Progress Report: SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) – Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU)

2024/2025 Session

Executive Overview

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) advances **Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities)** by embedding equity, social inclusion, and non-discrimination into its institutional frameworks. Anchored on the university's **"3Vs Agenda" (Values, Viability, Visibility)** under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, COOU addresses economic, spatial, and institutional disparities. Through a decentralized multi-campus model, flexible access pathways, non-discriminatory governance, and targeted financial support, the university works to ensure equitable access to higher education and professional advancement across Anambra State and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key Areas of Progress & Implementation

1. Spatial Accessibility & Multi-Campus Decentralization

To bridge urban-rural educational divides and improve access for underserved populations across Anambra State:

- **Decentralized Campus Footprint:** COOU operates across three strategic campuses—Igbariam (Anambra East), Uli (Ihsiala), and Awka (Anambra Central). This geographic distribution brings tertiary education closer to rural and semi-urban communities, significantly lowering transport and living costs for local students.

- **Flexible Entry Pathways:** Through the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB), diploma offerings, and remedial pre-degree programs, COOU creates alternative academic routes for students from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, enabling first-generation university candidates to access degree programs.

2. Socioeconomic Inclusion & Indigent Student Support

COOU mitigates income inequality by implementing social safety nets that prevent financial dropouts:

- **Government & Alumni Financial Aid:** The university collaborates with state government frameworks (such as the Anambra Youth Scholarship Scheme) and

coordinates with alumni chapters to deliver need-based bursaries, departmental grants, and academic materials to low-income students.

- **Economic Self-Reliance Programs:** Through the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI), COOU trains students in marketable vocational trades and micro-enterprise management, empowering indigent undergraduates to generate income to cover tuition and living expenses.

3. Institutional Non-Discrimination & Equal Opportunity
COOU maintains transparent policy frameworks to protect against discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background:

- **Inclusive Admissions & Hiring:** Admissions and staff recruitment adhere to transparent, meritocratic principles aligned with federal and state diversity guidelines, guaranteeing fair representation across diverse ethnic and cultural groups.
- **Institute for Gender Studies & Social Equity:** The Institute actively researches social stratification, gender disparities, and marginalization dynamics, advising university management on inclusive policy updates and conducting campus-wide human rights and equality campaigns.
- **Anti-Exploitation Protections:** The university enforces zero-tolerance policies against extortion, favoritism, and harassment, safeguarding vulnerable students from coercive academic practices.

4. Physical Accessibility & Disability Accommodation
COOU takes progressive steps toward creating an inclusive physical and academic environment for persons with disabilities (PWDs):

- **Infrastructure Retrofitting:** Recent campus development plans mandate ground-level access ramps and accessible seating in newly constructed lecture theaters and administrative buildings across Awka, Igbariam, and Uli.

- **Special Examination Accommodations:** Academic boards provide adjusted examination timelines and personalized physical arrangements for students with physical or visual impairments, ensuring equitable testing conditions.

Performance Summary against SDG 10 Targets

SDG 10 Target Area	COOU Operational Contribution	Impact Level
10.1 Socioeconomic Empowerment of Low-Income Groups	Vocational trade expos, CEI business incubation, and alumni hardship bursaries for indigent students.	**High** (Student Community)
10.2 Promote Universal Social, Economic & Political Inclusion	Multi-campus distribution (Igbariam, Uli, Awka) providing localized access to rural youth.	**High** (Regional / State Level)
10.3 Ensure Equal Opportunity & Eliminate Discrimination	Transparent admission/recruitment policies, anti-harassment enforcement, and gender equity campaigns.	**High** (University Governance)
10.4 Adopt Fiscal, Wage & Social Protection Policies	Transparent staff promotional structures, non-academic ICT advancement, and equitable wage protection.	**Moderate to High** (University Workforce)

Strategic Recommendations for Acceleration

1. **Establish a Dedicated Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Formalize a centralized administrative unit tasked specifically with monitoring campus equity metrics, handling disability support services, and coordinating indigent student assistance programs.
2. **Expand Comprehensive Campus Accessibility Audits:** Conduct an all-campus infrastructural audit to systematically retrofit legacy buildings with elevators, tactile paving, and PWD-compliant lavatories across all three campuses.
3. **Institutionalize an Emergency Tuition Relief Fund:** Partner with corporate donors and philanthropic foundations to set up an endowed tuition relief fund to ensure students experiencing sudden family financial hardship can complete their degrees uninterrupted.

Signature:  Date: 24/09/2026

Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr

Vice Chancellor