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**Time Deficits and Hidden Poverty Threaten to Undermine U.N.'S Sustainable Development Goals, New Levy Institute Study Says**

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y.— The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include a clear goal to reduce the incidence of poverty by 50 percent by 2030 and a somewhat vague goal to recognize and provide support to the unpaid provision of domestic services and care of persons undertaken predominantly by women in their households. A new study from the **Levy Economics Institute of Bard College** argues that policymakers too often fail to grasp the connections between these two goals and that failure can doom the success of policies on both fronts.

“The predominant framework for assessing poverty is deeply flawed because it rests on an implicit assumption that everyone has enough time available to devote to household production or enough resources to compensate for deficits in household production by purchasing market substitutes,” writes Levy Senior Scholar Ajit Zacharias in his Policy Note *How Time Deficits and Hidden Poverty Undermine the Sustainable Development Goals*. “Official measurements of poverty and poverty reduction are therefore doomed to paint a biased picture of poverty. Results from our research conducted in seven countries indicate the extent of bias stemming from this implicit assumption. Our findings suggest that, to obtain a more accurate portrait, assessments of progress in poverty reduction should take time deficits in household production into account.”

In his report—part of an ongoing Levy Institute project on time poverty (the Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty), Zacharias contends that in the developing world, the most important pathway out of income poverty for the employed population and their dependents is better employment prospects, but significant questions remain as to whether higher earnings will be sufficient to offset the impoverishing effects of time deficits, especially for women, who disproportionately bear the responsibility for household production. “Insofar as the improvement in household earnings is attained by the entry of women into employment, the agenda of gender equality will be undermined to the extent that women are likely to encounter the double bind of income and time poverty,” he writes.

Zacharias concludes that the SDGs' target of full employment, decent work, and pay equity is crucial to attaining progress in poverty reduction and to easing the impoverishing effects of time deficits. "Making investments in the social-care infrastructure and physical infrastructure can hasten progress toward all three targets," he writes. "Enforcing or enacting legislation regarding hours of employment to prevent overwork, moving toward living wages and away from starvation wages, extending social insurance and labor protections to workers in the informal sector, and providing genuine support to small farms can also help us move closer to attaining the SDGs."

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Policy Note 2017/4: *How Time Deficits and Hidden Poverty Undermine the Sustainable Development Goals*

To read the full text of this policy paper or to learn more about the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, please visit [levyinstitute.org/publications/how-time-deficits-and-hidden-poverty-undermine-the-sustainable-development-goals](http://levyinstitute.org/publications/how-time-deficits-and-hidden-poverty-undermine-the-sustainable-development-goals).

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