Progress Report: SDG 5 (Gender Equality) – Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU)

2024/2025 Session

Executive Overview

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) advances **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5: Gender Equality)** by creating a safe, inclusive, and equitable academic environment across its campuses in Anambra State. Under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha—a scholar with an extensive background in gender, media, and cultural studies—the university has elevated gender parity into institutional governance. COOU's strategy combines executive gender representation, anti-harassment policy enforcement, active gender research via its dedicated institute, and advocacy initiatives aimed at eliminating gender-based coercion and discrimination.

Key Areas of Progress & Implementation

1. Executive Leadership & Gender Representation

COOU demonstrates a top-level commitment to gender-inclusive decision-making and governance:

- **Female Executive Leadership:** The university is headed by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, whose appointment highlights merit-based gender diversity at the highest tier of university management.

- **Institutional Support Networks:** COOU supports active professional bodies, such as the COOU Women Association (COOOWA) and the female chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which advocate for female faculty, administrative staff, and student welfare.

2. Policy Frameworks & Anti-Harassment Enforcement

To ensure a campus environment free from violence, exploitation, and gender-based harassment, COOU has instituted policy enforcement mechanisms:

- **Gender & Sexual Harassment Policy Development:** Guided by the university's Institute for Gender Studies, COOU delegates participated in UN-ECOSOC and NGO training initiatives in Abuja to draft and refine comprehensive Gender and Sexual Harassment Policy Frameworks.

- **"Naming and Shaming" Accountability Policy:** The university administration instituted a strict zero-tolerance policy against student exploitation, academic extortion, and sexual misconduct. This includes a dedicated "Naming and Shaming" section in the monthly university publication (COOUNews) to publicly identify individuals found guilty of abuse following administrative investigations.

- **Reporting & Sensitization Drive:** The university regularly conducts campus-wide awareness campaigns to clarify boundaries surrounding sexual harassment, consent, and student rights, encouraging students to report infractions without fear of retaliation.

3. Academic Research, Advocacy, and Cultural Engagement

COOU uses academic research and creative advocacy to challenge gender biases and cultural barriers:

- **Institute for Gender Studies:** The Institute serves as the university's central hub for interdisciplinary research on gender dynamics, women's empowerment, and policy development. It frequently organizes seminars and workshops focusing on gender equity in education and workplace environments.

- **Cultural & Drama Advocacy:** COOU leverages creative performance to interrogate gender coercion and traditional social constraints. The university community produced stage presentations, such as the dramatic work *"UZUMMA,"* which depicts female resilience against cultural resistance and positions successful women as role models for younger generations.

4. Female Advancement in Academia & STEM

- **Promoting Female Scholars and Students:** COOU continuously fosters pathways for female academic advancement across diverse disciplines. The university celebrates major scholarly milestones, such as hosting inaugural lectures delivered by prominent female academics (including historic milestones in legal education and health sciences). The one-day Vice Chancellor initiative targeted at encouraging outstanding female students of the University serves as an avenue to mentor young female students towards achieving greatness in life.

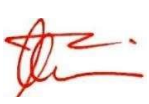
- **Equal Access in Student Admissions:** COOU maintains gender-equitable admission processes across all faculties—including Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, and Medicine—ensuring female students have unhindered access to traditional and STEM fields.

Performance Summary against SDG 5 Targets

SDG 5 Target Area	COOU Operational Contribution	Impact Level
5.1 End Discrimination Against Women & Girls	Gender-equitable admissions, meritocratic leadership appointments, and active female staff associations.	**High** (Institutional Governance)
5.2 Eliminate All Forms of Violence & Exploitation	Anti-harassment policy frameworks, mandatory staff warnings, and the COOUNews "Naming and Shaming" protocol.	**High** (Campus Safety & Protection)
5.5 Full Participation & Leadership Opportunities	Female Vice-Chancellor, female representation in deanships/headships, and advocacy by the Institute for Gender Studies.	**High** (University Management)
5.c Sound Policies & Legislation for Gender Equality	Formalization of campus sexual harassment guidelines based on UN-ECOSOC framework standards.	**Moderate to High** (Policy Framework)

Strategic Recommendations for Acceleration

1. **Establish an Anonymous Digital Reporting Portal:** Implement an encrypted, third-party-managed online reporting system to allow students and staff to report gender-based harassment or victimization safely and anonymously.
2. **Institute Gender-Responsive Budgeting & Grants:** Allocate dedicated internal research seed grants specifically for female early-career researchers and STEM projects led by women.
3. **Formalize Daycare & Lactation Facilities:** Construct university-funded childcare centers across all three campuses (Igbariam, Uli, Awka) to support nursing mothers, female staff, and student-parents, reducing career interruptions and dropouts.

Signature:  Date: 24/09/2026

Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr

Vice Chancellor