

Action Group on the Futures of Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence

AI Learning Lab Webinar Series:

AI in Action: Advancing Research for the SDGs

Date: 10 December 2025

Time: 12:00–13:30 UTC (7:00–8 :30 AM New York / 9 :00–10:30 PM Tokyo)

Modality: Virtual via Zoom

Registration link: [Click here to register](#)

Session Background & Overview

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming research, offering powerful tools to accelerate progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda. From optimizing data analysis to complex predictive modeling for climate action, health and education, AI enables researchers to address global challenges with greater precision and scale. By embedding AI into research methodologies, scholars and institutions can generate knowledge that drives innovation and informs policy for sustainable development.

Despite these opportunities, gaps remain in how AI-driven research is implemented and shared. Data from the Global South is often underrepresented, reinforcing geographical bias in AI models and potentially distorting policy outcomes and resource allocation. Current publishing practices and peer review processes often struggle to keep pace with the interdisciplinary nature of AI research, while limited open access hinders knowledge exchange. Moreover, training large AI models demands significant computational power and energy, potentially contradicting sustainability goals. Without clear international frameworks, uneven standards and misuse risk undermining AI's potential for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This webinar will explore how AI can drive ethical, transformative, and sustainable research within higher education. It will examine how AIxSDGs — the intersection of AI design, innovation and societal impact — can be both performative (actively shaping research and institutional practices)

and ethical (anchored in transparency, accountability and justice). Participants will explore how AI for Social Good (AI4SG) research can be conceived, implemented and published to advance human and planetary well-being.

This webinar is organized by the partners of the AI in Research and Development Implementation Team.

AI in Research and Development (AIRD) Implementation Team

AI in Research and Development (AIRD) is one of the four thematic pillars of the [Futures of Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence Action Group](#) co-led by the United Nations University (UNU) and UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education (UNESCO IESALC), under the **United Nations Higher Education Sustainability Initiative** ([HESI](#)). AIRD bridges research innovation, ethics, and academic publishing to accelerate progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Objectives

This webinar will introduce researchers, academics, and practitioners to how AI can advance high-quality research, support responsible publishing, and accelerate progress toward the SDGs. Through presentations from global experts across the UN system, academia, and academic publishing, the session will explore how AI policy, ethics, governance, and research practice intersect to shape a sustainable and equitable research ecosystem. Participants will gain practical insights into how AI4SG and AIxSDGs frameworks can inform rigorous and ethical scholarship; how AI-enabled tools can strengthen research integrity and publishing workflows; and how new journals, open-access pathways, and interdisciplinary platforms are emerging to support sustainable, socially impactful AI research.

Target Audience

Researchers, academics, graduate students, journal editors, publishers, policymakers, and professionals engaged in AI, sustainability research, responsible innovation, and higher education. The webinar is particularly suited to those seeking to understand how to design, position, and publish AI-driven research aligned with societal impact, the SDGs, and evolving UN AI governance frameworks.

Modality

The webinar will be held online via Zoom, combining live expert presentations with an interactive question-and-answer segment. To set the stage, a framing presentation will introduce the session by outlining AIRD's mission and the global landscape of AI for Social Good and AIxSDGs research. Following this, three focused presentations will explore real-world cases in AI policy and ethics, AI-enabled research integrity and publishing, and emerging journals dedicated to SDG-aligned AI scholarship. Each presentation will run approximately 15 minutes. In the final segment, participants will engage directly with speakers to discuss practical strategies for conducting, evaluating, and publishing responsible AI research that advances the SDGs.

Participants are kindly requested to join the Zoom meeting at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the webinar to ensure a timely and smooth commencement.

Language

This webinar will be conducted in English. Please note that interpretation services will not be available.

Programme

5 mins	Welcome Remarks <i>By: Jonghwi Park, Head of Innovation and Education, UNU-IAS</i>
5 mins	Framing Presentation: "AI for Global Good: Charting the SDG Research Path Forward with the AI & Research and Development Implementation Team (AIRD)" <i>By: David Steingard, Associate Professor, Saint Joseph's University</i>
15 mins	"AI Policy, Ethics, Research, and Practice: UN Approaches and AIRD's Role in Advancing the SDGs" <i>By: Francesco Fabiano, Computer Science Researcher, University of Oxford</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN leadership in AI policy, ethics, and governance: How the United Nations is shaping global frameworks, standards, and regulatory principles for responsible AI development, with a focus on safeguarding human rights, equity, accountability, and societal well-being.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIRD as a resource for policy-relevant AI research: How the Artificial Intelligence & Research for Development (AIRD) initiative supports researchers in generating rigorous, evidence-based insights that inform policymaking and strengthen AI's contribution to sustainable development. • Advancing SDG outcomes while mitigating ethical and governance risks: How AIRD promotes responsible research practices, interdisciplinary collaboration, and methodological transparency to help prevent harms related to bias, misinformation, opacity, exclusion, and other systemic risks associated with AI deployment.
15 mins	<p>“How AI can advance the SDGs through innovative publishing programs while maintaining research and publishing integrity” <i>By: Simon Linacre, Chief Commercial Officer, Cabells</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling research integrity: How AI could be used to strengthen peer review, detect low-quality or AI-generated content, and reinforce the credibility of SDG-related scholarship. • Improving SDG discovery and access: How AI can support effective journal matching, identify emerging SDG themes, and expand global accessibility through translation and inclusion tools. • Driving innovation in sustainability publishing: How AI can enable new workflows, impact dashboards, and knowledge tools that accelerate research contributing to the SDGs.
30 mins	<p>“Publishing AIxSDGs Research in Academic Journals: Publisher and Editor Perspectives”</p> <p>15 mins - <i>By Rebecca Torr, Publisher Development Manager, Emerald Publishing</i></p> <p>15 mins - <i>By Yantao Yu, Assistant Professor, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerald Publishing SDG & Responsible Management leadership in an AI-driven era: How Emerald Publishing's longstanding commitment to the SDGs and Responsible Management is evolving as AI reshapes research across disciplines—and why new hybrid, interdisciplinary journals are emerging to ensure that powerful AI tools are applied responsibly, ethically, and in service of sustainable global impact.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring quality and expanding reach through open access: How publishers and co-editors maintain rigorous peer-review standards for AI-enabled research, and how open-access models broaden global access, enabling SDG knowledge to circulate widely across regions, institutions, and sectors. • Applying AI to advance sustainability research and SDG impact: How AI-driven approaches in architecture, civil engineering, and the built environment generate innovative, SDG-relevant scholarship—and how Artificial Intelligence for a Sustainable Built Environment provides a critical platform for emerging AI innovations, elevates high-quality research, facilitates international knowledge exchange, and accelerates real-world SDG solutions across the built-environment disciplines.
15 mins	Questions and Dialogue
5 mins	Closing & Next Steps <i>By: Jerome Silla, Research Associate, UNU-IAS</i>