

PRESENTATION ONE:

LESSON LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES BY SDG10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES HUB HOSTED BY MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY

1. Education as a Powerful Tool for Reducing Inequalities:

One of the most significant lessons learned is the profound impact that access to quality education can have on reducing social and economic inequalities. For example, MKU's andragogy and pedagogy initiative at the Naivasha maximum prison in 2017 and Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, in March 2022, has provided inmates with educational opportunities that have facilitated their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. This program has not only improved the inmates' literacy skills but also fostered a sense of self-worth and hope, proving that education is a transformative tool in reducing inequalities. This is an ongoing project by the Hub.

2. Community Engagement is Crucial for Sustainable Impact:

Meaningful community engagement is essential to the success of initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities. A notable example is MKU's tree planting campaigns held yearly on World Environment Day, where over 10,000 trees have been planted in collaboration with local communities around the Thika campus. These events demonstrate that active community involvement leads to more sustainable environmental conservation efforts, which in turn contributes to reducing inequalities by improving local living conditions and providing educational opportunities in environmental stewardship.

3. Collaboration and Partnerships Amplify Impact:

Collaborations with governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations have been instrumental in amplifying the impact of MKU's initiatives. MKU has signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing its reforestation efforts. These partnerships have enabled MKU to access additional resources and expertise, making its environmental initiatives more effective and far-reaching.

4. Research and Data are Key Drivers of Change:

The importance of evidence-based research in informing policies and interventions aimed at reducing inequalities cannot be overstated. MKU's research on the potential of solar and wind energy in Kenya's semi-arid regions provided crucial data that has informed policy discussions on renewable energy. This research was particularly impactful in shaping the Ministry involved with Energy matters in writing their strategic plan to integrate more renewable energy sources into Kenya's grid, directly contributing to reducing energy inequalities in underserved areas.

5. Inclusivity Must be Central to All Initiatives:

A central lesson from MKU's tenure as an SDG 10 Hub is that inclusivity must be at the heart of all initiatives. MKU has launched a community-based initiative aimed at providing educational scholarships to students from marginalized communities, including persons with disabilities. This initiative, part of MKU's broader commitment to inclusivity, has provided over 200 students with access to higher education, demonstrating that targeted efforts to include marginalized groups can lead to more equitable outcomes and help break the cycles of inequality.

6. Flexibility and Adaptability are Essential:

The dynamic nature of inequalities requires flexibility and adaptability in program implementation. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, MKU quickly adapted its programs to continue providing education and support to vulnerable populations. The university's shift to online learning platforms ensured that students from disadvantaged backgrounds could continue their education despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic. This adaptability underscored the importance of being resilient and innovative in the face of crises to effectively address inequalities.

7. Sustainability and Long-Term Vision are Vital:

Long-term sustainability must be a core consideration in the design and implementation of programs aimed at reducing inequalities. For example, MKU's tree planting campaign is part of a long-term vision to plant 100,000 trees by 2025. MKU's emphasis on sustainability ensures that the benefits of its programs extend well beyond their initial implementation.

8. Awareness and Advocacy Play a Critical Role:

Raising awareness and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups are crucial components of reducing inequalities. The university's efforts in raising awareness about the intersection of climate change and inequalities have contributed to shaping public attitudes and policies that support marginalized communities.

9. Institutional Commitment is Necessary for Success:

The success of MKU as an SDG 10 Hub has been largely due to the strong institutional commitment to reducing inequalities. This commitment was evident in 2021, when MKU launched a strategic plan with specific items that focuses on advancing SDG 10. The plan included measurable goals and allocated significant resources to initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities, such as the expansion of scholarship programs for students from low-income families. This institutional commitment has been a key driver of MKU's achievements and has set a solid foundation for continued progress.