

Annual Report 2024



UNU
IAS

10
YEARS

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Director's Message

This has been a special year for UNU-IAS, celebrating our 10th anniversary. It has been an honour to reflect on the institute's many achievements and lasting impacts in advancing global sustainability through policy-oriented research, education and capacity development.

During this decade UNU-IAS has evolved as an institute strategically promoting synergies between research disciplines, and between research and education. This focus on integrated solutions has been a distinctive feature across our activities — from contributions to key UN policy processes, to activities on the ground with local communities, to our unique master's and doctoral programmes. These approaches are needed now more than ever, if we are to achieve the interlinked goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and other key agendas.

We have leveraged our unique position to connect local sustainability efforts to the global policy agenda. Through far-reaching partnerships across the globe, the institute has mobilized knowledge from local communities to provide valuable evidence-based inputs to international policy processes. Our unique operating unit in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan (OUIK) has been developing a much-needed model for translating the global sustainability agenda into concrete local action.

UNU-IAS remains the only UNU institute with standalone postgraduate degree programmes. Since 2014 we have produced 150 master's and doctoral graduates from 44 different countries, who are now working at the forefront of sustainability efforts in governments, private companies, international organizations and academia.

In 2024 our institute continued to advance knowledge and enhance capacity for sustainability, contributing to international policy dialogue on climate change, sustainable development, education, biodiversity and water.

At the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP16) in Cali, Colombia we promoted landscape approaches and youth participation in decision-making, bringing two university students to join the discussion in person. Our events at the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku addressed integrated policymaking as well as youth engagement, featuring two high school students from Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan. UNU-IAS also contributed to COP16 of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh — the largest ever UN land conference. We advanced discussion on how landscape approaches can support more coherent policies and land use decisions.

This engagement of youth has become a strong focus for UNU-IAS, including two new projects that are training students in sustainability issues. Our Global Youth MIDORI (GYM) platform and Next-Generation Leader Development Program developed critical skills for making meaningful contributions to international policy processes, and supported students to participate in CBD COP16 and COP29 as part of the UNU-IAS delegation.

On behalf of UNU, in April UNU-IAS assumed a new role as co-chair of the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI) — an open partnership between the UN system and higher education to advance sustainable development. At the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York, we co-organized the 2024 HESI Global Forum, which explored the potential of emerging technologies to enhance sustainability efforts in higher education.

UNU-IAS further advanced policy dialogue on climate–SDG synergies, co-organizing a series of Expert Group Meetings in March with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UN Climate Change. Building on the outcomes, we presented research and policy recommendations at a Special Event of the HLPF focused on climate–SDG synergies.

The future of multilateral cooperation was at the top of the global agenda, as the UN Secretary-General convened the Summit of the Future in September.

UNU-IAS provided inputs on the evolving role of think tanks for the SDGs, as part of a side event organized by the Asian Development Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation. We advanced debate on key challenges facing the United Nations, organizing six sessions of the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), which was jointly hosted by UNU and the University of Tokyo in June.

UNU-IAS supported recovery from the Noto Peninsula Earthquake of 1 January 2024, building on the strong links developed by OUIK with local communities in the region. We held a special symposium in May that strengthened collaboration between stakeholders in the region and beyond. In August we organized the 40th UNU Global Seminar in Ishikawa Prefecture, with a focus on recovery and resilience-building after the earthquake.

Our MSc and PhD programmes were further strengthened with new courses on climate justice and the right to education, and on implementation of the Paris Agreement. A new fast-track scheme enables master's graduates from Sophia University to obtain a second master's degree at UNU-IAS in as little as one year. In June we launched Net Zero 101, a new e-learning course in collaboration with UNITAR, which has since attracted more than 17,000 enrolments. The free course introduces key concepts of climate science and practical steps for climate action.

The institute's publications included an updated version of our flagship toolkit for local resilience assessment and articles in prominent journals such as *Science of the Total Environment*, *Water*, *Sustainable Cities and Society*, and *Energy Reports*. Our policy briefs provided guidance on integrated action for climate and biodiversity, renewable energy uptake, business and biodiversity, and decarbonizing food systems. Outreach and communications activities engaged a growing audience through our website, social media channels, the monthly email newsletter UNU-IAS CONNECT and media commentary in prominent newspapers and magazines.



On behalf of everyone at UNU-IAS I am deeply grateful for the vital contributions of our partners and donors to these activities, and the many others featured in this report. Your support and collaboration have been pivotal to the institute's enduring impacts on global sustainability over the last decade.

This year, as we celebrated the many important achievements of UNU-IAS, we also began to chart a course for the next decade and beyond — both for the institute and for the world's pursuit of a more sustainable future. We are excited to embark on the next stage of this journey with you all.

Shinobu (Yume) Yamaguchi

Director, UNU-IAS

Across the Globe

Europe

Events

Brussels, BELGIUM
Dinslaken, GERMANY

Presentations & Lectures

Leuven, BELGIUM
Montpellier, FRANCE
Cambridge, UK

Africa

Events

Eldret, KENYA
Nairobi, KENYA

Presentations & Lectures

Nairobi, KENYA

Asia (other) & Oceania

Events

Baku, AZERBAIJAN
Nusa Dua, INDONESIA
Seoul, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
Bishkek, KYRGYZSTAN
Manila, PHILIPPINES
Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA
Colombo, SRI LANKA
Kandy, SRI LANKA
Abu Dhabi, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Research Fieldwork

Bodh Gaya, INDIA
Bacoar, PHILIPPINES
Balanga, PHILIPPINES
Ifugao, PHILIPPINES
Manila, PHILIPPINES

Presentations & Lectures

Baku, AZERBAIJAN
Hangzhou, CHINA
Hualien, CHINA
Macau, CHINA
Yangzhou, CHINA
Chandigarh, INDIA
Nusa Dua, INDONESIA
Seoul, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
Suwon, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
Luang Prabang, LAO PEOPLE'S
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Kuching, MALAYSIA
Kathmandu, NEPAL
Singapore, SINGAPORE
Bangkok, THAILAND
Pattaya, THAILAND
Abu Dhabi, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN

234
Activities

25
Countries

10,309
Event Participants

Japan

Events

Fukuoka
Kanazawa
Kyoto
Nagoya
Nanao
Nara
Nishinomiya
Noto
Okayama
Osaka
Sapporo
Sendai
Takamatsu
Tokyo
Yokohama

Research Fieldwork

Kanazawa
Minamisanriku
Nomi

Presentations & Lectures

Gifu City
Hayama
Kanazawa
Kitakyushu
Nanao
Okayama
Tokoname
Tokyo
Yokohama

Americas

Events

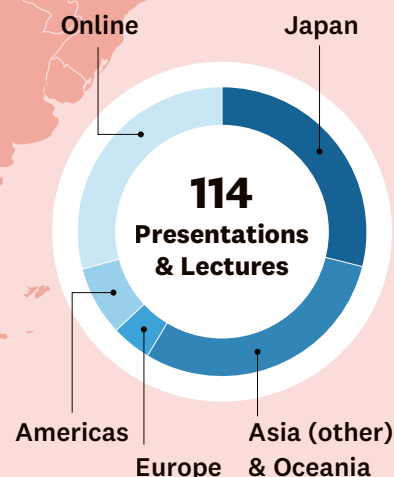
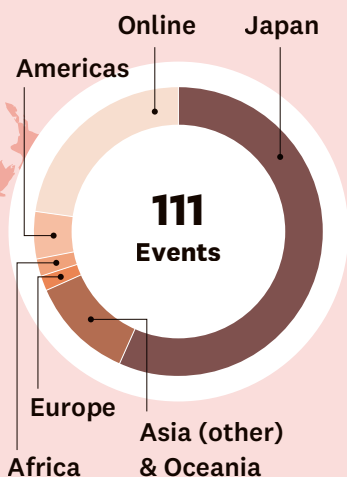
Cali, COLOMBIA
New York, USA

Research Fieldwork

Silvia, COLOMBIA

Presentations & Lectures

Beaupré, CANADA
Montreal, CANADA
New York, USA
Washington, DC, USA



Features

Synergies for Sustainability — 10 Years of UNU-IAS

In 2024 UNU-IAS celebrated its first decade of innovative policy-oriented research, education and capacity development. This work at the intersection of science, policymaking and the UN system has played an increasingly important role in building a more sustainable future for people and our planet.

A key insight from this first decade is the importance of synergies — across scientific disciplines, between research and education, and across all sectors of society. Overcoming the interlinked crises facing the globe will require innovative interventions and win-win solutions, as well as leaders who can think and act holistically.



To celebrate this milestone, UNU-IAS gathered its extended family of partners, supporters, staff and students for a special event on 19 June. It was held in the inspiring setting of Tokyo National Museum, in recognition of the deep links between culture and sustainability, as well as the museum's long history of international exchange. The symposium, **Synergies for Sustainability: Celebrating 10 Years of UNU-IAS**, discussed the institute's journey and evolution to date, and charted a course for the next decade and beyond. It celebrated the important contributions that UNU-IAS has made to sustainable development at all levels, leveraging its unique position to connect local sustainability efforts to the global policy agenda. The event also recognized the institute's many donors and partners, in particular the Government of Japan, whose generous support and collaboration has enabled and enhanced the work of UNU-IAS since its inception.

The first of two panel discussions, **Synergies: A Journey to Putting SDG Progress on Track**, proposed ways for UNU-IAS to enhance synergies for sustainability, such as stronger inter-institute collaboration, democratizing science through citizen and youth engagement, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge. Panelists agreed that building trust was the first step for effective partnerships between individuals, communities and organizations. The second discussion, **The Future of Sustainability in the Anthropocene: A Human Security Approach to Planetary Health and Well-being**, explored the deep and complex connections between people and the natural systems on which they depend. The human security approach holds strong potential for better understanding these connections and advancing policies that strengthen protections for all. The discussion identified opportunities and priorities for UNU-IAS to take on this challenge, emphasizing its role in nurturing the human capital that will drive sustainable development in the future.

Building on the outcomes of the 10th anniversary event, UNU-IAS advanced global debate on multilateralism and the evolving role of think tanks in international cooperation. UNU and the University of Tokyo jointly hosted the **Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Annual Meeting 2024** (Tokyo, 20–22 June). UNU-IAS organized six sessions, including one in collaboration with the UNU Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) and the UNU Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT), focused on psychological well-being and climate change. At the **Summit of the Future** UNU-IAS contributed to a

side event with 23 members of Think7 and Think20 — the official think tank engagement groups of the G7 and G20 (New York, 22 September). The discussion considered the difficulties facing multilateral cooperation on the SDGs and developed initiatives to strengthen collaboration with the Global South.

A Decade of Innovation, Collaboration and Impact

This special video, produced for the UNU-IAS 10th anniversary symposium, explored the institute's journey and achievements in its first decade. The video presents insights from the institute's extended family — a diverse group of current and former Directors, UNU leadership, researchers and students.

▶ [Watch the video](#)



Harnessing Synergies to Rescue the SDGs

On 6 July *The Japan News* published an op-ed by UNU-IAS Director Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi reflecting on the institute's 10th anniversary. It drew insights from a decade of UNU-IAS work leveraging synergies across scientific disciplines and all sectors of society to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The article urged leaders to place research and education at the centre of discussions at the Summit of the Future.



At a Glance — 2014–2024

1,075 public events

193 training courses

59 policy briefs

352 scientific journal articles

62 projects

420 staff from **46** countries

150 graduates from **44** countries*

50 postdoctoral fellows from **31** countries

* All graduates since UNU-IAS was inaugurated on 1 January 2014, integrating the degree programmes of two previous UNU institutes in Tokyo and Yokohama.





Features

Empowering Youth for Sustainability

Half of the world's population is 30 years old or younger — the largest generation of young people in history. It is their futures that are most threatened by the accelerating crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. But young people are not only victims. Across the globe, they are driving the urgent shift towards sustainability as change-makers, innovators and communicators.

Scaling up these efforts requires empowering children and youth, working with them as equals to incorporate their perspectives and solutions in policymaking. While young people are increasingly participating in global UN conferences, ensuring more meaningful engagement requires support to develop relevant skills, knowledge and resources.





Through a range of innovative capacity building initiatives, UNU-IAS is helping youth to play a more prominent role in sustainability efforts, both locally and globally. During 2024 the institute launched two new projects focused on youth empowerment.

The **Global Youth MIDORI (GYM) platform**, a collaboration with the AEON Environmental Foundation, provides training to youth and supports selected participants to attend and contribute to global conferences. It was launched with a joint press conference (Tokyo, 6 June), which underlined the massive potential of youth to develop solutions for biodiversity loss and other global challenges. A short training course (online, 4–7 August) engaged 18 young participants from eight countries, culminating in a speech contest that selected two students to participate in the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference in Cali, Colombia (CBD COP16; 21 October – 1 November) and contribute to global discussions on biodiversity. As part of the GYM Platform, a side event at the International Youth Conference on Biodiversity (Yokohama, 31 August) discussed how to unlock the potential of young people in addressing global challenges, featuring several GYM participants.

UNU-IAS also initiated the **Next-Generation Leader Development Program**, led by its Operating Unit Ishikawa / Kanazawa (OUIK). It aims to support youth to develop innovative solutions for local challenges and contribute to a sustainable future for Kanazawa, Japan. The programme provided 13 high school students with training in local and global environmental issues, and

critical skills for research and presentations. Two of the students were selected to join the UNU-IAS delegation to the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP29) in Baku, where they presented in a UNU-IAS event focused on youth empowerment and engaged in several other events.

A debrief event in Tokyo (14 December) brought together students from both initiatives to share their experiences and the insights they had gained from participating in international conferences. The event, **CBD COP16 & UNFCCC COP29 Debrief: Youth Empowerment for Biodiversity & Climate**, emphasized the need to engage youth from the earliest stages of policymaking, and overcome challenges related to career development and intergenerational cooperation.

UNU-IAS further supported youth empowerment for the SDGs by co-hosting the **Ninth Japan Youth Environmental Activity Contest and Forum** (Tokyo, 3–4 February), with the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ) and the Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency, Japan (ERCA), engaging 100 students from 16 high schools across Japan to share their solutions to local and global environmental issues. The UNU-IAS Director's Award was presented to the “Flora Hunters” team, a group of students from Nakui Agricultural High School in Aomori Prefecture. Their winning presentation focused on building a hydroponic cultivation system that saved water by improving containers and adjusting spraying time.

Through the **SDG–Universities Platform** UNU-IAS continued to support and strengthen collaboration between Japanese universities for the SDGs. The 2024 SDG–UP Public Symposium (Tokyo, 29 March) discussed the sustainability initiatives of member universities and how they could further advance the SDGs through education, research and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Students from participating universities, such as Keio University, Ryukoku University and Osaka University, presented their sustainability activities. Seven SDG–UP Workshops were organized, and the platform’s activities and recommendations were shared in the publications *Advancing Sustainability in Higher Education* and *Roles and Responsibilities of University Management toward a Sustainable Society*.

RCE Youth Art Challenge Exhibition: From Waste to Art

UNU-IAS organized this exhibition (Tokyo, 29 March – 30 May) showcasing winning artworks from the 2023 RCE Youth Art Challenge. Created by young people from around the world, the pieces aimed to inspire others to use resources more efficiently and reduce waste, as well as highlight individual and community action on SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production). They included a range of mediums, such as craftwork, paintings, sculptures and digital art, with some using locally sourced waste. The exhibition attracted more than 2,800 visitors.



Photo: “Mwaura (waste picker)”
by Evans Maina Nguni



“Youth voices must not just be heard but they need to be incorporated in the decision-making processes. Empowering them with the skills and scientific knowledge enhances their meaningful participation in the international decision-making processes, and makes decisions more impactful and inclusive.”

Mei Maruyama
Programme Coordinator

Read more:

Governance for Climate Change & Sustainable Development ► pg. 18

Biodiversity & Society ► pg. 20

Innovation & Education ► pg. 24

Capacity Development & Training ► pg. 26

Features

Building Resilience to Disasters & Climate Change

Disasters are becoming more frequent and severe as global warming rises beyond 1.5°C. Every year millions of people are displaced by extreme weather events, earthquakes and other disasters. In addition to the steep human and economic costs, this is undermining sustainable development and exacerbating inequalities within and between countries.

There is an urgent need to build resilience to such hazards, reducing people's exposure and vulnerability to harm. Investing in

resilience creates jobs and saves money — for infrastructure, every dollar invested can save six dollars. But social and ecological resilience is equally important to build a safe future for communities. A problem-oriented approach is crucial, combining science and evidence from the natural and social sciences, engineering, the humanities and beyond.



On 1 January 2024, the Noto Peninsula in Japan was struck by a powerful earthquake that resulted in the loss of many lives, evacuations and damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. UNU-IAS has been working closely with communities in the region for many years, including some of those most severely impacted by the disaster. The institute's Operating Unit Ishikawa / Kanazawa (OUIK) conducts research and education initiatives on Noto Peninsula focused on sustainable landscape management, agricultural heritage and localizing the SDGs.

Building on these activities, UNU-IAS launched several special initiatives to support efforts to overcome the disaster. The symposium **Supporting the Recovery of Noto Peninsula** (Tokyo, 11 May) brought together experts and stakeholders to share diverse perspectives and action plans for recovery. It considered relevant lessons from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, and fostered collaboration across generations and sectors, and between the local and international communities. The event highlighted the importance of integrating the SDGs, youth leadership and traditional knowledge into recovery plans. Reflecting OUIK activities, it emphasized that the region's strengths must be leveraged for recovery by utilizing the resources of *satoyama* and *satoumi* — sustainable landscapes and seascapes. The symposium was featured in several newspapers based in the Hokuriku and Tohoku regions of Japan.

OUIK **research and policy engagement on the Noto Peninsula Earthquake**, including the importance of well water use in disaster resilience, has helped to integrate the biodiversity and SDGs agendas into recovery policies, as well as amplifying youth perspectives.

The unit's research has recorded significant post-earthquake ecological changes, including expanded beaches and new habitats for wildlife, highlighting their importance as resources for recovery. UNU-IAS also strengthened understanding of resilience through the **40th UNU Global Seminar** (Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan; 21–24 August), which engaged 21 participants from Japan and five other countries. With a focus on integrating traditional knowledge and nature-based solutions, it shared knowledge and lessons from recovery efforts in Noto Peninsula and activities at Mount Hakusan, which is designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and World Geopark.



UNU-IAS presented research findings on the gender-related impacts of climate change and disasters at the **Moral Money Summit Japan: Unlocking Opportunities for a Greener and Fairer World** (Tokyo, 8 February), organized by Financial Times Live and Nikkei Inc. Policy recommendations were shared for ensuring education for climate-displaced populations, and expanding the participation of women and girls in climate action.



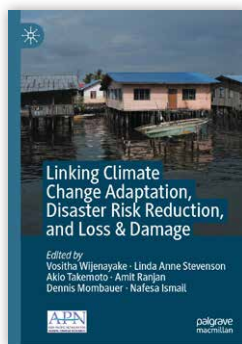
Indicators of Resilience in Socio-ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes



UNU-IAS published an updated version of this flagship toolkit, which helps local communities to assess their resilience and develop strategies for sustainable landscape management. It supports adaptive management of areas where people and nature interact closely, and contribute to maintaining biodiversity and producing

goods and services. The toolkit contains 20 indicators that provide a framework for communities to discuss and analyse resilience through a collaborative process.

Linking Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Loss & Damage



Featuring case studies from South and South-East Asia, this book deepens understanding on loss and damage, and its interlinkages with climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. It provides guidance on how to incorporate the issue of loss and damage into national and local policy processes. The book was produced through

collaboration between the Asia-Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN) and SLYCAN Trust, and published by Palgrave Macmillan Singapore.

"We can learn many lessons from the local community's response to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake. Strong community ties and a system of locally producing food, water and energy have a strong impact in building resilience and a sustainable society."

Sayako Koyama

Research Associate



Read more:

Governance for Climate Change & Sustainable Development ► pg. 18

Biodiversity & Society ► pg. 20

Capacity Development & Training ► pg. 26

Research & Policy Development

UNU-IAS generates interdisciplinary scientific knowledge to inform policymaking, advancing the global effort to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Our research and policy development activities address specific goals as well as the interconnections between them, helping to translate the global agenda into action at the regional, national and local levels. Combining in-house expertise with a diverse network of partner institutions, UNU-IAS bridges the developing and developed worlds, and strengthens the links between science and policy that will be critical for achieving the SDGs.

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Governance for Climate Change & Sustainable Development

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

2024 UN Climate Change Conference

UNU-IAS contributed to COP29 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Baku through a series of events, policy inputs and media commentary (11–24 November). In collaboration with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UNU-IAS organized a side event focused on overcoming fragmented policymaking (15 November), which called for integrating the SDGs into the national climate plans (NDCs) due in 2025. The event presented UNU-IAS research on sustainable landscape management, together with research by other UNU institutes.

A UNU event at the Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB) Hub focused on meaningful youth participation in addressing global environmental challenges (19 November). It featured diverse youth perspectives, including those of two high school students participating in a new UNU-IAS youth empowerment initiative, the Next-Generation Leader Development Program (see pg. 12). The students outlined their engagement in climate action and the messages that they would bring back from COP29. Other UNU-IAS activities included an event at the SDG Pavilion and several media articles (see pg. 33). The institute's experts also featured in events at the Indigenous Peoples Pavilion, the Thailand Pavilion and the Qatar Pavilion.



POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Climate & SDG Synergies

During 2024 UNU-IAS continued to advance global policy dialogue on this crucial topic. The institute co-organized a series of Expert Group Meetings that were co-convened by UN DESA and UN Climate Change (UNFCCC Secretariat) in Tokyo (4–6 March), bringing together more than 60 climate and development experts. The meetings identified challenges and opportunities for accelerating progress on SDG 13 (climate action) while ensuring co-benefits and synergies with other SDGs. A public symposium on 6 March highlighted best practices, underlining the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships and people-centred climate action. It was organized by UNU-IAS, the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ) and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES).

UNU-IAS subsequently contributed to a Special Event of the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) focused on climate–SDG synergies (New York, 16 July). As part of a discussion on the topic Seeking Synergy Solutions and the Role of Knowledge and Data and Cities to Accelerate Climate and SDGs in Synergy, UNU-IAS presented research findings and policy recommendations on the unique role of cities in synergistic solutions.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Mayors Academy for Sustainable Urban Development

UNU-IAS has been strengthening leadership for sustainable urban development in the Asia-Pacific region through this initiative since 2019, in collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN-Habitat and other partners. It builds a network of mayors to foster city-to-city collaboration and peer learning opportunities. UNU-IAS delivered 10 online training courses to 27 participants as part of the fifth edition of the academy, with 11 mayors graduating at a ceremony in Bangkok (29 November).

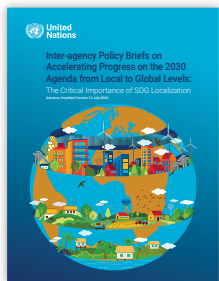
POLICY ENGAGEMENT

UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration

UNU-IAS contributed to the 23rd Session of the CEPA (15–19 April) at UN headquarters in New York — a technical advisory body for improving governance and public administration for development. The session focused on the theme New Governance Insights to Advance the SDGs and Eradicate Poverty. UNU-IAS provided evidence-based inputs focused on strengthening the circular economy, leveraging the insurance sector's ability to mitigate climate risks and harmonizing climate policies with socio-economic policies. These inputs were reflected in the official report on the session, which was recognized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC; resolution E/2024/L.14).

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Localizing the 2030 Agenda



Supporting efforts to achieve the SDGs, UNU-IAS advanced knowledge and effective models for localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The institute's research was included in the UN publication Inter-agency Policy Briefs on Accelerating Progress on the 2030 Agenda from

Local to Global Levels: The Critical Importance of SDG Localization (July), which addresses topics such as data and monitoring, multilevel governance, climate action synergies and resource circularity. A workshop on SDG localization was organized by UNU-IAS and the UNU Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) in Brussels (18–19 September), discussing how to adapt the goals to specific regions and communities while aligning with national and global frameworks.

In Japan, UNU-IAS youth empowerment initiatives helped to build capacity and expand opportunities for young people to support the 2030 Agenda (see pg. 12). The institute's Operating Unit Ishikawa / Kanazawa (OUIK) has been implementing a project on Sustainable Urban Nature, which supports efforts by Kanazawa City to achieve SDG 11 (sustainable cities & communities), SDG 15 (life on land), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). Participatory research in Kikugawa, Kanazawa engaged local residents in conservation and revitalization of abandoned spaces through planting, biodiversity monitoring and creating community gardens. OUIK also contributed to integrating the SDGs into the recovery process after the Noto Peninsula Earthquake (see pg. 15).

PUBLICATION

Bridging Science & Policy for Integrated Action on Climate & Biodiversity



This UNU-IAS Policy Brief (No. 45, 2024) provides recommendations for transformative, science-based governance to enhance climate–biodiversity synergies at the global, national and local levels. It provides advice on bridging the science–policy gap by leveraging institutional infrastructure and governance mechanisms.

PUBLICATION

Renewable Energy in Caribbean Small Island Developing States

Drawing on research in Barbados, this UNU-IAS Policy Brief (No. 46, 2024) addresses the challenges of transitioning to renewable energy sources in small island developing states. It offers recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to ensure a reliable and sustainable energy supply to support future development and resilience against climate change (full title: Fostering Renewable Energy Uptake in Caribbean Small Island Developing States: Insights from Barbados).

PUBLICATION

Decarbonizing Food Systems

Analysing policies implemented by the Group of 20 (G20) countries, this UNU-IAS Policy Brief (No. 48, 2024) provides recommendations for reducing food-related greenhouse gas emissions. It identifies practical approaches for both developed and developing countries to decarbonize food systems with a focus on post-production measures, including processing, transport, packaging, retail, consumption and end-of-life stages (full title: Decarbonizing Food Systems through International Food Trade and Post-production Management).



Biodiversity & Society

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

16th COP of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification

The largest ever UN land conference (UNCCD COP16) was held in Riyadh (2–13 December), with a focus on land restoration, drought resilience and sustainable land management. UNU-IAS organized two side events, highlighting integrated landscape approaches (10 December) and their role in bridging environmental and development policies (11 December). The discussions emphasized the work of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI; see across) in promoting socio-ecological resilience, balancing diverse landscape values and aligning local actions with broader policy goals.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

2024 UN Biodiversity Conference

UNU-IAS played a prominent role at the 16th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Cali, Colombia (21 October – 1 November). Building on the landmark Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted in 2022, the conference concluded with the creation of a new mechanism for benefit-sharing from the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources, and formal recognition of Indigenous Peoples and people of African descent as stewards of nature.



A series of UNU-IAS events at COP16 highlighted community-led biodiversity conservation, landscape approaches and youth engagement, and promoted the institute's updated toolkit for assessing ecosystem resilience (see pg. 16). A session on the Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS) programme, which supports community-led initiatives for the sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources, showcased successful community-driven biodiversity initiatives (30 October). Another event focused on integrating landscape approaches into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to enhance implementation of the GBF (22 October). UNU-IAS also emphasized the role of youth in biodiversity action, providing a platform for young leaders to share experiences and discuss ways to strengthen youth participation in global decision-making (see pg. 12).

UNU-IAS also contributed to CBD meetings in Nairobi (13–29 May). A side event of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 26) highlighted multi-stakeholder collaboration in implementing landscape approaches and disseminated a UNU-IAS Policy Brief on sustainable business practices for biodiversity (see across). At the 4th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 4), UNU-IAS organized a side event on implementing Target 18 of the GBF, which requires CBD Parties to reform incentives and subsidies.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

National Biodiversity Planning

UNU-IAS supported CBD Parties in developing NBSAPs, which are critical for GBF implementation. The institute co-hosted a regional dialogue for South and East Asia that facilitated mutual learning for updating and revising NBSAPs in alignment with the GBF (Tokyo, 23–26 January).

PARTNERSHIP

International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI)

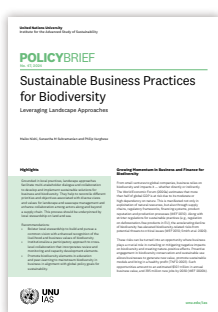
Through this partnership UNU-IAS advances human–environment solutions to accelerate transformational change toward living in harmony with nature. As its secretariat, the institute engages more than 330 IPSI members worldwide — from national governments and multilateral development banks to Indigenous community organizations and private companies. UNU-IAS research mobilizes knowledge from this diverse network to provide evidence-based inputs to international policy processes under the CBD, and advance implementation of the GBF.

During 2024 UNU-IAS drew upon knowledge from the IPSI network to produce both academic and policy-oriented publications, including an updated set of resilience indicators for socio-ecological landscapes and seascapes (SEPLS; see pg. 16). To update this toolkit, which was originally published in 2012, UNU-IAS reflected extensive experience from implementation by IPSI members and partners to enhance the accessibility and usability of the indicators at the community level. The indicators were presented at the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference (see across) and through an online workshop for national country teams, organized with the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP; implemented by UNDP).

An IPSI funding initiative, the Satoyama Development Mechanism (SDM), supported five projects implemented by members of the partnership during 2024 in Argentina, Ghana, India and Sri Lanka. SDM provides seed funding for organizations working on the ground with local stakeholders to address biodiversity and human livelihood issues in SEPLS. Five new projects were selected to be implemented in Benin, Colombia, Ecuador, the Philippines and Uganda.

PUBLICATION

Sustainable Business Practices for Biodiversity



This UNU-IAS Policy Brief (No. 47, 2024) draws from first-hand experiences managing SEPLS, providing insights on how landscape approaches can promote biodiversity-friendly business through local stewardship, cross-level collaboration and peer learning.

PUBLICATION

Advancing Forest Landscape Restoration in the Tropics



Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) is a holistic approach to rejuvenate degraded forest landscapes and improve human well-being. This policy report explores the advances made in FLR in the tropics and analyses 14 FLR projects funded by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). The report

highlights challenges in implementing FLR and how gender has been addressed.

PROJECT

Community Development & Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS)

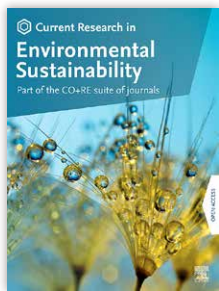
This flagship project of IPSI promotes sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources within local communities through small-scale financing, providing grants to local organizations. In its fourth phase (2023–2028) the project aims to support sustainability and sound biodiversity management, governance and sustainable livelihood activities with local communities in 15 countries: Bhutan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ghana, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Nepal, Peru, Samoa, Tanzania, Türkiye, Uganda, and Viet Nam.

Outcomes from the project were shared through a side event of the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF; New York, 17 July). It focused on the role of COMDEKS in achieving the SDGs and key targets of the GBF, including those on inclusive ecosystem restoration and protected area management. The event featured the experiences of local practitioners from Cameroon, Peru and Türkiye in implementing COMDEKS projects. COMDEKS is implemented by UNDP, with funding from the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ) and the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF), and co-financing from GEF.

Water & Resource Management

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

World Water Forum



UNU-IAS co-organized a side event of the 10th World Water Forum (WWF) in Bali, Indonesia which shared insights by young researchers and practitioners on improving urban water security (23 May). Held at the Japan Pavilion, the event discussed enhancing water security in cities in Asia, focusing on societal resilience,

economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. A panel discussion featured insights on water security in three locations in Asia: Southern Bali, Indonesia; Manila, Philippines; and Colombo, Sri Lanka. Panelists noted the importance of protecting natural ecosystems such as wetlands, promoting technology and innovation, and strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration and international partnerships. The event was organized by UNU-IAS in partnership with the Institute of Future Initiatives (IFI) at the University of Tokyo.

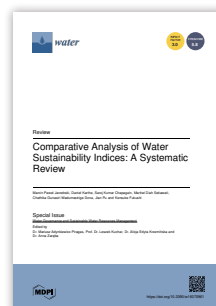
PROJECT

Redesigning Wastewater Treatment System Using the Circular Economy Approach

This project examines how the environmental and economic profiles of wastewater treatment systems differ in linear and circular economies. Wastewater treatment is a cross-cutting issue with impacts in all three domains of sustainability: environment, economy and society. The project seeks to determine whether a hybrid decentralized wastewater treatment system can effectively address the challenges revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as unbalanced socio-economic impacts. It applies the circular economy approach, whose adoption in the water sector has been accelerating. (Full title: Redesigning Wastewater Treatment System Using Circular Economy Approach: Sustainable Solutions towards Post-COVID Recovery.)

PUBLICATION

Comparative Analysis of Water Sustainability Indices: A Systematic Review



This scientific journal article provides insights on tools for monitoring and evaluating the impact of water resource management, examining their applications and potential contributions to water sustainability. It reveals the diverse landscape of existing indices, illustrating significant

differences in scope and methodology. Through a systematic review of 124 publications, the study identifies six distinct types of indices, highlighting the need for careful consideration in selecting tools that are appropriate for each situation. The article was published in the highly-ranked journal *Water*.



PUBLICATION

Assessing Determinants, Challenges and Perceptions to Adopting Water-saving Technologies among Agricultural Households in Semi-arid States of India

This article examines key factors impacting the adoption of water-saving irrigation technologies (drip and sprinklers) in the semi-arid states of India. Its findings underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to conserve water and enhance livelihoods. The article calls for integration of joint farming practices, water-sharing methods, supportive financial policies such as subsidies and accessible credit facilities, and the implementation of sustainable government social schemes. It was published in the open-access journal *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability*.

PUBLICATION

Coastal Flood Risk Prediction using AI

Published in the journal *Hydrology*, this article explores the potential of geospatial AI (GeoAI) to enhance prediction of coastal flood occurrence. Conventional prediction methods often overlook critical geographic features, underscoring the need for accurate risk prediction to ensure resilience. The study applied GeoAI to the case of El Salvador and found that it outperformed other models. It predicted a significant increase in floods by 2100 and highlighted the need for natural solutions such as mangroves to enhance coastal resilience (full title: Advancing Coastal Flood Risk Prediction Utilizing a GeoAI Approach by Considering Mangroves as an Eco-DRR Strategy).





Innovation & Education

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI)

In 2024–2025, UNU is co-chairing the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), an open partnership between the UN system and higher education institutions to advance sustainable development. At the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York, UNU-IAS co-organized the 2024 HESI Global Forum (15 July), which explored the potential of emerging technologies to enhance sustainability efforts in higher education. A multi-stakeholder panel discussed how emerging technologies such as AI could advance the SDGs, innovative teaching and learning practices, visioning the future of higher education and strengthening partnerships.



PARTNERSHIP

Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs)

This network comprises nearly 200 RCEs across the world — local hubs promoting education for sustainable development through multi-stakeholder collaboration. UNU-IAS supports and coordinates these efforts as the network's secretariat, scaling up its knowledge and best practices to advance the global ESD agenda. Seven new RCEs joined the network during 2024. UNU-IAS supported regional RCE Meetings for Africa (Eldoret, Kenya; 28–30 August), the Americas (online; 4–6 June and 24–26 September), Asia and the Pacific (Bishkek; 12–15 September) and Europe (Dinslaken, Germany; 27–29 August).

Youth empowerment is a key focus for the network.

The annual RCE Awards established a new category for youth-led projects, which recognized eight projects initiated and led by youth. Their diverse themes included gamification of ESD, community engagement, sustainable gardening and agriculture, waste management and safeguarding indigenous languages. RCE Regional Youth Coordinators played an instrumental leadership role in their respective regions. Other youth activities included the Japan RCE Youth Meeting (Yokohama, 16–17 February), which led to publication of the guidebook *Sustainable Yokohama – A Guide by RCE Youth Members*, and an International Youth Day Webinar (online, 23 August).

PARTNERSHIP

Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education & Research Network (ProSPER.Net)

As the secretariat of this network UNU-IAS leads collaboration by 60 higher education institutions in Asia and the Pacific through joint research projects and integrating sustainable development into postgraduate curriculums. Five new members joined the network during 2024, from Japan and Malaysia.

The ProSPER.Net — Sustainable Development Solutions Network Philippines Sustainability Forum focused on circular economy (Manila, 25 September). It was organized with ProSPER.Net members in the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University. The ProSPER.Net Young Researchers' School was conducted in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic (Colombo & Kandy, Sri Lanka; 26–22 December). In collaboration with the University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), it brought together 14 young scholars to learn about nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and develop innovative research proposals.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

UNU Macau AI Conference 2024

UNU-IAS contributed to this conference in collaboration with UN agencies and other UNU institutes (Macau, China; 24–25 April), leading the session Integrating Data to Ensure Inclusive Education of Climate Change Displaced Population. Engaging experts on education policy, AI-generated data, human mobility and climate change, it explored the potential of AI to enhance data-informed decision-making to ensure education for people displaced by climate change. In the session A Gender Equality Perspective on Responsible AI, UNU-IAS also provided recommendations on the opportunities and risks of AI from a gender perspective.

POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Geneva Human Rights Dialogue on the Right to Education

UNU-IAS contributed to the 4th edition of this annual policy dialogue organized by the Swiss Commission for UNESCO (Geneva, 18–19 June). It engaged UN agencies and academia to formulate strategies and solutions to guarantee the right to education for all. UNU-IAS presented research findings on the right to education of populations displaced by climate change, calling for integration of climate change data and education data to enable governments to make data-informed decisions.

EVENT

19th International Conference on Waste Management and Technology

UNU-IAS co-chaired a session of the 19th International Conference on Waste Management and Technology (Hangzhou, China; 18–20 May), focusing on SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production). Members of the RCE and ProSPER.Net networks presented on community-based action and engagement for waste and pollution management, and on integrating circular economy awareness and practices in tertiary education.

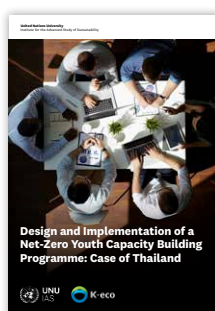
PUBLICATION

A Systematic Review of Climate Change Literacy Assessment Methods

This article in the *Journal of Environmental Education* reviews global trends in defining and assessing climate change literacy for adults. It recommends establishing a globally comprehensive and locally relevant set of climate change literacy and detailed assessment of them to inform the design of climate change education.

PUBLICATION

Action for Climate Empowerment



In March UNU-IAS published the report *Design and Implementation of a Net-Zero Youth Capacity Building Programme: Case of Thailand*. It provides guidance on developing capacity building programmes for youth focused on decarbonization, including a training programme design.

The report is based on pilot implementation of a competency framework that UNU-IAS developed for youth net-zero training in 2023. UNU-IAS further supported climate empowerment through the e-learning course *Net Zero 101: What, Why and How*, launched in June (see pg. 26).

PROJECT

AI and Sustainable Development in Higher Education

This new project is creating a knowledge commons on how higher education can navigate AI and sustainable development. It builds on three UNU-led networks: HESI, ProSPER.Net and the UNU SDG–Universities Platform (SDG–UP; see pg. 13) to leverage their global reach and impact, contributing to global policy discussions at the nexus of sustainability, AI and higher education. It facilitates knowledge sharing through the HESI Action Group on the Futures of Higher Education and AI (see across). As part of this action group, in January 2025 UNU-IAS launched the new podcast *AI and Sustainability*, which explores the intersection of AI, higher education and sustainability.



Capacity Development & Training

40th UNU Global Seminar

This seminar series has been organized by UNU since 1985, with the aim of enhancing awareness among students about contemporary global issues and the role of the United Nations in addressing them. With the support of MEXT and the Japan Foundation for the United Nations University (jfUNU), the 40th session was held in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan (21–24 August), engaging 21 researchers and students from Japan and five other countries. It explored innovation in sustainable development by learning from ongoing disaster recovery and resilience-building efforts after the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake. The seminar examined local initiatives in Kanazawa, Noto and Hakusan, with a focus on integrating traditional knowledge and nature-based solutions. These include creative disaster recovery and prevention, conservation, restoration and sustainable utilization of urban nature. Participants also learned about biodiversity conservation and sustainable development through activities at the Mount Hakusan UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Hakusan Todorigawa UNESCO Global Geopark.

Net Zero 101: What, Why and How

This free e-learning course introduces key concepts of climate science and practical steps that individuals can take for climate action. It was developed by UNU-IAS in collaboration with UNITAR. Launched in June, the course attracted more than 15,000 enrolments by the end of the year, with more than 8,000 certificates issued.

The course is designed for anyone who wishes to develop a foundational understanding of climate change and net zero, requiring no prior knowledge of climate science. Learners earn a digital certificate from UNU-IAS upon successful completion of the course. The course is delivered through the One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC:Learn) platform, an initiative led by UNITAR. It has also been shared through other learning resource hubs such as SDG:Learn and the SEAMEO Resource Centre. The course was developed by UNU-IAS as part of its K-eco Global Net Zero Partnership (K-GNP) Project, with support from the Ministry of Environment of Japan and the Korea Environment Corporation (K-eco), Government of the Republic of Korea.



Enhancing Greenhouse Gas Reduction through Effective NDCs

This workshop trained officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam on translating nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for climate action into implementation plans and programmes (Seoul, 4–8 November). It addressed issues including equity and climate justice in climate action, circular economy approaches and the Joint Crediting Mechanism, and discussed how to develop equitable, inclusive and impactful climate policies and mitigation plans. The workshop was organized by UNU-IAS and the Korea Environment Corporation (K-eco).



Global Leadership Training Programme in Africa (GLTP)

This initiative facilitates knowledge exchange between Japan and Africa to contribute towards solving sustainable development challenges on the continent. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic UNU-IAS redesigned GLTP as an online intensive course in collaboration with New York University and the University of Johannesburg, first implemented in 2021. In 2024 the course was delivered to 22 participants from 12 countries (online, 31 January – 8 March), with a focus on leadership engagement in diverse fields ranging from health, education and technology to democratization and human rights. A total of 11 experts provided lectures, followed by group work and discussions.

Grant for Global Sustainability (GGS)

This initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), builds collaboration with research and educational institutions in Japan to contribute to the 2030 Agenda. In the current phase GGS projects are focused on collaborative, policy-oriented research with diverse stakeholders including Japanese universities and the private sector, as well as UNU-IAS. In 2024 two projects were implemented: (i) Analysis and Curriculum Development toward Inclusive Carbon Neutral Society, and (ii) AI and Sustainable Development in Higher Education.

JSPS-UNU Postdoctoral Fellowship

This initiative provides young scholars and policymakers, especially those from the developing world, with opportunities to pursue advanced research and training aligned with the thematic areas of UNU-IAS. The 24-month fellowships are jointly organized by UNU-IAS and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). Fellows participate in UNU-IAS lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences, and benefit from the institute's close links with key universities and think tanks in Japan and around the world. During 2024 fellows conducted research on a wide range of topics including circular economy, water management in South-East Asia, gender mainstreaming in Indigenous rights education, environmental education for students with disabilities and sustainable value chains.

International Seminar Series on Sustainability

This seminar engaged 39 high school students from across Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan in lectures, presentations and interactive sessions (Tokyo, 8–9 February). Students learned about the work of UNU-IAS and explored a variety of topics related to sustainability while developing their English comprehension and presentation skills. The seminar was organized in collaboration with jfUNU and Ibaraki Prefectural Board of Education.

Postgraduate Education

UNU-IAS educates the policymakers and researchers of tomorrow through postgraduate degrees and courses that develop the knowledge and adaptive capabilities needed for a more sustainable global future. The institute offers master's and PhD degree programmes, and short intensive courses conducted in collaboration with leading universities in Japan and other countries.

Students and fellows benefit from the unique learning environment of a global university within the UN system, with access to leading scholars and practitioners, as well as international events. Active engagement in UNU-IAS research projects develops applied skills, while networks and partner institutions provide opportunities for field experience in developing countries. The institute's location in central Tokyo, at the heart of the city's international community, brings a wide variety of enriching educational opportunities and cultural experiences.

A range of scholarships are provided to support outstanding students, from the Japan Foundation for the UNU (jfUNU), the UNU Rector's Office, UNU-IAS, Asian Development Bank and Resona Bank. Academic cooperation and student exchange agreements enable the transfer of credits with the University of Tokyo (UTokyo), International Christian University (ICU) and

Sophia University. Through these schemes UNU-IAS students have access to 572 relevant courses at partner universities. UNU-IAS has also been implementing joint diploma programmes with Sophia University and UTokyo. A new fast-track initiative was established in February, enabling applicants who hold a master's degree from Sophia University to obtain an MSc at UNU-IAS in as little as one year.

Since September 2023 UNU-IAS has been delivering a new Diploma Programme for Specialization on the Paris Agreement, which strengthens national capacity to implement the Paris Agreement on climate change. It includes an intensive practicum course, which is also available to external students. During 2024 the practicum participants included students from developing and emerging economies, as well as professionals from the private sector and international organizations.

In April a new course on Climate Justice and the Right to Education was launched, providing students with an overview of trends and current issues related to migration and displacement in the context of climate change, with a focus on climate justice and human rights.

24 students from **17** countries

71% from developing countries

54% female, **46%** male

62% supported by scholarships



Learning Journeys

The diverse student body of UNU-IAS reflects the institute's global focus, and its aim of making a strong and lasting impact in local communities and around the world. Below, three students describe in their own words how studying at UNU-IAS is advancing their learning journeys towards careers as sustainability leaders.



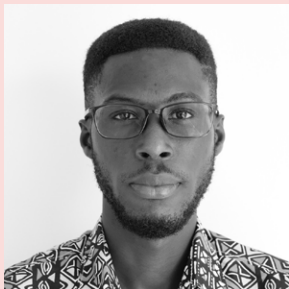
Ai Iwamoto

MSc Graduate, Japan

"My studies at UNU-IAS focused on coastal management in Japan in the context of human security. I thought UNU-IAS was the right place, because sustainability issues cannot be tackled by one country. We must tackle them together as humankind, which is what the UN was already trying to do.

It was very eye-opening to interact with students from completely different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. My supervisor helped me to become a good academic and I had the chance to interact with and study at other universities that are part of the UNU-IAS network — some of the best educational institutes in Japan.

Everything I learned at UNU-IAS is helping me at work — from applying the fundamental concepts of sustainability science, to leveraging international frameworks to address sustainability issues."



Isaac Nevis Fianoo

MSc Graduate, Ghana

"Growing up in Ghana, I witnessed firsthand the challenges of balancing development with environmental conservation. These concerns sparked my interest in sustainability and the need for comprehensive solutions that promote both human well-being and ecological resilience. The Master of Science in Sustainability programme at UNU-IAS appealed to me because of its transdisciplinary approach. The program aligned with my interests, and it offered the opportunity to contribute to real solutions in Ghana and beyond.

The lecturers are highly approachable and always eager to help, and the environment is very conducive to learning and research. We have access to other universities, providing the opportunity to meet like-minded people and learn from others."



Husna Kipsoi

MSc Graduate, Kenya

"Given my interests in peace and security, and human security, I saw the programme's potential to enrich my understanding and shape me into a better practitioner who is accurately grounded in the present and astutely considerate of the future.

With UNU-IAS specifically, I was captivated by the breadth of environmental considerations embedded in its research across the thematic areas. Coming from an incredibly biodiverse country and continent, I also saw it as a good opportunity to expand my skill set to better protect and conserve our environment and be a better steward of it.

I intend to work in the fields of peace and security, human security, and environmental conservation in field-based, research and policy roles. I feel that studying at UNU-IAS prepared me for this path."

Knowledge Transfer & Communications

Publications ▶ pg. 31
In the News ▶ pg. 32
Voices of UNU-IAS ▶ pg. 34



Publications

UNU-IAS researchers produced 77 publications during 2024, including 42 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals, as well as policy briefs, working papers, books, book chapters, online articles and conference papers.

UNU-IAS Policy Briefs

This series presents analysis and policy recommendations for addressing sustainability challenges, in an accessible format. Each brief informs high-level debates, enhances research uptake and provides actionable recommendations for decision makers at the global, national and local levels. Four were published during 2024:

- Bridging Science and Policy for Integrated Action on Climate and Biodiversity (No. 45)
- Fostering Renewable Energy Uptake in Caribbean Small Island Developing States: Insights from Barbados (No. 46)
- Sustainable Business Practices for Biodiversity: Leveraging Landscape Approaches (No. 47)
- Decarbonizing Food Systems through International Food Trade and Post-production Management (No. 48)

External Policy Briefs

UNU-IAS research also produced four policy briefs that were published by other organizations:

- Towards an Evidence-Base for the Just Transition
— A Think7 Italy Policy Brief published by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI).
- Inter-agency Policy Briefs on Accelerating Progress on the 2030 Agenda from Local to Global Levels: The Critical Importance of SDG Localization
— A UN policy brief offering evidence-based recommendations for advancing SDG localization.
- Revitalizing Local Economies: A Case of Japan's Furusato Nozei Program and Its Digital Transformation Impact on Tax Decentralization, Economic Growth, and Sustainable Development
— Published by the Think20 Brasil Task Force on Inclusive Digital Innovation.

- Reframing the Concept of Well-being and One Health Leveraging Indigenous Knowledge
— Published by the T20 Brasil Task Force on Strengthening Multilateralism and Global Governance.

Books

Recent books produced by UNU-IAS researchers include:

- *Linking Climate Change Adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Loss & Damage* (Palgrave Macmillan Singapore, 2024)
- *Resilient Horizons: Building Sustainable Environments for Climate Adaptation and Health* (Springer Cham, 2024)

Sustainability Science Journal

The scientific journal *Sustainability Science* is a collaborative initiative of UNU-IAS and the UTokyo Institute for Future Initiatives (IFI), published by Springer. It has developed a profile as one of the leading journals in the field, with an impact factor of 5.1 (2023 data) and a global ranking of 12th in the Sustainable Development category (Google Scholar). A total of 147 articles were published in 2024, with special features on energy transition and climate action.

In the News

UNU-IAS advances global debate on sustainability through expert commentary in the media, providing insights on current events and emerging sustainability issues. Our interviews, op-eds and original articles inform public understanding and influence policy discourse by explaining the latest research and policy recommendations.

Putting People at the Center of the Climate Change Conversation

Japan Today, 16 July

Highlighting the 10th anniversary of UNU-IAS, this op-ed by Yasushi Katsuma (Academic Director) considered the health benefits of tackling climate change. It argued that knowledge and education are critical to empower people to take individual climate action.

Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the Noto Earthquake

Hokuriku Chunichi Shimbun, 12 May

This article featured a UNU-IAS symposium supporting the recovery of Noto Peninsula after the devastating earthquake of 1 January 2024 (see pg. 15). The symposium was attended by more than 450 participants in person and online.



Affordable and Clean Energy in Focus

Africa Renewal, 12 September

In this opinion piece, published in English and French, Mark Akrofi (JSPS Postdoctoral Research Fellow) called for a transparent policy environment to boost investment in green energy in developing countries. *Africa Renewal* is a United Nations digital magazine covering economic, social and political developments in Africa.

Learning from Indigenous Communities to Achieve the SDGs

Ehime Shimbun and other newspapers, 5 February

This article featured comments by Suneetha Subramanian (Research Fellow) on how movies can introduce the culture of ethnic minorities to a broader audience. It was produced by Kyodo News and published in several Japanese newspapers including *Ehime Shimbun*.

United Nations Higher Education Forum Explores AI's Role in Sustainability

University World News, 31 July

Exploring the role of AI in advancing sustainability, this article presented comments by Jonghwi Park (Academic Programme Officer) on the opportunities that AI offers for higher education as well as the need to minimize risks and inequality issues.

How Circular Economy Initiatives Are Changing the World

The Japan Times, 22 July

Authored by Anupam Khajuria (Research Fellow and Academic Associate), this op-ed highlighted the role of innovation and education in driving the transition to a circular economy.



Yokohama Biodiversity Festival

Nippon TV, 29 September & 19 October

A UNU-IAS event held at the Yokohama Biodiversity Festival (31 August) was featured in two Nippon TV programmes — “Nittere Update!” and “Tokoro-san no Megaten!” The first programme included comments by Rina Miyake (Programme Coordinator) emphasizing the need to raise awareness of biodiversity issues.

Asia-Pacific Gen-Zers at COP29

The Diplomat, 19 November

This article explored the hopes and expectations of youth from Asia and the Pacific attending the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP29). It featured comments by a high school student from Japan who attended COP29 as part of the UNU-IAS delegation (see pg. 12).

Voices of UNU-IAS

UNU-IAS drives conversations around the pivotal events and topics that shape our world. On social media our experts, staff and students share thought-provoking stories and messages of hope to inspire and connect people from all walks of life. This page presents a selection of these voices from UNU-IAS social media during 2024.

Follow UNU-IAS ▼
[unu-ias.start.page](#)

#OurCommonFuture

Summit of the Future, 22–23 September



“The Summit of the Future is a critical stage in the journey to build more vital global collaboration, including reforming international institutions, particularly the Security Council, to reflect the current reality of today and tomorrow.”

Martiwi Diah Setiawati

Research Fellow and Academic Associate



“As the world grapples with the effects of climate change, I hope the Summit becomes a stepping stone to justice and equity-driven green transition and climate action.”

Nafissa Insebayeva

Consultant



Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress

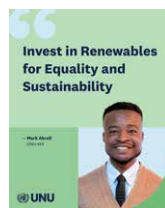
International Women’s Day, 8 March



“Women have made significant contributions to world development without being in positions of power.”

Himangana Gupta

Research Fellow and Academic Associate



“Prioritizing investments in renewable energy addresses environmental concerns and fosters gender equality, providing women and girls with the tools and opportunities to lead healthier, more prosperous lives.”

Mark Akrofi

Postdoctoral Fellow



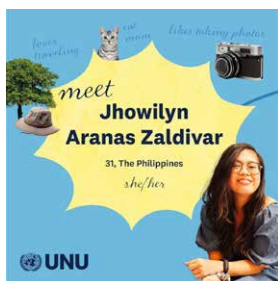
“Women and nature are intertwined. In Indigenous cultures, what society does to women, as well as what women do to themselves, reverberates in Mother Earth.”

Lorena Gomez Ramirez

MSc Student

Meet UNU Youth

International Youth Day, 12 August



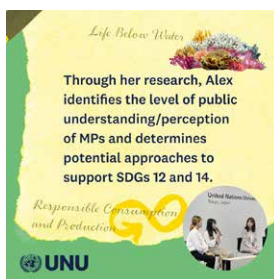
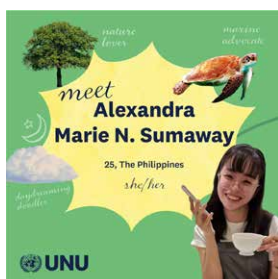
"Wherever you travel, be aware of the footprints you leave behind. Tourism must not harm nature. Protect biodiversity, as it naturally benefits the multiple facets of our well-being."

Jhowilyn Aranas Zaldivar
MSc Student



"We need to empower youth through Education for Sustainable Development to ensure a resilient future we all aspire to achieve."

Jongsan Byun
Intern



"Identifying gaps in public awareness and knowledge on global issues helps curate targeted solutions for a more proactive and informed community towards a sustainable society."

Alexandra Marie N. Sumaway
MSc Student

About UNU-IAS

The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) is a research and teaching institute dedicated to realizing a sustainable future for people and our planet. Based in Tokyo, Japan, UNU-IAS serves the international community by producing evidence-based knowledge and solutions to inform policymaking and address priority issues for the UN system.

Through policy-oriented research and capacity development the institute drives progress in four thematic areas: governance for climate change and sustainable development, biodiversity & society, water & resource management, and innovation & education. UNU-IAS creates new value by integrating expertise across these areas, in both academia and policymaking, to mobilize knowledge for sustainability and advance the global effort to achieve the SDGs by 2030. It applies innovative approaches and research methods to challenge conventional thinking and develop creative

solutions to emerging issues of global concern. The institute's research, education and training engage a global network of scholars and partner institutions, driving interconnectedness between policymakers and the science and academic communities to realize sustainable solutions. Through field-based research, including an operating unit in Kanazawa City (Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan), UNU-IAS is developing models for localizing the SDGs and other global agendas by building multi-stakeholder partnerships.

UNU-IAS postgraduate education advances the broader transformation towards sustainability in society — producing the policymakers and researchers of tomorrow, who will be at the forefront of global efforts for sustainability. The institute offers master's and doctoral degrees, postdoctoral fellowships and innovative short courses, in close collaboration with leading universities in Japan and other countries.

Thematic Areas

Governance for Climate Change & Sustainable Development

Sustainability depends on translating into practice the global vision of the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on climate change and other related agendas, ensuring their effective implementation. UNU-IAS mobilizes knowledge, expertise and partnerships to strengthen governance and policymaking processes for these urgent global agendas.

Water & Resource Management

Water is at the core of sustainable development, linking livelihoods, health, ecosystems and infrastructure. Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation for all requires a transformation in the way we manage water resources. UNU-IAS is developing sustainable, decentralized approaches to overcome the water crisis, enhance resilience and help build decarbonized, circular economies.

Biodiversity & Society

Action on biodiversity is urgently needed to sustain a healthy planet and the lives that it supports. UNU-IAS advances human-environment solutions to accelerate transformational change toward living in harmony with nature. The institute's research provides evidence-based inputs for implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with a focus on sustainable management of production landscapes and seascapes.

Innovation & Education

Building more sustainable societies relies fundamentally on fostering creative, innovative solutions and empowering individuals through education. UNU-IAS accelerates knowledge generation and lifelong learning for a sustainability transformation, through policy-oriented research, capacity development and partnerships.

An Institute of the United Nations University

UNU-IAS is an institute of the United Nations University (UNU) with a specific mandate to address sustainability issues. UNU is a global think tank and postgraduate teaching organization comprising 13 institutes, located in 12 different countries.

Organization

UNU-IAS was inaugurated on 1 January 2014. The institute is based at the global headquarters of UNU in Tokyo, and it has an operating unit located in Kanazawa City in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan (UNU-IAS OUIK).

Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC)

This joint initiative of UNU-IAS and the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ) supports on-the-ground activities and multi-stakeholder partnerships in various social sectors towards sustainable societies within and beyond Japan. It plays an important role in UNU-IAS communications, outreach and knowledge management.

During 2024 GEOC engaged public audiences through exhibitions, symposiums and dialogues and addressed key issues such as recovery efforts in Noto, meaningful youth participation and local SDG actions. By operating public facilities at UNU headquarters in Tokyo, GEOC actively disseminated information and ensured public engagement in critical global issues, including the UN Summit of the Future, climate change and biodiversity. During 2024 the center received more than 18,000 visitors.

Staffing

As of December 2024, UNU-IAS had a staff of 61, comprising nationals of 22 different countries. Women constituted 67% of UNU-IAS staff. UNU-IAS is committed to achieving gender balance and ensuring gender equality. UNU employment practices also strive to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for persons with disabilities and to prevent any form of disability-based exclusion or discrimination.

Board

The role of the UNU-IAS Board is to provide guidance on the strategic orientation of the institute and its academic and policy work, and ensure scientific excellence. The Board advises on management issues such as budgeting and staffing, and reviews the institute's activity reports, strategic plans and work programmes. The 2024 meeting of the Board was held at UNU-IAS in Tokyo on 6–7 November.

UNU-IAS Board Members

As of December 2024

Dr. Melissa Brown (USA)

Deputy Director, MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University

Mr. Mitsuo Kojima (Japan)

Representative Director, MetLife Investment Management Japan, Ltd.

Dr. Philip Osano (Kenya) CHAIR

Centre Director, Stockholm Environment Institute Africa

Dr. Smita Premchander (India)

Founder and Secretary, Sampark; Visiting Faculty, Indian Institute of Management

Members of the UNU-IAS Board serve in their individual capacity, and are appointed by the Rector of UNU, in consultation with the UNU Council. The Rector of UNU and the Director of UNU-IAS are *ex-officio* members of the Board.

Financing

UNU-IAS is financed entirely by voluntary contributions from governments, agencies, international organizations and other sources.

Financial Support

Contributions during 2024 over USD 20,000

- AEON Environmental Foundation
- Asian Development Bank - Metro Manila, Philippines
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Ishikawa Prefecture
- Japan Foundation for UNU (jfUNU)
- Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)
- Government of Japan — Ministry of the Environment (MOEJ)
- Government of Japan — Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
- Kanazawa City
- Korea Environment Corporation (KECO)
- Resona Holdings, Inc

End of Report

Photography & Images

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UNU is committed to the ideals and practices of environmental sustainability,
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THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development