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Replacing kerosene lanterns with solar-LEDs can spur jobs

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NEW YORK: In addition to environmental benefits, shifting away from inefficient and polluting fuel-based lighting -- such as candles, firewood, and kerosene lanterns -- to solar-LED systems can spur economic development as well -- to the tune of two million potential new jobs, a study says.

The researchers analysed how the transition from polluting fuel-based lighting to solar-LED lighting would impact employment and job creation.

"People like to talk about making jobs with solar energy, but it's rare that the flip side of the question is asked -- how many people will lose jobs who are selling the fuels that solar will replace," said researcher Evan Mills from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab).

The University of California manages Berkeley Lab for the US Department of Energy's Office of Science.

"We set out to quantify the net job creation. The good news is, we found that we will see many more jobs created than we lose," Mills noted.

The findings were published in the journal Energy for Sustainable Development.

There are about 274 million households worldwide that lack access to electricity.

But Mills' study focused on the "poorest of the poor", or about 112 million households, largely in Africa and Asia, that cannot afford even a mini solar home system, which might power a fan, a few lights, a phone charger, and a small TV.

Mills found that fuel-based lighting today provides 150,000 jobs worldwide.

Because there is very little data in this area, his analysis is based on estimating the employment intensity of specific markets and applying it to the broader non-electrified population. He also drew on field observations in several countries to validate his estimates.

He did a similar analysis for the emerging solar-LED industry and found that every one million of these lanterns provides an estimated 17,000 jobs.

These values include employees of these companies based in developing

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countries but exclude upstream jobs in primary manufacturing by third parties such as those in factories in China.

Assuming a three-year product life and a target of three lanterns per household, this corresponded to about two million jobs globally, more than compensating for the 150,000 jobs that would be lost in the fuel-based lighting market, the study said.

Furthermore, Mills' research found that the quality of the jobs would be much improved.

"With fuel-based lighting a lot of these people are involved in the black market and smuggling kerosene over international borders, and child labour is often involved in selling the fuel," he said.

"These new solar jobs will be much better jobs -- they're legal, healthy, and more stable and regular," he added.

The new jobs span the gamut, from designing and manufacturing products to marketing and distributing them.

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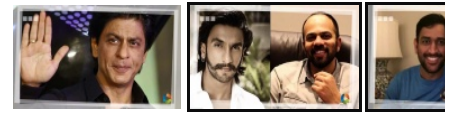


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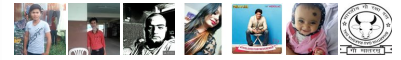


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