



## Despite Much Exhortations, India's Transition Towards Clean Domestic Fuel May Remain a Pipedream in the Near Future. Analyse. (250 words / 15 M ) (GS-3 Environment)

### Approach:

- Introduction.
- Government steps taken.
- State of India's domestic fuel use.
- Conclusion.

The world may not ensure universal access to affordable and modern energy services by **2030** as per **Sustainable Development Goals**. A recent report says that **India, South East Asia & sub-Saharan Africa will not meet SDG Target 7.1**, thus preventing the world from moving towards a cleaner future.

India has experienced **many changes in its energy consumption patterns**, due to the natural increase based on **population growth** and **increase in economic activity vis-à-vis development**.

### Government initiatives:

- In the first 3 decades, the union government supported initiatives to build **solid-fuel based stoves with lesser emissions**.
- In **2009**, **National Biomass cookstoves** was launched which approved 17 cookstove models for domestic use. But **their efficacy in reducing indoor air pollution is not ascertained**.
- Since, **nearly half** of India's households use **solid fuels** for cooking, India planned to **ensure 80 million households with LPG connections by 2020** under its flagship **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**.

### State of India's domestic fuel use:

- India's **rural population heavily relies on traditional biomass-based fuels** for meeting energy needs. Around **15% of total energy expenditure** occurred on **firewood** even in **urban families**.
- The **HFHS-3 (2005-06) and NFHS-4 (2014-15)** have shown **State-wise decadal trends** in solid fuel usage – **West Bengal stands at 79.2% (NFHS-3) & 72.1% (NFHS-4)**, **Odisha stands at 88.6% (NFHS-3)**, **Assam stands at 74.9% (NFHS-4)**, **Madhya Pradesh at 80.3% (NFHS-3) & 70.4 (NFHS-4)**, etc. While the average usage across states is above **64%**.
- It is reported that **80% of PMUY beneficiaries completing 1 year connection have returned for refill**. I.e., **at least 10 million (20%) have not come for refill**. It is **unsure whether of the 40 million** who came for second refill, have come for **3<sup>rd</sup> or subsequent refills**. Hence, if beneficiaries are not regularly refilling cylinders, it will be misleading to



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boast the success of the scheme.

- **Reasons** : LPG connection under PMUY is **not free**, so **affordability** remains a major bottleneck. Other factors are – **(a) lack of distributors, (b) logistically difficult terrain in some areas, (c) cumbersome process of getting LPG connection, especially for poor, (d) unwillingness to shift to LPG.**
- **Kerosene cooking** is widespread. Although kerosene is advocated as a cleaner alternative, yet **studies are few on its harmful effects.**
- to **IEA, 688 million** people are **deprived of clean cooking fuels** in India. **681 millions** still rely on **traditional biomasses**. If this trend continues, **580 million Indians** will depend upon solid fuels **by 2030.**

It is evident that India will **not meet SDG target by 2030**. About **40% Indians** will remain **exposed to harmful indoor air pollution** from traditional cooking fuels. **Unsustainable harvest of fuel wood** is a major cause of **forest degradation**, contributing to **more than 93% of GHG emissions from forestry sector**. **Clean cooking** not only ensures **sustainable energy security** but also **address poverty**. **Inadequate access to clean & affordable energy** is one reason for the **low quality of life**. So, the **new challenges demand a new paradigm for India's energy policy**.