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## **Universal access to clean energy vital for reducing poverty, UN officials stress**



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It is vital for countries in Asia and the Pacific to have national policies that will ensure universal access to clean and efficient energy services to advance poverty reduction and improve health and well-being, United Nations officials told a meeting in Bangkok.

Over 40 per cent of the estimated four billion people in the region mainly rely on traditional biomass for their cooking and heating needs while nearly one billion people lack electricity, according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)).

This has enormous socio-economic costs, most of them borne by women who comprise nearly 70 per cent of the one billion people in the region living on less than \$1.25 a day, the Commission noted in a news release.

“Wider access to energy is a critical for reducing inequality. In formulating energy policies, we need to listen to the voices of the poor and marginalized,” Nanda Krairiksh, Director of ESCAP’s Social Development Division, [told](#) the Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Energy Development in Asia and the Pacific.

The three-day meeting that ended today was organized by the UN and brought together representatives from over 15 Asia-Pacific nations and global energy experts to review energy security challenges facing the region and to outline a regional agenda on the issue.

Ms. Krairiksh told the meeting that ensuring universal access to basic, clean energy services is not only vital for reducing inequality but also provides significant benefits in the areas of health and literacy.

“Access to energy would, therefore, offer opportunities for millions of people to contribute more effectively and productively to society.”

Noting that people facing energy insecurity have no voice in designing energy policies, the Expert Group Meeting agreed on the need to make energy policies pro-poor, and especially pro-women, to ensure universal access to modern energy sources.

“Ensuring access to modern energy services, doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and doubling the share of renewable energy can revitalize the regional economy, combat climate change and go a long way toward ensuring equal opportunity for all,” said Rae Kwon Chung, Director of ESCAP’s Environment and Development Division.

The Expert Group Meeting was organized by ESCAP, the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)).

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