Progress Report: SDG 1 (No Poverty) – Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU)

2024/2025 Session

Executive Overview

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), situated across its campuses in Igbariam, Uli, and Awka in Anambra State, Nigeria, has integrated Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1: No Poverty) into its core academic, research, and operational frameworks. Driven by the institutional **"3Vs Agenda" (Values, Viability, Visibility)** spearheaded by the university leadership, COOU addresses poverty eradication through student financial self-reliance, community agricultural extension, targeted research, and local economic development.

Key Areas of Progress & Implementation

1. Entrepreneurship Development & Student Livelihood Support

To mitigate student poverty and promote economic self-sufficiency, COOU has institutionalized practical skills acquisition and micro-entrepreneurship:

- **Curriculum Integration:** Practical entrepreneurship education is embedded directly into academic degree programs, shifting student outcomes from job-seeking to job-creation.

- **Entrepreneurship Centre & Trade Initiatives:** Through the university's Entrepreneurship Centre and Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, students receive hands-on training in product manufacturing, tech skills, and vocational trades.

- **Micro-Enterprise Trade Fairs:** COOU regularly hosts trade expos where students market self-manufactured products (such as footwear, textiles, household items, and processed foods). Income generated from these enterprises directly assists underprivileged students in self-funding their tuition and living expenses.

2. Agricultural Initiatives & Rural Economic Upliftment

Recognizing that agriculture is a key driver for rural poverty reduction in Anambra State, the university leverages its Faculty of Agriculture (Igbariam Campus) for food security and income generation:

- **"Farming to Food Security" Campus Projects:** COOU runs institutional farming initiatives spanning fish farming, crop cultivation, banana/plantain plantations, and local cattle breeding (Muturu). These projects serve as operational models for local farming communities and stabilize food access on campus.

- **Community Extension Services:** Through the Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension, faculty and students conduct rural outreach to surrounding agrarian communities. Extension workers train local smallholder farmers—with emphasis on empowering rural women—in sustainable farming techniques, post-harvest processing, and enterprise management to raise household incomes.

3. Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Affordability
To prevent academic dropouts caused by financial distress, COOU facilitates financial inclusion mechanisms:

- **State & External Scholarship Links:** COOU actively collaborates with state-sponsored financial assistance frameworks, such as the Anambra Youth Scholarship Scheme, to lower entry barriers for low-income youth.

- **Alumni & Departmental Support Systems:** Alumni groups and faculty departments regularly establish targeted bursaries, academic gifts, and hardship funds (e.g., departmental alumni scholarship schemes) to cover fees and study materials for vulnerable students.

- **Internal Financial Aid Initiatives:** Financial aid initiatives and equity based funds, like the Genius Fund, help mitigate economic pressures that push families into hardship, serving as qualitative or quantitative proof of our University's internal measure to combat socio-economic barriers to education.

4. Research & Policy Advocacy on Poverty Alleviation
COOU academics contribute to empirical research addressing urban and rural poverty dynamics across Sub-Saharan Africa:

- **Economic & Policy Research:** Scholars within the Faculty of Social Sciences (Department of Economics, Public Administration) publish research evaluating national poverty alleviation policies, workplace inequalities, inclusive growth, and urban poverty indicators within Anambra State and the broader Nigerian economy.

- **Partnership and Symposia Engagement:** The university participates in regional and international academic dialogues regarding AI, economic resilience, and sustainable development goals, advocating for pro-poor policy interventions.

Performance Summary against SDG 1 Indicators

SDG 1 Target Area	COOU Operational Contribution	Impact Level
1.1 & 1.2 Extreme & Multidimensional Poverty Eradication	Student micro-enterprises and practical vocational training to enable tuition self-payment.	**Moderate to High** (Campus & Student Community)
1.3 Social Protection & Vulnerability Reduction	Departmental/Alumni bursaries and facilitation of government youth scholarships.	**Moderate** (Targeted Student Cohorts)
1.4 Equal Access to Economic Resources & Technology	Centre for AI and Robotics, digital literacy initiatives, and vocational centers.	**High** (Institutional & Community Level)
1.5 Building Resilience of Vulnerable Communities	Agricultural extension programs, crop production, and sustainable rural farming outreach.	**High** (Regional / Anambra State Communities)

Strategic Recommendations for Acceleration

1. **Establish a Dedicated SDG Impact Unit:** Formally publish an annual SDG Progress Report with indexed quantitative data tracking the exact number of low-income students supported, local farmers trained, and scholarships awarded.
2. **Expand Private Sector Work-Study Partnerships:** Further collaborate with industry partners and financial institutions to scale student work-study opportunities and fund youth enterprise incubation projects.
3. **Formalize Town-and-Gown Microfinance Schemes:** Partner with local microfinance institutions to provide low-interest seed capital to graduating students launching agricultural or technological micro-enterprises in Anambra State.

Signature:  Date: 24/09/2026

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