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Launch of Energy Access Explorer tool by WRI India

India's electricity access story is constantly evolving. In the recent years, we have witnessed a significant policy impetus from both the central and state governments to enhance energy access across the country. While India has achieved nearly 100% household electrification, many crucial public infrastructures like healthcare and educational facilities continue to be impacted due to lack of access to a reliable, sustainable, and affordable power connections. While the departments of energy, health, education, and livelihoods have been trying to address these problems at a sectoral level, there is an urgent need to understand the links between them and to adopt an integrated approach to solve some of these challenges.

Access to electricity is a pre-requisite to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of good health, quality education, clean water, sanitation and eventually, socio-economic development.

To help understand these links and to develop inferences from these datasets, WRI has developed the Energy Access Explorer (EAE) platform. It is an online, interactive platform that for the first-time ever, brings together geospatial data from development and electricity sectors to support decision making. Even though the tool is a research initiative led by World Resources Institute. WRI India is leading the initiative in expanding and use of the tool in India for the Indian stakeholders.

The Energy Access Explorer or EAE is an open-source, digital, live data platform that has been created by the World Resources Institute (WRI) at a global scale. It leverages the power of satellite imagery combined with local data to visualize power supply and demand, and equips electricity planners, investors and clean energy entrepreneurs with the data they need to close the access gap.

Further EAE will:

- Make integrated data on energy access and development accessible to all
- Enable identification of links between electricity and development
- Empower decision-makers to prioritise areas requiring access related interventions
- Track progress of electricity and develop service delivery indicators over time.

During her presentation at the Event, Uttara Narayan, who is leading the EAE initiative in WRI India mentioned, *“Data is only as good as the needs of the users that it aims to cater to. It is important to recognise that data will be a dynamic, on-going conversation involving various kinds of stakeholders. Good data needs to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the people.”*

On 9 December 2021, WRI India launched the EAE platform for Jharkhand in Ranchi. This platform will provide a unique opportunity to visualize the energy, health, education, and livelihood indicators and will aid in decision-making processes for the accelerated development of the state of Jharkhand. It will also enable decision-makers to make better informed policies to transform the state of energy availability and its reliability at critical social and public spaces in Jharkhand.

Indicating the importance of platforms like EAE for brainstorming and planning in today's IT age, MR. K.K. Verma, Director, Jharkhand Renewable Energy Agency (JREDA) said, "It gives me immense happiness to launch this data platform today. This key platform will play a major role in informing us of Jharkhand's energy data."

He added that India's rural population has a future today, thanks to the extensive use of solar energy, which has given them employment opportunities and a better quality of life. "This tool can now help us design pathways for an inclusive energy access policy," he said.

During the closing remarks, Mr. Bishnu Parida, Chief Operating Officer, JSLPS (Government of Jharkhand) congratulated WRI India for launching this innovative product. He mentioned that this is an innovative IT tool, which can have multi-level data at the ground level aiding decision making process. He also requested WRI India to expand the data from energy, health, and education infrastructure along with rivers and canal network that farmers use for irrigation purposes.

Energy Access Explorer is already available for Kenya, Zambia, Uganda, and Tanzania, with plans to expand its use in more geographies in Africa and India.

About the World Resource Institute India

WRI India, an independent charity legally registered as the India Resources Trust, provides objective information and practical proposals to foster environmentally sound and socially equitable development. Our work focuses on building sustainable and livable cities and working towards a low-carbon economy. Through research, analysis, and recommendations, WRI India puts ideas into action to build transformative solutions to protect the earth, promote livelihoods and enhance human well-being. We are inspired by and associated with World Resources Institute (WRI), a global research organization.

For media queries contact:

Kunal Shankar

*Senior Communications Manager,
WRI India, Energy Programme*
Kunal.Shankar@wri.org
(M) +91-98661-73803

Ahona Datta Gupta

*Communications Manager,
WRI India, Energy Programme*
Ahona.DattaGupta@wri.org
(M) +91-98180-55447