

United Nations University

# Annual Report

2025

# United Nations University

## Annual Report 2025

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**THE GLOBAL GOALS**  
For Sustainable Development



### About the Cover

The artwork on the cover of this report represents UNU's 13 institutes, which collaboratively generate evidence-based solutions for sustainable development.

# Rector's Welcome



As I reflect on 2025, I am filled with pride and determination. This was my third year as Rector of the United Nations University (UNU) and a milestone year marking our institution's 50th anniversary. This golden jubilee celebrated five decades of advancing knowledge and fostering innovation, while reaffirming the enduring vitality of UNU's mission.

The year also saw the launch of our new five-year strategy, positioning UNU to contribute more

effectively in an era of interconnected crises and rapid technological change. This strategy, built on the three pillars of knowledge, partnerships, and impact, guides our work in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Throughout 2025, I delivered addresses at many significant international conferences and engaged with leaders across government, academia, civil society, and industry. I also prioritized outreach

to government officials, business leaders, researchers, and students in our host nation of Japan, strengthening UNU's visibility and impact.

A transformative development of 2025 was the expansion of our UNU Hubs network: strategic partnerships with leading universities that extend our research, education, and policy engagement worldwide. In 2025, we launched new UNU Hubs focused on humanitarian innovation and technology (Hong Kong), the future of youth education (Paris), climate engineering and sustainable technologies (Dresden), engineering to face climate change (Hamburg), and integrated health and climate/agriculture systems (Pretoria). These join our existing network of UNU Hubs on water security and environmental issues (Calgary), remote sensing and sustainable urban systems (New York), and global environmental challenges (Lund).

Progress was also made on the establishment of two new UNU institutes. UNU signed a formal agreement in November to establish a new institute in Kőszeg, Hungary, focused on applying futures literacy and foresight methodologies to issues of peace, security, and transformative technologies. In October, we confirmed that the UNU Institute for Artificial Intelligence will open in Bologna, Italy, in 2026. This new institute will serve as a dedicated research engine for responsible AI governance aligned with UN values, contributing critical perspectives on digital transformation that benefits all of humanity and aligns with the human-centric and inclusive principles of the Global Digital Compact.

UNU's 50th anniversary featured several meaningful commemorations honouring our legacy while pointing towards the future, including the *Exhibition for Peace: 80 Years Since the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Atomic Bombings* at UNU Headquarters and participating in such landmark events as Expo 2025 in Osaka. The anniversary was marked by a commemorative ceremony at UNU Headquarters, graced by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, alongside senior ministers, members of the National Diet, diplomats, UN officials, and UNU staff and partners.

As we look ahead, I am confident that UNU will continue to serve as a beacon of progress, generating knowledge, fostering partnerships, and driving impact towards a sustainable future for all. The achievements detailed in this report, from groundbreaking research on disaster risk and climate resilience to innovative partnerships advancing digital governance and social protection, reflect the dedication of our entire UNU community.

## Tshilidzi Marwala

Rector of the United Nations University  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations



Tokyo, Japan - Rector Tshilidzi Marwala introduces Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan to UNU-IAS students in September.

# Knowledge to Transform the World

As a global think tank for the United Nations, UNU occupies a unique position: an autonomous research institution that is also a trusted knowledge partner within the UN system. This dual identity enables UNU to undertake sensitive research, convene frank policy dialogue, and translate evidence into action, bridging cutting-edge research and policy.

This year marked the launch of the *United Nations University Strategy 2025–2029*, which is built on three pillars: enhancing **knowledge** and capacity through research and education; strengthening **partnerships**, particularly in the Global South, and enhancing collaboration within the UN system; and achieving greater visible **impact**.

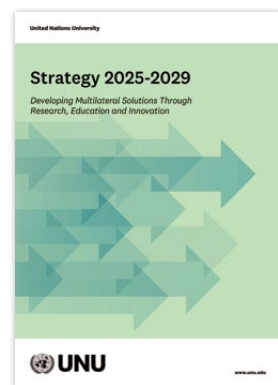
UNU's unique identity enables it to bridge the research-policy gap through three complementary approaches:

**Acting as a Trusted Partner** — UNU leverages its academic freedom and its place within the UN system to undertake sensitive research and convene policy discussions in politically delicate contexts. In 2025, this included a strategic partnership with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on frontier technologies and climate governance.

**Shaping Global Conversations** — UNU research generates critical evidence and fresh perspectives that inform decision-making and influence public debate. As one example, the flagship *Interconnected Disaster Risks* report achieved significant policy uptake across multiple countries.

**Co-Creating Solutions** — UNU partners work with other UN entities to develop tailored outputs that address specific knowledge gaps. Notable 2025 co-productions included the *World Social Report 2025* with UN DESA and disaster risk finance guidance developed with UNDP.

Through its global network of institutes, UNU's work encompasses the full scope of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNU researchers use their interdisciplinary expertise to provide practical recommendations, ensuring that those most affected by global challenges help shape solutions that drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.



The *United Nations University Strategy 2025–2029* is available on the [UNU website](#).

## Highlights of UNU Collaborations and Partnerships

### United Nations System Partners

- 

**Executive Office of the Secretary-General**  
Science-policy briefs on frontier technologies; support for the UN Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board; COP30 climate governance initiatives



**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**  
Information for All Programme; Digital Governance Dialogues for Portuguese-speaking countries
- 

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**  
Joint master's degree programme in Food and Nutrition Security at Africa University, Zimbabwe



**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**  
Women, Peace and Cybersecurity; gender-inclusive policy frameworks across the Asia-Pacific
- 

**International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**  
Academy Training Centre (certified courses on emerging technologies)



**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**  
Water Information Management Systems; Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
- 

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**  
Independent evaluation of Mother and Child Cash Transfer Programme in Afghanistan



**United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**  
Global Platform participation; ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction
- 

**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)**  
Co-authored World Social Report 2025; Local Online Service Index; Higher Education Sustainability Initiative



**United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBO)**  
2025 Peacebuilding Fund Thematic Review on Youth, Peace and Security
- 

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/ United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)**  
Climate risk finance guidance for National Adaptation Plans; Pacific climate risk insurance



**World Health Organization (WHO)**  
Gender Mainstreaming Manual update; gender-responsive health policies
- 

**United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-ECLAC)**  
Inclusive growth and fiscal policy research collaboration

### Regional and Multistakeholder Alliances

- African Union/African Development Bank (AfDB):** Critical Minerals Information Hub; Africa Climate Week; continental governance frameworks
- African Tax Administration Forum:** Data-driven research; joint policy briefs; training modules; African Tax Outlook
- Asia-Pacific Adaptation Network:** Climate-induced biodiversity loss assessment; regional framework development
- Asian Development Bank:** Open-source AI as digital public goods; social protection financing
- Caribbean Community (CARICOM):** Cross-border social protection portability across 14 member states (with ILO and ISSA)
- European Union:** Five Science Diplomacy Working Groups; European Framework recommendations
- Inter-American Development Bank:** Water Information Management Systems for Wider Caribbean Region
- Munich Climate Insurance Initiative (MCII):** Climate risk transfer mechanisms; parametric insurance for Pacific communities
- West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL):** Just energy transitions; gender-transformative approaches to energy policy

# Advancing the Global Goals: What We Do

The United Nations University bridges the gap between knowledge and action. In 2025, UNU's 13 institutes advanced the Sustainable Development Goals through research that informed policy, partnerships that amplified impact, and capacity development that strengthened institutions in the Global South.

## A Global Network for Local Solutions

UNU operates at the intersection of cutting-edge science and ground-level reality, tackling the full scope of the 2030 Agenda. The diversity of its network allows UNU to take on challenges from multiple angles simultaneously. For example:

### From the Lab to the Field

UNU Macau runs AI-based policy simulations to optimize social protection in the Arab region, while UNU-INRA is on the ground in Ghana deploying solar dryers to reduce post-harvest losses for smallholder farmers.

### From Global to Local

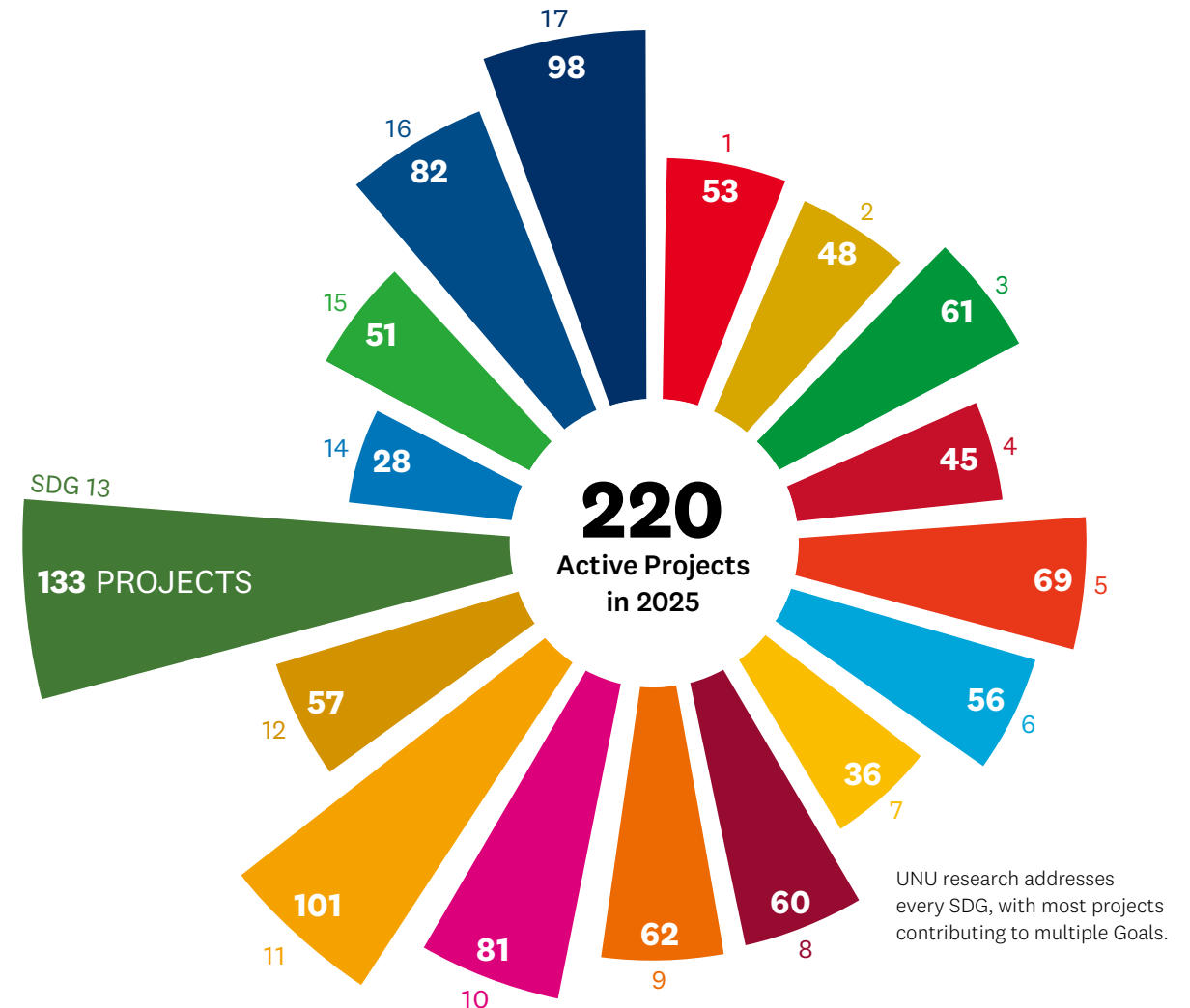
UNU-CPR advises the UN Secretary-General on frontier technology governance, while UNU-IAS is working directly with city mayors in the Asia-Pacific region to implement nature-based urban planning.

### From Theory to Practice

UNU-WIDER analyses administrative tax data to reshape global fiscal policy, while UNU-EHS is translating complex risk modelling data for planning experts in Pakistan, and UNU-BIOLAC is providing hands-on biotechnology training to Latin American researchers.

## Structuring Our Impact: The Five Ps

The following pages showcase selected examples of UNU's work in 2025, organized under the rubric of the "Five Ps": People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, and Partnerships. Each section highlights flagship initiatives and presents examples that show how UNU is helping to advance the SDGs.



## Advancing the Global Goals

# People

In 2025, UNU's people-centric research centred on equity, local leadership, and systems change. A common thread across these issues was that the most effective solutions are designed in partnership with people and communities closest to the problems.



Quang Nguyen Vinh / Pexels

### Featured Achievements

#### Confronting Gendered Violence in Healthcare

**Workplaces** — Healthcare workers, particularly women in primary care settings across sub-Saharan Africa, face endemic workplace violence that compromises their well-being and undermines health systems. UNU-IIGH launched a consortium with African partners to address this crisis through policy analysis and participatory action research. The project employs locally led methodologies to document experiences of gendered violence, identify systemic drivers, and co-design interventions with health workers themselves, generating evidence to inform policy reform across the continent.

#### Protecting Vulnerable Families in Afghanistan's

**Crisis** — Over 20 million Afghans face acute food insecurity, with women and children bearing the heaviest burden. UNU-MERIT (in partnership with Samuel Hall and UNICEF Afghanistan) conducted an independent evaluation of the Mother and Child Cash Transfer Programme across four provinces. This rigorous assessment examined health and nutritional outcomes in the context of women's decision-making power and household resilience, and is informing both immediate humanitarian response and longer-term social protection design.

#### Understanding Inequality from Birth to Old Age —

Inequality accumulates across lifetimes, with disadvantages in childhood compounding into deeper disparities in adulthood. UNU-WIDER's Inequality Over the Life Course project traces how inequalities in the Global South emerge and evolve from childhood to old age, identifying the critical moments when interventions can break cycles of disadvantage. The research underscores the need for interventions at multiple life stages, not just in moments of crisis.

#### Building Capacity, Generating Evidence

- UNU-BIOLAC supported biotechnology fellows and delivered targeted training courses, strengthening regional research capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- UNU-CRIS, UNU-EHS, UNU-IAS, and UNU-MERIT published a joint policy brief on climate change, human mobility, and mental health, providing evidence for integrated policy approaches.
- UNU-IIGH contributed to the UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy 2026–2031 through an evidence review on gender-responsive HIV interventions; supported locally led improvements to sexual and reproductive health policy in Burkina Faso and Mozambique; and published a 12-paper series, “Advancing Gender Equality in Health”.

- UNU-INWEH developed a framework to quantify water-gender interlinkages by introducing measurable accountability mechanisms, addressing the persistent gap in tracking gender equity in water governance.
- UNU Macau delivered training to strengthen digital security and cyber resilience of gender equality and women's rights advocates.
- UNU-MERIT's Migration Management Diploma Programme trained government officials from four continents on evidence-based migration policy and governance; its Summer School on Catalyzing the Digital Future built capacity on digital innovation.
- UNU-VIE installed solar-powered irrigation systems for smallholder farmers in Mali and The Gambia, improving water access and crop productivity while expanding renewable energy use in vulnerable communities.

#### Key Publications

- “Developing an Agenda for the Decolonization of Global Health” (UNU-IIGH article in *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*)
- *Labour Market Integration for Refugees: A Social Justice Framework* (UNU-MERIT working paper)
- “Quantifying Women in the Water Workforce” (UNU-INWEH article in *Nature Water*)
- Special issue of *World Development* on “Women's Work: Routes to Social and Economic Empowerment” (UNU-WIDER)

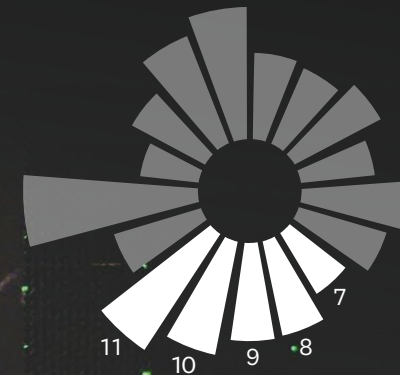
- *Strengthening Safety Nets in Post-Conflict and Humanitarian Contexts* (UNU-WIDER guidebook)
- *Unmasking the Unseen: The Gendered Impacts of Water Quality, Sanitation and Hygiene* (UNU-INWEH report)

#### Events and Training

- Advancing Global Health in a Changing World Order (UNU-IIGH panel discussion)
- AI Education Day (UNU Macau)
- Future Skills Workshop (UNU-EHS)
- Human-centred Approach to AI in Higher Education (UNU-IAS seminar)
- Planned Relocation Simulation (UNU-EHS workshop)
- Strengthening Global Health Governance: Defending the Public Interest and Holding Powerful Private Actors Accountable (UNU-IIGH symposium)

# Advancing the Global Goals Prosperity

In 2025, UNU research on prosperity-focused SDGs examined the need for systemic reform to ensure that solutions are inclusive and equitable across issues as diverse as debt, tax, digital transformation, and critical minerals.



Taylor Vick / Unsplash

## Featured Achievements

**Reforming Global Finance: From Debt Crisis to Development** — Over 3.3 billion people live in countries where interest payments exceed public spending on health or education. UNU-WIDER and UNU-CPR placed this crisis at the centre of global policy debates in 2025. At the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville, Spain, UNU-CPR presented evidence on sovereign debt mechanisms while UNU-WIDER focused on domestic revenue mobilization. UNU-WIDER experts also charted pathways towards more equitable global financial governance (published in the book *Financing for Development: The Global Agenda*) that are informing ongoing UN discussions regarding international tax cooperation.

**Digital Governance for the 21st Century** — Governments worldwide are struggling to ensure that their digital public infrastructure systems serve citizens, protect data, and enable cross-border cooperation. In 2025, UNU-EGOV launched a third regional Digital Governance Forum for peer learning on data protection, digital identity, and service delivery standards; supported Saudi Arabia’s “Vision 2030” by developing legal frameworks for digital trust services and designing interoperable trust lists; and presented its work on data protection in digital public infrastructure at UN Open Source Week.

### Building Capacity, Generating Evidence

- UNU-EGOV helped to assess digital social protection systems and cross-border benefit portability across CARICOM’s 14 member states, and trained participants from 24 countries on inclusive digital service design and cybersecurity governance.
- UNU-CRIS co-organized the European Union in International Affairs Conference; organized an AI governance workshop to bridge EU and global majority perspectives; and launched a project on decolonizing global regionalism studies.
- UNU-INRA launched the Critical Minerals Information and Knowledge Hub — Africa’s flagship platform for policy support and market intelligence on minerals essential to the green transition — and trained residents of eight Ghanaian communities in environmental governance and sustainable forest resources management.
- UNU Macau developed an AI-based simulator to evaluate economic development policies in the Arab region. The simulator enables testing of policy scenarios to help governments optimize financial inclusion and social protection safety nets that better serve the most vulnerable.
- UNU-WIDER’s SOUTHMOD tax-benefit microsimulation models (covering multiple African countries) enabled governments to simulate policy reforms before implementation. The institute also

helped the Zambia Revenue Authority launch Africa’s third secure tax data lab (following South Africa and Uganda), which will help policymakers generate evidence for fairer, more effective fiscal policy.

### Key Publications

- *Citizen Centricity in Public Policy Making: Approaches, Mechanisms, and Beyond* (UNU-EGOV book)
- *Counting the Costs: From Extraction to Green Transition* (UNU-INRA report)
- *Digital Maturity and Sustainability: Unpacking the Interrelationships between the Global Digitalization Index and Human Development* (UNU Macau white paper)
- *The Domestic Savings Shortfall in Sub-Saharan Africa: What Can Be Done About It?* (UNU-WIDER book)
- *Finance, Growth and Democracy: Connections and Challenges in Europe and Latin America in the Era of Permacrisis* (UNU-CRIS book)
- *Poor Protection: The Role of Taxes and Social Benefits in the Developing World During Crises* (UNU-WIDER book)
- *Transforming Rural Energy Access in Sub-Saharan Africa with Digital Technologies* (UNU-VIE policy brief)

### Events and Training

- Delivering Just Transitions for African Economies (UNU-INRA session at Africa Climate Summit)
- 18th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV 2025; UNU-EGOV)
- FAIR Cities: Foster AI for Inclusive and Responsible Cities (UNU-EGOV session at WSIS+20)
- Global Youth AI Future Innovation Competition (UNU Macau competition)
- Inclusive Growth in Mozambique Symposium (UNU-WIDER)
- WIDER Development Conference: “Safeguarding Tomorrow – Innovative Approaches to Growth and Equity” (UNU-WIDER)
- Women, Peace, and Digital Transformation: Economic Inclusion for Lasting Stability (UNU Centre high-level conference)

# Advancing the Global Goals

## Planet

A central insight from UNU's work on the planet-related SDGs is that while environmental challenges cascade across systems and require integrated responses, solutions must be grounded in local realities and owned by those affected.



Sohan Rahat / Pexels

### Featured Achievements

**Interconnected Disaster Risks: Turning Over a New Leaf** — Climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation interact and cascade in ways that amplify risk. The 2025 edition of the UNU-EHS flagship report *Interconnected Disaster Risks* demonstrates how tipping points in one system can trigger failures in others, providing policymakers with frameworks for understanding systemic risk. The report achieved significant media uptake and policy visibility, with outreach events in Germany and the USA fostering dialogue among high-level representatives.

**Climate Risk Insurance: Protecting Pacific Communities** — The Pacific Insurance and Climate Adaptation Programme, jointly led by UNU-EHS, UNCDF, and UNDP, has introduced parametric insurance solutions across vulnerable Pacific Island communities. In 2025, UNU-EHS analysed the impact of the first insurance payouts and studied cost-effective ways to expand coverage. In Fiji, researchers began assessing whether climate-risk insurance might serve as a form of shock-responsive social protection.

**From Nature-based Solutions to Carbon Market Governance** — As countries work to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and meet Paris Agreement commitments, they need evidence on what works. UNU-IAS contributed to

both agendas in 2025: informing Convention on Biological Diversity processes with case studies on socioecological production landscapes from the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative, publishing a report on reforming subsidies that harm biodiversity, and presenting research on how nature-based solutions can help cities adapt to climate impacts. A UNU-INRA report highlights how carbon markets, though promising, could perpetuate inequities and greenwashing.

#### Building Capacity, Generating Evidence

- UNU-EHS developed a framework to evaluate climate justice measures in Nationally Determined Contributions and provided guidance on integrating climate and disaster risk finance into National Adaptation Plans. The institute's Weaving Urban Futures toolbox empowers city planners and civil society actors in Latin America to create urban strategies that align with global climate goals.
- UNU-FLORES advanced sustainable post-mining transitions in Germany's Lusatia region, partnered with mining authorities to develop restoration strategies transferable to Global South contexts, and developed a global rehabilitation-focused dataset on coal mine soil pollution.
- UNU-IAS launched a Net Zero 101 e-learning course on the UN CC:Learn platform to bridge the climate

literacy gap in the Global South and help drive local solutions. The UNU-IAS Operating Unit Ishikawa/Kanazawa continued to support recovery from the 2024 Noto Peninsula earthquake by providing recommendations on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction.

- UNU-INWEH inaugurated a Global Media Academy that trains journalists to translate complex water and climate science into accessible, solution-oriented storytelling. The institute's Water Information Management Systems have strengthened drought early warning and water resource planning across six Caribbean countries.
- UNU-VIE's work on just energy transitions helped to ensure the shift to renewable energy serves marginalized communities, not just climate targets.

#### Key Publications

- "Aging Dams, Political Instability, Poor Decisions and Climate Change: A Recipe for Disaster" (UNU-INWEH article in *npj Natural Hazards*)
- *Business and Biodiversity: Reciprocal Connections in the Context of Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes* (UNU-IAS book)
- "Climate Change Adaptation in Global Mountain Regions Requires a Multi-sectoral Approach" (UNU-EHS article in *Nature*)

- *Harnessing the Power of AI for Climate Change Impact Assessment* (UNU-INWEH report)
- *Impact of Subsidies and Incentives on Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes and Seascapes* (UNU-IAS report)
- "Integrating 'Nature' in the Water-Energy-Food Nexus" (UNU-FLORES article in *Science of the Total Environment*)
- *Interconnected Disaster Risks: Turning Over a New Leaf* (UNU-EHS report)
- *Promoting Water Valuation for Urban Sustainable Development in Asia* (UNU-FLORES / UNU-IAS policy brief)

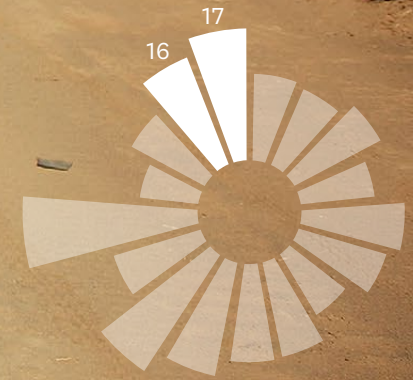
#### Events and Training

- Third Annual Conference of the Environment and Climate Mobilities Network (UNU-EHS)
- Living with the Climate Crisis (UNU-IAS global seminar)
- Rethinking Climate Governance: Lessons and Models for the Future (UNU-CPR workshop)
- The Future of Climate and Disaster Risk Finance (UNU-EHS expert dialogue)
- Time to Act Forum 2025 (UNU Centre)
- Water as Enabler for Climate Action and the Future Society of Our Lives (UNU-INWEH event)

## Advancing the Global Goals

# Peace & Partnerships

UNU research addressed the foundations of peaceful, just and inclusive societies while strengthening the partnerships needed to achieve all the Global Goals. A defining theme was how existing multilateral mechanisms can be redesigned to meet 21st-century challenges.



Martine Perret / UN Photo

## Featured Achievements

### Reimagining Global Governance for Today's Challenges

— UNU-CPR's Global Governance Innovation Platform seeks to determine what can be borrowed, replicated, or scaled from historical governance models to address today's complex transnational challenges. The initiative produced a foundational report on multilateral sovereign debt mechanisms, convened workshops on a potential UN Climate Change Council, and developed a digital platform for consolidating governance innovations.

### Science-Policy Briefs for the Secretary-General

— Breakthrough technologies are reshaping society faster than governance can adapt. UNU-CPR partnered with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to support the Scientific Advisory Board, producing science-policy briefs on frontier technologies and seabed resource extraction. A retreat organized by UNU-CPR for Board Members and the Secretary-General produced a consolidated Statement on Open Science.

### Protecting Women Leaders in Digital Spaces

— Women leaders face escalating digital threats, from harassment and doxing to coordinated disinformation campaigns. UNU Macau's Women, Peace, and Cybersecurity project (in partnership with UN Women) expanded from South-East Asia to include the Pacific, Timor-Leste, and South Asia. Through policy

reviews, surveys, and expert consultations, the project developed actionable recommendations for closing gendered gaps in digital security.

### Building Capacity, Generating Evidence

- UNU-CPR updated the *Assembly for Peace* handbook to include resolutions from the 79th Session of the General Assembly; organized learning workshops to help Member States understand the Assembly's tools and practice; published a discussion paper (*Essential Peacekeeping for a Divided World*) that offers lessons from the 1956 Suez Crisis for reimagining modern peace operations; and conducted a thematic review of 41 UN Peacebuilding Fund projects to identify practical lessons for youth-focused peacebuilding programming.
- UNU-CRIS marked its 25th anniversary with an Essays on Global Regionalism project that collected diverse global voices aimed at decolonizing and reshaping regionalism studies.
- UNU Macau partnered with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to explore how open-source AI can function as a digital public good, informing regional digital governance strategies across ADB member countries. The UNU Macau Milestone Series (including an AI Conference, AI Education Day, and Global Youth AI Future Innovation Competition) convened hundreds of participants from 20+ countries to translate global

digital commitments into local action.

- UNU-MERIT research on diaspora engagement examined how countries have mobilized expatriate communities for post-conflict peacebuilding and economic reconstruction, producing recommendations for Ukraine's rebuilding efforts.

### Key Publications

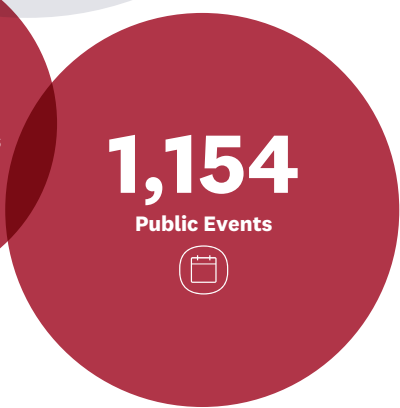
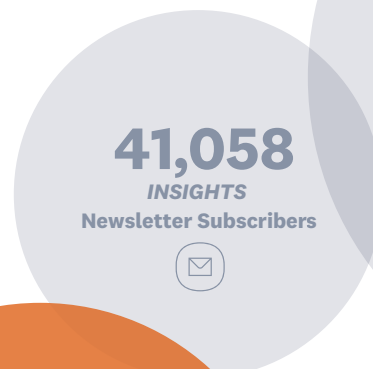
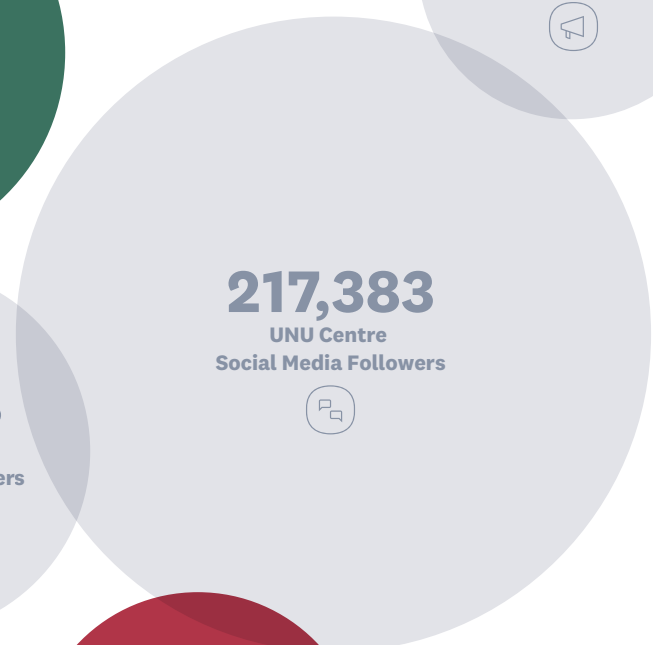
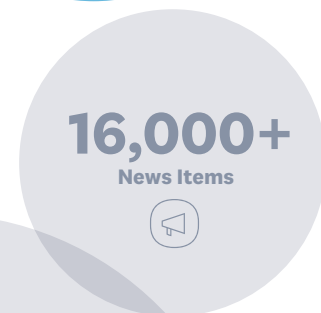
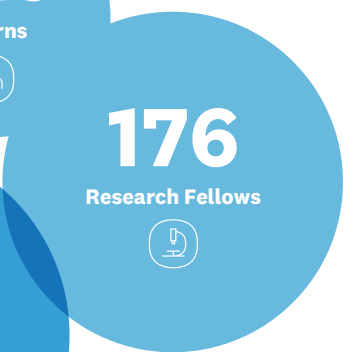
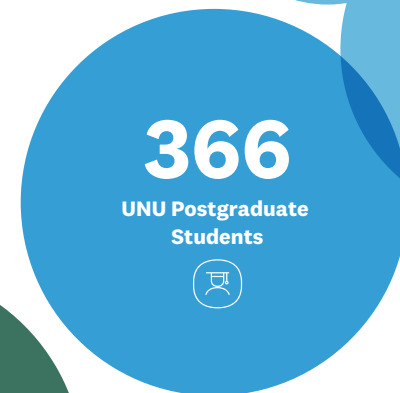
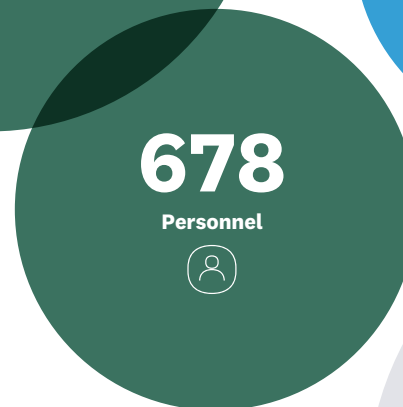
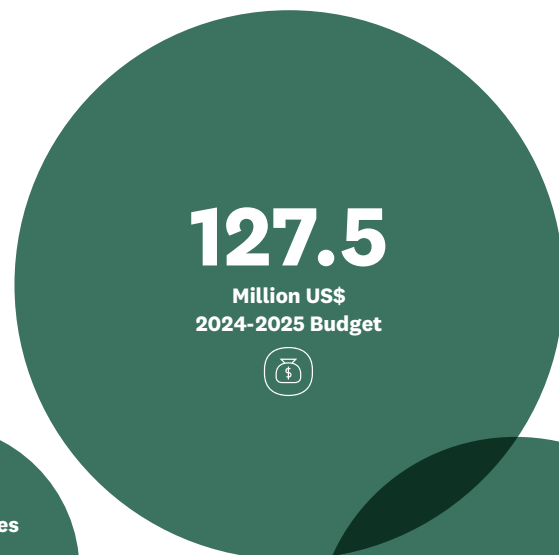
- *A European Framework for Science Diplomacy* (UNU-CRIS report)
- "Assessing the Information Security Posture of Online Public Services Worldwide" (UNU-EGOV article in *Government Information Quarterly*)
- *Co-Creation in the Public Sector: Challenges and Lessons Learned* (UNU-EGOV policy brief)
- *Essential Peacekeeping for a Divided World* (UNU-CPR discussion paper)
- *Foundations for a Multilateral Sovereign Debt Mechanism* (UNU-CPR report)
- *How States Respond to Crisis: Pandemic Governance Across the Global South* (UNU-WIDER book)
- *Learning for a Sustainable Future: RCE Stories of Action-Oriented Pedagogy* (UNU-IAS book)

### Events and Training

- 80th Remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Imperative of Global Unity (UNU Centre event)
- 4th United Nations Open Science and Open Scholarship Conference (UNU Centre)
- Future of Peace: Young Voices from Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki (UNU Centre event)
- Governance in the Digital Era: Lessons for Africa (UNU Centre/UNU-IAS TICAD event)
- Helsinki Symposium on Reform of the International Financial Architecture (UNU-WIDER)
- UNU 50th Anniversary Ceremony (UNU Centre commemorative ceremony)
- Women, Peace, and Security (UNU Centre symposium)

# Organizational Overview: Who We Are

The following sections introduce the global UNU system and summarize UNU's communications and outreach activities, human and financial resources, and governance and leadership structure.



## UNU@50

### Marking a Milestone

In 2025, the United Nations University celebrated its 50th anniversary. This milestone was commemorated with a ceremony on 18 September at UNU Centre in Tokyo, honoured by the presence of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan. Speakers included several Japanese Cabinet Ministers, who reaffirmed Japan's enduring support for UNU's mission.

Events throughout the year at UNU Centre reinforced the University's role as a convener at the intersection of technology, governance, and sustainable development: the UNU Conversation Series brought distinguished experts to address frontier challenges in peace and multilateralism, while BIG IDEAS seminars explored critical issues from gender equity to climate justice.

UNU's 50-year track record reflects institutional stability grounded in secure funding that is independent of the regular UN budget. The University is funded through voluntary contributions, primarily from UNU system host nations, and investment income derived from the UNU Endowment Fund. This financial model has enabled five decades of independent, high-quality research responsive to emerging global challenges.

The UNU Strategy 2025-2029 builds on this legacy, positioning the University to address future global needs, particularly in the Global South, by strengthening partnerships, expanding collaboration within the UN system, enhancing knowledge and capacity through research and education, and increasing visibility through expansion and outreach.

## Organizational Overview

# The UNU System

UNU operates as a network of 13 institutes located in 12 countries, each with a specific focus as mandated by its statute and host country agreement. The global UNU system is coordinated by UNU Centre with its headquarters in Tokyo.

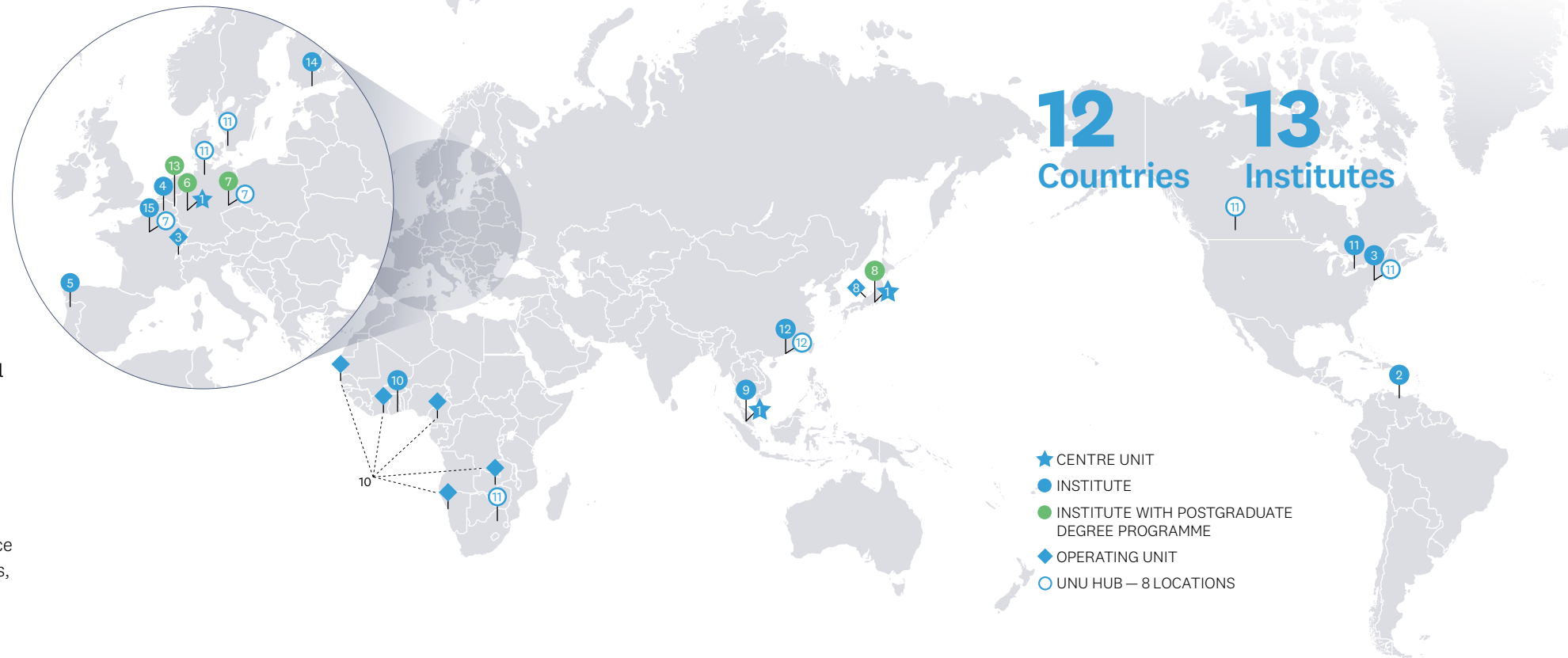
### ★ UNU Centre

- **UNU Centre — Tokyo** (Japan) serves as the programming, planning, and administrative headquarters of the University, comprising the Office of the Rector, Administration and Financial Services, the Campus Computing Centre, and the Office of Communications.
- **UNU Centre — Putrajaya** (Malaysia) operates as an adjunct administrative, human resources, and financial services unit.
- **UNU-VIE** (the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe; Bonn, Germany) supports the University's institutional development, coordinates joint activities and networks, and facilitates collaboration with UN agencies in Bonn and regional stakeholders.

**2 UNU-BIOLAC** — The UNU Biotechnology Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, Venezuela) promotes the use of biotechnology for sustainable development, focusing on training and capacity-building.

**3 UNU-CPR** — The UNU Centre for Policy Research (New York, NY, USA) generates innovative solutions to global public policy challenges and actively contributes to policy debates at the United Nations, representing the UNU system at UN Headquarters.

**4 UNU-CRIS** — The UNU Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (Bruges, Belgium) focuses on governance, cooperation, and integration both within and between regions.



**5 UNU-EGOV** — The UNU Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (Guimarães, Portugal) works at the intersection of governance, technology, and development.

**6 UNU-EHS** — The UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security (Bonn, Germany) addresses the challenges of global environmental change, with a focus on vulnerability driven by environmental factors and climate adaptation to manage ecological and societal risks.

**7 UNU-FLORES** — The UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources (Dresden, Germany) contributes to the sustainable use and integrated management of environmental resources, particularly water, soil, and waste.

**8 UNU-IAS** — The UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (Tokyo, Japan) supports efforts to achieve a more sustainable future by focusing on transformations towards sustainable societies, natural capital and biodiversity, and global change and resilience.

**9 UNU-IIGH** — The UNU International Institute for Global Health (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) advances evidence-based policy on key health issues, focusing on gender mainstreaming in health systems and digital health, and accountability in health policy.

**10 UNU-INRA** — The UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (Accra, Ghana) provides cutting-edge knowledge about sustainable responses to Africa's natural resources management challenges.

**11 UNU-INWEH** — The UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health (Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada) analyses and synthesizes existing knowledge on water challenges, identifies emerging policy issues, and develops scalable solutions.

**12 UNU Macau** — The UNU Institute in Macau (Macau, SAR China) conducts policy-relevant research on digital technologies, digital security, and the SDGs to support evidence-based, knowledge-driven, participatory decision-making.

**13 UNU-MERIT** — The UNU Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (Maastricht, the Netherlands) explores the social, political, and economic factors that drive technological innovation.

**14 UNU-WIDER** — The UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (Helsinki, Finland) focuses on the interlinked development challenges of transforming economies, states, and societies, with an emphasis on research-into-use processes.

**15 UNU Paris** — The UNU Paris Office enhances collaboration with key stakeholders in France, including UNESCO, the OECD, and other research and development institutions.

○ **UNU Hubs** are strategic partnerships with leading universities that expand UNU's global reach and foster locally driven research on critical themes of sustainable development and human welfare.

## Organizational Overview

# Communicating & Engaging for Impact

UNU bridges the gap between academic research and multilateral decision-making by making complex research accessible, convening diverse stakeholders, and building analytical capacity in the Global South. This integrated approach creates multiple pathways to impact: research findings influence policy when published accessibly and promoted strategically; convenings build the trusted relationships that enable frank dialogue; training programmes create alumni networks that sustain influence long after projects end.

**Sharing Knowledge** — UNU disseminates its research through peer-reviewed articles, reports, policy briefs, working papers, books, and online media, reaching a diverse audience of academics, professionals, policymakers, affected communities, and the public.

Some 9,000 UNU publications — including more than 250 published in 2025 — can be downloaded free of charge through the online UNU Collections repository.

**Fostering Global Conversations** — Through conferences, seminars, and symposiums, UNU convenes experts, policymakers, and practitioners to address critical global challenges. In 2025, UNU organized and co-organized 1,154 events, ranging from high-level diplomatic forums to practitioner workshops.

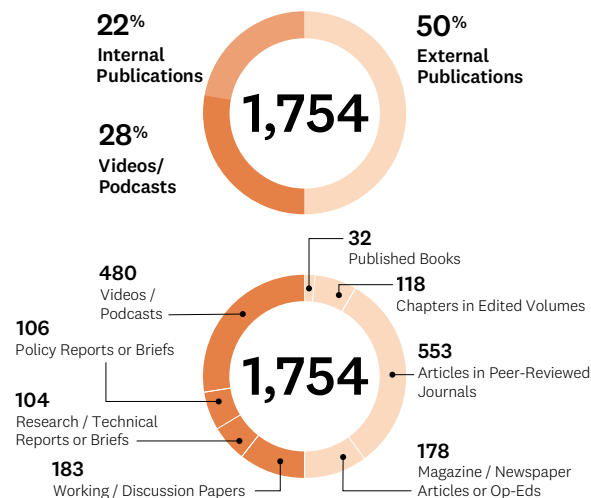
**Building Leadership Capacity** — UNU's postgraduate degree programmes and non-degree training opportunities empower future leaders to address complex global issues. Specialized training programmes provided practical skills to thousands of participants

globally on topics including digital governance, climate-resilient fiscal planning, disaster resilience, and biotechnology. Many programmes adopt a "train-the-trainer" approach that creates cascading learning.

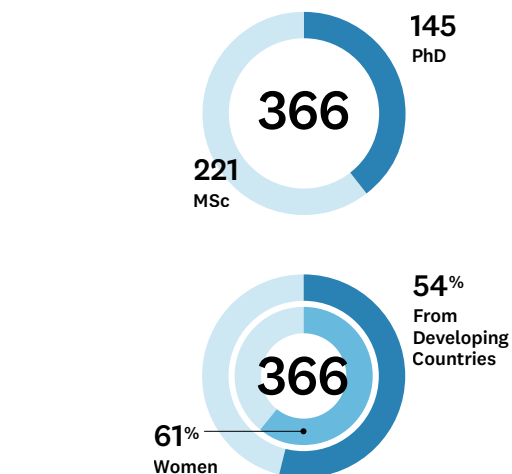
**Shaping Policy Discourse** — UNU reinforced its role as a key advisor in global policymaking by providing evidence-based briefings to intergovernmental bodies and key stakeholders. UNU-developed frameworks were formally adopted for integrating disaster risk finance into National Adaptation Plans globally, while its model for administrative tax data governance led to secure data labs in several African nations. UNU-CPR partnered with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to produce science-policy briefs on frontier technologies for the Scientific Advisory Board.

**Enhancing Global Engagement** — UNU amplifies its global visibility through digital platforms, newspapers, social networks, and digital newsletters. In 2025, more than 16,000 media articles referenced UNU research worldwide; the integrated UNU web platform received 3.6 million pageviews; the *INSIGHTS* newsletter reached more than 40,600 subscribers; and UNU's social media following grew 30% to 217,383 followers. This visibility ensures that UNU research reaches policymakers through the channels they consult daily, building institutional credibility and demonstrating accountability.

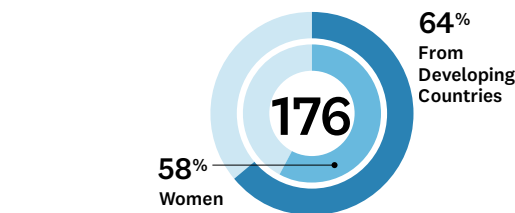
### Publications



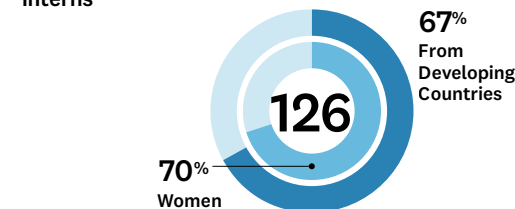
### Postgraduate Students



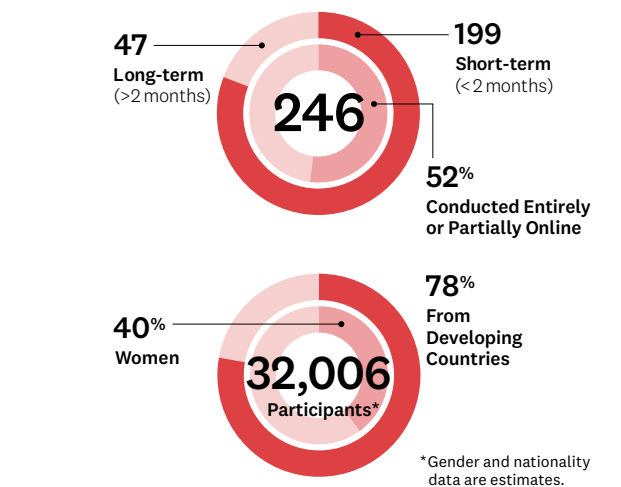
### Research Fellows



### Interns



### Non-degree Training Programmes and Activities



## Organizational Overview

# Human & Financial Resources

**Personnel** — The University’s personnel include Professional and General Service staff appointed in accordance with UN Staff Regulations and Rules, as well as visiting scholars, research associates, postdoctoral fellows, administrative and academic services personnel, and specialized consultants. As of year-end 2025, the global UNU system had a personnel complement of 678, of whom 46% were developing country nationals and 58% were women.

UNU is an inclusive employer committed to maintaining an accessible and enabling workplace that embraces diversity, respects individual (racial, cultural, sexual, and other) differences, and is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse.

UNU continued to strengthen gender equality in 2025, meeting or exceeding 86% of indicators for the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment — outperforming both the UN system average and UN training institutes. The University updated its Policy on Gender Equality and introduced a new Gender Action Plan 2025–2029.

Gender parity was maintained at the Professional and higher levels, with women holding 54% of senior Professional posts and 52% of leadership roles.

**Finances** — UNU receives no funds from the regular UN budget. The University is funded entirely through voluntary contributions: institutional funding — primarily recurring host country contributions and investment income derived from the UNU Endowment Fund — and project-specific funding from UN Member States, foundations, agencies, international organizations, and other sources. UNU is committed to transparency and accountability in financial management and directs its financial resources in line with its strategic priorities and in service of its global mandate.

**Budget** — The UNU Academic Programme and Budget for the Biennium 2024–2025 amounted to US\$127.5 million, comprising core funding of US\$81.8 million and estimated project fundraising of US\$45.7 million.

## Contributions Received by UNU

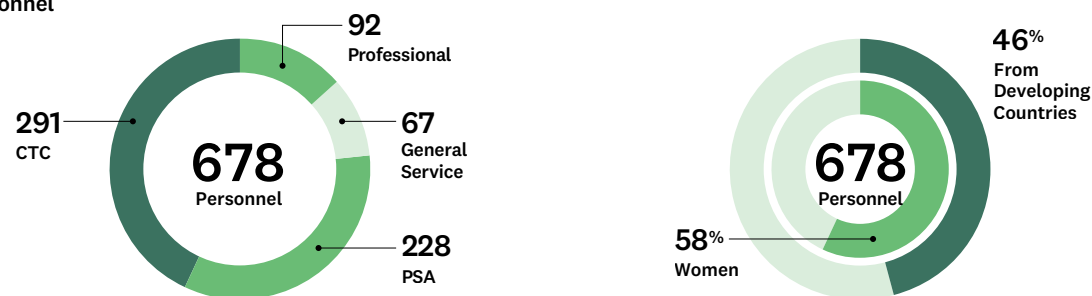
1 January — 31 December 2025

MEMBER STATES	US Dollars*
Austria	11,468
Belgium	1,201,445
Canada	2,859,185
European Union (European Commission)	1,235,244
Finland	1,759,364
Germany	8,921,202
Japan	2,585,632
Korea, Republic of	80,684
Macau S.A.R. (China)	265,165
Netherlands	1,348,787
Norway	2,351,807
Portugal	1,459,944
South Africa, Republic of	790,701
Sweden	2,100,829
Switzerland	771,210
United Kingdom	5,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>27,747,668</b>
<b>OTHER CONTRIBUTORS</b>	
AEON Environmental Foundation	72,780
African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET)	42,229
Asian Development Bank, Manila	55,767
Chemonics Group UK Ltd.	99,657
CIMA Research Foundation	31,250
Deutsche Zentrum für Luft-und Raumfahrt (DLR)	61,925
ETLA Economic Research	33,445
Eurac Research	407,500
European Investment Bank (EIB)	44,116
Farmer’s Market Association	111,310
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	117,521
GIZ GmbH	1,151,889
Harbour International Education Technology Co., Ltd.	109,474
Hiltonian Society NPC	38,665
Institute Of Development Studies (IDS)	22,277
Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)	51,250
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	1,189,557
International Labour Organization (ILO)	21,320
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	108,706
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	74,991
Ishikawa Prefecture	169,390
Japan Foundation for UNU (JFUNU)	103,230
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS)	72,346
Kanazawa City	169,843
Karlsruher Institut fuer Technologie	87,751
Kookmin University	33,000
Maastricht City Council	379,542

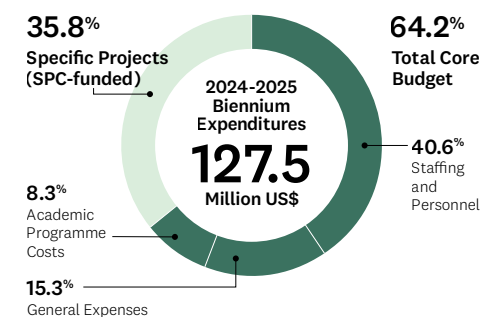
\*Contribution figures are converted to US dollar equivalents and rounded to the nearest dollar; subtotals may reflect rounding approximations.

Maastricht University, INSPIRE	166,660
Microsoft Japan Co. Ltd.	220,080
Munich Climate Insurance Initiative (MCI)	375,992
Munich Re Foundation	26,096
New Venture Fund	56,145
OroVerde Tropical Forest Foundation	416,436
Resona Holdings, Inc	22,628
Schmidt Sciences LLC	399,698
Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	165,062
Social Impact Investment Foundation (SIIF)	40,000
Stiftelsen Global Challenges Foundation	109,444
Swiss Philanthropy Foundation	111,548
Technische Universitaet Dresden (TU Dresden)	71,555
The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), a project of the Norwegian Refugee Council	103,071
Third World Network Berhad	27,500
UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO)	983,268
United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)	208,011
United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UN DPPA)	73,271
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	30,000
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)	91,475
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)	303,543
United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP FI)	1,021,566
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	468,115
United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)	40,000
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)	385,112
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	405,847
United Nations Programme for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	50,000
Universiteit Gent	65,104
University of the Western Cape	56,578
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)	140,187
WaterAid Canada	170,421
World Food Programme (WFP)	54,599
World Vision Australia	113,627
(44 other donors with individual contributions of less than US\$20,000)	267,551
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>12,100,924</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,848,592</b>

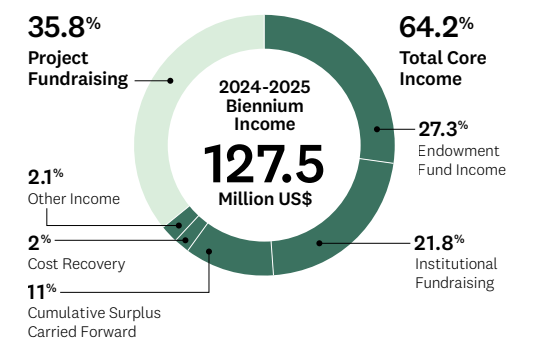
### Personnel



### Expenditures



### Income



## Organizational Overview

# Governance & Leadership

UNU's operations and academic activities are guided by an integrated governance structure that covers the UNU system and its individual institutes.

### System-level stewardship

The Council of the United Nations University oversees the affairs of the global UNU system. This 16-member Council comprises 12 appointed members, the UNU Rector, and three ex officio members: the UN Secretary-General, UNESCO Director-General, and UNITAR Executive Director. The UNU Council provides strategic guidance, approves the University's work programme and budget, and sets system-wide policies. In 2025, the UNU Council convened in Tokyo for its 83rd session (June) and its 84th session (December).

The UNU Rectorate provides day-to-day coordination and direction of the UNU system. Led by the Rector, who holds the rank of UN Under-Secretary-General, the Rectorate ensures integrated academic and administrative leadership across UNU's network of institutes.

UNU Administration handles the development of unified standards, financial and budget reporting, and human resources, financial, and procurement services across the global UNU system.

### Institute-level administration

Each UNU institute is led by a Director who oversees the institute's operational management, spanning budget, human resources, and academic and research activities. The Directors meet annually at a Conference of Directors and periodically through virtual calls to discuss inter-institute coordination and policy.

Advisory Boards/Committees (typically three or more appointed members plus the UNU Rector and institute Director) provide expert guidance on thematic programming and management of their respective institutes.

### External oversight

United Nations system bodies that play an oversight role for UNU include the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Board of Auditors, and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

### UNU Council 2025

#### APPOINTED MEMBERS

May 2019 – May 2025

- **Dr. Denisa Číderová** (Slovakia) — Associate Professor in the Department of International Trade and Liaison for Idea Puzzle at the University of Economics in Bratislava
- **Dr. Comfort Ero** (United Kingdom) — President and CEO, International Crisis Group
- **Dr. Xin Fang** (China) — Professor, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences
- **Prof. Adam Habib** (South Africa) — Director, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
- **Prof. 'Funmi Olonisakin** (United Kingdom & Nigeria) — Vice-President and Vice-Principal International and Professor of Security, Leadership and Development, King's College London
- **Prof. Brenda Yeoh** (Singapore) — Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

May 2022 – May 2028

- **Sir Hilary Beckles** (Barbados) — Vice-Chancellor, University of the West Indies; Chair of UNU Council
- **Yamini Aiyar** (India) — Public Policy Scholar; former President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi
- **Prof. Catherine Kyobotungi** (Uganda) — Executive Director, The African Population and Health Research Centre
- **Amb. Kuni Sato** (Japan) — Advisor, East Japan Railway Trading Co., Ltd.; Advisor, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage; Vice-Chair of UNU Council
- **Vanessa Scherrer** (France) — Advisor on Higher Education and Youth in International Contexts; Vice-Chair of UNU Council
- **Prof. Monica Serrano** (Mexico) — Research Professor, Centre for International Studies, El Colegio de México [2024 - 2028]

May 2025 – May 2031

- **Prof. Louise Fawcett** (United Kingdom/Ireland) — Professor of International Relations, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Politics and International Relations, and Fellow of St Catherine's College, University of Oxford
- **Prof. Francisco H.G. Ferreira** (Brazil) — Amartya Sen Professor of Inequality Studies and Director of the International Inequalities Institute, London School of Economics; Vice-Chair of UNU Council

- **Prof. Dr. Hauke Reiner Heekeren** (Germany) — President, University of Hamburg
- **Prof. Rongping Mu** (China) — President, Chinese Association of Sciences of Science and S&T Policy
- **Dr. Jane Catherine Ngila** (Kenya) — Executive Director, African Foundation for Women and Youth in Education and STI
- **Ms. Shuvai Busuman Nyoni** (Zimbabwe) — Executive Director, African Leadership Centre

#### EX OFFICIO COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Rector of UNU
- Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Director-General of UNESCO
- Executive Director of UNITAR

### UNU Rectorate

- Rector **Tshilidzi Marwala**
- Senior Vice-Rector **Aya Suzuki**
- Vice-Rector in Europe **Shen Xiaomeng**
- Executive Officer **Sabine Becker-Thierry**

### UNU Administration

- Director of Administration **Joan Sawe**

### UNU Institute Directors

- UNU-BIOLAC Programme Coordinator **Gustavo Fermin**
- UNU-CPR Executive Director **David Passarelli**
- UNU-CRIS Director **Philippe De Lombaerde**
- UNU-EGOV Head **Delfina Soares**
- UNU-EHS Director **Shen Xiaomeng**
- UNU-FLORES Director **Edeltraud Günther**
- UNU-IAS Director **Shinobu Yume Yamaguchi**
- UNU-IGH Director **Revati Phalkey**
- UNU-INRA Director **Fatima Denton**
- UNU-INWEH Director **Kaveh Madani**
- UNU Macau Director **Jingbo Huang**
- UNU-MERIT Interim Director **Clemens Kool**
- UNU-WIDER Director **Kunal Sen**



Tokyo, Japan – Council members and Institute directors with Rector Marwala at the 84th session of UNU Council in December.