Part 1: A close-up look at daily life
I’m Abhijit Banerjee, co-author with Esther Duflo of Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty. The data in this graphic gives us detailed information about how individuals in India, Morocco, Guatemala, and the United States spend their day. I’ll try to use them to show you some interesting facts that provoked us to think harder about the lives of the poor.

Part 2: Water, water — hardly everywhere
You can see here that everyone spends a lot of time in activities that have to do with water and hygiene (Figure 1). In many of these countries, people cannot take for granted that the water they are using is clean and safe. Diarrhea kills 1.5 million children under 5 every year, and many of those deaths are water related. Water not only affects health; for many of the households around the world, making sure that they get enough water for their daily needs takes quite a bit of time, and can be a major source of stress. Forty-three percent of the world’s population does not have piped water in their home. We met Fadel in Morocco, where a project we worked on offered families credit that they could use to pay for piped water connections. Most people who got this option took it, and after a year, they reported being happier, less stressed, and facing less conflict in their lives.

(Figure 1)
Part 3: Mitigating risk with many jobs

Another striking aspect of the lives of the poor is income diversification — they get their income from multiple sources, so that if one of those dries up they can still be afloat. We can see here that in Guatemala, Lucia (Figure 2) starts her day at a job that pays her wages, but spends the afternoon running her own business. Strategies like this are just one of the creative ways that we see the poor coping with the risk and uncertainty that is part of their everyday lives.
Part 4: Free time or enforced idleness?

As this view tells us, few poor people have steady jobs. Such positions, which ensure employment over a period of time, are desired but hard to find. As a result, you may be surprised by how much free time some of these people seem to have on their hands: Look at Fadel in Morocco, or Madhuri in India (Figure 3). They have plenty of time to sleep, socialize, and watch TV. But often, this free time is not a choice, but rather enforced idleness: They are in between stints of employment in the city, or periods when there is a lot of work to be done in the fields, and there is just not much to do in the village. This is why festivals, cell phones, and televisions, which relieve boredom and maintain social connections, are so important in the lives of the poor.
Part 5: A woman’s work: truly never done

Madhuri, who got married at 15 and had her first child at 16, has no education; this is partly why, in contrast to Lucia in Guatemala, she does not have a job. But it is also the case that, worldwide, women shoulder much more of the housework and child-care and elder-care responsibilities than men. This limits what else they can do: They are less likely to take a full-time formal job, and more likely to have a small business at home. Running both a business and a household at the same time is not necessarily pleasant, but the extra income is important.

We included Caroll (Figure 4), a middle-class American, as someone to compare with. On the surface, both she and the poor women are working and doing household chores, but as we explore deeper, the differences become quite apparent: Caroll has a job; when she is thirsty, there is water on tap; she does not need to worry about whether she will get to eat tomorrow.

(Figure 4)

There are many more such insights into the lives and challenges of the poor to be discovered in this data. I hope you will explore it further.