Report on SDG 1: No Poverty at Al-Turath University
Date: November 2023
Committee: Al-Turath University SDG Impact Committee

Introduction

This report outlines Al-Turath University's contributions and recommendations related to SDG 1: No Poverty, highlighting existing initiatives and suggesting enhancements to better support low-income students and the surrounding community. SDG 1 aims to eradicate poverty by addressing barriers to education, providing support services, and fostering economic stability through community programs. This report includes recommendations to strengthen TU's impact, which can serve as evidence in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

Current Initiatives

1. **Financial Aid Programs for Low-Income Students**

   o TU provides targeted financial assistance to students from low-income households to ensure that financial barriers do not prevent them from completing their degrees. Currently, financial aid covers a portion of tuition fees and essential living expenses, which supports approximately 15% of enrolled students.

2. **Financial Support Centers**:
   o Al-Turath University has set a target to admit students from low-income households, specifically aiming for **5%** of our student population to come from the bottom 20% of the household income group within the country. This goal is part of our commitment to ensuring equal access to education for underprivileged students and reducing financial barriers to higher education. The university actively works to identify and support these students through dedicated outreach and financial aid programs, enabling them to pursue their academic goals.
   o TU has set specific goals to improve graduation rates for low-income students by expanding financial support through programs such as the https://uoturath.edu.iq/en/financial-support-center-2/. This initiative ensures that more full-time students receive the necessary funding to complete their education.

3. **Guidance and Mentorship**:
   o TU has established a "Students Guidance Committee" in each department to provide academic and financial guidance, supporting students through mentorship. As a result, **97%** of the students who received financial aid have successfully graduated, with a clear *targeted completion rate for students under these programs to **100%***.
   o TU is committed to ensuring that all low-income students reach graduation by removing financial barriers such as tuition fees. The university has set a clear goal to provide full financial support, ensuring that no student is prevented from earning their degree due to financial hardship.

4. **Carpenter Training Program**

   o TU offers a free Carpenter Training Program for local community members, providing skills and resources to create sustainable income opportunities. Participants receive hands-on training, and a $2,500 startup grant to launch their own carpentry businesses.

5. **Women's Handicraft Cooperative**

   o A new initiative, the Women's Handicraft Cooperative empowers local women by teaching them marketable craft skills and supporting them with grants and access to markets, including seasonal bazaars held on campus.

6. **Annual Free Dental Clinic by College of Dentistry**

   o Each year, 4th- and 5th-year dental students provide free dental services to low-income community members under expert supervision. This program addresses essential healthcare needs, reduces healthcare costs for low-income families, and enhances student training.

7. **Public Access to Recreational Facilities**

   o TU has made its soccer stadium accessible to the community and hosts annual tournaments during Ramadan, offering a safe and inclusive space for recreation.

Recommendations

To enhance TU's contribution to SDG 1 and strengthen our position in the THE Impact Rankings, we propose the following recommendations:

1. **Increase Financial Aid Coverage to Reach More Low-Income Students**

   o Expand financial aid to cover a greater portion of tuition and living expenses, aiming to reach at least 15% of the student population from the lowest income brackets. Additional funding could be sourced through alumni donations or partnerships with local organizations.

   o **Implementation:** Update financial aid policies, conduct outreach to increase applications from low-income students, and regularly report on the aid distributed.

2. **Community Business Development Grants**

   o Develop a structured program that offers small business grants or low-interest loans to community members with sustainable business ideas, alongside training on financial and business planning.

- **Implementation:** Partner with local businesses or financial institutions to establish a fund, create a business training curriculum, and monitor the success of supported businesses.

3. **Legal Aid and Financial Counseling Services for Students and Community Members**

   - Establish a legal aid clinic on campus that offers free or subsidized legal services and financial counseling for low-income students and local residents. Services could include debt management, housing assistance, and business licensing support.

   - **Implementation:** Recruit faculty and law students to offer legal support, create partnerships with local legal organizations, and provide online resources.

4. **Launch a "Basic Needs Resource Center" for Student and Community Support**

   - Establish a dedicated center that offers essential resources such as food, clothing, hygiene products, and emergency housing referrals for students and community members experiencing financial hardship.

   - **Implementation:** Stock the center with donated goods, partner with local charities for additional support, and encourage student volunteer involvement.

5. **Expand Career Pathway Programs for Skill Development and Employment**

   - Introduce career pathway programs in fields like agriculture, technology, and vocational trades. Programs should include skill-building workshops, internships, and employment placement services to help local residents build sustainable income.

   - **Implementation:** Develop partnerships with local employers, establish an internship matching program, and monitor job placement rates for participants.

Conclusion

Al-Turath University is actively working toward reducing poverty in its community through programs that provide financial aid, skill development, healthcare, and recreational resources. The recommendations in this report offer pathways to enhance these efforts, increasing access to education and supporting economic empowerment. By implementing these recommendations, TU can make a greater impact on poverty reduction and further strengthen its standing in global sustainability rankings.