



Mains Practice Question

Q. Explain the significance of access to clean energy for developing countries like India. (250 words)

18 Sep, 2019 GS Paper 3 Economy

Approach

- Introduce by mentioning about the need for affordable and sustainable energy supply.
- Mention the socio-economic benefits of access to clean energy, particularly in the rural areas.
- Conclude by mentioning how clean energy helps in achieving inclusive growth.

Introduction

Access to affordable and sustainable energy supply is necessary for maintaining a high growth trajectory. India is the sixth largest economy in the world and it is also the third largest consumer of energy in the world. Energy demand is set to double by 2040.

A sustainable energy sector is needed to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 7 pertaining to access to clean affordable energy. It has undeniable positive spillovers in the achievement of other SDGs, including those pertaining to gender equality, clean water and sanitation, and most importantly, sustainability.

Body

Impacts of access to clean energy supply across different sectors:

- **Manufacturing sector:** Commercial energy access is essential to create income generating opportunities. It enables capital investments in machinery and advanced technology, which exponentially increases operational capacity and output.
- **Agriculture:** Energy access also helps in augmenting farmer income through better irrigation, mechanized ploughing and harvesting and by ensuring a wider market for their output.
- **Women empowerment:** Energy access has the potential to positively influence women's health, finance, and access to information, especially in rural areas.
 - For example, **Ujjwala Yojana**, which provides access to clean cooking gas, replacing firewood or coal, was a game changer for women and ensuring them smoke free healthy lifestyle, and augmenting livelihood opportunities.
 - Steady growth in off grid and decentralized renewable energy systems has opened up a lot of avenues for **women entrepreneurship** especially in rural India.
- **Education:** Solar energy powered schools in rural India have given young girls the opportunity to pursue quality modern education, turn digitally literate and brighten their career prospects. Electrified schools do better in recruiting and training qualified teachers, recording higher student attendance, and academic performance.
- **Universal access to clean water and sanitation:** Energy is essential for water extraction, water treatment and water distribution.
- **Health sector:** Decentralized clean energy solutions can greatly enhance the efficiency of Primary Health Services delivery to the marginalized sections of the population residing in remote corners

of the country.

- With increased digitization, energy access will accelerate the growth of technology enabled services like telemedicine and mobile health applications.

Conclusion

A more diverse energy supply with rising share of renewables contributes to a cleaner, healthier future, by helping reduce dependence on fossil fuels that emit harmful greenhouse gases. However, more than just safeguarding the environment, it induces perceptible improvements in socio-economic parameters like health, education, employment opportunities, and gender equality, thus playing a pivotal role in poverty alleviation and improving quality of life.

Thus, access to universal clean energy is critical for maintaining a high growth trajectory, in a manner that is sustainable and inclusive with its benefits reaching all sections of the society.

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