Community-based micro-hydro development in Northern India – benefits beyond lighting?

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out how local communities in the Himalayan region of India are benefiting when given the responsibility of managing village-based micro-hydro projects. In this research, a total of 7 cases were studied where the local communities were involved in management and other phases of micro hydro development. Data were collected using interviews with local community members, government officials, NGO officials and local experts in the micro-hydro sector. Results were categorized under social, economic, health and environmental factors. Results show that, although limited, these projects do produce local benefits. Electricity stays within the village, and villagers, especially children, women and the elderly, are benefited in various aspects of life. Although some local employment is generated and environmental considerations related to river flow are observed, these projects often run into financial difficulties, and with no financial backup the possibility of permanent project shutdown is always present.

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