

## **GENDER STUDIES & SOCIAL POLICY DEPARTMENTS**

### **1. Introduction**

When facing numerous global crises, it is essential to acknowledge that poverty and inequality levels have a significant impact on an individual's ability to survive and flourish in society. LSE's Departments of Gender Studies and Social Policy take pride in conducting impact-driven research that emphasises the complexities of these two growing areas of concern. Therefore, we believe that our departments can offer significant recommendations for UN SDGs at the High-Level Political Forum.

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This position paper is the product of joint efforts by the two departments to build on the UN's SGD 1: No Poverty and SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities. The paper presents the departments' contributions towards the UN goals through projects/researches. It is also concerned with the conceptualisation, measurement and critique of poverty and inequality targets. The following sections cover different developments presenting the theoretical and practical implications of our findings for sustainable development.

### **2. Poverty**

#### 2.1. Multidimensional perspective

No single indicator can capture the deprivations faced by the poor. To understand the causes of poverty and assess its effects, there is a need for a multidimensional lens. Acknowledging this complexity, indicators of 'No Poverty' SDG must not limit its poverty index to income levels but expands to proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed, older people, people with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable. Thus far, Gender Studies and Social Policy department's researches have tried to capture this complexity of the poverty phenomenon.

Dr. Wendy Sigel, from the Department of Gender Studies, argues against the often problematic utilisation and interpretation of quantitative methods and evidence to inform policy. Through a critical feminist approach, Dr Wendy Sigle-Rushton studied how the importance of and benefits from marriage as an "anti-poverty strategy" are overemphasised and universalised, without taking into account "age, education, health status and behaviour, employment, and wage rates" that themselves can ensue poverty outcomes (Sigle-Rushton, 2002).

Moreover, a comparative study of households consisting of unmarried mothers and their partners, with households of married parents, suggested that an intersection of a multiplicity of factors, in addition to family structure, was what translated into disparities in employment, earning capacities and ultimately poverty — directly in relation to SDG targets. Through a focus on family and demography, Sible highlights how national policy failing to take into account these differences reduces their efficacy and augments inequalities.

## 2.2. Measurements

The Social Policy Department uses quantitative methods like poverty measurement to be able to assess and create more appropriate policies that would meet the needs of those in need. The following examples of the department research align with SDG indicators on No Poverty, whereby adjusting the measurement for poverty would better ensure equal rights to economic resources.

Dr Stephen P. Jenkins and colleagues focused on estimating income inequality from household survey data. There is an inadequate capture of incomes at the very top of the income range using surveys. To address this under-coverage, the research showed how to supplement household survey data with income information from administrative data (Burkhauser et al., 2017). This approach was not only incorporated in official statistics from 2020 onwards but also led to a better estimation of poverty and has effects on the policy designs.

Moving beyond the grounds of the UK, Dr Jenkins has also worked on ‘Perspectives on Poverty in Europe’. It illustrates the developments in the discourse of poverty in Europe. Drawing from the work of Tony Atkinson, Jenkin gives empirical evidence on poverty trends using several indicators, and remarks about the direction of anti-poverty policy in the EU (Jenkins, 2019).

### 1. POVERTY

**SDG 1.3** Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

**SDG 1.4** By 2030, ensure equal rights to economic resources, basic services, land ownership, inheritance, natural resources, technology, and financial services for all individuals, especially the poor and vulnerable.

### 3. Inequality

#### 3.1. Multidimensional perspective

“Without the right measurement tool and statistics of the world, there is a higher possibility of misrepresentation of the society and the world.”

- Lucinda P

##### 3.1.1 Measurements

Reducing inequalities requires an intersectional approach as it is a problem that both impacts and is interdependent on various fronts like class, race, gender, disability, geopolitics etc.

The Social Policy department's research work thus far has questioned the socio-economic inequalities caused by racial discrimination, marginalising ethnic minorities, ignoring the vulnerable and disabled, and weak immigration policies. The faculty from the Department of Gender Studies critically analyse issues of sex and gender inequality and discrimination, together with issues of race, class, nationality and migration, amongst others. Under LSE's Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, Dr. Tania Burchardt of the department and her colleagues have been working on building better measurement of poverty and inequality to improve the lives of disadvantaged people. Until now, four frameworks have been developed: the Equality Measurement Framework (EMF), Children's Measurement Framework (CMF), and Human Rights Measurement Framework (HRMF) for the UK; and the Multidimensional Inequality Framework (MIF), developed in conjunction with Oxfam for international use (LSE, 2021). By using a multidimensional approach, they have tried to overcome the phenomenon of “data exclusion”.

##### 3.1.2 Race and ethnicity:

Robtel Neejai Pailey's research examines the socio-economic change in Liberia, Africa's first black republic, through the prism of citizenship. Her interdisciplinary study reveals that as Liberia transformed from a country of immigration to one of emigration, so too did the nature of citizenship, thus influencing claims for and against dual citizenship (Pailey, 2022).

In developing a better contextual understanding of human rights, penal codes and legislation, in their book *The Economies of Queer Inclusion*, Dr. SM Rodriguez (2019) investigated the intersection of gender, sexuality, race and punishment. Their research showed that the impact of transnational advocacy on Ugandan “Kill the Gays Bill” was detrimental to the local organisations advocating for inclusion. This 2009 bill aimed to penalise homosexuality with the death penalty and US-based human and LGBT rights organisations provided avenues that exacerbated the problem (Rodriguez, 2019). Rodriguez's work points to contextualising problems of inequality and discrimination while

##### **10. INEQUALITY**

**SDG 10.2** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

**SDG 10.3** Reduce inequality by promoting social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals regardless of their age, gender, race, or identity.

**SDG 10.4** Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

**SDG 10.7** Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

simultaneously situating them in the global economy. Despite their work aligning with the goal to reduce inequality (10.2, 10.3), there is a critique of translational bodies impeding ‘local’ efforts once again underlines the need for an intersectional approach to policy, legislation and transnational flows of capital, ideas and people.

### 3.1.3 Marginalisation:

Research of Dr. Tania Burchardt et al at LSE’s CASE highlights previously hidden or neglected disparities providing visibility and voice to marginalised groups. Developing tools for measuring multidimensional inequality ensured improvement in the lives of disadvantaged people (LSE, 2019). Through better measurement of poverty and inequality, policymakers can improve the lives of disadvantaged people.

### 3.1.3 Gender:

Stating the significance of intra-household inequality in social reproduction and care-giving work as significant indicators translating to market inequalities, Dr. Ania Plomien investigated the variations in employment outcomes among different groups categorised by gender, age, marital/parental status, and other factors in Romania, Poland, and Russia (2014). Through household surveys, they assessed disparate access to employment opportunities and income, resulting in uneven functioning, well-being and development. Plomien also studied the impact of the covid pandemic on inequalities as welfare states in Europe stripped away at public provisioning (UN Women, 2022). Unequal access to public goods (such as education, housing and care), perpetuated by state policy, maintained a binary between one section of the population providing services and resources for the other section to consume. This again is in tandem with the two SDG goals (1.3, 1.4, 10.2, 10.4, 10.7). Thus, Plomien provides an account of inequality that again foregrounds the importance of intersectionality of class, race, gender, sex and migration in research and policy formulation, which is discounted in contemporary economic approaches.

## 3.2 Migration

A critical perspective on national migration and integration policies is another important facet while researching and working towards reduction in inequalities. SDG 10.7 and the Social Policy Department research place special emphasis on this aspect, recognising the dichotomous impact of migration on inequality. At times, migration can improve people’s standard of living, making mobility opportunities more equal for all. Dr Robtel Neajai Pailey’s research on dual citizenship in Liberia explores the implications of migration on people’s personal and societal definitions of citizenship and belongingness (Pailey, 2022).

However, a lack of strong integration policies can affect immigrants’ socioeconomic conditions and overall inequality levels in society. For instance, Dr Thomas Biegert’s research evaluates how different types of labour policies can be disadvantageous to certain social groups, based on the insider/outsider divide (2014). Similarly, Dr Lucinda Platt has

conducted an extensive analysis of the relationship between national policies and the labour force participation of immigrants (Platt et al., 2022).

## **Conclusion**

These researches and findings not only represent the developments in SDGs measurement and ideas but also highlight areas of improvement. As calls for decolonisation and inclusivity grow stronger, challenging the flaws in the existing international frameworks becomes pertinent. What underpins the two departments' approach to research is a strong desire to build and exchange knowledge on social inequalities. The public discourses surrounding SDGs can in turn feed into the review process, enhancing the reporting and monitoring mechanisms. Ultimately, the goal of our departments will always be to drive socioeconomic change by fostering discussions and the Forum would be an important platform for this purpose.

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