Power drive  
Getting affordable electricity to every  
household needs sustained policy support

**A**ccess to electricity drives the productivity of households, empowers women and enables edu­cation and communication. Millions of homes still lack this vital resource in India. And as of April 1, 2015, the official count of unelectrified villages was 18,452. So when Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced that all inhabited villages now enjoy electri­fication, it signalled a significant milestone in the coun­try's development. It is an achievement that will raise aspirations in the remotest districts. Yet, broad-brush statistics conceal severe disparities, including the ac­tual number of households in villages that have power connections, the number of hours they get reliable power, and the per capita power that rural and urban Indians consume. For one, the existing definition to de­clare a village electrified is coverage of a mere 10% of households and common facilities such as schools, pan- chayats and health centres. The claim of electrification pales when viewed against some of these realities. Ru­ral household electrification has a wide range across States, from 47% to 100%. The average hours of power supplied in a day to rural areas in January 2018 ranged from 11.5 in Mizoram, 14.91 in Haryana and 17.72 in Uttar Pradesh to 24 hours in Kerala, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. These anomalies are often the result of infrastructure deficits and administrative inefficiency and they show that, even with supportive Central schemes, the Power for All 24x7 goal adopted by States and Union Territo­ries with a deadline of April 1, 2019 is far from realistic.

Census data for 2001 and 2011 indicate that the num­ber of rural households that use electricity as their primary source of lighting rose by about 12 percentage points to 55.3%, while in that decade urban households rose five points to 92.7%. The per capita consumption between rural and fast-rising urban India also repre­sents a challenge, since there is a divergence between the two. There are twin challenges to be faced in im­proving access and equity. To many, the falling cost of renewable, decentralised sources such as solar photo- voltaics represents a ready solution for rural India. Yet, the evidence from States such as Maharashtra, which made an early claim to full electrification six years ago relying partly on solar power, shows that theft, damage and lack of technical capacity can pose serious hurdles. The answer may lie in a hybrid solution that ensures continued scaling up of both grid-connected and stan­dalone solar systems in appropriate areas, augmenting conventional sources of electricity, with a clear empha­sis on rooftop solutions for cities. Cheaper renewables will enable differential pricing for households in remote areas, a key determinant of wider social benefits of elec­tricity. Rural electrification in India has been a long ef­fort, achieving rapid growth from the Third Plan to the Twelfth Plan, but getting affordable power to every household needs sustained policy support.

1. [**quest**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/quest) (noun) – search, pursuit; mission.
2. [**household**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/household) (noun) – family, house.
3. [**sustained**](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sustained?q=Sustained) (adjective) – continuous, uninterrupted/prolonged, constant.
4. [**empower**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/empower) (verb) – authorize, allow, entitle.
5. [**lack**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lack) (verb) – require, be in need of, be deficient in.
6. [**inhabited**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/inhabit) (adjective) – relating to a place where people & animals live in.
7. [**broad-brush**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/broad-brush) (adjective) – lacking in detail, incomplete, insufficient.
8. [**disparity**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/disparity) (noun) – difference/imbalance, variation, disproportion.
9. [**pale**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pale) (verb) – decrease in importance, lose significance; diminish/fade.
10. [**anomaly**](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/anomaly?q=anomalies) (noun) – abnormality/irregularity, oddity, deviation.
11. [**far from**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/far_from) (phrase) – not, not at all, nowhere near.
12. [**divergence**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/divergence) (noun) – difference, dissimilarity, variance.
13. [**renewable sources**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/renewable) (noun) – the natural resources (such as water, wind, solar energy) from which energy is generated.
14. decentralised sources (noun) – it refers to energy sources that is generated off the main grid, such as wind turbines, PV (photovoltaic) solar panels, reciprocating gas engines, etc.
15. [**rely on**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rely) (phrasal verb) – be dependent, hinge on, resort to.
16. [**lie (in)**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lie) (verb) – consist, exist, be present.
17. [**scale up**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/scale_something_up_(or_scale_up)) (phrasal verb) – increase.
18. [**augment**](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/augment?q=Augmenting) (verb) – increase, supplement, enlarge.
19. [**differential**](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/differential) (adjective) – different, dissimilar, contrasting.
20. [**determinant**](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/determinant?q=Determinant) (noun) – factor, issue, concern.