

Energy Poverty in the transition from a Lower Income to a Middle-Income Country with special reference to Sri Lanka

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The Paris Climate Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals of 2015 have clearly identified energy access as a pre-requisite to achieving broader development goals. Sri Lanka, having a per capita GDP of USD 3,835 (2016), and a national poverty headcount ratio of 6.7% (2012/13), is a lower middle-income country, with significant progress in human development, and social indicators. This paper investigates into the shifts in energy consumption behaviour with the transition of Sri Lanka to a lower middle-income country, and the presence of energy poverty in the country using secondary data. Poverty and energy deprivation go hand-in-hand. Energy poverty yet to be clear define with a consensus, it is ill defined, complex and multi-dimensional concept and not adequately captured or measured in a single quantitative indicator. Energy poverty is hard to compare between two nations due to heterogeneity of the inherent characteristics. In Sri Lanka, per capita consumption of household cooking fuel has increased from 171kg to 252 kg of LPG equivalent from fuelwood, LPG and kerosene from 2003/04 to 2012/13, while per capita domestic electricity consumption has been maintained around 226 kWh and 210 kWh respectively. Using per capita threshold values for cooking fuel as 35kg of LPG or equivalent and 120kWh of electricity to be energy poor. In the meantime, Sri Lanka has maintained lower levels of energy intensity compared to other similar nations. As for electricity consumption by the domestic sector, the per capita household electricity consumption for lighting and other general purposes has also declined from 226kWh to 210kWh per capita from 2003/04 to 2012/13 respectively. One major reason for the reduction could be the use of energy efficient appliances, but this behavior is contrary to some other studies. In conclusion, considering a threshold of 120kWh of electricity per capita to define energy poverty, again Sri Lanka demonstrate that she has not been an energy poverty nation during latter part of it being a low income developing country.

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