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**Name of the Topic:** Role of Solar Energy in the Lives of Women: A Case Study of Zaskar Valley in Ladakh.

**Key words:** Renewable Energy, Sustainable Development, Gender Inequality, Women Empowerment.

### **Findings**

#### **Gendered Spaces of Electrification**

The finding builds upon the converging findings from the two research sites (Pipcha and Rorumony) to explore the gendered spaces of electrification. The chapter delves into the analysis of how implementing the Solar Electrification Project has shaped and redefined genderdynamics within electrified homes and communities. The chapter examines how the electrification process has impacted women's lives regarding their daily routines, roles, and responsibilities. It explores the changes brought about by household electrification and its effects on women's agency, resources, and empowerment. By addressing questions such as how women have been included in the engagement and ownership of the electrification process and the role played by technology in this process, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the gendered aspects of electrification.

Furthermore, the finding delves into the shifts in consumption practices resulting from the electrification process and their implications for women. It analyses how access to electricity has introduced new resources and assets for women and their families but also explores any polarising or unintended gendered outcomes that may have emerged. The chapter critically examines whether household electrification has led to consumption patterns that give women greater resources and agenc

#### **Empowering Women: Unveiling the Impact of Electrification**

Through the analysis of gendered electrification spaces, Chapter Six sheds light on the complex interplay between electricity, gender roles, and social dynamics. It offers valuable insights into the transformative potential of electrification on women's lives and the challenges and opportunities that arise. The chapter examines how implementing electricity plays a role in transforming women's work responsibilities. It investigates how access to electricity can improve women's efficiency and productivity in performing their domestic duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare. The analysis explores the changes in women's workload and the potential for alleviating some of the burdens associated with traditional household tasks. Furthermore, the chapter investigates the interplay between electricity, mode of intervention, and gendered divisions of labour. Moreover, the

chapter considers the social value attributed to women's labour and its impact on the consumption of electricity-related appliances for household chores.

The analysis of the study shows that the Solar Electrification Project has brought important benefits to communities, families and individuals, by providing opportunities for increased income, access to communication through mobile phones and media, as well as wellbeing and improved health in terms of light, and water. However, the Solar Electrification Project and implementation of Community Solar Power Plants were set out on the premises of an imagined geography that understood this process as mainly technical and economic, devoid of the cultural and social aspects of 'village politics' and hierarchy. By not sufficiently addressing the social complexities of families and communities in the project, the electrification process for household energy in Pipcha and Rarumony to a large extent excluded women, as well as partially excluded people of lower caste and class from participating in the implementation process, reinforcing their marginalisation.

Moreover, socio-economic differences in the communities meant that the ability to benefit from the electrification was not equally distributed or able to bridge the inequalities that prevailed in the communities. Ultimately, the failure to understand the 'customer' in the local context also played an important part in the demise of the Solar Electrification Project. The distribution of household electricity in Pipcha and Rarumony was connected to the responsibilities and cultural norms of women's place in the home. It subsequently brought women empowerment through their capacity to improve domestic work. This compromised their empowerment in others areas, as it reinforced patriarchal structures of gendered divisions of labour and authoritative knowledge.

In Pipcha, where the Community Solar Power Plant was used to increase productivity and income in an existing women's livelihood project, the project provided women empowerment to carve out a space of their own outside the 'cults of domesticity', renegotiating the moral landscape of women's legitimate role. However, this process of empowerment was situated in a discourse that sees empowerment primarily as a depoliticised and individual process. As such, the empowerment women gained from the project was still severely limited by lack of formal political and legal support that inhibits women's ability to change gender relations in their communities. Still, the merger of access to electricity and the existing women's livelihood project illustrates well how a holistic approach to energy interventions can put women in a position to (at least) actively challenge gender norms and traditional perceptions of women's authoritative knowledge, which in the long run might lead to changes in discriminatory gender relations. Lastly, this study points to how private sector led development for providing rural electrification signifies interventions where responsibilities are distributed between public and private partners of development. As the ambitions and interests of the private commercial partners are directed towards entering new markets and gaining profit by providing technical and economic models of development, complex issues of gender equality are easily abandoned, reducing the democratic and sustainable aspects of such interventions.

