



Report on the activities of the IAU Global HESD Cluster 2024-2025

Shaping the Path Forward - Higher Education and Partnerships ahead of 2030

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Prepared by Isabel Toman, Riu Rodriguez, and Meg Harris, IAU.

Contact: Isabel Toman, Senior Programme Officer HESD, hisd@iau-aiu.net

International Association of Universities (IAU)

UNESCO House

1 Rue Miollis

F-75732 Paris cedex 15

Tel: + 33 1 45 68 48 00

www.iau-aiu.net / www.iau-hisd.net

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2030 is less than 5 years away, this **fifth comprehensive report** on the activities of the IAU HESD Cluster offers a true opportunity to stress once more the important role universities and other higher education institutions play in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This report highlights good practices from Members of the International Association of Universities (IAU) in addressing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs through teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and various partnerships. Since the inception of the IAU HESD Cluster in 2018, **work with the SDGs has become increasingly interdisciplinary and cross-cutting**, as is reflected in the various Cluster activities, which rarely address only one SDG at the time.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reminds us that no goal can be achieved in isolation. The SDGs underscore the complex, interconnected nature of global challenges and the imperative of equitable, inclusive partnerships to address them. Education is not only a goal in itself but a powerful catalyst for progress across all SDGs. **Strong, collaborative partnerships are essential enablers in this effort.**

The International Association of Universities extends its sincere appreciation to all contributors from its Member institutions and organizations for their invaluable insights and steadfast commitment to the **IAU Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development** (IAU HESD Cluster). Their ongoing efforts to advance the implementation of the SDGs within their institutions and wider networks, both locally and globally, are not only deeply valued but critically necessary in light of the urgent challenges facing our planet.

This report presents a collection of good practices from Cluster members, demonstrating the **tangible progress being made across the higher education sector**. These examples reflect a growing commitment to embedding sustainable development into the core structures, policies, and practices of higher education institutions, using the SDGs as a strategic framework. They offer compelling evidence that transformation is underway, and that higher education is actively shaping a more sustainable, just, and resilient future.

We hope that this report will trigger new interest and generate new and renewed initiatives.

Happy reading,



Jouhaina Gherib, PhD

*IAU Vice-President and Chair HESD Working Group
Former President of La Manouba University, Tunisia*



Hilligje van't Land, PhD

IAU Secretary General

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES

The International Association of Universities (IAU) is the leading global association of higher education institutions and organisations from around the world. It was founded in 1950, under the auspices of UNESCO. Throughout its **75 year history**, the IAU has fostered partnerships in higher education and taken a leading role in discussions around topics of relevance for university leadership, staff and students (more about [IAU's history](#)).

The IAU brings together about 600 Members from about 130 countries for reflection and action on common priorities. The IAU is an independent, bilingual (English and French), non-governmental organisation. It acts as the global voice of higher education to UNESCO and other international higher education organisations, and it provides a global forum for leaders of institutions and associations. Its services are available on a priority basis to [Members](#); however, opportunities to engage and IAU publications are also available to non-Member organisations, institutions, authorities concerned with higher education, individual policy and decision-makers, higher education specialists, administrators, teachers, researchers, and students. The IAU is an official partner of UNESCO (Associate status), has been given consultative status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and was granted participatory status with the Council of Europe. More information on IAU's activities and Membership is available on the [IAU website](#).

IAU Mission

To contribute to peace and human development by promoting and enhancing the power of higher education to transform lives, build capacity, connect diverse peoples, generate and disseminate new knowledge, create insights and find sustainable solutions to local and global challenges.

IAU Vision

As the global voice of higher education, IAU will be the most influential and representative global association of diverse higher education institutions and their organisations, advocating and advancing a dynamic leadership role for higher education in society. Articulating the fundamental values and principles that underpin education and the pursuit, dissemination and application of knowledge, the Association will lead and advocate the development of higher education policies and practices that respect diverse perspectives, promote social responsibility and contribute to the development of a sustainable future. IAU will be a think tank and forum for the development of new approaches, the sharing of best practice and the undertaking of joint action, encouraging and facilitating innovation, mutual learning and cooperation among higher education institutions around the world.

Values

IAU promotes core values among its Members and the wider higher education community including:

- Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and social responsibility locally and globally
- Cooperation and solidarity based on mutuality of interests and shared benefits
- Tolerance of divergent opinions, freedom from political interference
- Equity in access and success in higher education and open access to knowledge
- Scientific integrity and ethical behaviour as cornerstones of conduct for all stakeholders in higher education
- Higher education and research in the public interest
- Quality in learning, research and outreach

Strategy

The IAU works to enhance the higher education community's role and actions in advancing societies worldwide. As a global membership organisation, the IAU represents and serves the full spectrum of higher education institutions and their associations. The [IAU Strategy 2030](#), adopted during the [16th IAU General Conference](#) in 2022, affirms the IAU's focus on four key higher education priority areas, while improving support and services to Members by enhancing their visibility and engagement.

IAU's four strategic priorities

- Promoting Globally-engaged and Value-based [leadership](#) in higher education
- Remaining a leader for inclusive, fair and ethical [Internationalisation](#) of higher education
- Integrating [sustainable development](#) fully into higher education strategies (Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development)
- Fostering the [Digital transformation of Higher Education](#)

IAU fulfils its goals through:

- Advocacy
- Standard setting
- Knowledge hub
- Capacity building
- International collaboration

IAU continuously enhances its efficiency by:

- Engaging & enlarging IAU membership
- Ensuring financial sustainability



Speakers at the HESD Session, IAU International Conference in 2024, at Sophia University, Japan.

IAU PRIORITY: HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HESD)

Sustainable development has been part of the strategic commitment of the International Association of Universities (IAU) to improve higher education for over 30 years. In 1993, the Association adopted the IAU Kyoto Declaration on Sustainable Development (IAU, 1993), and its commitment to sustainable development was reaffirmed in 2014 via the IAU Iquitos Statement on Higher Education for Sustainable Development (IAU, 2014). The IAU is a strong advocate for the role of higher education in sustainable development globally. It regularly speaks out at UN organisations and at other multilateral organisations around the world.

The Association has been supporting United Nations programmes for sustainable development since the early 1990s. For example, the IAU was one of the Key Partners in UNESCO's Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (GAP ESD), which ran from 2014 until 2019. The IAU is engaged in the [UNESCO ESD for 2030 Network](#), the UNESCO GAP ESD follow up programme adopted in 2019 which reconciles 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)' principles with the 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2019). Furthermore, the IAU is a partner in the UNESCO [Greening Education Partnership](#).

More information on IAU HESD initiatives can be found on the IAU website <https://www.iau-aiu.net/HESD> and on the [IAU HESD Portal](#).

IAU GLOBAL SURVEYS ON HESD

With the aim of mapping what actions universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) undertake in support of education for sustainable development, and in particular to understand the implementation mechanisms and results of a *Whole Institution Approach for Sustainable Development (WIA)*, the IAU conducts *Surveys on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD)*. The first IAU HESD Survey report, titled [Higher Education Paving the Way to Sustainable Development](#), was published in 2016, and it was followed by [Higher Education Moving into the 'Decade of Action and Delivery for the SDGs'](#) in 2019. The third global HESD Survey was conducted in 2022, and the latest report, [Accelerating Action for the SDGs in Higher Education](#), was published in 2023. **The next global HESD survey will be conducted in 2026.**

Accelerating Action for the SDGs in Higher Education gives insights from 464 valid responses from higher education institutions in 120 countries. The findings showed that higher education and partnerships are essential to address the global challenges identified in the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to build a more sustainable future together. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are in a unique position to use a whole institution approach to foster engagement with sustainable development (SD) in Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Engagement. Furthermore, the survey looked closer at partnerships, leadership and strategy for SD, and the relatively new concept of

Climate Change Education (CCE). This report provides data and thus shows the global commitment and responsibilities of higher education institutions (HEIs) towards the 2030 Agenda and SD more generally.

IAU at the UN HLPF

In 2019, the IAU began taking an active role in the *UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* (HLPF).¹ The HLPF was established and mandated in 2012 by the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "[The Future We Want](#)". The format and organisational aspects of the Forum are outlined in General Assembly resolution 67/290.

The HLPF is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level.



In 2019, a delegation of representatives from the IAU Secretariat and Member institutions travelled to New York, USA and took part in various events at the HLPF. From 2020-2023, participation was in virtual format. In-person participation began again in 2024 via a side event organised with the University of Bergen and the International Science Council (ISC). The IAU co-organised events listed in the official programme, and with its Members engaged in critical discussions.² The IAU works closely with a wide range of other key partners to increase the visibility and underline the contributions of the sector to the processes. In 2025, a small delegation of IAU Secretariat representatives will take part in person and is co-organising a side event with the University of Gothenburg (see [here](#)).

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages member states to “conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven” (paragraph 79 of the Agenda). These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for regular reviews by the HLPF. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The following IAU HESD Cluster Report serves as evidence of progress made on the 17 SDGs in the higher education sector . This report will be first presented to the public at the HLPF 2025 (July 2025).

¹ This page was drafted using the official information provided online: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

² See also for IAU at HLPF participation: <https://www.iau-aiu.net/HESD?onglet=3>

THE IAU GLOBAL CLUSTER ON HESD

The IAU Global Cluster on HESD brings together 16 lead universities who contribute expertise for one particular SDG while fostering cross cutting dynamics with all 17 goals. The IAU leads the work on *SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals*. The lead institutions, which are based in all world regions, work with subgroups of up to 10 ‘satellite’ institutions to advance a particular SDG and initiate concrete projects, while ensuring synergies among all goals. Furthermore, the Cluster promotes the role and potential that HEIs have globally in order to achieve the SDGs and 2030 Agenda. Higher education institutions engage with the SDGs in various ways, including through teaching, research, leadership, and campus operations. The Cluster encourages collaboration and a holistic approach to work with the SDGs, focusing specifically on the whole institution approach.



Within the overarching goal of “*Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*” ([UN SDG Summit 2019](#)), the Cluster has two concrete objectives:

- First, to serve as a **resource and networking hub for HEIs** around the world who are already engaged with the SDGs locally and seeking partnerships, as well as for those beginning to engage with the SDGs at their institutions. These institutions may turn to the Cluster for collaboration, guidance on best practices, and to translate and advance SDGs in local, national and international contexts.
- Second, the IAU Global Cluster serves as a **global voice for higher education in sustainable development**. The IAU advocates for HESD at the UN High Level Political Forum, IAU International Conferences, and events organised by the universities involved at the local, regional and international levels.
- **Guiding documents for the IAU HESD Cluster**
 - [The Strategy and Working Plan 2025-2026](#)
 - [Terms of Reference for IAU HESD Cluster Members \(2023\)](#)
 - [The Statement on the Joint Vision from the IAU Higher Education for Sustainable Development \(HESD\) Cluster Members \(2022\)](#)

The following pages summarise activity reports of the different universities leading the work on specific SDGs within and beyond the context of the IAU Global Cluster on HESD and provide concrete examples of translation of engagement with the SDGs into concrete practice.

For more detailed reporting on IAU’s activities for SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, please refer to the section on SDG 17 below (p. 46ff).

IAU HESD CLUSTER ACTIVITY REPORTS



SDG 1: NO POVERTY

Lead: The University of Ghana

<https://www.ug.edu.gh/>

Satellites:

- McMaster University, Canada
- UNICAMP, Brazil
- Qatar University, Qatar
- Makerere University, Uganda

Observer:

- Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, Japan



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

The University of Ghana, with a staff population of more than 6,565 and a student population of 73,155, is committed to a whole institution approach to activities that sync with Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1). University-wide initiatives have been done to achieve targets in SDG 1, with progress measured by aligning them with key indicators. Activities are pursued as a team, with reliance on partnerships with our stakeholders. The university is actively involved in initiatives aimed at eradicating extreme poverty, especially through education, innovation, and community engagement. We promote indigenous technology to boost agriculture, advocate for attitudinal change and inclusive development, and engage small-scale farmers, business leaders, and policymakers.

The Institute of Applied Science and Technology at the University of Ghana has established greenhouses on campus and offers robust [greenhouse training programs](#) aimed at equipping learners in underserved, urban communities with modern, climate-smart agricultural skills. This type of controlled environment agriculture can help reduce urban poverty by creating jobs, improving food security and reducing food miles.



Photo: Hands-on training on seed sowing

The University of Ghana Business School LEAP & JSDF Pilot Projects have provided [scientific proof](#) that holistic approaches to alleviating people from extreme poverty, including cash transfers (LEAP) and combined “cash plus” programs, which include livelihood support, are more impactful than other more fragmented approaches.

The University of Ghana plays a key role in shaping and studying social protection systems in Ghana, both through academic research and policy and community engagements. The Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS), which is a leading hub for research, training, and policy dialogue on social protection, offers graduate programs in Social Policy and hosts seminars on poverty, welfare, and fiscal policy. Faculty members of the Department of Social Work contribute to national and regional discussions on child protection, welfare economics, and poverty alleviation, which is featured in the Handbook of Social Work and Social Development in Africa. University of Ghana researchers helped shape the [National Unemployment Insurance Scheme](#) (NUIS), which is a major shift in social protection policy aimed at informal workers and the unemployed.

The University of Ghana has taken meaningful steps to promote equal rights to economic resources, basic services, and ownership. The university’s equality, diversity, and inclusion policy outlines its commitment to equal access to employment, education, and services regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic status. It includes barrier-free facilities and technologies to ensure inclusive participation, fair ownership and control over resources used in teaching, research, and campus life and support for students with special needs, including physical and social accommodations. Faculty conduct [research](#) on land tenure, social protection, and access to economic resources, and advise on policies that promote inclusive ownership and service delivery. The university also engages in studies on wealth distribution, social security, and access to financial services with evidence-based policy for equitable resource allocation. The university contributes to national efforts to document and reform land tenure systems, especially for women and rural populations for equal access to agricultural land.

The University of Ghana is actively building resilience to environmental, economic, and social disasters through research, education, infrastructure, and community engagement. The Climate Resilience & Sustainability Initiative, a flagship eight-year project called the University of Ghana Collaborative on Climate Resilience and Sustainability (UG-CCReS) is driving innovation across Africa. The focus areas include climate science and data, population health resilience, climate-resilient agriculture and food systems, indigenous knowledge systems and multi-level governance and policy engagement. The Centre for Climate Change and Sustainability Studies (C3SS) trains students and professionals to develop resilience strategies for climate and environmental challenges. The Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies (IESS) published a framework for integrating climate resilience into social protection systems by protecting vulnerable populations from climate shocks and promoting adaptive capacity through livelihood diversification and inclusive policies. The University hosts international conferences on inequality and resilience, such as the [6th International Research Conference](#) on socio-economic and environmental resilience which engaged stakeholders from government, academia, and civil society to shape national climate priorities.



6TH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE OF THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

CALL FOR PAPERS



https://bit.ly/49vWd5G

Theme: Addressing Inequalities: Building Socio-Economic and Environmental Resilience for Sustainable Development

Date: 15th - 17th May 2024

Venue: University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana

SUBMISSION

All abstracts should be submitted using the link or the QR code

IMPORTANT DATES

Submission of Abstracts: January 15, 2024

Notification of Acceptance: February 15, 2024 - March 14, 2024

SPONSORED BY:  OXFAM

CONTACT US:  cohconference@ug.edu.gh  +233(0)24 058 0044  coh.ug.edu.gh

The University of Ghana actively mobilizes resources to help end poverty. A doctoral study on Fiscal Decentralization & Poverty Reduction examined how grants and local revenue mobilization affect poverty levels in Ghana which reported that a 10% increase in Ghana’s District Assemblies Common Fund (DAFC) reduced district-level poverty by 6 percentage points and recommended investing in digital tax administration systems.

The University of Ghana has made significant strides in developing pro-poor and [gender-sensitive policy](#) frameworks. The University emphasises the creation of a community where no potential is stifled based on sex, and where both women and men can thrive without bias or discrimination. The Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) at University of Ghana is the first gender centre in Ghana that promotes gender equity in academia. As part of its 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, the university uses gender-neutral language in official documents, ensures gender-balanced representation on committees and boards and promotes leadership opportunities for women, including chairing key bodies.



Photo: Launch of the University of Ghana Strategic Plan for 2024-2029

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities from Satellites

McMaster University

McMaster researchers, students and staff are answering the UN call to embrace change and work towards creating a healthier brighter world. McMaster University ranked of 14th out of 2,526 institutions worldwide in the 2025 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which measures universities' performance in advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve life around the world and protect the planet. McMaster was ranked the best in North America for working to end poverty (SDG 1). Recent SDG 1 'No Poverty' related initiatives include:

- [Affordable Housing Project](#): McMaster's Professor and housing expert Jim Dunn examines why the stock of affordable housing is being eroded, and what can be done to prevent it. His research looks at four main pillars: new construction, acquisition, preservation and housing-based supports for those in need.
- [McMaster Centre for Research on Employment and Work \(MCREW\)](#) is a new research centre at McMaster that brings together experts from all disciplines to explore how rapid technological change and economic shifts are transforming workplaces.
- [A fair chance at fair work: Reducing poverty by supporting vulnerable employees](#): Professor Catherine Connelly's work tackles SDG 1 by shedding light on the challenges faced by vulnerable workers — those with disabilities, temporary workers, and people in precarious or gig economy jobs who are often impacted during times of economic change.

Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP)

The Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Brazil, has developed many activities concerning the SDGs, in particular SDG 1, including the publication of the [Books 'Vulnerable Populations: Unicamp and Public Ministry of Labor' and 'Vulnerable Populations – Child Labor'](#); the [UNICAMP Childhood and Adolescence Observatory \(OiA\)](#), an interdisciplinary space that aims to be a national and international reference on public policies for children and adolescents. Its goals include creating a database on childhood and adolescence in the Campinas region.

SDG 2: ZERO HUNGER

Lead: Universidad Antonio Nariño (UAN), Colombia

<https://www.uan.edu.co/>



Satellites:

- University of Oslo, Norway
- Saint Joseph University of Beirut, Lebanon
- Queen's University, Canada
- Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
- University of Calgary, Canada

Observer:

- Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP), Brazil

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

UAN has integrated the 2030 Agenda into its new [Development Institutional Plan \(2022-2026\)](#) as a cross-cutting axis to guide its approach to sustainable development, emphasising on its Glocal Engagement strategy, which represents participation, interaction, and collective construction of knowledge and solutions.

- **HZERO: Feeding the Future** is an initiative that brought together over 170 participants from universities, civil society, the private sector, and government institutions to address the eradication of hunger through a multidisciplinary approach. Representatives from countries such as Colombia, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru participated, fostering regional cooperation and knowledge exchange.
- **Strengthening Economic, Social, and Environmental Sustainability in the Huellas Indígenas Reserve (Caloto, Colombia)** is an international cooperation project developed with UCEVA, Universidad San Martín, Universidad Católica del Maule, Universidad Veracruzana, Fundación Caminos de Identidad, and the local Indigenous community. The project focuses on food security, sustainable agriculture, and climate resilience through collective knowledge building and practical implementation of agroecological models.

Key Achievements and Impact

The Cluster fostered broader institutional engagement in research and teaching aligned with SDG 2. A key achievement was the increasing participation of faculty, researchers, and students from diverse disciplines—ranging from environmental sciences and agriculture to public health, engineering, and international relations. This reflects UAN's commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and glocal engagement as defined in its Development Institutional Plan.

Significant academic activities supported research on food security, sustainable agriculture, water quality, and rural livelihoods, often in collaboration with community and private sector stakeholders. Notable examples include studies on pharmaceutically active compounds in food systems, mastitis control in goat farming, and the sustainability of dual-purpose cattle production.

Two particularly impactful collaborative initiatives were the international project to strengthen sustainability in the Huellas Indigenous Reserve and HZERO: Feeding the Future, which engaged more than 170 participants across sectors and countries. These efforts exemplify the Cluster's role in promoting knowledge co-creation and translating research into practical outcomes.

UAN reinforced its leadership as the SDG 2 Cluster coordinator by promoting dialogue, visibility, and cross-sector collaboration. The university contributed to international events such as NAFSA 2024 and the International Sustainable Staff Week in Romania, sharing insights on sustainability and the role of higher education. Internally, UAN further aligned its institutional strategy with the 2030 Agenda through the integration of SDG 2 into curricula and research priorities.

Cluster activities also fostered new academic partnerships and South-South cooperation, particularly in Latin America, with a focus on Indigenous knowledge systems, agroecology, and community-centered innovation. These efforts reflect UAN's ongoing commitment to equity, interculturality, and the democratization of knowledge in the fight against hunger.

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

UAN has funded, started, and supported research projects related to SDG 2, focusing on food security, agriculture, major grain food sources and farming sectors. These research projects have engaged communities and involved the private sector, fostering collaboration in addressing hunger and malnutrition. Access the full-text publications [here](#).

Satellite Collaboration

In the role as Cluster Lead, UAN has met with the sub-cluster comprising Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP), University of Oslo, Kaunas University of Technology, and Saint-Joseph University of Beirut. This sub-cluster aims to engage national and local clusters with HEIs, governmental agencies, civil society, and NGOs with experience in addressing world hunger and promoting SDG 2. In 2025, the group convened to design a Learning Pathway, titled "Towards Zero Hunger: A Global Dialogue", consisting of a cycle of four webinars to be held from August to November 2025. The series will showcase key projects, research findings, and lessons learned related to SDG 2, aiming to foster dialogue and collaboration among researchers and students across regions and disciplines. A certificate of participation will be awarded to those who attend all four sessions. Additionally, UAN leads a local collaboration initiative with other universities in Bogotá to share good practices and measure the impact of HEIs on the Global Agenda.

SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Lead: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), Spain

<https://www.uoc.edu/>

Satellites:

- University College Dublin, Ireland
- Makerere University, Uganda
- Western Sydney University, Australia
- Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, México

Observers:

- Universidad de Caldas, Colombia
- Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia



Introduction to the IAU SDG3 Cluster and 2024 Action Plan

The IAU SDG3 cluster on Health and Wellbeing, Universities for Good Health, is a network of 7 higher education institutions across 5 continents including [Western Sydney University \(Australia\)](#), [Makerere University \(Uganda\)](#), [Universidad de Caldas \(Colombia\)](#), [Universitas Gadjah Mada \(Indonesia\)](#), [Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana \(Mexico\)](#), [University College Dublin \(Ireland\)](#) and [Universitat Oberta de Catalunya \(UOC\)](#). It is spearheaded by the UOC's eHealth Center in Barcelona, and a part of the Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development (HESD) created in 2018 and hosted by the International Association of Universities.

The cluster aims to be a higher education champion, promoting an integrated approach to health, in support of equity and wellbeing worldwide in line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda.

Key Considerations:

- Consideration of both long term mental and physical health
- The patient and his or her specific needs are at the centre of diagnostics and care.
- Attaining full health potential, given all health determinants

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

In October 2023, the SDG3 cluster kicked off its knowledge-sharing series with an online seminar entitled “The mental health crisis, building resilience in a changing world”. See the 2023 [webinar recording](#) and [write-up](#). Following up on this work, in early 2024, the cluster secretariat launched an internal survey and a series of one-on-one calls with member institutions and the IAU to better understand members' engagement with mental health at the institutional, teaching and research levels. A group call was



subsequently set up to share preliminary findings. A deeper dive into each institution was then developed, based on the initial data and additional website consultations. [Two webinars in fall 2024](#) were also organised with members to explore the topic. A report was subsequently developed summarizing discussions and key learnings. The sub-cluster also submitted an article including learnings from this work for the [IAU Horizon magazine's summer 2025 edition](#).

The UOC secretariat team also participated in bi-yearly IAU HESD cross cluster meetings held by the IAU to exchange on behalf of the SDG3 cluster to share good practice with other sub-clusters.

In 2025, the sub-cluster has been focusing more specifically on how each member university is considering soft skills for resilience, health and wellbeing.

Key Achievements and Impact

This work enabled cluster members to share learnings and gain a better understanding of how member universities are considering soft skills and mental health institutionally, in their curriculum and research, in support of resilience, health and wellbeing.

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)

- In October of 2024, Marta Aymerich, the UOC's e-Health center Director, presented her work on "Academic values that address two painful gaps are needed: equitable university careers and gender-inclusive health research" at the IAU Annual Meeting Conference entitled "[University Values in a Changing World](#)", linking SDG3, 4 and 5. She talked about the IAU SDG3 Cluster collaboration.
- In 2024, the eHealth Center repositioned its narrative by explaining the potential social impact that digital health research can have around [seven global health challenges](#), one of which is the [promotion of mental health and emotional wellbeing](#).
- The IAU SDG3 Cluster Secretariat authored a communication in Catalan about the 2023-25 cluster project titled 'Global Network for Mental Health: 7 Universities, 5 Continents, 1 Collective Response' for the 2025 Scientific Conference of the Public Health Society of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands.
- In January 2024, UOC launched the [OpenEU initiative](#) (where IAU is one of the associated partners) funded by the European Commission, and the eHealth Center is responsible for developing a digital wellbeing tool in different European languages. This will be a standardized, culturally adaptive measure for the digital wellbeing assessment. Once developed and validated, the scale will be suggested for implementation in the mental health support strategy of the participating OpenEU universities.

Makerere University, Uganda

- Community-based research programmes are now incorporated in the curriculum across undergraduate and graduate programmes.

- Makerere has also made available in open source its [Sustainable Health Training Programme](#) developed in collaboration with Karolinska Institutet.
- Makerere is increasing its focus on student-centred initiatives in teaching and extra-curricular activities. An example is the organisation of student-led conferences.

Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia

- WSU has been confirmed as a [World Leisure Centre of Excellence](#) contributing to creating thriving, inclusive, and resilient communities in which all members enjoy their human right to leisure. WSU ran a seminar in July 2025, with participants from across the university as well as external organisations working in this space to share their work.
- WSU ran a seminar in July, with partner organisations and researchers within the university around the theme of ageing well and in place, with a particular emphasis on the community in Western Sydney, a culturally and linguistically diverse area. Key themes included social engagement, mental and physical well-being. Please see the recently published [white paper](#).
- WSU held a health and wellbeing week in October 2024 with research seminars and associated activities for both staff and students. This included themes around contribution, pro social activities, religion and other kinds of community organizations and leisure activities, and how involvement in these activities can contribute to wellbeing.
- In 2025, WSU appointed Global Challenge Leaders around the themes: Realising Digital Futures, Contributing to Fairer Societies, Creating Liveable Environments, Leading Future Industries, Supporting a Sustainable Future, and Creating Healthy Communities.

University College Dublin (UCD), Ireland

- UCD has developed a new SDG website and an [SDG dashboard](#). Please see the SDG3 section for updates on actions related to SDG3.
- UCD is holding an ICT for Sustainability 2025 Global International Conference June 9-13 2025.
- UCD held a Universitas 21 [Student workshop](#) in June.
- UCD launched its [One Health Centre](#) in 2024.

Universidad de Caldas, Colombia

- Universidad de Caldas continues its research and policy work in mental health and recently launched a paper “[Classification of depression in young people with artificial intelligence models integrating socio-demographic and clinical factors.](#)”

Visit [Universities 4 Good Health](#)

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

Lead: York University, Canada

<https://www.yorku.ca/>

<https://yorku.ca/unescochair/>



Satellites:

- Charles University, Czech Republic
- Heidelberg University of Education, Germany
- University of Inland Norway (INN), Norway
- International Islamic University, Malaysia
- Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany
- Rhodes University, South Africa

Observer:

- University of Peace with the Earth Charter International Institute, Costa Rica

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

In 2024/2025, a major project with involvement of several cluster members was the development of three ESD-related publications, commissioned by UNESCO, focusing on ESD competencies (Robert J. Didham from Inland University of Norway), assessment (Daniel Fischer from Leuphana University) and the whole-institution approach (Charles Hopkins and Katrin Kohl from York University) in collaboration with the IAU. Mirian Vilela from Earth Charter was a member of the advisory board overseeing the publication development. The publications are currently being tested in action research in ten countries and are expected to be published in November 2025.

In collaboration with SDSN, the York University team edited a special issue in the Journal of Education for Sustainable Development (JESD, SAGE) on [policy perspectives on ESD](#) was developed with contributions from Robert J. Didham, University of Inland Norway; Dzul Razak, International Islamic University Malaysia; and Daniel Fischer, Leuphana University. The special issue was launched in April 2025 and will be available for [open access download](#) in July 2025.

Key Achievements and Impact

A main achievement in 2024/2025 was the continued strategic positioning of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a central theme in global education policy and in the global higher education community. Through



coordinated efforts, ESD was advanced not only as a thematic priority but also as a cross-cutting foundation for institutional transformation and system-level change. The initiative strengthened alignment across international education networks, including the UNESCO/UNITWIN programme, and fostered synergies with key multilateral partners, such as the SDSN and the UN Academic Impact (UNAI) and including the most recent 2025 Sectoral Paper by the [Education & Academia Stakeholder Group](#). These efforts also supported the development of shared understandings around competencies, assessment strategies, and institutional approaches—reinforcing the role of higher education as a catalyst for sustainable development.

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

In collaboration with the IAU Secretariat, the Subcluster was able to contribute to the UN consultations on several drafts of the Global Pact for the Future which was adopted during the Summit of the Future in September 2024 during the 79th UN General Assembly. The cluster continues to contribute to sectoral papers of the UN Education & Academia Stakeholder Group. Current engagement for the 2025 HLPF is underway.



Photo: SDG 4 Cluster Members and IAU at a UNESCO Meeting in March 2025 in Paris

Contributors: Jana Dlouhá, Environment Centre, Charles University, Czechia; Mirian Vilela, UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter, Earth Charter at the University of Peace, Costa Rica; Alexander Siegmund & Tobias Kloes, UNESCO Chair on World Heritage and Biosphere Reserve Observation and Education, Department of Geography - Research Group for Earth Observation (rgeo), Heidelberg University of Education, Germany (since 2023); Robert J. Didham, UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Lifestyles, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN), Norway; Dzul Razak & Zainal Sanusi, UNESCO Chair in Future Studies, Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability & Humanity, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM); Daniel Fischer & Deepika Joon, UNESCO Chair in Higher Education for Sustainable Development, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany; Heila Lotz-Sisitka, SARCHI Chair on Global Change and Social Learning Systems, Director Environmental Learning Research Centre, Education Department, Rhodes University, South Africa; Charles Hopkins & Katrin Kohl, UNESCO Chair in Reorienting Education towards Sustainability, York University, Canada (coordinating university).

SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY

Lead: University of Bologna, Italy

<https://www.unibo.it/>

Satellites:

- Vechta University, Germany
- McMaster University, Canada
- Assam Don Bosco University, India
- Open University of Catalonia (UOC), Spain
- Tsukuba University, Japan
- American International University of Bangladesh, Bangladesh
- Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE)
- European Women Rectors Association (EWORA)

Observer:

- São Paulo State University (UNESP), Brazil



Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

The University of Bologna (UNIBO) has started to analyse the material from the questionnaire distributed to all Cluster partners in June 2024. It is based on the recommended building blocks suggested by the European Commission for the structuring of Gender Equality Plans, and it covers, for instance, gender equality actions in recruitment, career progression, research, communication and raising awareness, integration of academic life with personal life, and combating discriminatory violence. Besides collecting good practices and discussing them within the Cluster, the aim is to share the result of the survey once completed with the entire IAU community.

UNIBO has worked together with the IAU, and with the support of Open University of Catalonia (UOC), McMaster University, Assam Don Bosco University, to the design of a side event to be held at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development that will take place in July 2025 at UN Headquarters in New York, USA. This proposal for an event on Perspectives from Academia on Women's Health: Public Health and Global Health Policy was unfortunately not accepted to the HLPF programme. Together with IAU, we still intend to organize an event on these issues in the near future.

Key Achievements and Impact

The Cluster has increased the number of universities and HE institutions taking part in its meetings. This has helped to open the discussion and explore ways to work together on concrete projects and complement its activities, as well as to identify and share the key challenges encountered when

implementing SDG 5 at each institution. From this discussion, central aspects emerged which show the necessity of an intersectional approach, as well as the need for stronger involvement of the student community.

The sharing of different expertise impacted UNIBO's drafting of its Gender Equality Annual Report and its new Gender Equality Plan (link for both below).

The ninth edition of the [Gender Equality Annual Report](#) (UNIBO has currently finished preparing the tenth edition, to be published later this year), proves itself a valuable tool for understanding the complexity of our community in terms of our diversities and the still existing gaps. The report sets targeted policies and initiatives that help implement one of the four key principles of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, namely to "facilitate equity, sustainability, inclusion and respect for diversity in every area".

The new [Gender Equality Plan](#) is a policy document covering the next three years (2025-2027) within which UNIBO aims to implement actions and projects to reduce gender inequalities and to enhance diversity.

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

To ensure gender mainstreaming and to address gender violence, UNIBO has promoted a comprehensive programme of initiatives, targeting not only the academic community but also civil society. For example,

- On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UNIBO has organised a series of events in collaboration with the Town Hall;
- On 29 November 2024, a conference took place to promote analyses and proposals on what needs to be undertaken for the full inclusion of women at every level of the economic structure;
- On 12 May 2025, the event "Gender-based violence in study and work spaces: reflections and tools to combat it" welcomed the participation of numerous [Helpdesks](#) against gender-based violence operating on the national territory.

Other Links

- [UNIBO Equity, Diversity, Inclusion](#)
- [EWORA Podcast Project](#)
- [UOC Gender Equality Website](#)
- [UOC Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)
- [UNESP Center/Coordination for Affirmative Action, Diversity and Equity](#)
- IOHE: EMULIES on Gender
 - [Mentoring Program](#)
 - [Women in Ibero-American Universities](#)
 - [Gender Policy Training Program](#)

Satellite Report McMaster University:

McMaster University is a leader in providing a welcoming and inclusive environment and a range of programs focused on non-discrimination for women and transgender people. McMaster University ranked 14th out of 2,526 institutions worldwide in the 2025 Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, which measures universities' performance in advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve life around the world and protect the planet. Recent SDG 5 'Gender Equality' related initiatives/achievements include:

- [McMaster WISE \(Women in Science & Engineering\) Initiative](#) is an integrated network of academics and professionals in science, engineering, and related fields whose mission is to support, celebrate, and advocate for female-identified and other equity-seeking groups in science and engineering at McMaster University and the surrounding community.
- [McMaster's International Women's Day \(IWD\)](#) is a pivotal event that honours the myriad contributions of women and their achievements across social, economic, cultural, and political arenas worldwide. It serves as a time for introspection on the progress made towards gender equity, recognizing both the advancements and the continuous efforts needed to sustain this momentum.
- [Discrimination and inherent bias in AI systems:](#) With global investments in AI expected to reach \$232 billion by next year, addressing the critical issue of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) bias is more relevant than ever. McMaster University Associate Professor Maryam Ghasemaghaei's research explores the phenomenon of AI bias and its impact on organizations, individuals and society. Her research also focuses on developing effective strategies to mitigate these biases and promote EDI.
- Gender-based violence and harassment is a widespread issue in supply chains. Women workers in garment manufacturing, food production and hospitality are routinely subjected to unwanted touching and sexual advances and inappropriate comments, while promotion and advancement are often conditional on sex. In the most severe cases, this abuse escalates to sexual assault and rape. [Analysis: Worker-led programs are tackling gender-based violence in supply chains, but they're at risk](#)
- Jordan Foster, Sociology, postdoctoral research fellow at McMaster University, [studies beauty and its cultural forces, especially as they apply to young people online](#)

SDG 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Lead: University of Manouba, Tunisia

<http://www.uma.rnu.tn/>



Satellites:

- University of Tehran, Iran
- Universidad Antonio Nariño, Colombia
- Qatar University, Qatar
- Sophia University, Japan
- NYU Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Western Sydney University, Australia
- University of Bergen, Norway

The University of Manouba (UMA), a leading academic institution in Tunisia, has demonstrated a long-term commitment to Sustainable Development (SD). As a member of the United Nations Global Compact since 2016 and the "Principles for Responsible Management Education" initiative since 2019, UMA has actively engaged in various initiatives that aim to foster a culture of sustainability, citizenship, and accountability. This report provides an overview of UMA's progress and achievements in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a particular focus on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), reflecting our contributions and the activities of our SDG 6 cluster. UMA took over the Lead in the IAU HESD Cluster in Summer 2023.

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

In 2024, the University of Manouba (UMA) advanced its commitment to SDG 6 through key collaborative initiatives within the IAU HESD Cluster. One flagship event was the AQuER–QuAnLab Day (November 20, 2024), co-organized by the AQuER unit (ESCT-UMA) and the QuAnLab research laboratory. The roundtable, titled “Solutions for Mitigating the Water Crisis: Quantitative Economic Analysis,” brought together Tunisian and international researchers to explore economic tools and policy responses to water scarcity, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and international collaboration.

Additionally, UMA is a core partner in the PRIMA CIRQUA Project (2024–2027), which promotes integrated approaches for enhancing water reuse efficiency and sustainable fertilization through nutrient recovery from treated wastewater. This project, involving Mediterranean and European institutions, reflects a strong commitment to applied research and local-scale implementation of circular water management solutions.

Both initiatives are embedded in UMA’s broader strategy of interdisciplinary sustainability research and global engagement. Through these actions, the university strengthens its role in the HESD Cluster and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda. They also enhance student involvement, public awareness, and the visibility of local innovation in water and environmental sustainability.

Key Achievements and Impact

In 2024, the IAU HESD Cluster on SDG 6 significantly influenced the University of Manouba's sustainability agenda. As SDG 6 Cluster Lead, UMA aligned academic, research, and outreach strategies with the Cluster's priorities, strengthening its institutional focus on clean water and sanitation.

Key achievements included the organization of [“UMA4SDGs”](#), the first university-wide event dedicated to the SDGs, which showcased UMA's integration of sustainable development in education, particularly at the Higher Institute of Biotechnology of Sidi Thabet (ISBST). The AQUER–QuAnLab Day further enhanced interdisciplinary dialogue on economic responses to water crises, engaging researchers from Tunisia and abroad.

At the research level, Cluster engagement supported UMA's leadership in water-focused projects like PRIMA CIRQUA, PHC-Maghreb, and SAVE Water, fostering international partnerships and advancing applied innovation in wastewater treatment, resource recovery, and AI-based water management.

The Cluster's impact is also visible in student-centered activities, workshops, and career-focused sessions that strengthen sustainability education and civic engagement. UMA's visibility and influence in regional and international sustainability networks have grown, and the integration of SDG 6 into its institutional mission continues to guide strategic decisions.



Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

In addition to institutional events and international engagements, the University of Manouba's active participation in the Cluster is reflected in its robust research ecosystem aligned with SDG 6. In 2024–2025, several high-impact interdisciplinary research projects have been launched or continued in collaboration with regional and international partners:

- PHC-Utique Project (2020–2023): Focused on sustainable management of textile wastewater using microbial fuel cell technology (Tunisia–France).
- PHC-Maghreb Project (2024–2027): Developing microbial electrolysis for green hydrogen production from organic waste (Tunisia–France–Morocco).
- PRIMA CIRQUA Project (2024–2027): Aimed at enhancing water reuse and soil fertilization using nutrients recovered from wastewater.
- VRR Project (2024–2026): Prototype development for textile wastewater decontamination using indigo-fixing peptides (ISBST).

- SAVE Water Project (2025–2027): Exploring geospatial and AI technologies for innovative water resource management (MSE-UMA).

These initiatives not only contribute to advancing water and sanitation sustainability but also strengthen South–South and North–South cooperation within the Cluster. They foster innovation, support doctoral training, and promote science-based solutions with high societal relevance, reinforcing UMA’s contribution to the Cluster’s mission.

Beyond formal events and research projects, the University of Manouba (UMA) continued to embed the spirit of the IAU HESD Cluster into its broader institutional culture during the reporting period. Sustainability themes were integrated not only in scientific programming but also in public engagement activities, including student-led workshops on corporate social responsibility and biotechnology careers, and thematic panels on water reuse and circular economy.

Notably, UMA is preparing to co-lead discussions on climate-resilient water management and energy transition at the upcoming 5th International Citizen Forum of Education and Interdisciplinary Research (2026), strengthening the Cluster's global footprint. Additionally, the university emphasized interdisciplinary learning by fostering synergies between research centers, faculties, and student organizations.

This period also saw an increased focus on science-policy dialogue through regional forums, enhancing the visibility of local innovation and community-driven solutions. UMA’s engagement model showcases how universities in the Global South can actively shape the SDG discourse by combining academic rigor with inclusive collaboration.

Satellite Report Universidad Antonio Nariño UAN, Colombia

The [Territorial School of Water at Universidad Antonio Nariño \(UAN\)](#) is an academic-community initiative that empowers rural and peri-urban communities in Colombia through water knowledge, citizen science, and environmental education. Led by faculty and students from the Faculty of Environmental and Civil Engineering, the School focuses on five key areas: water quality monitoring, citizen participation, territorial planning, environmental education, and the application of ICTs for water management. In collaboration with community aqueduct associations and institutional partners like CAR (*Regional Environmental Authority for Cundinamarca Colombia*), the initiative conducts fieldwork, water analyses, and educational outreach to strengthen local capacities, promote sustainable water use, and support climate resilience. Its participatory approach contributes to SDG 6 and enhances the social appropriation of scientific knowledge in underserved territories.

SDG 7: CLEAN AND AFFORDABLE ENERGY

Lead: Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU), India

<https://www.dbuniversity.ac.in/>

Satellites:

- Qatar University, Qatar
- Strathmore University, Kenya



Cluster Overview

Apart from water and food, energy is one of the key enablers of human life. Energy is central to nearly every major challenge and opportunity the world faces today and access to energy for all is essential. Therefore, energy needs to be available and affordable to all to allow future development, and it needs to be clean to ensure that the development can be sustainable. Assam Don Bosco University promotes and supports clean energy, both through research, campus outreach and in their behaviour and consumption. Taking heed of these conditions, a [solar energy-based training programme](#) is conducted every year which provides leading on-the-job education for emerging energy planners and rural youth. Our research programme in a multidisciplinary scheme is based on determining integrated practices to improve energy efficiency, resource recycling, and making modern energy production cleaner and more affordable. As a University, ADBU prioritises collaborative work involving a broad range of stakeholders and providing a model to strengthen cooperation in research, innovation and practice.

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

As a recognized global Cluster Lead for SDG 7, Assam Don Bosco University has actively engaged in international collaborations to promote sustainable energy. A major initiative during 2024 was the International Conference on Emerging and Environment Sustaining Renewable Energy ([ICEESRE-2024](#)),



organized in partnership with five prestigious Taiwanese universities—Cheng Shiu University, National Quemoy University, National Chung Cheng University, Kung Shan University, and Fu Jen Catholic University. The conference served as a platform for global knowledge exchange on affordable and modern energy services, with strong support from India's Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB).

Another key collaborative initiative was the research partnership with Chang Gung University, Taiwan, focusing on Gallium Nitride (GaN)-based space solar power. This pioneering project explores wireless energy transmission from satellites in low Earth orbit to ground stations, potentially transforming energy access in remote regions.

Both initiatives exemplify the University's commitment to leveraging global academic networks to co-develop innovative, inclusive, and scalable clean energy solutions in alignment with SDG 7.

Key Achievements and Impact

As the global cluster lead for SDG 7, Assam Don Bosco University made significant strides through impactful initiatives in research, education, and international collaboration. A major milestone was hosting the [International Conference on Emerging and Environment Sustaining Renewable Energy \(ICEESRE-2024\)](#), which brought together global experts and five leading Taiwanese universities. This event advanced discourse on renewable energy access, policy, and innovation, reinforcing the University's leadership role in shaping sustainable energy practices in the Global South. Another standout achievement was the joint research project with Chang Gung University, Taiwan, focusing on space-based solar power using Gallium Nitride (GaN) technology. This cutting-edge collaboration has positioned the University at the forefront of futuristic energy solutions, with potential long-term impacts on global energy equity.

These cluster activities created substantial academic and practical impact at the University. Faculty and students gained exposure to frontier technologies and global best practices, while the institution deepened its commitment to clean energy through curriculum enrichment, research publications, and sustainability focused campus operations. The cluster's engagement has significantly enhanced ADBU's role as a regional and global catalyst for clean and inclusive energy transformation

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

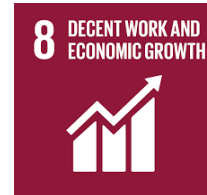
During the reporting period, Assam Don Bosco University strengthened its cluster activities by integrating SDG 7 themes into student-driven innovation, curriculum, and sustainability research. The University advanced the SIELWARM Project (Sustainable development goals on Integrated Energy, Land, Water, and Air Resource Management) in collaboration with the UNESCO Chair on Global Understanding for Sustainability, Friedrich Schiller University Jena Germany adopting a "Living Laboratory" approach. This initiative empowered students to use real campus data for developing applied solutions in clean energy, water management, and eco-mobility. Certification under the Jena Declaration was offered to student participants. Additionally, the University organized [expert-led seminars linking machine learning, power systems, and sustainability](#), exposing students and faculty to the intersection of emerging technology and clean energy goals. These efforts have fostered greater interdisciplinary engagement, expanded international partnerships, and deepened the University's institutional commitment to the IAU SDG Cluster agenda.

Click [here](#) to learn more.

SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Lead: University of Gothenburg, Sweden

<https://www.gu.se/en> ; <https://gmv.gu.se/english>



Satellites:

- Makerere University, Uganda
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- University of Nairobi, Kenya

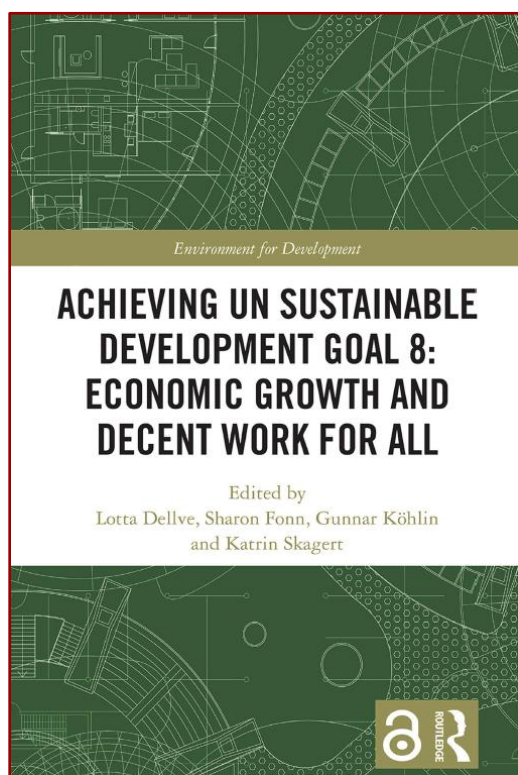
Observers:

- Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
- University of Nigeria, Nigeria
- University of Concepción, Chile
- Universidad de los Andes, Colombia
- University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Woxsen University, India

The Strategic Goal of the SDG 8 Initiative

The SDG 8 Initiative involves the University of Gothenburg together with eight satellite universities in the Global South. The strategic goal of the initiative is to engage and support a global community, with the starting point in academia, to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. This is done by applied action research and policy interaction that focus on solutions for growth and work-related challenges through collaboration among researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners in local and global contexts. The work is coordinated at the Environment for Development Unit at the University of Gothenburg with the support of a steering committee representing three faculties at University of Gothenburg.

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25



After years of dedicated work, the book [Achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 8: Economic Growth and Decent Work for All](#) was published by Routledge in March 2025. Thanks to a generous donation from a local foundation, the book is available with open access, ensuring broad accessibility. Authored by 40 researchers worldwide within the SDG 8 subcluster and further GU network, it synthesizes knowledge on sustainable economic growth and fair employment, aiming to support progress toward these goals by 2030.

Covering targets 8.1 – 8.9, along with chapters on academic capacity-building, the book explores key policies related to decent work, youth employment, child labor, resource efficiency, and sustainable tourism. It also provides a critical analysis of SDG 8's framework, addressing biases and contradictions to better guide policymaking.

Key Achievements and Impact

The official launch of the book took place on April 28, 2025, at the University of Gothenburg, hosted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The book emphasizes academia's vital role in achieving SDG 8, highlighting how research and higher education institutions contribute through capacity-building and policy engagement. It will be presented during an [official side event at the UN HLPF, on 22 July 2025](#) in New York.

Other Projects, Resources, and Activities

- [Environment for Development \(EfD\) Initiative](#)
- [The SDG 8 Initiative](#)
- [More information about the partners](#)



SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Lead: Beirut Arab University (BAU), Lebanon

<https://www.bau.edu.lb/>

Satellite: Assam Don Bosco University, India



Beirut Arab University (BAU) is committed to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9) – "Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure." Through a comprehensive range of initiatives and collaborations, BAU is at the forefront of promoting innovation, fostering industry growth, and enhancing infrastructure development in Lebanon.

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

- **Expansion of Solar Energy Systems:** BAU has significantly scaled up its renewable energy infrastructure, directly supporting SDG 9's targets for sustainable industrialization and resilient infrastructure. In 2025, the Beirut Campus increased its solar capacity from 310 kW to 435 kW through rigorous maintenance and system optimization. By the end of 2026, solar systems will be extended to the Debbieh Campus (1.6 MW) and Bekaa Campus (100 kW), ensuring clean energy access across all campuses and reducing reliance on unstable power grids.
- **The newly designed BAU campus in the Bekaa region** will serve as a research and education hub for sustainable practices strengthening rural-urban connectivity while preserving the natural assets within an agricultural context.
- **LED Lighting Upgrade for Energy Efficiency:** As part of its commitment to sustainable infrastructure (SDG 9), BAU has replaced 15% to 40% of conventional lighting with LED systems at the Beirut Campus, with plans to reach 80% coverage by end-2026. This initiative enhances energy efficiency, cuts operational costs, and reduces the university's carbon footprint.

Key Achievements and Impact

Beirut Arab University has demonstrated significant commitment to advancing SDG 9 through impactful research and practical applications during the 2024-2025 academic year. The university's research portfolio shows strong engagement with industrial innovation, with SDG 9-related work accounting for 35% of total publications across key faculties. The Faculty of Engineering leads this effort, contributing 60% of all SDG 9 research output, while the Faculties Science, Business Administration, and Health Sciences provide important complementary contributions as well.

A compelling example of BAU's practical work comes from the Faculty of Health Sciences, where researchers partnered with the Ministry of Economy and Trade to conduct a market study on tomato paste adulteration. This rigorous investigation analyzed local and imported products, developed new testing methodologies, and established quality benchmarks that are now informing national food safety standards. The project exemplifies BAU's ability to translate academic research into tangible industry benefits.

The university actively cultivates innovation through programs like the LIRA Innovation Program 2025, which connects researchers with EU funding opportunities to develop solutions for Lebanon's agricultural and healthcare sectors. This initiative reflects BAU's strategic focus on bridging academic research with market needs, with current participation from 18 faculty researchers exploring 32 potential projects.

Research output reveals particular strengths in digital transformation and smart infrastructure. Engineering disciplines show especially strong alignment, with 60% of their total publications addressing SDG 9 objectives. These scholarly contributions, combined with practical industry collaborations, position BAU as a key driver of sustainable industrialization in Lebanon, effectively supporting national progress toward SDG 9's goals of resilient infrastructure, inclusive industrialization, and technological innovation.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

In 2025, BAU participated in the Innovation Program 2025, and three projects at BAU were approved and received funding for development.

IEEE competitions such as LNSC 2025, often involve industry mentors, sponsors, or real-world challenges. This helps bridge the gap between academic learning and industrial application, strengthening innovation ecosystems.

The IEEE conference at BAU (ICABME2025) encourages the application of sustainable practices in biomedical industries. Discussions and workshops focus on integrating sustainability into medical device manufacturing and healthcare services, supporting SDG 9's goal of sustainable industrialization.

The full version of this report with additional descriptions and links can be consulted [here](#).

SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Lead: University of Tsukuba, Japan

<https://www.tsukuba.ac.jp>

Satellites:

- University of Bologna, Italy
- Universiteit Utrecht, The Netherlands
- KIIT/KISS, India
- Queen's University, Canada

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

Reconstruction of the satellite network on SDG 10 was the main activity for the University of Tsukuba, the Lead of SDG 10, during the reporting period. The University of Tsukuba has continued reconstructing its satellite network, with regular consultation with the IAU, and has begun negotiation with universities in Africa and the Americas. In the meantime, the University of Tsukuba and the University of Bologna have maintained close coordination, mainly with the strong leadership of the University of Bologna.

Key Achievements and Impact

At the University of Tsukuba, Assistant Professor Hajime Akiyama was introduced as the Lead for this cluster succeeding Professors Munee Kaigo and Hidehiro Yamamoto.

Within the University of Tsukuba, the Organization for [DESIGN THE FUTURE](#) has continued activities and conducted another fair within the university cafeterias to promote better knowledge of carbon footprints – and created menus with the carbon footprint labeled.

The [University of Tsukuba Empirical Social Science Research Center for Policy Solutions to Disparities and Inequalities \(DDPI\)](#) headed by Professor Hidehiro Yamamoto, has released a new edited book in Japanese, “Political Inequality in Contemporary Japan: Mechanisms of Disparity and Division in Participation and Representation” by Akashi Shoten, March 2025.

This book examines the state of political inequality in modern Japan, primarily through the analysis of questionnaire survey data, while addressing various aspects of the political process. In order to consider how public opinion is reflected in Japanese politics and how political representation should be, the book used detailed survey data to clarify disparities in aspects such as political participation, political awareness, policy preferences, representativeness, and policy responsiveness. It shows the reality of political inequality, including the perspectives of media, gender, foreigners, and other aspects.

SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Lead: Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand

<https://siam.edu>



Satellites:

- J.F. Oberlin University, Tokyo, Japan
- Tokai University, Tokyo, Japan
- Durban University of Technology (DUT), Durban, South Africa
- American International University Bangladesh (AIUB), Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Pathumthani, Thailand
- Linnaeus University, Sweden
- University College Dublin, Ireland

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

Siam University with Asia Cooperation Dialogue University Network (ACD-UN) and World Federation of United Nations (WFUNA) is organizing Student leadership camp under SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities during 04-06 June 2025, under this cluster some satellite universities are registering their students to attend this meaningful camp.



Photo: Delegates and officials at the ACD-UN WFUNA Action Camp

A delegation from the American International University Bangladesh visited Mykolas Romeris University in May 2024. The meeting provided information about university service to the vulnerable groups of society. MRU presented its support to the Ukrainian refugees and war affected people, mostly women

and children, living and studying on MRU campus. American International University Bangladesh presented the university's support of people living in slum territory. Other SDG 11 related issues such as safe and affordable housing, affordable and sustainable transport, inclusive urbanization, clean cities, environmental impact of Vilnius and Bangladesh, etc. were discussed. Cultural and natural aspects of the city of Vilnius were presented. Possibilities of future joint projects were discussed. Following the visit the teams met several times online.

Key Achievements and Impact

Siam University won in the International Green Gown Awards under "Benefitting Society" for project ["Tiny Heroes, Global Savors"](#) which uses black soldier fly larvae to decompose organic waste, addressing health issues and creating a new income source for the Klong Ladphachi community by transforming the larvae into marketable pet food, becoming a successful role model for others. Winning this award has motivated students, faculty members and other community members to build more awareness about the strength of SDGs and its impact.

In 2024–25, another key achievement of the Cluster was an exchange visit and meeting in person of individual Cluster members, discussing practical cases of helping people in need, engaging local communities. A major milestone was the launch of the [MRU HET Systems Center](#) to explore the interaction between humans, environment, and technology in urban systems. MRU also played a key role in the [Didlaukis Campus Development Project](#), co-developing sustainable urban visions with city planners, municipality, businesses, NGOs and academic community members. The [MAFESUR project](#) mapped ecosystem services in Lithuanian cities, guiding resilient urban planning. The university hosted an international conference on urban well-being, bridging architecture, healthcare, and design. MRU also demonstrated social impact through long-term support for Ukrainian refugees via the accommodated [Gravitas Ukrainian School](#) and the ["Lawyers4Ukraine" initiative](#) to aid the injured children in war.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

Planting oak trees donated by the President of the Republic of Lithuania for winning a second place in the walking contest WALK15 among higher education institutions in Lithuania. MRU community has engaged in this environment saving and healthy living promoting initiative for three years.

In support of climate education, MRU introduced the Climate Fresk workshops, an interactive learning tool used by students, faculty, and community members to understand the science behind climate change and its connection to urban sustainability. These sessions foster systems thinking and empower participants to take action in their communities and professional fields. The workshops support climate literacy—a key component of building resilient and informed cities.

On a grassroots level, students led the development of the MRU Urban Garden behind the dormitory. Students continued the tradition of planting bee-friendly flowers and vegetables, creating a shared space that promotes biodiversity, food sustainability, and community bonding. The garden encourages participation from the entire university community and supports pollinator health.

SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Lead: University of Regina and Luther College, Canada

<https://www.uregina.ca/>

<https://www.luthercollege.edu/university/>



Satellites:

- University of Vechta (Germany)
- Pontifical Catholic University of Peru
- Mahidol University, Thailand

Observers:

- Moi University (Kenya)
- El Bosque University (Colombia)
- Universiti Sains Malaysia

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

The cluster meets every two months so that member universities may share key initiatives they are working on and receive feedback from their peer universities. Since September of 2024 this included the University of Vechta (Germany) presenting on the role gamification can play in teaching about Sustainable Development in the classroom around Responsible Production and Consumption. Their sustainable consumption and production game teaches core circular society principles aimed at sufficiency, designing out waste, building resilience, ensuring transparency and access, and strengthening cohesion. Luther College at the University of Regina (Canada) also presented its plans to develop an Autonomous Equipment Repository (AER) that aims to create a “living laboratory” of equipment using open source library software. It presented on a draft survey it had developed to identify kinds of equipment for sharing along with possible terms for sharing and related volunteer opportunities and received feedback. Four collective strategic goals were identified by the SDG 12 Cluster for 2025 (see below).

Key Achievements and Impact

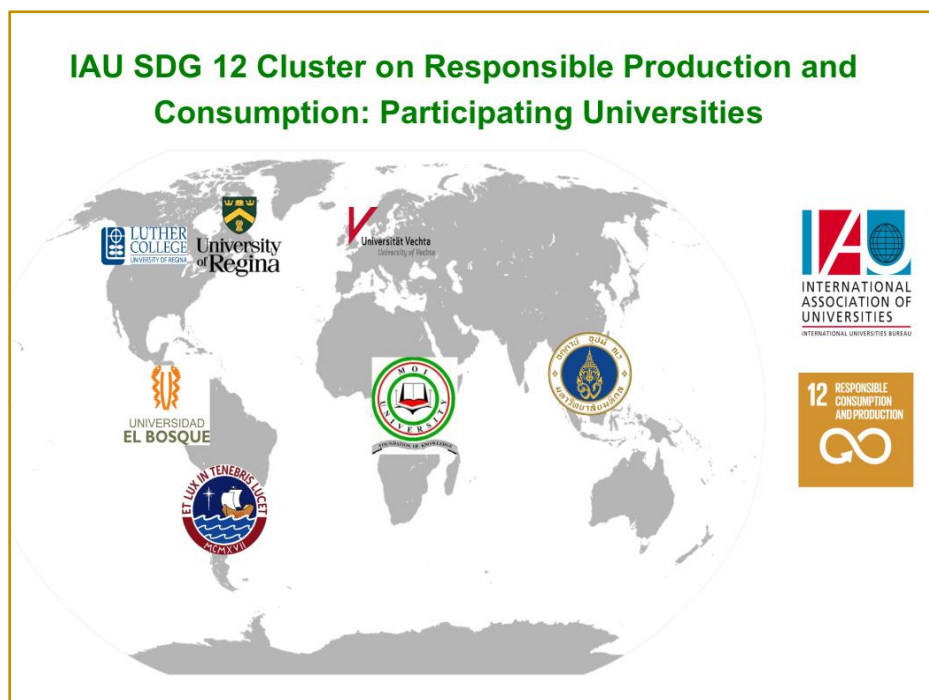
In September, 2024, Moi University (Kenya) introduced a new project: “Mobility in Innovative Green Technologies for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Bioeconomy ([INTERACT-Africa](#))”. Focused on chemistry, biology and information technology, the project emphasizes conversion of organic waste into valuable bioproducts for transitioning into environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economies. The University of Vechta in Germany co-founded a new network: the "Center of Sustainability Transformation in Areas of Intensive Agriculture (trafo:agrar)" with five universities working together with industry in a cooperative network to jointly promote the sustainable development of the agricultural and food industry in northwestern Germany.

Five (5) new representatives from the University of Regina and Luther College were added to the cluster in December, 2024, and in February, 2025 a new university, Mahidol University (Thailand), was welcomed.

This university has extensive projects on Responsible Consumption and Production in Bangkok with specific strategies for community engagement. Approached by the United Nations Association in Canada, Luther College co-hosted a virtual guest lecture by Dr. Adam Sneyd (Guelph University, Canada) on March 19, 2025, “On the SDG Targets and Indicators Linked to Responsible Consumption and Production and [Why We Need an Independent Commission on Sustainable Development Progress](#)”.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

Four (4) collective goals were identified for the cluster in the upcoming year (2025): (1) identification of the structural/institutional activities that are happening in our respective cluster universities that shift culture towards sustainable production and consumption (e.g., scholarships, living labs, creative use of recycled material in arts/fine arts disciplines), (2) mobilizing global knowledge exchange by seeing how the cluster members can utilize existing supports, such as International or Global Learning departments on campus (e.g. framing MOUs and knowledge exchange for students) and using the UN Volunteer Platform, (3) exploring more localized production and promoting resilience in sustainable production & consumption in a less friendly global trading world (e.g., what opportunities for localized production may arise from less dependence on international trade), and (4) exploring how AI and digital technologies are affecting scholarship and research in our member universities.



SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Lead: The University of West Indies (UWI), Caribbean

<http://www.uwi.edu/>



Satellites:

- University of Bergen, Norway
- University of the South Pacific, Fiji
- University of Ghana, Ghana
- University of Costa Rica

Observers:

- State University of New York - SUNY, USA
- TERI School of Advanced Studies, India
- University of Waterloo, Canada
- Universidad de los Andes, Colombia
- University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- University of Aruba, Aruba
- University of Bristol, UK
- University of Delaware, USA



The UWI is 1 University with 5 Campuses, serving 17 English-speaking Caribbean countries. UWI is an SDG-engaged university, and the Cluster connects with several UWI Research, Centres & Institutes, such as: The Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES – UWI Cave Hill Campus), Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), Centre for Policy Studies in Sustainable Development, Centre for Environmental Management (CEM), and others.

Main activities undertaken *in collaboration with others* in this Cluster in 2024-25

In the framework of the *International Association of Universities' (IAU) Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development*, The University of the West Indies (UWI) was nominated in 2019 to lead the Global University Consortium on SDG-13 and has brought together 10 universities from across the globe, committed to developing the role of academia in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Focused on Climate Action and its interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global University Consortium, since its first year, has worked persistently to advance knowledge, engage in

knowledge exchange, research collaborations, advocacy, North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Key achievements and their impact

The University of the West Indies has undertaken some activities for the 2024/2025 period in the area of SDG 13. These were:

1. *Responsible Futures*

After successfully joining the pilot group in 2023/24, the University of the West Indies has continued its commitment to the [Responsible Futures International](#) Programme led by SOS-UK and IAU. This programme is aimed at incorporating sustainability with the institution's curriculum but also allowing students and staff to learn about sustainability and its benefits.

2. *International School for Development Justice*



The UWI Pro-Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs continues to lead on the finalisation of the [International School for Development Justice \(ISDJ\)](#). This new school will form part of the UWI's Global Campus and offer post-graduate courses across all the SDGs.

Photo: UWI officials and partners at the ISDJ launch in Jamaica

3. *Innovation Project: Rum and Sargassum Inc*

The University of the West Indies Cave Hill collaborated and launched the first vehicle powered by bio-compressed natural gas (CNG). The Innovative fuel source that utilises Sargassum seaweed. This initial test phase was undertaken by Rum and Sargassum Inc., The UWI and is an achievement for sustainable development in the Caribbean. It was supported by partners such as the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE).

4. *Sustainability Reporting Mechanism*

The UWI's Office of Global Affairs (OGA) has drafted a proposal for a centralized *Sustainability Reporting Mechanism*. While sustainability efforts are ongoing across campuses, the proposal aims to centralize and systematize reporting, assess engagement with the SDGs.

5. Climate Emergency Declaration

Following Hurricane Beryl in 2024, the OGA began developing a Climate Emergency Declaration to reaffirm The UWI's commitment to climate action. The declaration is intended to send a strong message to regional and international stakeholders about the urgency of addressing climate change and to position The UWI as a global leader in Climate Justice Advocacy. After completing its initial internal review, the declaration will be circulated to external partners, with the aim of achieving regional adoption under UWI's leadership.

5. Centre for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE)

In May 2024, The UWI launched the [Centre for Oceanography and the Blue Economy \(COBE\)](#) at the Five Islands Campus in partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

In 2024, with support from the Clara Lionel Foundation, The University of the West Indies (UWI) launched two projects focused on building resilience in at-risk communities and monitoring sargassum to inform future resilience strategies. In partnership with Future Earth and funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, UWI began a two-year research project titled [Engineering the Design of Nature-Based Solutions for Sustainable Development](#). Led by Dr. Deborah Villarroel-Lamb of UWI St. Augustine, the project spans Trinidad & Tobago, the USA, Barbados, and Jamaica, and aims to develop universal design specifications for nature-based solutions.

From April 2023 to March 2024, UWI served as the Regional Community Convenor for Latin America and the Caribbean in the global [Connecting Climate Minds initiative](#), which explored the intersection of climate change and mental health. UWI hosted regional dialogues, supported global discussions, established a regional community of practice, and contributed to the Global Research and Action Agenda launched in May 2024.

In collaboration with the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), UWI also led two research projects: a six-month coastal erosion assessment in Negril, Jamaica, and a study on stakeholder perspectives in adopting nature-based solutions for hazard mitigation and sustainable development. UWI's Centre for Biosecurity Studies at Cave Hill additionally conducted a project on the impacts of climate change and wildfires in Barbados.

Through its Global Campus and in partnership with CCRIF, UWI delivered two online courses: [Disaster Risk Financing](#) (Summer 2024) and a postgraduate course on Disaster Risk Financing for SIDS (July–October 2024). CCRIF also supported the inaugural Caribbean Summer Workshop on Introductory Modelling (CSWIM), hosted by the Mona Climate Studies Group in June 2024, which trained 12 tertiary-level scientists in climate modelling and data analysis to strengthen regional capacity.

In 2024, UWI became a member of the [International Universities Climate Alliance \(IUCA\)](#), led by the University of New South Wales, Australia, and supported the Right Here, Right Now Global Summit as part of this alliance.

SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER



Lead: University of Bergen, Norway

<https://www.uib.no/>

Satellites:

- The University of the South Pacific, Fiji
- The University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Observers:

- University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Ocean University of China
- Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany
- Dalhousie University, Canada
- University of Western Australia
- Universidad del Magdalena (UNIMAG), Colombia

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

Master Programme in Ocean Science: Led by the University of Brest, some members of the cluster have engaged in an Erasmus+ project with UCT & other universities in South Africa where the goal is to establish a [Master Programme in Ocean Science - SAMOS](#).

Ocean Knowledge Exchange - Bridging Norway and Canada (OCEAN): A new educational project between Dalhousie University, UiB and other Norwegian universities. This project fosters cooperation between educators in both countries on the development of curricula, course design, teaching material and educational practice. It will also include student exchange, and two summer schools. The cluster lead is project leader of both these educational projects tailored towards cooperation across borders.

Navigating Common Waters: Ocean Science Diplomacy for a Sustainable Common Future. [A side event](#) bringing together UNAI, ISC, IAU and others at the third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in the emerging field of ocean science diplomacy bringing together researchers, diplomats, practitioners and others operating on the science-policy nexus (11 June 2025).



Photo: Speakers and Organisers at the side event in Nice on Ocean Science Diplomacy.

Bridging Academia and Action: Advancing Partnerships for SDG 14, Knowledge-sharing, and Ocean Literacy: As part of the official side events around the *UN Ocean Conference 2025*, IAU, the University of Bergen, the University of the West Indies, the International Science Council and other partners organised an [online event](#) (13 June 2025) bringing together voices from higher education, science and other key partners for advancing SDG 14: Life Below Water.

Key Achievements and Impact

The cluster lead now has two endorsed educational Ocean Decade Actions, one at the PhD level ([N-POC, with University of South Pacific](#)), and one at the post-doc level (SEAS - Shaping European Research Leaders for Marine Sustainability). SDG14-related activities include the annual SDG-conference, the One Ocean Week, and an educational portfolio on SDG-related issues to more than 15 courses, and a [cross-disciplinary masters program](#).

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

The cluster lead and Ocean University of China contributed to a [joint conference](#) between the Chinese and the Norwegian Marine University Consortia in the fall of 2024 where many issues pertaining to SDG14 were on the agenda.



Photo: UiB at the China Norway Marine University Consortium Conference

SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

Lead: University of Costa Rica

<https://www.ucr.ac.cr/>



Satellite:

- University of Inland Norway (INN), Norway

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

In February 2024, the University of Costa Rica was virtually represented at the Conference on SDGs, organized by the University of Bergen, particularly in the session “A Whole-Institution Approach for ESD and the SDGs”, with the presentation “Education for the SDGs at the UCR”, by Dr. Ana María Durán Quesada.

In this activity, Ana María Durán Quesada, Ph.D., professor at UCR’s School of Physics and researcher at the Research Center on Environmental Pollution(CICA-UCR) shared some current initiatives at UCR that contribute to an institutional approach for education of sustainable development:

- Students’ participation in programs devoted to reaching SDGs allows them to interact with peers of different careers, backgrounds, and countries.
- Several workshops conducted each year in which a whole international community contributes to expand horizons for SDGs.
- Goals for equity and equity for the goals resonate in our university to continue the development of a modern curriculum in which understanding the role of our professional development for SDGs is a priority.
- Classwork that includes seminars, workshops, emphasizing interactions, training, and lab work, where students take part in research activities with UCR professors and international experts, in a modern infrastructure with state-of-the-art labs, among others.

Key Achievements and Impact

During this period, Universidad de Costa Rica continued developing programs, projects, and activities contributing to SDG 15 fulfilment. As an example of this, in January 2024, the Graduate Program in Sustainable Development at UCR conducted a study about the [relationship and contribution of research conducted to sustainable development](#). It analyzed 46 theses developed between 2007 and 2023. Through a comprehensive documentary analysis, the study delved into aspects including authorship, gender, nationality, emphases, and the locations and objects of study for each research. Regarding SDG 15, it found that “[life on land] has been addressed through research focused on species and habitat

conservation, while also promoting the protection of terrestrial biodiversity. These initiatives have assessed ecosystem health, identified endangered species, and proposed sustainable management strategies, such as the restoration of degraded habitats, reforestation, and combating biodiversity loss. These initiatives contribute to the preservation of these ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of natural resources. These topics include the conservation of at-risk species and habitats; the restoration of degraded ecosystems; the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices; the protection of natural areas and biodiversity; and the restriction of activities that negatively affect terrestrial ecosystems”.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

During this period UCR partially financed the participation of more than 6 researchers abroad in activities related to SDGs, and its researchers at the university led more than 23 community work projects, more than 20 research projects, among other activities, such as workshops, colloquia, and international week.

Click [here](#) to learn more about Research on SDG 15 at UCR.

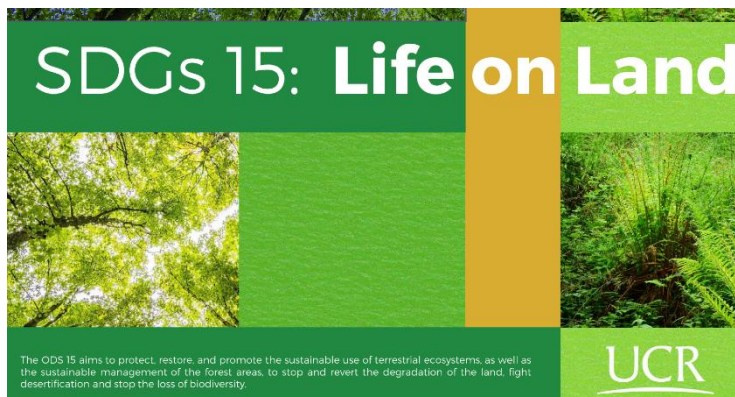


Photo: Cover of the SDG 15 Research Dossier prepared by UCR (April 2025).

SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Lead: University of Nairobi, Kenya

<https://www.uonbi.ac.ke/>



Satellites:

- University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- James Madison University, USA

Observers:

- University of Tokyo, Japan

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

Through the [Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies \(WMI\)](#), the University of Nairobi is working on different initiatives to enhance its work through the SDG lens of Peace, Just and Inclusive societies. These three ideas shape the approach to reducing violence, creating effective and transparent institutions, ensuring responsive, participatory decision making, strengthening institutions through cooperation, and promoting non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable communities and conflict prevention.

Engagement was initiated with several corporate organizations, in collaboration with the civil society organization Hearts of Green, to strengthen sustainability activities. This includes tree planting and nurturing, as well as training on sustainability dynamics. A central focus is youth involvement, aimed at building a critical mass engaged in governance, environmental peacebuilding, and the promotion of cultures of peace. These efforts are carried out as part of advancing the legacy of Wangari Maathai, Nobel Laureate (2004) for her contributions to environment and peace, under the Landscape Repair and Transformation (LANSRET) initiative—an important vehicle for promoting sustainability and strengthening governance.

A webinar was also initiated in collaboration with the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo, Norway, focusing on the definition of peace, thematic areas of engagement, and strategic approaches. The Peace Centre, which operates as both a museum and a platform for public programming, disseminates the work of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, builds global knowledge and skills, and serves as an international meeting point to facilitate dialogue and action.

Research in governance and justice within carbon investments in Kenya is ongoing, in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen. This research addresses climate change while exploring justice and the involvement of local communities at carbon investment sites throughout the country.

Efforts have also been directed toward water governance by working with local communities along the Athi River. This includes strengthening community institutions through a partnership with the Millennium Community Development Initiative (MCDI), a civil society organization committed to sustainable development. Wangari Maathai Institute (WMI) was invited to join the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). Additionally, involvement in Pan-African climate justice training has been ongoing through the [Nairobi Summer School](#), held at Chuka University in Kenya by the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance. This program equips youth with knowledge on climate justice issues, recognizing their vulnerability and essential role in addressing future environmental challenges.

Key Achievements and Impact

Work is ongoing with local communities along the Athi River through a partnership with the civil society organization Millennium Community Development Initiative (MCDI) to strengthen water governance and community institutions. As part of this effort, two PhD students have been recruited to collaborate with community members in a co-creation process. Additionally, four master's students will be hired to support the work of the PhD candidates and contribute to community engagement on governance issues.

Research on governance and justice in carbon investments in Kenya is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen. This initiative has recruited three PhD students and one postdoctoral researcher. The project also works closely with civil society organizations to accelerate the dissemination of information and ensure community involvement in decision-making processes related to carbon investment sites.

More than 500 youth from across the African continent have been trained on climate justice, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to initiate climate-related activities in their respective countries. This training contributes to building a generation of environmentally conscious leaders prepared to address future climate challenges.



Photo: Tree Planting activity in partnership with Hearts of Green

In addition, over 10,000 tree seedlings have been planted across various landscapes in partnership with Hearts of Green. This activity forms part of advancing the legacy of Wangari Maathai under the Landscape Repair and Transformation (LANSRET) initiative, a platform for promoting sustainability and strengthening governance.

SDG 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Lead: International Association of Universities (IAU)

Websites: [IAU HESD](#) & [HESD Portal](#)



Partner organisations: ACU, AUF, ASEF, ARES, Copernicus Alliance, SOS, HESI, Sulitest, MCO, EUA, EAUC, the MECCE Project, UNESCO, and others.

Main Activities undertaken in this Cluster in 2024-25

Led by the IAU's Strategic Goal: ***Higher education and research contribute and are recognized for their contributions to sustainable development***, IAU HESD initiatives, notably supported by the IAU Working Group on HESD and IAU HESD Cluster network, are undertaking efforts to strengthen partnerships with and within higher education for the SDGs. The IAU believes that the *UN Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* presents a window of opportunity for higher education to be involved and advocate for the sector's key role in teaching, research, and community engagement for sustainability.

The IAU Global Cluster on HESD:

The activities of the [IAU Global HESD Cluster](#) have been consistently developing and the IAU has been in touch with the group through monthly emails and virtual meetings (bi-annual). Additional in-person meetings took place with some Cluster members in the context of a selection of partner events. The Cluster met online on 27 September 2024 and 25 & 26 March 2025. The IAU Members in the Cluster are actively working on SD projects, thus consolidating existing partnerships and initiating new ones. However, time and resource allocation seem to be a challenge for Cluster Members, as support of this additional engagement is not always provided at institutional level. The IAU is bringing this to the attention of HEI leadership in membership and other meetings. IAU members are invited to also engage with other initiatives such as the HESD survey and publications. Other activities for the period under review included the identification of new satellites to several subclusters following conversations facilitated by IAU, and the discussion of new collaborative Cluster projects.

IAU Global HESD Portal on HESD (www.iau-hesd.net)

The portal underwent a technical and design update which was completed in November 2023, with new search functions by SDG, key word and theme being presented at the IAU International Conference 2023, and was further improved in functionality and content throughout 2024/25. Members can submit their actions through an [online form](#) to facilitate the process, or contact the IAU via email.

Other Projects, Resources and Activities

- **UNESCO ESD:** IAU is part of the [ESD-Net 2030](#) (launched October 2022), and attended the regional ESD-Net Meeting in Paris in June 2023 and May 2025. Furthermore, IAU representatives including the Secretary General, took part in the [ESD Global meeting in Tokyo](#), Japan, in December 2023.
- IAU is working with UNESCO and York University on a publication as part of the *Transforming Futures* Project. IAU took part in an orientation meeting for this project in March 2025 at UNESCO HQ. IAU is in charge of a **guidance tool for the whole-institution approach (WIA)**, to be published in late 2026.
- The IAU attended meetings of **UNESCO's [Greening education partnership](#)** and followed the engagement of UNESCO at COP.
- The IAU took part in and co-organised two side events at the [3rd UN Ocean Conference](#) in June 2025, together with the University of Bergen.
- **[Responsible Futures Programme](#)** - IAU partnered with SOS UK for the international version of the facilitated change programme for Sustainability for HEIs. The International Pilot was successfully completed and outcomes presented at the IAU Conference 2024. The second cohort with now 10 institutions is on the way, many of them part of the IAU Cluster such as MRU, QU, and UWI. Read more in the [Pilot Report here](#).
- **[IAU Horizons 30.1 on Sustainable Development](#)**, published in June 2025, with contributions from several Cluster Members.
- **HESI:** Active participation in meetings and discussions.
- **Sulitest and SDSN France:** IAU Secretary General Hilligje van't Land sits on the leadership council/Advisory board.
- **Events:** Active participation in various online events, from member universities, associations, and [organisations related to HESD](#), with partners such as HETL, UNEP-YEA and others.



Photo: IAU at the UNESCO Transforming Futures - Kick-off Workshop in March 2025 in Paris, France.

ANNEX

Terms of Reference for Cluster Membership

Effective 15 November 2023.

The following Terms of Reference (ToR) have been agreed upon by the IAU Board Members forming part of the IAU HESD Working Group, on 6 November 2023. It is shared with all Cluster Members and is available on the website [here](#). This ToR may be revised every year and updated if needed by a unanimous decision of the HESD WG and IAU Secretariat. Cluster Members can also make suggestions for changes.

The term 'Cluster Members' includes Leads and Satellites (and Observers).

Membership and Responsibilities

Leads:

- are motivated and committed to engaging and guiding the group;
- have signed a commitment letter and informed their university's leadership when they took on this role at the creation of the Cluster in 2018/19 or at a later moment if the Lead changed;
- are expected to keep in regular contact with the Satellites and report back to the IAU quarterly;
- are expected to monitor and evaluate the progress and impact of their SDG Subcluster and report back in written form yearly (Activity Reports);
- take part in the biannual Global Cluster Meetings organised by IAU;
- take the initiative and propose 1 to 2 projects per year based on conversations with Satellites;
- seek funding externally or at the university level for Cluster projects;
- take the initiative to connect researchers and students of Cluster Members;
- are IAU Members and agree to facilitate contact with the institution's leadership when necessary for membership-related requests or invitations for leadership to take part in events;
- are appointed for an initial period of 4 years which can be reassessed by the IAU HESD WG. The Lead can decide to pass on the responsibility to another member of the Cluster on this occasion. The Lead can change/be reassigned by IAU upon staff changes or if the above responsibilities are not fulfilled.

Satellites:

- are motivated and committed to being part of a peer-to-peer network;
- are open to networking and collaborating with other Satellites;
- contribute to the work on the SDG and are in regular contact with the Lead and IAU;
- make sure the Lead and IAU have the contact of 1-2 focal points for the Cluster work and nominate a different focal point in case of staff change;
- attend meetings proposed by the Lead and IAU;
- are invited to propose projects to the Lead or IAU;
- seek funding externally or at the university level for Cluster projects;
- inform their leadership of the engagement in the Cluster;

- are IAU Members or in the process of seeking IAU membership. *

**see rules of procedure for non-IAU members in the Cluster below.*

Following discussions with the WG Members, and requests from Cluster Members, a third category of Cluster Membership is introduced:

Observers:

- are motivated to share their expertise and learn from others in the Cluster network;
- are non-IAU Member institutions or individual academics with demonstrated expertise and have a standing connection with the Cluster Lead or IAU;
- present a letter of commitment (from the individual), stating why they would like to be affiliated with the Cluster and how they can contribute;
- can *share* with and *receive* information from Cluster Members, will be listed as **Observer** and can attend meetings;
- can be project partners in projects with the Subcluster.
- However, they will have no access to the full IAU services;
- they will not be offered support by the IAU or additional information on the funding of projects (such opportunities will only be shared with Members).

IAU:

- is in charge of the coordination as far as SDG 17 is concerned;
- is providing support in the form of consultation, convening, communication and visibility to the Cluster Members;
- is sending regular updates (monthly or bi-monthly) to the Cluster Members to inform them about current projects and upcoming opportunities to engage;
- creates profiles on the IAU HESD Portal for all Cluster Members and updates these on a priority basis;
- provides visibility to the cluster and the Cluster Members' activities on international platforms, including key policy convenings at UNESCO/UN;
- offers discount on IAU conference registration fee to Cluster Members;
- offers to issue certificates and other letters/documents to acknowledge the institutional or individual commitment to the Cluster.
- is exploring external funding opportunities to share these with the Cluster, as well as applying for project grants for the Cluster when possible.

Rules of Procedure

Institutions wishing to join the Cluster:

- The Cluster accepts new members on a rolling basis if the Lead and the Satellites in the existing group agree;
- New members need to be IAU Members and have no outstanding membership fees;
- New members need to fulfil the aforementioned conditions and commit to investing time into the project;

- A focal point/main contact at the university to facilitate contact with IAU/the Cluster needs to be identified;
- A pre-meeting with the Lead is suggested and a letter of commitment identifying possible projects is drafted.

Change of Lead institution:

A change of the lead institution is possible if:

- a. A transfer of lead institution to another active member of the Subcluster after 4 years, in agreement with the previous Lead and all group members.
- b. The Lead decides to pass on the responsibility to another institution, in this case, it is first offered to one of the active Satellites in the group. The Lead can remain part of the SDG as a Satellite, or an Observer (in case the HEI is no longer an IAU member).
- c. The Lead is inactive for a significant period of time, and/or reporting back to IAU and Satellites has been difficult. In this case, IAU and the IAU Working Group can exert the right to suggest a restructuring of the Cluster and invite another IAU Member institution with expertise on the SDG in question to take the Lead.
- d. The Lead's HEI leaves IAU Membership (see below non-member procedure). Then the remaining members of the SDG group might nominate a new Lead.
- e. In exceptional cases, IAU, in agreement with the HESD Working Group, can decide to remove a Lead if the HEI or individual has acted in opposition to [IAU's core values](#) and the IAU Constitution.

Inactive Satellites or non-members

- IAU, in discussion with the Lead/other members of the SDG in question, will make several attempts to involve Satellites if they are inactive or a focal point is not responsive to emails anymore. However, if these efforts are unsuccessful, the Satellite will be removed from the list after 6 months if no reply is received or the institution names no new focal point.
- Non-members that are Satellites, or Satellites whose institutions have decided to end IAU membership, are contacted by IAU and the Lead to discuss the options. If no (re)joining of the IAU is possible, the Satellite will be removed from the list after 3 months. Active Satellites where the HEI cannot (re)join at this stage, or the adhesion process longer than 6 months, can remain a part of the Cluster as Observers.

Voluntary Commitment

By signing this, I have read and understood these Terms and Conditions (ToR) for Members (Leads and Satellites) of the IAU HESD Cluster. I commit to following these to the best of my abilities to support the work of the Cluster.

The IAU HESD Cluster Strategy and Work Plan 2025-2026

Shortened version - full version (January 2025) please see the document here:
https://iau-hesd.net/sites/default/files/media_files/HESDClusterWorkingPlan2024-26.docx.pdf

This working plan was discussed at the **IAU HESD Cluster Meeting**, which took place online on 27 September 2024 and includes input from the IAU Cluster Members and IAU Working Group on HESD. It underwent a review process coordinated by the IAU Secretariat with inputs from the IAU Cluster and IAU Board Working Group for HESD.

The Cluster works mainly at two levels:

- 16 HESD Cluster Lead universities, each leading one of the SDGs.
- Each SDG Lead institution works and advances projects relating to the SDG with Satellite Institutions and Observer Institutions.

IAU coordinates the overall project, providing assistance as needed to Subclusters and leading the work on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. IAU acts as a multiplier, working with and supporting international organisations, such as UNESCO, and the Lead Institutions. Together, the Lead and Satellite Institutions are reporting back to IAU on their actions.

In November 2023, the IAU introduced **Terms of Reference** which distinguishes between Satellite and Observer Institutions within the Cluster. Characteristics vary slightly between the two, mainly because Observer Institutions are non-Members of the IAU, unlike Satellite Institutions. It may be revised or updated every year per approval from the IAU Board HESD WG and IAU Secretariat. [The full Terms of Reference are available here](#) defining the responsibilities of Leads, Satellites, and Observers, the Procedures to join the Cluster, and more.

The term '**Cluster Members**' includes Leads and Satellites (and Observers).

Cross/trans-SDG partnerships are strongly encouraged, and many HEIs are active in more than one Subcluster. The separation into SDG teams is not supposed to create new "silo" approaches to sustainable development work. Rather, it should be seen as a method to ensure that all SDGs are being considered. Due to the diverse nature of the SDGs, each team will develop its own projects and strategies. **Joint initiatives** have been, are being, and will further be planned. The Cluster work involves HE leadership, academic staff and admin, and local partners.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

It is recognized that the IAU Global Cluster on HESD Work Plan (2024-2026) must remain actionable and feasible. With this in mind, the IAU Secretariat has revised this work plan to be more concrete, objective,

and outlined in a way that provides a logical pathway for progress. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the Cluster faces limitations. Below are three key areas that pose challenges for the Cluster.

- **Operational Autonomy:** At its core, the Subclusters are composed of separate institutions with varying capacities to implement and coordinate projects. Additionally, the IAU Secretariat also has limited human resources. As such, collaborating on deliverables may be a challenge. The IAU Secretariat aims to foster transparent communication with Subclusters to provide operation support as much as possible while equally empowering them to take initiative.
- **Limited Funding:** The Cluster is constrained by a lack of funding and resources for projects. The IAU, as the Lead for SDG 17, aims to maintain existing partnerships and create new partnerships that may open up new avenues for funding. The IAU is also responsible for *Activity 12*, the identification of third-party funding opportunities that may finance Cluster projects.
- **Turnover:** Like all institutions, the Cluster Members are not immune to staff changes. These can create a disconnect between sub-clusters and the IAU Secretariat, impeding project plans. The IAU hopes that by maintaining strong connections with Cluster Members, the Cluster can minimize the amount of blockades brought by transitions. The introduction of the Terms of Reference also allows flexibility for Members to restructure and realign as needed.

COMMUNICATIONS

The IAU communicates regularly with the IAU HESD Cluster Leads via monthly updates on IAU activities, opportunities to be engaged, and activities from other Cluster Members that are open for participation. These also include information or requests for feedback for the Cluster Leads on IAU initiatives. The Leads, in turn, report back to IAU and are invited to actively share their initiatives for publication on IAU channels. Also, the Leads are responsible for communicating with Satellites and sharing information distributed by IAU, if of relevance for the specific Subcluster. Some platforms and possible IAU channels include:

- IAU Cluster Webinars with a focus on HESD are being offered regularly;
- The IAU website and the HESD portal reports on Cluster work highlighting the HEIs work;
- The IAU monthly Newsletter highlights achievements and share information;
- A LinkedIn [group](#) for the Cluster to facilitate information-sharing;
- An online Drive with IAU Cluster Resources is created (internal, please email i.toman@iau-aiu.net for access).
- An online Sheet with funding opportunities/ calls for proposals for sustainable development (internal, please email i.toman@iau-aiu.net for access).

IAU thanks all contributors to this report, notably the members and focal points of the IAU HESD Global Cluster.

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