Environment & Ecology · GS - III

Why does access to clean cooking energy not necessarily translate into its sustained use among low-income households? Examine the implications for public health and environmental sustainability in India.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026	GS - III	Environment & Ecology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Clean cooking energy, Ujjwala Yojana, fuel stacking, energy poverty, indoor air pollution, PM2.5, behavioural change

Model Answer

The gap between access and sustained adoption

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) has expanded LPG access among economically disadvantaged households, particularly women. However, providing a connection does not automatically ensure regular use. The continued dependence of some beneficiaries on biomass fuels illustrates the difference between energy access and energy security.

Why traditional fuels persist

1. **Recurring expenditure:** LPG refill costs can be difficult for households with irregular incomes and competing essential expenses.

2. **Fuel stacking:** Families often use LPG for selected cooking activities while retaining firewood, dung cakes or agricultural residues for other purposes.

3. **Established practices:** Familiar cooking methods, taste preferences and local availability of biomass influence household choices.

4. **Supply constraints:** Distance from LPG distribution centres and difficulties in obtaining timely refills can discourage sustained adoption.

Wider public health and environmental consequences

Traditional biomass combustion releases fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide and other harmful pollutants. Prolonged household exposure can increase respiratory and cardiovascular risks, particularly among women and children who spend more time near cooking areas.

At the environmental level, continued biomass burning contributes to air pollution, black carbon emissions and pressure on local vegetation. Household fuel emissions also add to regional air-quality problems.

Making the transition sustainable

1. Improve refill affordability through targeted financial support and flexible delivery systems.
2. Strengthen rural distribution networks and doorstep access.
3. Promote awareness about the health consequences of household air pollution.
4. Monitor actual LPG consumption rather than measuring success only through connections distributed.

Conclusion: Clean cooking policy must move beyond infrastructure access towards affordable, reliable and sustained fuel use. This is essential for achieving public health improvements and cleaner household energy systems.

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