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UN Sustainable Development Goal 10: “Reduced Inequalities”

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“Reduced Inequalities”

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Study Materials:

Video: 2030- SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities- Ted talks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLgGLINPUM8>

Instructions

Answer these questions: (4 to 8 paragraphs for each question)

1. Why is the UN's goal of Reduced Inequalities important, in your opinion?
2. How is the state of Inequalities in the world?
3. What changes need to happen to achieve Reduced Inequalities?
4. Do you think it is possible to achieve Reduced Inequalities around the world? Why or Why not?
5. How can education lead to a world with Reduced Inequalities?
6. How can education improve in your community so that the next generation has the tools and mindset to obtain Reduced Inequalities?

INTRODUCTION

Reduced inequalities is the UN's 10th Sustainable Development Goal. Inequality simply refers to a lack of equality; a lack of equal opportunities between the rich and the poor, male and female, different races and different countries. In different parts of the world, there is discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, social status, sexual orientation, disability and beliefs. The rich and influential control most of the world's wealth.

In 2017, 1% of the world's population, held 50.1% of the world's wealth; (the richest) while the poorest 70% of the world's working age population, hold only 2.7% of the global wealth. The imbalance is put into stark relief when one considers that 36 million millionaires, who account for 0.7% of the world's adult population, control 46% of total global wealth of \$280tn. According to Forbes, the world's 10 richest billionaires, own \$505 billion in combined wealth, a sum greater than the total goods and services most nations produce on an annual basis.

Inequality sabotages economic growth and development. It hinders progress, deprives people of opportunities and subjects many to conditions of extreme poverty and low self-esteem. Hence, the UN in an effort to make the world a better place intends to reduce inequalities in all forms within and among countries across the world globally by 2030.

Here are some examples of Inequalities:

1. In the late 2000s, children living in the wealthiest quintile of South Asia were two times more likely to complete primary school compared to children in the poorest.
2. Women who live in rural areas are three times more likely to die while giving birth than urban women are.
3. People with disabilities are the world's largest minority.
4. In Latin America and East Asia, children in the poorest asset quintile are three times more likely to die before they turn five years old than those living under rich conditions.
5. An estimated 69 million children under five years of age will die from mostly preventable causes.
6. Homelessness – There are lack of affordable housing. This is a result of treating housing as a commodity rather than a human right.
7. Child Poverty – UNICEF estimates that more than 356 million children live in extreme poverty.
8. Wage Inequality – The unequal distribution of income between individuals, social classes, groups, populations, and countries.
9. Racial Discrimination – unequal treatment of individuals based on their race
10. Occupational Sex Segregation – discrimination in wages based on gender. For example, as women are under-represented at an aggregate level among the employed population, their expected share in a single population could be lower than that of men, if they were distributed in the same way as men across all populations.

QUESTION 1: WHY IS THE UN'S GOAL OF REDUCED INEQUALITIES IMPORTANT?

There is a growing rate of Inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, income, religion, social status or class, sexual orientation, age, opportunity and even disability within and among countries across the world. Inequality is a roadblock to long-term social, economic, and environmental development, threatens poverty reduction, creates imposter syndromes, self-limiting and self-sabotaging beliefs in people and it destroys their self-worth and sense of fulfillment, ultimately increasing the rate of crime and diseases.

The UN Sustainable Development goal 10: *“Reduced Inequalities”* is very important because it is the first step towards achieving sustainable economic development and making the world a better place. Without embracing diversity and inclusion; without including everyone in equal opportunities, services, and a chance for a better life, we cannot achieve a better world.

Reduced inequalities will make it possible for the UN to achieve its other global goals to end poverty, achieve gender equality, ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all, etc. This is because many of the factors that affect economic growth and progress stems from unequal access to opportunities and services.

This UN goal of “Reduced inequalities” by 2030 is also very important for obvious reasons below:

1. It will empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of sex, age, disability, origin, race, ethnicity and religion, economic or other status.
2. It will also ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
3. It will help improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.
4. Reduced inequalities will enable countries adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies which will progressively lead to the achievement of greater equality.
5. It will also ensure that developing countries have enhanced representation and a voice in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, accountable, credible and legitimate institutions.
6. Reduced inequality will promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, sustainable cities and communities.

QUESTION 2: HOW IS THE STATE OF INEQUALITIES IN THE WORLD?

Every nation across the world faces the challenge of poverty, hunger, climate change, health, sustainability, education, and inequality. However, as of Tuesday 07 December 2021, India stood out in terms of income and wealth inequality, claimed the World Inequality Report 2022. The top 1% held more than a fifth of the national income while the bottom half accounted for a mere 13% and this share has been reducing for some decades.

Today, 71% of the world's population live in countries where inequality has grown. While inequality has gone up in the majority of countries over the past three decades, it has fallen in a few. In Latin America and

the Caribbean, there has been a considerable decline, although levels remain high. Two questions come to mind when talking about the subject of inequality.

- (i) Do we know what level of inequality we have?
- (ii) What level of inequality do we want?

Let us analyze the state of inequalities in the world by first looking at the five types or systems of inequalities. Then we will use Europe, America, Asia-Pacific and Africa as examples to analyze the state of inequalities across the globe.

There are five types of inequalities and they include:

1. Wealth/Income inequality – which refers to the unequal distribution of assets or income
2. Political Inequality – unequal influence over decisions made by political bodies, and the unequal outcomes of those decisions.
3. Treatment and Responsibility Inequality – This has to do with the differences in the way some people are treated. In this type of inequality, some people benefit more and can quickly receive more privileges than others can.
4. Life Inequality – unequal access to opportunities that can improve a person's life.
5. Membership Inequality – refers to the number of members in a family, nation or faith.

The extent of global inequality poses a challenge to societies across the world, as governments and international organizations seek to encourage inclusive and sustainable growth. Levels of global inequality remain extreme, with persistent high numbers of people in absolute poverty. According to the World Bank, in 2012 nearly 13 percent of the world's population received less than \$1.90 per day, and some 2.1 billion people, about 35 percent, lived on less than \$3.10 per day. The World Bank estimates inequality in countries

around the world using the GINI index – a measurement of the extent to which income deviates from a perfectly, equal distribution. On the scale, 0 represents perfect equality and 100 would represent total inequality. Throwing back to the year 2013 or the nearest year, data revealed that much of the globe faces high levels of inequality including large parts of Asia, Africa and the Americas. On the other hand, Europe, especially in Scandinavia and the east, showed the lowest levels of inequality.

The State of Inequalities in Europe

Eastern Europe and Scandinavia return low scores for GINI, with the Ukraine, Norway and Finland all among the top performing countries around the world. The general picture for Europe, especially when compared to the rest of the world, is overall lower levels of inequality, as well as fair consistent levels across the continent.

The State of Inequalities in America

If we consider the Americas, we see the lowest levels of inequality in Canada, with a GINI score of 33.68 – even this places it some way down the global list. For comparison, the USA scores 41.06 – placing it between Madagascar and Russia on the list. In South America, much of the continent returns high GINI scores, including scores in excess of 50 for Brazil, Colombia and Chile.

The State of Inequalities in Asia-Pacific

In Asia, the situation is diverse with some countries experiencing relatively high inequality, while others have much lower levels. Kyrgyzstan has a GINI score of 27.4, while at the other end of the scale the Philippines has a score in excess of 40.

The State of Inequalities in Africa

Compared to the rest of the world, the picture of inequality in Africa is relatively high. Three African nations return scores in excess of 60. However, some nations return relatively low scores, for example Niger and Ethiopia.

Inequality may be one of the greatest challenges to global development and communities' social fabric. Notwithstanding, there is much room for progress. However, globalization and the rise of the BRICS countries (A group of major emerging countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as well as other emerging economies have helped reduce global inequality between nations by lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, raising standards of living and expanding services and opportunities. Through Innovative programs like Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and Mexico's *Oportunidades*, the poor have a chance to fight for at a brighter future.

One common characteristic of many undemocratic developing countries with rich natural resources is ***extreme inequality***". A few well-connected elites or strongmen in Africa and Latin America have often seized the opportunity to exploit natural resources like oil, timber and other precious minerals for their selfish interests and personal gain at the expense of more inclusive economic development. In developing countries like the US and UK, the state of inequalities is more sobering because there is a growing gap between the haves and have not which can be seen in lower standards of living for many, increased social tension and high levels of poverty.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Global Inequality

Considering the recent events happening in the world, it has become imperative to analyze the impact of Covid-19 on Global Inequalities. Significantly, the pandemic has highlighted the impact of socio-economic conditions on health. As the World Health Organization explains, "there is ample evidence that social factors including education, employment status, income level, gender and ethnicity have a marked influence on how healthy a person is".

Covid-19 has brought deep awareness of inequalities in areas from healthcare to technology. Before this virus, inequality was already increasing in many parts of the developing world. Notwithstanding, the pandemic has greatly heightened existing economic and social inequalities. Here are five of the main ways inequality is heightening around the world.

In other words, the pandemic has highlighted inequalities in the following areas:

1. **Jobs:** The pandemic has increased inequality between workers. Workers in developing countries, who depend on a daily wage and casual work, were mostly affected by the lockdown policies enacted by many governments to suppress the spread of the virus. Their inability to travel to their work places has led to a significant loss of earnings, with no protection and high levels of insecurity about the future of their livelihoods. For instance, a trader who hawks fruits at the market square suddenly found himself or herself out of living because he or she had to stay home due to the lockdown orders. Unlike some professionals who still had the opportunity to work from home.

2. **Gender Gap:** Women across the world are much more likely to have hospitality and retail jobs where remote working is less possible, and particularly hit by lockdown-induced job losses. In addition, the closure of schools and day nurseries forced some women to withdraw from employment. In times of economic stress, girls are often the first to be withdrawn from school (or to miss classes) as they substitute for working mothers. With many schools closing during the pandemic, girls stood at a greater risk of not returning once schools reopened. The effect of this on their education will ultimately lead to worse long-term unemployment and prospective earnings. Additionally, while both men and women must stay at home due to lockdown policies, in most situations, women are more likely to take care of children and domestic chores, leading to an unequal distribution of household duties within the family.

3. **Rising Protectionism:** Globalization was the great driver of the growth in incomes in East Asia and in recent decades, China; protectionism on the other hand will limit its capacity to reduce the wide disparities in incomes between the rich and the poor in the post-pandemic world. The pandemic has accentuated the wider trend towards economic nationalism, with countries like the US and UK pulling out of major trade blocs. Developing countries are shut out of the richer markets of developed countries, leaving limited opportunities to gain from world trade, because of the rise of protectionism.

4. **Access to The Vaccine:** The World Health Organization kicked against vaccine nationalism, which means vaccines mostly distributed only to citizens of richer countries; countries that invested billions of dollars into the research. The result of advanced countries or richer countries reserving medical supplies or equipment for their own citizens rather than expanding or providing support to less developed countries is that, the less developed or poor countries end up with heavy costs, especially economically.

5. **Digital Divide:** The pandemic has increased the relevance of technology, giving many businesses the opportunity to operate digitally and allowing many people work from home unlike before. The shift to online technologies is an added advantage to countries like Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore. Citizens of these countries that are well educated and have access to internet have an advantage in this shift to online technologies like attending virtual meetings via zoom, skype, google meet or any other digital medium they choose as compared to many countries in sub-Saharan Africa that are still lagging behind in the digital race.

QUESTION 3: WHAT CHANGES NEED TO HAPPEN TO ACHIEVE REDUCED INEQUALITIES?

Rising inequality is not a natural cause or inevitable condition. It happens within and among countries. Certain elements like governmental policies, institutions, laws, norms, socio-cultural practices, government deficits, and the unequal distribution of power and wealth give rise to inequalities.

To achieve this goal of “reduced inequalities”, these few changes need to happen:

1. **Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger:** There must be greater efforts towards eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, and investing in education, social protection, and decent jobs for the youths, better health care systems as well as capacity building of people living in vulnerable communities or societies.

2. **Investing In Education:** Investing in education can help reduce poverty, improve health, enhance equality, promote rights and reduce crime. A crucial driver that enables these benefits is the link between education and income earnings. Education is a long-term and forward-looking investment. It is of the essence to look at what industries and sectors will remain relevant a decade from now when designing the school curriculum. Planning an educational institution requires a clear understanding of the “graduate profile” that the institution can prepare. In a dynamic market environment, a distinct organization is required to provide students with the set of soft skills and mindset development frameworks that make them ready for jobs that do not yet exist.

3. **Ensuring Equal Opportunities and Reducing Inequalities of outcome:** Reducing inequalities of outcome and ensuring equal opportunities is a major change towards achieving “reduced inequalities”. Reducing inequalities requires a transformative change and that change starts with all countries ensuring equal opportunities for all their citizens including equal distribution of income and equal access to education. The redistribution of wealth, capital and land equally to all citizens are indirect ways to reduce inequalities, because they will equalize the unearned income that derives from ownership.

4. **Eliminating Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices:** Eliminating discriminatory laws and policies, and encouraging and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action is a major step towards reducing inequalities of outcome and ensuring equal opportunity for all. The enactment of laws and policies and the involvement of people in the formulation of these policies should also be encouraged. People at the grassroots level are usually more conversant with issues affecting their communities. Hearing from such individuals, listening to initiatives proposed by the youths can give room to the government improving the areas brought to their attention through the introduction and implementation of new laws and policies.

Additionally, governments of nations should adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies which will eventually throw open the doorways to progressively achieve greater equality.

5. **Economic Inclusion:** Increasing economic inclusion, enhancing social services, ensuring social protection, creating decent work and higher outcome, increasing minimum wage, facilitating safe migration and mobility and tackling irregular migration; fostering pro-fiscal policies, and developing fair and transparent tax systems are all changes that need to take place in order to achieve this goal of reduced inequality.

6. **Building Assets for Working Families:** Building assets is one of the key drivers to help families move into the middle-age class and build a stable and prosperous economic future. It is key to economic mobility. Assets protects families against temporary setbacks and provides the foundation for investments to help families get ahead over the long term. Another advantage is that they can be passed on from one generation to the next, adding to a family's wealth.

Every nation has its own level of inequalities and as such can adopt the aforementioned changes in order to reduce their inequalities towards the achievement of the UN's global goal 10.

QUESTION 4: DO YOU THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE REDUCED INEQUALITIES AROUND THE WORLD? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Yes. I think it is possible to achieve reduced inequalities around the world because it has shifted from being a country's national debate to a global one. Confronting inequalities has moved to the forefront of many global policy debates and a consensus has emerged that all should enjoy equal access to services and opportunities; "Leave No One Behind" serves as the rallying cry of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Inequalities are not only driven and measured by income, but are determined by other factors - gender, age, origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class, and religion. These factors determine inequalities of opportunity that continue to persist, within and between countries. The UN making "*Reduced Inequalities*" one of their global goals is making many nations aware of the state of their nation's inequalities and providing *possible solutions* for global inequality that will ultimately lead to reduced inequalities.

Some Of These Solutions Include:

1. Access To Quality And Sustainable Education
2. Worldwide Support (Global Partnerships)
3. Financial Subsidies
4. Establishing Minimum Wages
5. Improving Workers' Rights
6. Increasing Incentives For Innovation
7. Global Wealth Tax
8. Creating Incentives For Firms To Locate Poor Areas

QUESTION 5: HOW CAN EDUCATION LEAD TO A WORLD WITH REDUCED INEQUALITIES?

Real progress on the global goals will be elusive unless all children receive quality education. Education is, among many things, a powerful social elevator. Investing in the development of higher education learning centers not only fosters social development and mobility, but also provides long-term positive returns. Education is at the heart of sustainable development, fighting violence, achieving more gender equality and boosting economic growth.

Education can lead to a world of reduced inequalities because:

1. It can help tackle gender disparities in wages, reproductive autonomy and political power.
2. It can help reduce poverty
3. It can help enhance gender equality because it enables girls and women to reach their full potential in parity with boys and men in their homes, communities, workplaces and institutions of influence.
4. It can reduce crime and promote the human rights of individuals.
5. It can dramatically improve the health outcomes for women and their children. The more educated mothers are, the healthier they and their children are. In other words, educated people are much less vulnerable to health risks.
6. It makes it possible to earn higher income.
7. When everyone has equal access to higher education, it can reduce wealth and income inequality.

A crucial driver that enables these benefits is the link between education and earnings. When people receive higher education and have good jobs, they get to earn higher income that can help reduce crime and prostitution, ultimately leading to a world of reduced inequalities.

QUESTION 6: HOW CAN EDUCATION IMPROVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY SO THAT THE NEXT GENERATION HAS THE TOOLS AND MINDSET TO OBTAIN REDUCED INEQUALITIES?

Education is an essential element of change in reducing inequalities. However, initiating such change must begin in our smaller communities by:

1. Creating awareness and empowering caregivers about the importance of education to the people
2. Ensuring that all persons have equal access to education
3. Providing books to Low-income Families
4. Making provision for scholarships to students who cannot afford to pay their tuition
5. Bridging the digital gap – in other words, closing the digital divide
6. Enabling access to literacy resources and tutors
7. Providing equitable funding for underfunded schools and making this a priority
8. Exposing individuals to free educational resources
9. Introducing vocational skills and trainings
10. Empowering them with the knowledge and skills of internet marketing, forex trading and other digital assets. These lifetime knowledge and skills can be transferred from one generation to the next and ultimately end poverty.

CONCLUSION

Extreme inequality is out of control. Hundreds of millions of people are living in extreme poverty while huge rewards go to those at the very top. There are more billionaires than ever before, and their fortunes have grown to record levels. Meanwhile, the worlds' poorest remain even poorer. According to Oxfam International, new billionaires are produced every 26 hours, as inequality contributes to the death of one person every four seconds. The ten (10) richest men in the world doubled their fortunes in pandemic while incomes of 99% of humanity fall.

Today's economic models have failed the world. Power is concentrated in the hands of a few, at the expense of the worlds' poorest and most marginalized. They have sustained multiple and interlinked forms of inequality that are the root cause of poverty and injustice. Across nations, regions and communities, people are denied the ability to shape their future. However, inequality is not inevitable. The tide is turning. We can achieve a better world. A world where women and girls have a voice and many people free from the shackles of poverty. A world where everyone has equal access to education and other opportunities so that we all can thrive. I believe this world is emerging.

Having a mindset that *“reduced inequalities”* is a goal that can be achieved by using education and technology as tools, is the first step towards change and the realization of the SDG 10 and the other global goals. Notwithstanding, the creation of NGOs, forming of partnerships and allies in order to empower communities to build lives for themselves, be resilient and protect their lives and livelihoods in times of crisis should be encouraged. This will foster lasting solutions in the fight of reducing inequalities that keep people locked in poverty and injustice, because it will help in tackling the systems and bring about change through genuine and durable campaigns and initiatives.

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