

# Right to House: Housing-induced Poverty and Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

The most basic needs for human survival constitute food, clothing, health and house. Any type of deprivation with respect to the basic needs directly impinge on human survival and poverty. Thus, human life cannot be secured in isolation by any one of them. It is a locus of interactions between a multitude of needs. Universally, income has always been a criterion for determining poverty, but with the changing times scope of poverty expanded to include consumption, access to basic amenities, etc. House is at the centre of an ensemble of issues related to life. It is quite evident that poor people are not only deprived of basic amenities like access to education, healthcare facilities, adequate food consumption, income generation etc., but also devoid of adequate house. Can there be some complementing relationship between housing and poverty? The results of the study revealed that house along with sustainability indicators like health, education and food has greater impact on poverty than without house. It means the cumulative effect of anti-poverty measures centered on a house has far-reaching impact on poverty. This study suggests that providing house is not sufficient for poor people, house with basic amenities and access to education, health and income generating activities improved their living conditions.

**Keywords:** Right to house, poverty, deprivation, sustainability, two-room house

## I. Introduction

The most basic needs for human survival constitute food, clothing, health and shelter. Any type of deprivation of these basic needs directly impinge on human survival and universally recognized as poverty. Thus, human life cannot be secured in isolation by any one of them. It is a locus of interactions between a multitude of needs. Universally, income was the criterion for determining poverty, but with the changing times, scope of poverty expanded to include consumption, housing and access to basic amenities, etc. Housing is at the centre of an ensemble of issues related to life, such as peace, security and dignity of any individual in the society. Thus, can there be some complementing relationship between housing and poverty? If it is true, every citizen should have right to adequate housing. Right to house was recognized as a basic fundamental need for safety and security by the international community. The UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948) also states that everyone has the right to standard of living which includes appropriate house, food security, basic services, access to health, education, clothing, employment and social security. In India, various anti-poverty measures have so far not been able to efficiently deal with poverty for various reasons. However, the cumulative effect of anti-poverty measures centered on a house has far-reaching impact on poverty. Therefore, this study estimates the housing-induced poverty in India and analyse the causality between housing with sustainable indicators and poverty.

### I.1 Methodology

The Sustainability Index is a composite index of basic components, viz, access to health, access to education, food security and housing status. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is used to estimate the dimension index of health. Since low infant mortality rate is an indication of better health situation. Enrolment Rate (ER) is used in calculating the dimension index of education. High enrollment ratio indicates the better access to education. The incidence of Calorie Deficiency (CD) has been taken to construct the dimension index of food security and the livable house has been used to estimate the importance of housing.

Goalposts and Scale: The Sustainable Index (SI) sets a minimum and a maximum values (goalposts) for each dimension and then shows where each state stands in relation to these scales. "The maximum value is the highest value of the indicator among the states. Similarly, the minimum value is the lowest value of the indicator among the states". Performance in each dimension is expressed as a value between 0 and 1 and a maximum value of 1 and minimum value of 0 by applying the formula. For any dimension of SI, the individual index can be computed according to a general formula:

Goalposts for calculating the Sustainability Index (SI)		
Indicators	Maximum Value	Minimum Value
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	70	12
Enrollment Ratio (%)	100.00	38.08
Incidence of Calorie Deficiency (kcal)	86.29	50.72
Housing status (Number)	12,418,375	1,536,287

Dimension Index = (Actual value – Minimum value)/(Maximum value – Minimum value)

While calculating the index of enrollment and housing, the dimension index formula was not changed, since infant mortality rate and calorie deficiency are deprivation indicators, therefore, the formula is...

Dimension Index =  $1 - (\text{Actual Value} - \text{Min Value}) / (\text{Max Value} - \text{Min Value})$

The Sustainable Index without House (SI-H) and Sustainability Index with House (SI+H) are then calculated as a simple average of Health Index, Education Index, Food security Index and Housing Index.

Sustainability Classifications

- States in the SI range of 0.750 and above are in the high sustainability group.
- States in the SI range between 0.400 and 0.749 are in the range of medium sustainability group.
- States in the SI range of less than 0.400 are in the low sustainability group.

Presentation: In the indicator tables all the states are ranked in descending order by their SI value. The State which takes the highest score as SI is considered as housing impacted/developed state and so on.

Calculating the SI:

IMR Index =  $\text{Actual IMR} - 12/70 - 12$

ER Index =  $\text{Actual ER} - 38.08/100 - 38.08$

ICD Index =  $\text{Actual ICD} - 62.40(\text{R})/94.21(\text{R}) - 62.40(\text{R})$   
 $\text{Actual ICD} - 39.04(\text{U})/78.37(\text{U}) - 39.04(\text{U})$

LH Index =  $\text{Actual LH} - 1536287/12418375 - 1536287$

SI-H Index =  $1/3(\text{IMRI}) + 1/3(\text{ERI}) + 1/3(\text{ICDI})$

SI+H Index =  $1/4(\text{IMRI}) + 1/4(\text{ERI}) + 1/4(\text{ICDI}) + 1/4(\text{LHI})$

Then, this study used linear regression model<sup>1</sup> to estimate the causality between sustainability with house and sustainability without house to find out the importance of housing that directly related to poverty reduction. Based on the data obtained from different sources the predictive model such as 'linear regression with scatter plot analysis' then used to investigate the relationship between housing and poverty.

**I.2 Data Sources:** The study analyses above issues based on the secondary data. The secondary sources of data collected from the population census, housing census, health and education statistics etc.

### I.3 Review of Literature

Pleace (2000) has argued that people with personal problems are more vulnerable to adverse social and economic conditions than other people and, therefore, the high concentration of people with support needs in the homeless population can be explained by their susceptibility to structural forces which appear to have the most direct impact on levels of homelessness.

Castles (2004) both argued that less generous welfare systems are associated with countries with higher rates of home-ownership. There is a positive relationship between the poverty rate and the home-ownership rate across eleven EU countries, and it has been suggested that home-ownership is being used as a supplement to state pensions. These writers imply that unequal incomes and high poverty rates caused high national homeownership, although association does not necessarily imply causation.

Fitzpatrick, et al., (2011) argued that there would be a clear link between low income and homelessness if it were not for Housing Benefit, social security systems, and especially housing allowances are what usually breaks the link between low income and homelessness.

## II. Right to House

Right to housing was recognized as a basic fundamental need for safety and security by the international community in 1976<sup>2</sup>. Subsequently, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights (ICESR) have recognized the right to an "adequate standard of living," which included within its ambit the Right to Housing. On the basis of resolution, the UN-Habitat made a right's based recommendation to all states to promote, protect and ensure the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing for vulnerable and poor<sup>3</sup>. The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless facilitated the raising of public awareness about the housing and related problems which were still prevalent throughout the

<sup>1</sup> Linear Regression: Based on the data obtained from different sources the predictive model such as 'linear regression with scatter plot analysis' then used to investigate the relationship between housing and poverty. In order to examine how obtained linear regression equation represents the data, two sets of parameters, correlation coefficient (R) and coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) are calculated. The R value ranges between -1 and +1. If R value close to +1 indicates that two variables have strong positive linear correlation. The R<sup>2</sup> ranges between 0 and 1, and R<sup>2</sup> value close to 1 indicates excellent linear reliability. Using the housing and sustainability score as independent variable and poverty figures as dependent variable for each state, a simple linear regression analysis with scatter plot can be performed to examine the relationship between housing and poverty.

<sup>2</sup> Vancouver Declaration.

<sup>3</sup> UN Resolution (paragraph 61), 2002.

world<sup>1</sup>. As a follow-up, the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year put housing issues in the forefront, thus leading to housing rights as part of the human rights agenda of the United Nations. Within the Global Strategy for Shelter, adequate housing comprised adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities all at a reasonable cost. India is a signatory to almost all the related UN Declarations, Covenants and Understandings. However, the numbers of poor in India continue to plague the policy makers. In India, the poverty figures have been contorted, distorted and widely debated. Still there are sizeable numbers of poor who continue to remain in abject poverty. Likewise, this number will swell five to ten times higher if other types of basic deprivations are taken into account. With the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the right to adequate housing joined the body of international, universally applicable and universally accepted human rights law<sup>2</sup>. Thereafter, this right has been reaffirmed in a wide range of additional human rights instruments, each of which is relevant to distinct groups within society. This declaration states that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living, adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, old age and other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. Today, most countries have adopted laws, established policies and created programs to improve access to housing for their populations. However, few have undertaken serious measures for the explicit purpose of realizing the right to adequate housing for their population. Some have included as a right in their respective Constitution and some have directly enacted legislation to guarantee adequate housing for their citizens. Almost 48 countries have adopted national legislation recognizing the right to adequate housing and explicitly fixing the responsibility on their government to guarantee adequate housing to the entire population<sup>3</sup>. The basic elements of adequacy included legal security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, accessibility, habitability, location and cultural adequacy. Legal security of tenure guarantees access to, use of and control over land, property and housing resources. Adequacy of a house cannot be effectively realized without access to public goods and services, including water, healthcare, transport, fuel, sanitation, electricity, etc. Affordability and habitability are the two sides of the same coin, i.e., access to housing is must at affordable price and must also provide adequate space to live in dignity and peace. It is evident from the existing literature that a large majority of developing and under-developed nations have realized the urgent need for house for their deprived and marginalized population in order to fight the scourge of poverty. Accordingly these nations have been able to successfully establish legal instruments within their operational framework to provide adequate housing to their poor population. It is estimated that one third of the entire population in India lives in abject poverty. This figure is challenged by many, not only social scientists but also the government. The Indian Constitution makes India a welfare state where the State is responsible for securing decent standard of life for its citizens without discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> 1988

<sup>2</sup> Article 25, Universal Declaration.

<sup>3</sup> UN-Habitat Report.

**Right to Housing: Selected Examples of National Commitment**

South Africa (1996)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/26 & A/28
Brazil	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing for poor- A/7(iv), A/14, A/23(ix), A/183, A/187(viii), and A/203(ii)
Venezuela (1999)	Constitutional Obligation- Lands & Agrarian Development Law
Portugal (1976)	Constitutional Provision - A/65 (Housing & Urban Planning)
France (1958)	A/1- "Guaranteeing shelter constitutes duty of solidarity for the entire nation", A/4 & A/7
Armenia (1995)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/31
Bangladesh (1994)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/15
Belgium (1993)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/23
Bolivia (1967)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/199
Colombia (1991)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/51
Congo (2005)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/48
Costa Rica (1949)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/65
Greece (1975)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/21
Guyana (1980)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/26
Iran (1980)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/31 & A/43
Philippines (1986)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/13
Russian Fed. (1993)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/40
Seychelles (1993)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/34
Sri Lanka (1977)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/27
Mexico (1983)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/4
Netherlands (1984)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/22
Nepal (1990)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/26
Pakistan (1990)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/38 (d)
Panama (1978)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/113
Switzerland (1999)	Constitutional Provision on access to adequate housing- A/41

Source: UN-Habitat Report.

Based on the Part-IV, Article 36-51 of the Constitution, the Directive Principles of the State Policy states that "the State shall endeavour to secure by suitable legislation or economic organization to all workers. This part is merely instructions to the State and labeled as non-justifiable rights, i.e. no one can take the refuge of the court for the enforcement of any right stated under Part-IV. But the Supreme Court of India elevated these principles to the status of human rights describing them as forerunners of the U.N. Convention on Right to Development as an inalienable human right<sup>1</sup>. The Supreme Court has further stated in several other decisions that the Directive Principles supplement the Fundamental Rights and that Parliament can amend Fundamental Rights for implementing the Directive Principles. This interpretation became the genesis for widening the scope of Article 21- Right to Life & Personal Liberty. The Article 21 states that: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law". In other words, though negatively constructed, the Apex Court interpreted it as right to live with human dignity is the fundamental right of every Indian citizen. This implies right to food, right to access to education, right to health, right to clothing, right to decent environment and right to house. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to house became a major component of well-being and poverty reduction. To support this obligation, the Apex Court held that all citizens of India have the right to have an access and live in adequate house. Right to life has been assured as a basic human right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family; it includes food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.

Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights lays down that State parties to the Covenant recognize that everyone has the right to standard of living for himself and his family including food, clothing, housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. Thus, the court had considered and upheld that the right to shelter as a fundamental right available to every citizen by interpreting Article 21 as encompassing within its ambit to make the right to life more meaningful. It also espoused that the access to adequate house, health, education, food, employment and pollution free environment are also in the right to life under Article 21. On the issue of right to shelter, the Supreme Court of India had also made clear distinction while interpreting Article 21 that one has to keep in view the difference between the need of an animal and a

<sup>1</sup> Air India Statutory Corporation v. United Labor Union (1997).

human being for shelter. For the animal it is the bare protection of the body, but for a human being it has to be a suitable accommodation, which would allow him to grow in every aspect - physical, mental and intellectual<sup>1</sup>. Thus, for any civilized society, the right to shelter is referred to as not merely a roof over one's head but it includes adequate living space, clean and decent surroundings, sufficient light, pure air, water, electricity and sanitation. However, these observations of the Apex Court have been comfortably overlooked by the Government of India while drafting the National Urban Housing & Habitat Policy 2007. The policy does well to acknowledge shelter as a basic human need but it seriously falls short of actually recognizing housing as a fundamental and universal human right. For this condescension, implications are critical because government becomes a responsible party with an obligatory duty to ensure fulfillment of the right to adequate housing for all citizens of India.

### III. Poverty and Adequate Housing

#### III.1 Sustainability Index without house

It can be seen from the Table-1, there are a wide disparities in the level of sustainable development in the state level. At the state level Punjab, Kerala and Haryana were among the states with better sustainability. The states such as Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Orissa and Karnataka were at other end. The reason behind this could be infant mortality, incidence of calorie deficiency are highest in the states. Despite having access to health the state like Tamil Nadu performance was not well in the other two areas such as education and food security. Ultimately these results give us to think that the group of these three indicators with adequate housing may provide more sustainability.

#### III.2 Sustainability Index with house

If we observed from the results of sustainability with house, it is quite significant that the states like Punjab, Haryana and Kerala were out performers. The states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were among the lowest performers.

**Table 1 Sustainability Index**

States	Enrollment Index	IMR Index	CD Index	Housing Index	SI-H	SI+H
Andhra Pradesh	0.40	0.31	0.26	0.47	0.32	0.36
Assam	0.18	0.10	0.48	0.84	0.25	0.40
Bihar	0.26	0.24	0.65	0.28	0.38	0.36
Gujarat	0.34	0.34	0.36	0.51	0.35	0.39
Haryana	1.00	0.28	0.79	0.94	0.69	0.75
Karnataka	0.26	0.43	0.18	0.67	0.29	0.39
Kerala	0.58	1.00	0.37	1.00	0.65	0.74
Madhya Pradesh	0.09	0.00	0.33	0.58	0.14	0.25
Maharashtra	0.33	0.64	0.06	0.15	0.35	0.30
Orissa	0.10	0.02	0.67	0.80	0.26	0.40
Punjab	0.78	0.50	0.88	0.93	0.72	0.77
Rajasthan	0.30	0.12	0.66	0.65	0.36	0.43
Tamil Nadu	0.10	0.67	0.17	0.67	0.31	0.40
Uttar Pradesh	0.04	0.05	0.80	0.00	0.30	0.22
West Bengal	0.28	0.60	0.49	0.32	0.46	0.42

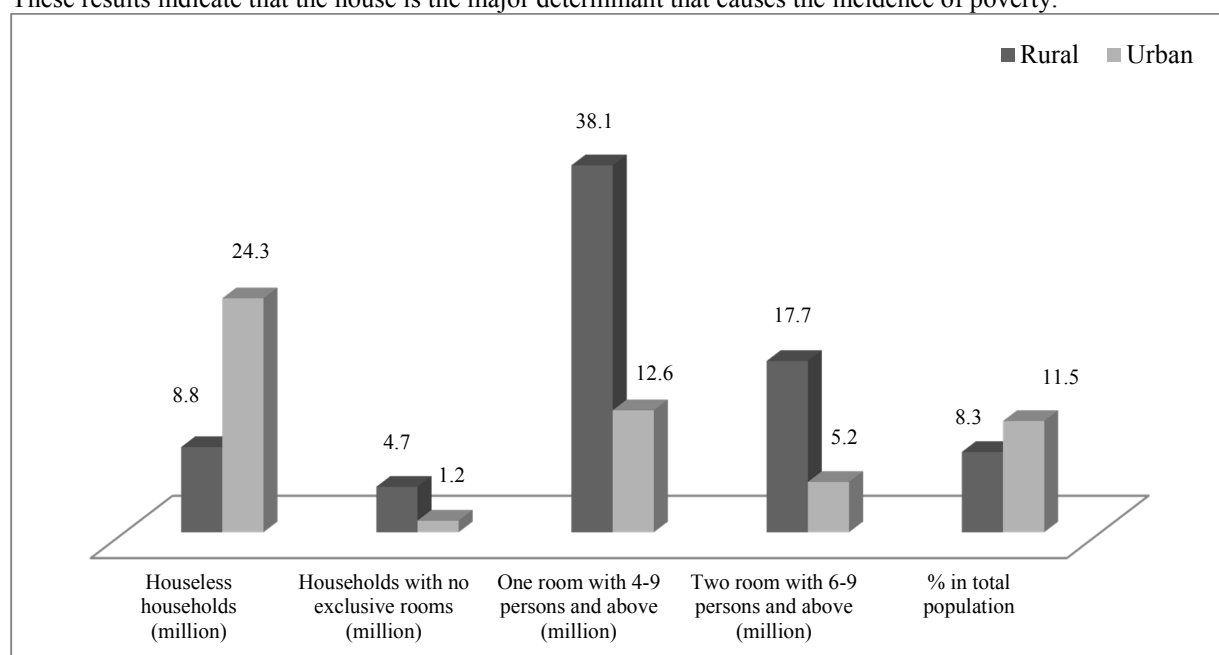
Source: Computed from the data of different sources

#### III.3 Housing Induced Poverty

The lack of adequate house represents a new face of poverty. Since house provides comfort, safety and dignity in the life of a person, it is the foundation upon which a person is able to claim his human right to a standard of living that strengthens the likelihood and being able to enjoy the quality of life and create a future of his own choosing. While poverty occurs at household level, the most visible evidence of poverty arises when poor families are not able to acquire adequate house and basic amenities. Even after more than six decades of planned development, one third of Indians are still living in absolute poverty, deprived of basic amenities of life such as foods, cloths, shelter, health, education and drinking water. In spite of these facts, having adequate house is the fundamental to improve access to all needs and services. When people are well housed, their family and community life is more stable, enabling greater opportunities for good health, educational performance, job security and community safety. Housing affordability is the principal measure along with the cost of food, clothing, education, health and livelihood options. Therefore, housing is overlooked factor in considering both the causes of poverty as well as

<sup>1</sup>Shantistar Builders v. Narayan Khimalal Totame (1990).

potential remedies to alleviate poverty. Poverty issue manifests itself in spatial patterns and is directly linked to housing namely housing-induced poverty. The housing-induced poverty is estimated by using the indicators like house less population, population have a house without any exclusive rooms, one room house with 4-9 people and above, and two room house with 6-9 people and above. The estimation drawn from the data, the poverty in India is roughly 36 to 44 percent. Figure 1 illustrates the number of households without exclusive room, one room with 4-9 persons and two-rooms with 6-9 persons and above is highest in rural areas than urban areas. The share of these households in total population is about 8.3 percent in rural areas and 11.5 percent in urban areas. This is the main reason that poverty has a direct association with adequate housing. Housing-induced poverty is best exemplified by the sprawling slums and informal settlements in the cities and towns of developing countries. In some cities, more than three quarters of the population live in informal settlements, without security of tenure, and in conditions that can be described as life and health threatening homes and neighbourhoods. It is generally accepted that an increasing proportion of the people living in housing-induced poverty are women and children. These results indicate that the house is the major determinant that causes the incidence of poverty.



Source: Housing Census 2011, Ministry of Home Affair, Government of India.

**Figure 1: Housing-induced Poverty (percent)**

### III. 4 Causality between Sustainable indicators, house and poverty

Any civilized society, the right to shelter is referred to as not merely a roof over one's head but it includes adequate living space, clean and decent surroundings, sufficient light, pure air, water, electricity and sanitation. The decent standard of living not only comprises a house but a livable house along with basic amenities. In order to estimate the absolute poverty, the internationally accepted norms for measuring severe deprivation of basic human needs rest on eight essential parameters, namely food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, information and access to services. The UN Expert Group suggested that absolute poverty threshold may be regarded as severe deprivation of any two or more basic needs. The suggested norm for measuring severe shelter deprivation stated that living dwellings with 4 or more people per room is regarded as absolute poverty. However, more than 270 million people in India reside in one room with 4 or more persons, discounting the number of homeless. Perhaps, this is why poverty estimates in India are never accepted as real but notional. To extend it further, multi-faceted nature of poverty reveals that people may not be income-wise poor but they are in absolute poverty on account of deprivation in terms of basic amenities.

As stated earlier, poverty is one of the most confused subjects for policy makers. The recent data revealed that India is slow in terms of progress made in health, education and food security for multifarious reasons. Undoubtedly, there has been a considerable impact of the respective welfare programs on absolute poverty, but whether all these programs cumulatively have been able to arrest poverty or perhaps policy on poverty alleviation should experience a paradigm shift for an integrated approach with housing as a central parameter. In this regard, sustainability index<sup>1</sup> was adopted as a measure of progress of human lives and standard of living<sup>2</sup>. The primary

<sup>1</sup> Sustainability Index is a composite index of basic components, viz, access to health, access to education, food security and housing status.

<sup>2</sup> Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly (1948) stated that "Everyone has the right to

consideration for developing such an index was based on existing literature on sustainability. These may be considered as barest minimum efforts to curb an individual deprivation. The analysis based on all-India data revealed that sustainability (access to health, education and food) with house has a greater impact on overall poverty. It means by including housing as one of the independent variable in the Sustainability Index, the cumulative effect of anti-poverty measures was found to be significant on overall poverty. Thus, the analysis revealed that housing is an integral element for eradicating poverty. The analysis further revealed that the government accepted norm of one-room house has a direct relationship with poverty. Average Indian household size is 5.2, thus, one-room house with 6 persons was taken for the analysis purposes. The analysis explored that more the number of one-room houses, more will be poverty. There is a strong positive relationship between one-room house with 6 members and poverty (see Figure 3 & 4). Thus, in overall terms, one-room house with 6+ members spurs poverty in both rural and urban areas. It indicates that one room house with 6 or more is not an affordable shelter for poor. As the number of one room house (6 or more) increase, results show that there is a likelihood of a concomitant increase in poverty. Contrary to the prevalent norm, the analysis concluded that a two-room house will be an essential requirement for an average poor household in the Indian conditions. Anything less than this will continue to remain severe shelter deprivation for an average Indian household. However, the analysis also revealed that a two-room house in isolation will not be able to have an impact on eradication of poverty due to multifaceted nature of poverty prevailing in rural and urban areas.

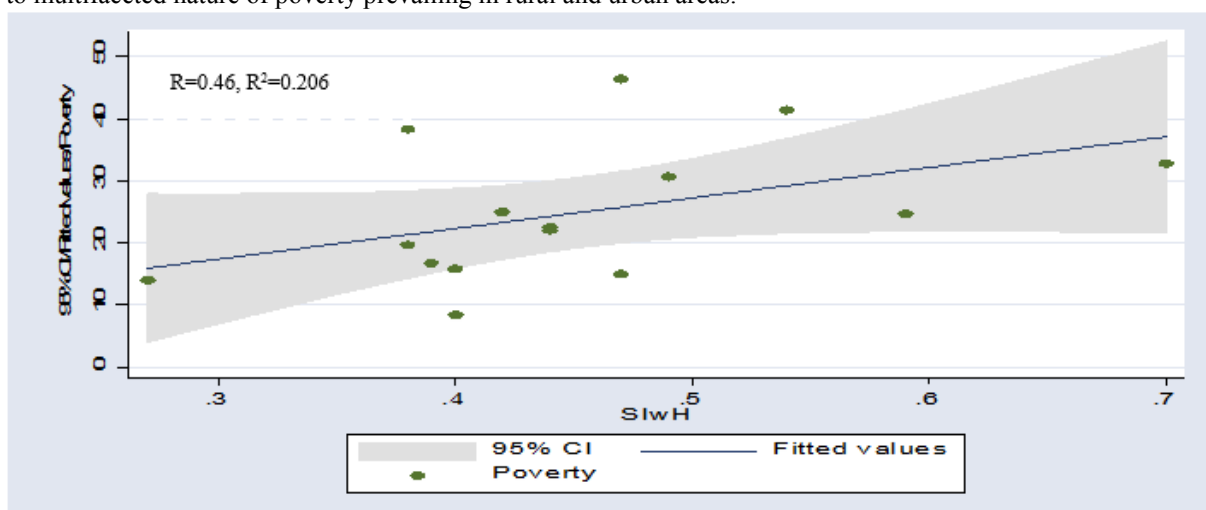


Figure 2: Impact factor of sustainability indicators with house and poverty

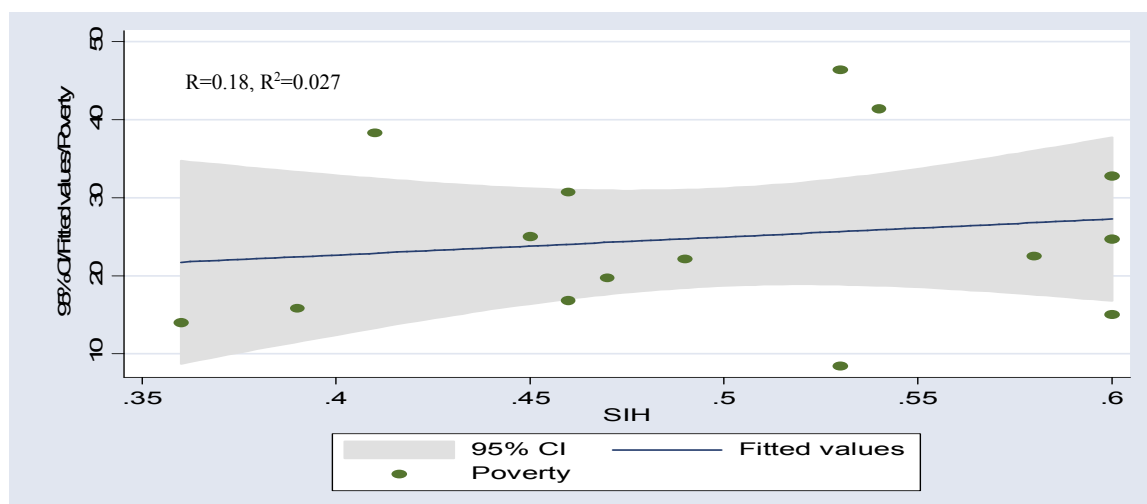


Figure 3: Impact factor of sustainability indicators without house and poverty

#### IV. Conclusion

The analysis of the study exhibited that sustainable indicators without house have been ineffective in curbing

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standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself, and his family, including food, clothing and housing.”

poverty but sustainable indicators with adequate house cumulatively their impact is significant. It indicates that the impact on poverty is considerable if housing, along with other measures like food security, education, improved access to healthcare facilities, is provided. In other words, it means poverty decreases as sustainability with house increases. This phenomenon can be concluded as more provision of houses for the poor, with health facilities, access to education and income generating activities for food security can significantly help in reducing poverty. The study also suggests that two-room house will be an essential requirement for poor household in India. Therefore, the results of the analysis proved that house is a major determinant to estimate people's living conditions. This analysis also supports house is a basic human right for every citizen. These results show the importance of sustainability indicators in formulating a strategy for reducing poverty in both urban and rural areas. Therefore, accessibility, habitability and affordability in housing should be central concern of partnership strategies. Any anti-poverty measure in isolation is ineffective to curb poverty. Even a two-room house will not be sufficient to reduce poverty unless associated antipoverty measures are integrated with it. As part of a model developmental strategy to fight the menace of poverty, the Government should focus on developing strategy to formulate two room houses for the poor through Public Private Partnership. Thus, it is concluded that house with sustainability indicators, especially in a collective mode, has a greater impact on poverty reduction.

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