

# ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF LEBANON REPORT ON SDG 17

PARTNERSHIP FOR  
THE GOAL



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



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## SDG 17 - PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOAL

### INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, represent basic principles to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. They were gestated at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, replacing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000), to create a set of global goals related to environmental, political and political challenges. economic conditions that our world faces. They were launched in January 2016 and will guide the policies and funding of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the next 15 years.

The United Nations Development Program works with governments to integrate the SDGs into their national development plans and policies, and this in turn has led to the need to implement a new agenda to promote Sustainable Development, Agenda 2030. Agenda 2030, is a new tool for sustainable development, which aims to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all people, in addition to protecting the environment by 2030.

More and more institutions are auditing their situation with respect to the SDGs to lay the foundations of the new agenda, Agenda 2030. Those most committed and more aware of this international need will be the best positioned to carry out necessary improvements in the current management model and infrastructures with technical and financial assistance from the United Nations Development Program.

Within these institutions are the universities, where the relationship between the SDGs and the universities can be seen as mutually beneficial and necessary for both parties. On the one hand, anticipating offering training on the SDGs is a way of demonstrating the institution's ability to adapt to these changing circumstances, and on the other, funding entities and sponsors are allocating more and more aid to meeting the Goals.

Sustainable Development Goal 17 "Partnerships for the goals" refers to the need for cross-sector and cross -country collaboration in pursuit of all the goals by the year 2030. SDG 17 is a vision for improved and more equitable trade, as well as coordinated investment initiatives to promote sustainable development across borders. It is about strengthening and streamlining cooperation between nation-states, both developed and developing, using the SDGs as a shared framework and a shared vision for defining that collaborative way forward.

At the Islamic University of Lebanon, we have a strong belief that in order for our country to develop sustainably, we have to abide by and follow these SDGs where people will enjoy a better life as well as a higher standard of living. The Islamic University has already implemented many of the requirements of the SDGs and is much willing and able to implement the remaining and incorporate it in its programs and policies.

At the end, it is extremely important to note that we need as human beings living on earth to live happily and with dignity by partnering together. All of us have to have the ultimate respect and

appreciation of each other's rights; the human right. However, to be able to enjoy that and develop our lives, many elements have to be taken with great consideration. We need as humans living on this planet to care for each other by providing assistance to the less fortunate ones. And what could be better to assist than a collaborative and joint effort among all countries under the United Nations umbrella. This is the reason behind the SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals.

We, countries of the world, need to assist in preventing hunger, stressing the importance of sustainable and drinkable water, being ready to face climate change, protecting life under water and on land, respecting the order of law, treating each other equally and without discrimination, continuously and relentlessly working on looking out for other sources of affordable and clean energy, sustaining city life without having to continuously run away to the suburbs, preserving justice among us all through a good and fair judicial system, consuming and producing responsibly, stressing innovation and creativity, promoting decent jobs and good work environments without any human trafficking or child labor or money laundering, promoting good health and well-being, making education affordable and reflective of the job market demand and assuring each other of zero tolerance for hunger.

When all of these are implemented then the world will be a much better place to live. The quality as well as the standard of living of people will be better leading to a decrease in the gap between the rich and the poor. There will be more respect for the human rights, lesser crime and extremism and finally peace will prevail.

## SDG 10 – REDUCED INEQUALITIES

SDG 10 aims to reduce inequalities based on income and also reduce them based on economic status in a country, religion, race, ethnicity disability and gender among others. In addition, the SDG's aim is also to address inequalities among different countries worldwide especially in such areas that are related to underrepresentation, development assistance and migration.

Some people might ask or wonder as to why this SDG is so important. The answer is pretty much straight forward. SDG 10 ensures that the voice of the least developed countries in the decision-making process in international and financial institutions is well heard and that their presence there is effective and leads to their benefit and development. Otherwise, these countries will remain isolated and lesser developed for a long period of time.

Inequality is a killer to a country's progress especially when it deprives its people of equal opportunity that will lead to extreme cases of poverty. This will also affect their education, health and overall lives.

The goal here is to ensure that the income of the poorest in the world rises higher than the national average so that eventually this national income gap will be close to zero which will lead to better development and growth in the countries. New and improved policies in this context should be executed to bridge the gaps between the well represented and the underrepresented groups in societies around the world. It also should be fairly executed for best results. Moreover, easier access to the international financial system should be made available to the developing countries

as this will allow these countries to get that capital needed for development and prosperity which will eventually lead to reducing inequalities at all levels.

The Islamic University of Lebanon thrives to help and assist and become a pioneer in reducing inequalities in Lebanon especially on the educational front. The university bridges all gaps between all applicants regardless of their background, sex, origin and others.

#### IUL and reduced inequalities:

Based on the Human Development Index, the Arab world lost on average of 24.9 percent which is higher than the average of the whole world. This loss in human development is due to inequality in education and income. In addition, the Arab world suffers from a big difference between rural and urban development.

As far as Lebanon, the picture is not that different from the Arab region. Issue of inequality are quite visible between Beirut and the other parts of the country. The different municipalities are allocated funds from the government on an unequal basis leading to huge inequalities between the capital and the rest of the country as far as educational services, health care, Jobs availability, mortal rates, security and others.

It is critical to mention that Lebanon lacks a civil code that regulates matters of personal status and thus does not guarantee an equal treatment for all citizens. It has, however, fifteen personal status separate laws which are linked to the different religious sects.

There are also religious groups in Lebanon that are not fairly represented as far as the parliament or even in society which we refer to as the underrepresented though not considered oppressed. Moreover, the Lebanese society still suffers from the fact that women are still unequal to men in many aspects of society whether the private or the public ones. This results in them being at a disadvantage when it comes to job opportunities and salaries as well. Women are still being discriminated against as I mentioned when it comes to being active in the society on all fronts almost. It looks like they suffer from what we refer to as the glass ceiling which puts a limit to what they can do and where they can reach. It acts as a barrier to their profession thus limiting their abilities and consequently leading to lesser productivity hurting the overall economy and development. It is actually a man's world in Lebanon and elsewhere, whether we like it or not: more than 92% of the CEO position in corporate America are held by men not to mention the salaries' discrepancies between both men and women for the same exact position and responsibilities. Societal restraints also play an important role in escalating the degree of inequality between men and women in Lebanon not to mention the influence of religion in this respect. Women practicing their religion some times by using a particular dress code might be a disadvantage when it comes to landing certain job as compared to other women thus increasing inequality even within the same gender. Not only that, but another issue pertains to the culture that unfortunately still exists in Lebanon where girls get married at a very young age. This results in their inability to continue their education for the most part and thus escalating the rate of inequality in this country.

Another issue with inequality in Lebanon is directly related to the presence of minority groups with particular sexual preferences which are considered to be at a disadvantage when it comes to

landing jobs on an equal basis with others. This leads them to keep it as a secret so as not to be discriminated against in society.

Inequalities in this small country have historically led to acts against humanity and human rights. It even was the reason behind genocides as was clear during the Lebanese civil war which started in 1975 and lasted till 1990 with the Taïif agreement in Saudi Arabia. Different factions and sects that felt they were underrepresented in their own country could not deal with that situation and thus went into war trying to reach equality with the other Lebanese groups. Blood was shed and atrocities were made for the reason of inequality. This is also visible in many countries around the world; Rwanda and India are just an example of that.

In addition, inequality in Lebanon has historically resulted in millions of Lebanese migrating to other countries where they were easily able to mingle with the people of these foreign countries and become pioneers in the different field of Business, economics, politics, medicine, sport and others. There are more than ten million people of Lebanese origins living outside of Lebanon that most of whom are extremely successful in the countries that they migrated into.

Can you imagine the loss to Lebanon of this national wealth of human assets? It is indeed hard to. The major reason is that they felt a great sense of inequality in their country in terms of education, jobs and others. They decided to start a new life overseas and made major investments there that they could have made in Lebanon had they been given an equal opportunity and equality with others in their homeland.

The Islamic University of Lebanon understands that one of the major reasons behind being an underdeveloped country is the inexistence of equal opportunities. Some people are given certain advantages at the expense of others which could be detrimental to the society and the overall economy. As based on that, the university makes sure that no application for any student enrollment is discriminated against no matter what. No discriminations based on gender, sexual preference, economic and social status, religion and national origin exist amongst its students and staff. The university is by all means an equal opportunity employer. The only criteria that the university applies is the one related to qualifications. And as such, students meeting the requirements as set by the university will be admitted to the university without any problems. The same applies to faculty and staff which are strictly selected based on qualifications only; if you are going to add value to the university then you are more than welcome to apply and get your application fairly reviewed.

The Islamic University of Lebanon (IUL) is committed to the fundamentals of freedom in academics, equality of opportunity, and preservation of the human dignity when it comes to decisions related to both students and employees which are free from unfair discrimination in all its different aspects. In Islam, discriminating against people for other than faith in God is completely prohibited.

The Islamic University of Lebanon (IUL) does not engage, regarding students' admissions, in any issues related to discrimination or harassment against anybody based on their race, color, or religion. In Lebanon, there exists eighteen different sects which are all welcomed and encouraged to apply to IUL. Imam Mousa Al Sader was very clear many decades ago when he said that these

different sects are grace and not indignation. Discrimination on the basis of country, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, and sexual orientation is completely forbidden. This nondiscrimination policy applies to admissions and employment as well as to the access to the University activities and programs.

The university in its pursuit of excellence in its recruiting decisions is highly committed to admit, educate, and employ individuals based only on their qualifications. IUL strongly seeks to attract its students and staff of diverse backgrounds regardless of their economic, financial, or socioeconomic status. No social exclusion exists at IUL [1].

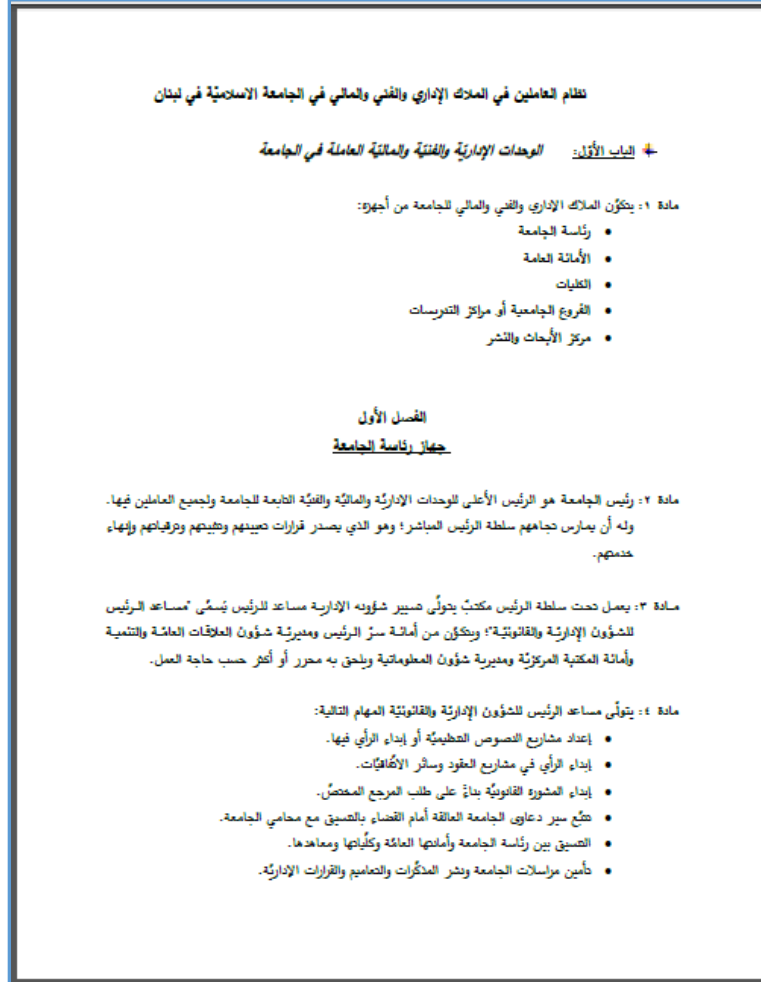


Figure 1. Taken from [1]

Moreover, the Islamic University of Lebanon has many programs related to financial assistance to the students as well as scholarships. All they have to do is just apply. The university understands that equality in education is the name of the game; the foundation for equality, development and growth. The Islamic University of Lebanon does provide financial support for people with disabilities as well as those who are in need.

The Islamic University of Lebanon was founded in the first place to help and serve those who are willing to learn but cannot afford the tuitions of other universities (Lebanese University exempted).

The Islamic University of Lebanon has a partnership with several hospitals, associations, and others where they will get special discounts.

All orphans will get an automatic discount.

If a student has one or more siblings, each one of the siblings will get a discount in spite of the economic status of their family.

Any student who is not included in either one of the groups and needs financial aid will be guaranteed to get the aid as soon as a request is submitted to the administration.

In addition to all the financial help that is provided by the Islamic University of Lebanon, the president of the university, Dr. Dina Mawla, initiated this year a new program called “Takaful” to support the needy students with their tuitions.

The Islamic University of Lebanon aspires and keeps on the lookout for any ideas or programs that lead to more awareness of the problem of inequality and its reduction because it quite understands that if people are treated equally then eventually this will result in economic development, lesser migration, more human rights respect and higher standard of living. This will put an underdeveloped country on the path of becoming more developed.

That socioeconomic gap has to be bridged. It will be bridged by being equitable.

Equitable we are at IUL.

#### *Measure applications & admissions of underrepresented*

IUL has four branches in Lebanon; Wardanieh, Khalde, Tyre, and Baalbeck. The main idea for that is to reach out for the poor and underprivileged people in the Bekaa area and in the southern part of Lebanon where many people have suffered historically from lack of opportunities in education because they were deprived of not only education but of the very basics of life as well. IUL under the supervision of the Higher Shiite Islamic Council, this is not the case anymore. The university seeks out to make sure that each and every person needing higher education will get the chance to get it no matter who he is, what he believes in or where he comes from. This opened the golden gate for thousands of poor people from the south as well as from the Bekaa area to get higher education at IUL and better up themselves and their societies and the overall country as well. In addition, the Wardanieh campus is located in an area that is predominantly of the minority Druze sect and the campus is wide opened to embrace students from this sect to add to the overall diversity of the university that is needed and welcomed.

The university stretched itself into farther regions in the country to make education within everyone’s reach regardless of any obstacles. The Khalde campus is close to Beirut and the suburbs and is ready to accept other minorities as instructors, students or employees on its campuses by giving them all the same equal opportunity. It is also worth mentioning again that the Higher Shiite Islamic Council provides on an equal basis scholarship for the poor and the orphans and the families of the martyrs and for people that are physically challenged as well. Moreover, if a student is not physically handicapped but someone in his family is, that person will still be eligible for financial assistance and scholarships.



The number of female students in proportion to the overall students count is needed covering a period of 3 or 4 years in all majors of study at the university.

*About disability*

IUL welcomes students from all ethnicities and low-income families. In addition, it accepts students that are disabled and assists them in all aspects. The same applies to instructors who are welcomed from many regions of the country, especially the poorer ones. They are recruited from Tripoli, Akkar, and Baalbeck and even from the remote areas of the south. These groups generally come from poorer backgrounds and they are given good equal opportunities at the university to prove and better up themselves and their families regardless of their religion or political background.

In addition, the university carries out events on these topics:

Updates in the field of learning disabilities - Symposium 2019 [2]



Figure 2. Taken from [2]

The Islamic University in Lebanon, in cooperation with the Social Welfare Institutions in Lebanon, Dar Al-Aytam Al-Islamiyya - The Human Capabilities Development Complex - made an exhibition of educational means to support the education and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities under the title “Incorporating a Right of My Rights” [3].

The Dr. Qabbani spoke, expressing his pleasure at his presence on the campus of the Islamic University, and said: “From here, from this cultural edifice, the building of homelands begins. This cultural edifice is the one that opens the doors of knowledge to those who wish to pursue their knowledge, but it does not only open the doors of knowledge. Also opens the doors of the whole world. This university has great merit among the many universities in Lebanon that build future generations and revive the homeland”



Figure 3. Taken from [3]

In addition, the Higher Shiite Islamic Council has assistance programs for these instructors who choose to continue their education in other countries. Also, the HSIC employs people of poorer backgrounds as evidenced in all four campuses. The HSIC mission is to assist the poorer groups in our society to improve themselves by giving them the opportunity to do that.

#### Conclusion and perspectives:

From what has preceded, the Islamic University of Lebanon understands that in order to be productive and work effectively and efficiently and reach higher degrees of socioeconomic progress and development the issue of equality should always be closely scrutinized and seriously considered. If equality among citizens in Lebanon becomes a norm and a way of conducting business, then eventually the whole country will be on the right track to prosperity and development. IUL has been and will always be ready to team up with any groups, NGOs, private or public institutions whether local, regional or international to fortify the issue of equality among citizens in Lebanon. There is no choice in this matter. To progress as a country, society or a university, there need to be equal opportunities provided to everyone. It is simply a human right that should be available to each and every citizen. Issues as related to sect or gender among others should not be thought of especially in Lebanon as these two elements are truly reasons that hinder our development and well-being.

In addition to what has been discussed, it is also important to shed light on another important matter that will indeed make the issue of inequality reduction an easier process; having access to the international financial institutions worldwide. It is critical for a small country such as Lebanon

to make sure that its sound is clear in all international institutions and political ones including the Financial markets, United Nations, the World Bank as well as the International Monetary Fund to make sure that we are always involved in their decisions making process as this has a lot of advantages to our country. IUL will always be available to assist in this matter throughout its internal resources and national and international connections.

## References

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