

INEQUALITY IS

Luis Mella Gajardo on inequality and inclusion

The mayor of Quillota, Chile, talks about the limited relationship between income and happiness and why inclusion is key to fighting inequality.

A conversation about inequality in all its forms.

Transcript begins.

LUIS MELLA GAJARDO: There's a graph that charts income and happiness. They grow together until a point. After that point, income goes up but happiness flatlines. That's when we have to begin sharing.

[Inequality is logo. A graphic black equal sign with an orange slash through it.
#InequalityIs. Luis Mella Gajardo, Mayor, Quillota, Chile. A Chilean man wearing a blue suit with a light pink dress shirt and dark pink tie.]

Living in one of the world's most unequal countries, we realized that if we only focused on living standards we were only measuring material wealth. Quillota is a town with a great project: the pursuit of happiness as the main objective for changing society. I'm going to explain that with an example of inclusion. I told my team that I wanted to go to the poorest and most marginalized school in my city. I thought they were going to ask me for computers, classrooms—big investments. I went prepared to do it and not to fail them. They said, "We want musical instruments so we can march in the parades like the private school kids." In short, we bought those instruments and a miracle occurred. The kids behaved better. They did better in school. Parents who hardly came to school showed up. And that school was just named one of the most improved schools in Chile, this decade. The kids were trying to tell us that they wanted to be seen by Quillota. They didn't want to be excluded any more, only able to watch, mere spectators of an event. They wanted to be the stars. At its core, inequality is not being seen. I believe social inclusion has to start there.

[Inequality Is Logo. Join the conversation. #InequalityIs.]

End of transcript.