

Mapping Power: Electricity Governance in India's States

CONTEXT AND MOTIVATION

The Indian electricity sector is governed by an abundance of laws and populated by many actors and organizations. According to the separation of powers mandated by the Indian Constitution, broad rights to legislate in the sector are granted to the central government but the responsibility for implementation is assigned to state governments. Increasingly, scholars and policymakers acknowledge the vital importance of gaining a keener understanding of state-level perspectives and state-level interests, which will be critical to finding durable solutions to the chief problems that face the electricity sector as well as to understanding the fate of new initiatives in the energy sector. For example, this was one of the signal findings to emerge from the “Report on India’s Renewable Electricity Roadmap 2030,” the first publication issued by the newly-commissioned NITI Aayog in 2015. That report, like much other policy analyses and scholarship produced in the last ten years, indicates the need to shift away from the central government perspective alone and toward the state capitals to understand the electricity sector, and in particular the distribution side of the sector. The current project is designed to provide such a comprehensive, state-level perspective.

Our aim in this research project is, through state-level analysis, to examine contemporary electricity policy, and outcomes. In particular, we will explore *who* the various stakeholders and organizations are in each state, *what* their views and perspectives are, *how they will be affected by* new initiatives on 1) tariffs and electricity distribution, 2) renewable energy mandates, 3) competition and open access, and 4) demand-side efficiency. In the capitals of twelve Indian states that represent all regions of the country, our researchers will consult a range of the most important stakeholders in the sector (including regulators, utility managers, bureaucrats and politicians in the energy departments, consultants, civil society organizations, and consumer groups) to learn from them about the most important challenges facing the sector and how these are likely to be resolved in the coming years.

RESEARCH TEAM

The conveners of this project are Dr. Navroz K. Dubash (Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi), and Prof. Sunila S. Kale (University of Washington, Seattle), and Ranjit Bharvirkar (Regulatory Assistance Project). Dubash and Kale have researched and written extensively on many aspects of India’s energy sectors and Bharvirkar was a key member of the team that produced the Roadmap 2030 cited above. The rest of the team is composed of ten doctoral or post-doctoral researchers with experience working on various aspects of the energy and electricity sectors. You can find more about the project and the team at <http://cprindia.org/projects/mapping-power>

RESULTS

Through this research we hope to contribute a more coherent understanding of the main issues facing electricity governance in each state and the likely implications for future challenges and developments in the electricity sector. We hope to publish a series of policy briefs, working papers, and an edited collection of essays from this research.