

Health awareness and the transition towards clean cooking fuels: Evidence from Rajasthan

Martina Zahno,
Katharina Michaelowa ,
Purnamita Dasgupta,
Ishita Sachdeva

Abstract

Ensuring affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030 is part of the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG7). With roughly 3 billion people still lacking access to clean cooking solutions in 2017, this remains an ambitious task. The use of solid biomass such as wood and cow dung for cooking causes household air pollution resulting in severe health hazards. In this context, the Indian government has set up a large program promoting the use of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in rural areas. While this has led millions of households to adopt LPG, a major fraction of them continues to rely heavily on solid biomass for their daily cooking. In this paper, we evaluate the effect of simple health messaging on the propensity of these households to use LPG more regularly. Our results from rural Rajasthan are encouraging. They show that health messaging increases the reported willingness to pay for LPG, and substantially increases actual consumption. We measure this based on a voucher, which can only be used if LPG consumption is doubled until a certain deadline. Households exposed to health messaging use the voucher about 30% more often than households exposed to a placebo treatment. We further show that the impact of our very brief, but concrete health messaging is close to the effect of a 10% price reduction for a new LPG cylinder. Finally, our study raises some interesting questions about gender-related effects that would be worth consideration in future research.