power that rural and urban Indians consume
- \n

\n\n

What is the actual electrification scenario?

\n\n

- \n
- Millions of homes still lack this vital resource in India.
- \n
- Rural household electrification has a wide range across States, from 47% to 100%.
- \n
- The average hours of power supplied in a day to rural areas also varies widely among states.
- \n
- It ranges from 11.5 in Mizoram, 17.72 in Uttar Pradesh and 24 hours in Kerala, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.
- \n
- Thus the claim of electrification loses validity with these small scale statistics.
- \n
- Even with supportive Central schemes, the Power for All 24x7 goal with a deadline of April 1, 2019 is far from realistic.
- \n

\n\n

What are the challenges?

\n\n

- \n
- These anomalies are often the result of infrastructure deficits and

administrative inefficiency.

\n

- There is a clear divergence between the per capita electricity consumption between rural and urban India.

\n

- Thus, improving access and equity would be the twin challenges to be faced.

\n

- The falling cost of renewable, decentralised sources such as solar photovoltaics represents a ready solution for rural India.

\n

- However, evidence from States such as Maharashtra highlights the challenges in this.

\n

- It made an early claim to full electrification 6 years ago relying partly on solar power.

\n

- But it witnesses theft, damage and lack of technical capacity and the hurdles therein.

\n

\n\n

What could be done?

\n\n

\n

- A hybrid solution i.e. scaling up of both grid-connected and standalone solar systems in appropriate areas would be a way out.

\n

- Augmenting conventional sources of electricity, with a clear emphasis on rooftop solutions for cities could be taken up.

\n

- Cheaper renewables will enable differential pricing for households in remote areas.

\n

- This would be a key determinant of wider social benefits of electricity.

\n

- In all, rural electrification in India and affordable power to every household needs sustained policy support.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

