
“Change is the only constant in life”, said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. This is true for organisations as well, including the United Nations University (UNU), which in 2020 celebrated its 45th anniversary.

To remain relevant in a world of political, societal, and technological change, organisations must evolve. Even more so than in 1975, when UNU was born, the world today is highly interlinked. Advances in communications technologies, in particular, have changed our planet from a complex, often-chaotic puzzle of land-based territories to a supranational virtual grid in which we may “speak” more often, and identify more closely, with persons hundreds of miles distant than with members of our local community.

While the focus of this annual report is on the work of UNU in 2020, to commemorate our 45th anniversary we first look back at UNU’s past, with examples of the historical significance of UNU’s research. UNU is seldom in the headlines, yet our research has had a strong behind-the-scenes impact on policymaking and knowledge development. Although a relatively small institution in comparison with many of its UN sister agencies, throughout its lifespan UNU has made its voice heard in academia and in the policy sphere. Over the decades, UNU widened the arc of its intellectual influence through research with strong academic and scientific value, and has made meaningful contributions to United Nations policy processes.

Today, demand for UNU research and policy advice is stronger than ever before. UNU is frequently sought out as a partner by global policymakers, including at the highest levels of the United Nations, and among national delegations, including those represented in the UN Security Council. This new demand suggests that UNU’s constant evolution keeps it relevant to policy communities. But we must continue renewing our own thinking to ensure that UNU can fulfil the ambitious aim of its Charter.

Part of UNU’s evolution throughout the decades was a succession of multi-year strategy commitments, each building on the previous one. The year 2020 marked the first year of the new UNU Strategic Plan 2020–2024. This five-year plan will ensure that our community of international personnel continues to contribute to key policy initiatives concerning peace and security; social change and economic development; and environment, climate, and energy issues.

The “Our Work on the Global Goals” section of this report offers examples of how UNU projects, publications, and events had policy influence and on-the-ground benefit. I want to pay tribute to my colleagues for this meaningful work, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the UNU system was able to operate smoothly throughout this extraordinary time, and continuing donor generosity has rewarded the admirable collective effort of our teams spread across twelve countries on five continents.

The “Responding to the Pandemic” section describes how UNU’s research expanded our understanding of, and response to, COVID-19.

The successes of UNU in 2020, and over the past 45 years, would not have been possible without the dedication and high-quality work of its leadership – my Rector’s Office colleagues and the UNU institute directors – and all researchers and personnel. They have, over the years, won my unqualified admiration. I would like to salute the UNU Council’s Chair and members who, with no remuneration, have overseen and guided us with wisdom, ambition, and sensitivity to the communities we serve. UNU institutes’ host governments have also remained steadfast in their support throughout these challenging months. Finally, we are very grateful to those who follow our work through our publications, events, and online outreach – the latter even more important during the pandemic than it would otherwise have been. And warm thanks, as ever, to our donors, whose preoccupations, ideas, and encouragement energise us.

In closing, I would also like to thank you, the reader, for your interest in UNU, and hope that you will find this annual report to be a useful resource.

David M. Malone

Rector of the United Nations University
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations University at 45
Rarely has the demand for independent policy research been greater than in today’s political climate. The United Nations University (UNU) conducts objective, evidence-based research that supports policy development and decision-making on pressing global issues.

The UNU Charter, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1973, mandates that “the University shall devote its work to research into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its agencies”. That Charter further specifies that “the University shall enjoy autonomy within the framework of the United Nations” and grants UNU “the academic freedom required for the achievement of its objectives, with particular reference to the choice of subjects and methods of research and training”.

This unique identity as both a research institution and a knowledge partner within the United Nations system enables UNU to:

• create and exchange knowledge through targeted capacity-building programmes
• connect diverse international stakeholders to share objective, high-quality research with a broad spectrum of audiences
• translate research into evidence-based, pragmatic policy recommendations, and deliver those recommendations to UN and global decision-makers

By facilitating collaboration between diverse constituencies, the University also serves as a bridge between academic communities – particularly those in the developing world – and international policymaking communities. UNU collaborations address a broad range of policy challenges, such as the impact of climate change on natural ecosystems and human well-being; biodiversity and natural ecosystem protection; effective responses to new migration flows; the control of illegal drugs; education for sustainable development; gender equality; and new digital technologies.

Through targeted partnerships, UNU provides research institutions in the developing world with a unique opportunity to help shape policymaking in the United Nations. The University also strengthens capacities of the Global South through interdisciplinary postgraduate degree programmes and specialised training initiatives focused on the complex challenges to peace, development, and sustainability.

The University disseminates its research findings through a range of publications, events, websites, and social media.

Online resources

For additional information about the work of UNU, we invite you to visit the following online resources:

• the global UNU system website (unu.edu)
• previous UNU Annual Reports (unu.edu/publications/annual-reports)
• the UNU Sustainable Development Explorer (unu.edu/explore)
• the monthly UNU INSIGHTS newsletter (unu.edu/insights)

You can also follow UNU on social media at:

• Twitter (twitter.com/UNUniversity)
• Facebook (facebook.com/UnitedNationsUniversity)
• LinkedIn (linkedin.com/company/united-nations-university)
A 45-year history of contributing to global progress

In 1969, UN Secretary-General U Thant proposed the creation of a “United Nations University, truly international in character and devoted to the Charter objectives of peace and progress”. After a feasibility study by a panel of experts, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on 11 December 1972 approving the establishment of the United Nations University (UNU) and on 6 December 1973 adopted the UNU Charter. The UN General Assembly further accepted an offer by the Government of Japan to provide headquarters facilities for UNU in Tokyo and to contribute 100 million USD to establish an endowment fund. With these resources, UNU launched operations at a temporary headquarters building in Tokyo on 1 September 1975 with about 30 personnel and an annual budget of less than 3 million USD.

Not a traditional university

Despite its name, and the fact that it now operates several postgraduate degree programmes, UNU was never intended to be a traditional “university”. As explained by one of the proposal documents: “The word ‘university’ in itself should not … suggest a post-secondary educational establishment, like most existing universities for instance, but rather a composite body, a group of research workers performing functions which combine research, teaching and community service”. However, as UNU’s first Rector, Dr James Hester, noted, “the format of … a research and advanced training institution calling itself a university but lacking a campus and degree students confused many people”.

Another early description was that UNU would be “a ‘brain bank’ that is problem-oriented, not discipline-oriented” and would apply “innovative, multidisciplinary, highly mixed approaches”.

Perhaps the best description, though, can be found in the UNU Charter: “an international community of scholars, engaged in research, postgraduate training and dissemination of knowledge” that conducts research “into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare”.

Today, based on a 2009 amendment to the UNU Charter, UNU offers several MSc and PhD degree programmes that focus on finding policy-relevant solutions to specific global issues. UNU graduates are working in academia and public service alike.

UNU expanded its reach beyond Japan by working in cooperative partnerships with academic and research institutions around the world. After a decade of establishing its bona fides as a reputable research institution, in 1985 UNU launched its first research and training centre: the UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) in Helsinki, Finland. Today, the UNU system has grown into a global organisation comprising 14 institutes in 12 countries, each focusing on a specific set of issues, with some 740 personnel and an annual budget of more than 56 million USD.
The 45-year history of UNU is defined by collaboration and thought leadership. By focusing on answering important policy questions and positioning itself as a think tank that is not afraid to challenge the status quo, UNU has come to be recognised as an independent and respected voice within the United Nations system. Because UNU doesn’t often make newspaper headlines, like many of the larger and better funded operational agencies of the UN system, the University’s contributions to knowledge development and policymaking often pass unrecognised. In fact, though, UNU is frequently active behind the scenes, feeding evidence-based research and advice into the multilateral policy process.

Operating as a network of institutes, UNU has been a pioneer in developing knowledge and expertise that crosses traditional scientific boundaries, reflecting the complex and intertwined nature of global systems and issues. UNU also has provided top scholars and practitioners worldwide, particularly those in the Global South, with access to policymakers in the UN system – and vice versa – helping them stay up-to-date about the UN’s evolving agenda and research needs.

UNU’s position within the UN system enables it to convene a range of actors that might seldom engage directly. For the past 45 years, UNU has developed innovative research and new ways to measure sustainable development and assess human welfare. This brief section cannot begin to encompass the totality of UNU’s impact over the past four decades, but merely points out a few noteworthy trees in the broader forest:

- UNU-WIDER’s detailed case studies of countries in the Global South in the 1980s were instrumental in spurring a global paradigm shift that challenged one-size-fits-all structural adjustment programmes, pushing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to be more diagnostic in their responses to that decade’s macroeconomic crises. The UNU-WIDER Hunger and Public Action project similarly encouraged a movement away from seeing development mainly in terms of GDP and income, and towards adoption of a capabilities or human development approach. This research quickly spread through the global development economics community and beyond.
- A UNU Vice-Rector served as the lead writer of the 2002 Report of the Secretary-General on “Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change”.
- The UNU-WIDER project Personal Assets from a Global Perspective, launched in 2004, helped to develop the first estimates of the distribution of global household wealth, revealing that 2% of households owned half of global wealth. This work led to the creation in 2008 of the World Income Inequality Database.
- UNU-EHS research addressed the issue of involuntary displacement after the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami (2004) and Hurricane Katrina (2005), at a time when environmental migration was not yet on the scientific or political agenda. The work of UNU-EHS also influenced the decision to include migration and displacement in Article 14f of the Cancun Adaptation Framework (2010).
- UNU-IAS helped advance the global biodiversity agenda. Highlights include: COP-10 in Aichi/Nagoya (2010), where UNU-IAS co-launched the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI) as a tool to better understand and support human-influenced natural environments; the global launch of the UN Decade on Biodiversity; and significant contributions to developing the Post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Since 2005, UNU-IAS has also been working closely with UNESCO on the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the related Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD.
- UNU-ONY (now merged with UNU-CPR) played a pivotal role in 2015 in formulating the Code of Ethics that now binds the President of the UN General Assembly.
- For nearly two decades, UNU’s SCYCLE programme has been a global leader in e-waste-related research and training, playing an important role in research dissemination and synergising with other UN organisations.
- Since 2005, UNU-CRIS has led or been actively involved in several large European Union (EU)-funded consortium projects that influenced EU external policies. It also played a pioneering role in developing indicator systems for monitoring regionalisation and globalisation, in collaboration with other UN system entities and regional institutions.
- The annual International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV), the flagship event of UNU-EGOV launched in 2007, has established itself as a major global conference in the domain of digital governance.
UNU has always striven to be agile and adept, both in terms of its organisational structure and resources as well as its strategy and priorities, to ensure that its research remains relevant to the evolving nature of the world’s most pressing global issues. Key to this ongoing effort has been the development of a succession of multi-year strategic documents.

The latest of these, the *UNU Strategic Plan 2020–2024*, emphasises the policy orientation of UNU research, prioritising the policy needs of the United Nations and its Member States (and the needs of policymakers in developing countries, in particular). The four overarching objectives of this strategic plan are to ensure (i) policy-relevant programming; (ii) a dynamic, innovative, and diverse institutional culture; (iii) increased collaboration, communications, and visibility; and (iv) systemwide financial sustainability.

The growing demand for UNU research and advice confirms the success of the University’s past work. Going forward, UNU will remain focused on adding value to the key debates and policy initiatives concerning peace, development, and sustainability, and being a reliable, forward-thinking knowledge-broker and thought leader.


Moving forward

UNU has always striven to be agile and adept, both in terms of its organisational structure and resources as well as its strategy and priorities, to ensure that its research remains relevant to the evolving nature of the world’s most pressing global issues. Key to this ongoing effort has been the development of a succession of multi-year strategic documents.

The latest of these, the *UNU Strategic Plan 2020–2024*, emphasises the policy orientation of UNU research, prioritising the policy needs of the United Nations and its Member States (and the needs of policymakers in developing countries, in particular). The four overarching objectives of this strategic plan are to ensure (i) policy-relevant programming; (ii) a dynamic, innovative, and diverse institutional culture; (iii) increased collaboration, communications, and visibility; and (iv) systemwide financial sustainability.

The growing demand for UNU research and advice confirms the success of the University’s past work. Going forward, UNU will remain focused on adding value to the key debates and policy initiatives concerning peace, development, and sustainability, and being a reliable, forward-thinking knowledge-broker and thought leader.

---

**Research themes**

UNU has continued to evolve in order to deliver against a new, more ambitious set of expectations. It initially focused its work within three broad programme areas:

- World hunger
- Management, use, and proper distribution of natural resources
- Human and social development

In the early 1980s, seeking to broaden its approach and encourage a multidisciplinary methodology, UNU expanded the scope of its work to encompass five “priority concerns and problem areas” (themes):

- Universal human values and global responsibilities
- New directions in the world economy
- Sustaining global life-support systems
- Advances in science and technology
- Population dynamics and human welfare

These themes have further evolved and, in line with the *UNU Strategic Plan 2020–2024*, UNU’s main areas of work encompass the following:

- Peace and security
- Social change and economic development
- Environment, climate, and energy

These themes include a number of more specific research topics, including, e.g., human migration; water access, use, and management challenges; and the cross-cutting issue of good governance.
UNU-WIDER at 35

As the United Nations University celebrates its 45th anniversary, the first institute of the global UNU system celebrates its 35th.

Since it was established in 1985, the UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) has focused its work on the most pressing concerns of the most vulnerable people. Beyond leading research for change, UNU-WIDER has always been an advocate for a research-policy nexus, with partnerships, quality research, and capacity building to ensure that its findings equip policymakers to make informed decisions.

For three-and-a-half decades, UNU-WIDER has contributed to our understanding of a wide range of issues. During the macroeconomic crises of the 1980s, policymakers often lacked sufficient knowledge about developing economies and, as a result, proposed a series of hasty policy “solutions” that relied too much on orthodoxy. This created further damage and ushered in the infamous “lost decade” for global development.

UNU-WIDER was among the first to challenge International Monetary Fund (IMF) orthodoxy on macroeconomic stabilisation. Through detailed case studies covering 16 countries in the Global South, the institute created new knowledge on how developing countries could better weather their balance of payments crises. This research was instrumental in launching a global paradigm shift that challenged one-size-fits-all structural adjustment programmes and pushed the IMF and the World Bank to be more diagnostic in their crisis response.

This early work by UNU-WIDER, and an insistence on taking a broader perspective, established the institute as a somewhat heterodox voice in development economics and as an advocate for informed policymaking. Throughout the years, the institute has continued to orient itself to stay relevant to, and be a part of, policymakers’ agendas in the Global South.

UNU-WIDER’s research has continuously focused on creating knowledge, and building capacities, for positive sustainable change. As the models and goals of development economics have changed and evolved over the past three decades, UNU-WIDER has always championed formulating new ways to measure development – such as the capabilities approach that challenged the conventional method of measuring human welfare purely in monetary terms. This led to the creation of alternate measures of well-being such as the Human Development Index used by the UN Development Programme. Additionally, UNU-WIDER helped to expose the dramatic extent of global wealth inequality and continues to host the world’s largest database on income inequality.

There is a very real threat of another lost decade for development due to the possibility of stagnation – or even backsliding – of progress caused by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNU-WIDER is committed to supporting research and policy analysis focused on minimising the economic shocks and any entrenchment of negative socio-economic impacts that this pandemic brings.

One example is the UNU-WIDER project The Developer’s Dilemma, which seeks to fill the knowledge gap about how countries can manage the potential trade-offs between structural change and inclusive growth. The goal is to enable society to “build back better” after COVID-19. UNU-WIDER is also collecting real-time data about the experiences of people around the world, measuring the impacts that COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions on social interactions are having on trust in governments and on national economies.

For 35 years, UNU-WIDER has had a positive impact on the development discourse. And it will continue to do so going forward, conducting research that will influence the work of national governments, NGOs, the United Nations, and other international organisations. Through its partnerships with governments and research organisations in developing countries, the institute will continue to co-create research, strengthen national capacity in research and policy formation, and work together to address the core concerns of Global South policymakers. UNU-WIDER’s capacity building programmes, meanwhile, will continue to provide skills and knowledge to the next generation of researchers, with particular attention to empowering those from the Global South, especially women. The knowledge that has been created over the past three decades, and the lessons learned about the synergies of research and policy, can help lead us to better outcomes.

For a look back at some of the greatest achievements of UNU-WIDER over its 35-year history, see “35 years of research for change – what’s next” on the UNU-WIDER website.
Responding to the Pandemic

Food shortages in Tokyo, Japan. Dick Thomas Johnson / CC-BY 2.0
Organisations and individuals worldwide faced the unprecedented challenge of coping with a global pandemic in 2020, and UNU was no exception. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on UNU was twofold:

- Each of the globally dispersed units of the UNU system modified its in-office work practices and in-the-field research procedures to protect the health of staff and collaborators.
- Many institutes adjusted their research agendas to contribute to the global understanding of, and response to, the pandemic.

**Operations**

The global UNU system continued to operate smoothly through the COVID-19 pandemic. From the first news of the possible impact of the virus, UNU convened a COVID-19 Response Team to develop a COVID-19 Contingency Plan aimed at protecting the health of University personnel, students, and collaborators. Measures included activating work-from-home arrangements, deploying online collaboration and project management tools, and regularly analysing current conditions and future expectations.

The most visible effect of the pandemic was on public events. Many conferences and seminars, some of them international in scope, were postponed or cancelled, while others were adapted so that they could be held online.

**Research**

UNU institutes quickly launched new projects aimed at contributing to better understanding of, and response to, the pandemic, or adjusted several ongoing projects to incorporate COVID-19 considerations. The University also adapted work methodologies, adjusted project timelines, and coordinated its interactions with external partners, donors, and policymakers to conform with their needs and constraints.

Examples of how COVID-19 considerations were incorporated into the UNU research agenda in 2020 include:

- UNU-CPR analysed the effects of the pandemic on human trafficking, modern slavery, and humanitarian access.
- UNU-EGOV analysed e-governance responses and quick adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.
- UNU-IAS initiated research aimed at reconceptualising landscape approaches for biodiversity in the context of COVID-19 and explored the pandemic’s ramifications for the education sector.
- UNU-IIGH developed the UNU Evidence, Policy, and Interventions for COVID-19 Tracker (UNU EPIC Tracker; epictracker.org), an online inventory of public health, economic, social, and community measures taken to address the pandemic across all countries. An accompanying collection of analytical blog posts, the Global Health Reflections series, drew on sources provided through the UNU EPIC Tracker.
- UNU-WIDER reoriented its overall work programme to consider COVID-19 implications and possible mitigation/adaptation measures with regards to economic and social impacts; the impact of lockdowns on informal workers; poverty; and social and institutional trust.

For more about UNU’s research and policy work relating to the pandemic, see the UNU COVID-19 Response page (unu.edu/covid-19) on the UNU website.
Selected working papers and policy briefs

Labour Market Effects of COVID-19 in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Informality Lens from Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal
This UNU-MERIT working paper, published in May, presented real-time survey evidence on the labour market effects of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. It investigated how informality exacerbated the immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment and income. The research found that informal workers were more likely to lose their jobs or experience a decrease in earnings, and also more likely to struggle to meet their basic needs.

Policy Opportunities and Challenges from the Covid-19 Pandemic for Economies with Large Informal Sectors
This UNU-MERIT working paper, published in May, focused on the urban component of informality and the vulnerability to the pandemic-induced economic shock. It suggested that the pandemic provided circumstances for greater active engagement with informal actors by placing informal enterprises on par with formal firms within industrial policy, and that if the state created incentives for global value chains (GVCs) to engage systematically with informal actors and to reduce the transaction costs in such engagement, it would provide benefits in the longer run - even if costly in the short run.

Inter-country Distancing, Globalisation and the Coronavirus Pandemic
This UNU-MERIT working paper, published in April, contributed to an initial understanding of the driving factors of the pandemic. It analysed the impact of globalisation on the speed of initial transmission to a country and on the size of initial infections in the context of other driving factors. It found that measures of globalisation were positively related to the spread of the virus, both in speed and size, but concluded that the best option was not to reduce globalisation but to better monitor the human factor and mobilise disease-curtailment collaboration forces.

Regional Integration and Trade in the Era of COVID-19: A First Look
This UNU-CRIS working paper, published in September, analysed (i) the different types of trade and economic policy responses to COVID-19 and how they relate to regional integration, and (ii) the response of the EU and four other regional institutions to the crisis. It considered the role of the regional institutions in terms of agency, exploring whether they led collective action and/or coordination in trade and economic policy, as well as models of political economy. The paper concludes that the EU is unique and that the crisis could lead to a quantum leap in the economic autonomy of the Union.

Avoiding “Mixed Messages” in Times of COVID-19
This UNU-CRIS working paper, published in April, argues that the EU must adopt a consistent position on world order, and resist geopolitical imperatives in favour of a commitment to collective action in multilateral institutional contexts. It set out nine key points of substance for consideration, presented as a series of propositions in need of recognition by those driving EU international relations in the life of the next Commission, and urged the EU to make it clear that it is driven by the pursuit of geo-sustainability through multilateral cooperation, not by geopolitics and its related nationalist assumptions.

Reaffirming the Significance of Global Public Goods for Health: Global Solidarity in Response to COVID-19 and Future Shocks
This UNU-IIGH policy brief, published in October, focused on the urgent need for collective action to address the global systemic and structural health inequities that impose significant social, economic, and inter-generational costs. COVID-19 has amplified health inequities that disproportionately impact poor and vulnerable groups around the world, and has demonstrated the need for a global reaffirmation of health as being integral to the social, economic, and environmental resilience of our planet. The policy brief concluded with several recommendations, including some immediate steps that the G20 should take.

Physical Distancing at School: Practice and Evidence Review
This UNU-IIGH policy brief, published in November, explores the national policies of selected high-income countries with regard to physical distancing in schools. It concluded that increasing evidence demonstrates that transmission in schools is rare, and that reopening had not resulted in increased levels of community transmissions. Strong physical distancing policies, on the other hand, reduce allowable class size and consequently keep children and adolescents out of school. The policy brief recommended that the risks and benefits need to be carefully considered.
Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty
This UNU-WIDER working paper, published in April, estimated that the economic fallout from the global pandemic could increase global poverty by as much as half a billion people, or 8% of the total human population. This would be the first time that poverty has increased globally since 1990.

Data, Global Development, and COVID-19
This UNU-WIDER working paper, published in September, covered seven lessons that the COVID-19 pandemic holds for the relationship between data-driven decision-making, the use of artificial intelligence, and development. It cautioned that the consequences for data policy and data science are that trust, equality, context, and political leadership are as, if not more, important than technology.

Horizontal Inequality, COVID-19, and Lockdown Readiness
This UNU-WIDER working paper, published in November, explored how horizontal inequality in India may influence COVID-19’s impact through the differential impact of lockdown policies across caste and religious groups, as well as across states, and across urban and rural areas. The analysis illustrated stark differences in lockdown readiness across groups, which in turn could exacerbate existing horizontal inequalities.

Healthcare Equity and COVID-19
This UNU-WIDER working paper, published in July, assessed whether more “egalitarian” forms of democracy matter in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, given that they should contain more equitable healthcare access and societal infrastructure, such as social capital and trust, for achieving a broader collective good. The results suggested while more equitable access to healthcare does indeed increase testing rates and lower the death rate, broader egalitarian processes show the opposite effects. Factors associated with healthcare capacity to reach and treat were shown to matter more than broader societal factors associated with egalitarian governance.

Technology-enabled Worker Feedback in the Time of COVID-19
This UNU Macau research brief analysed how the pandemic increased the risk of labour exploitation and human rights violations in global supply chains. It also examined how technology can supplement traditional social compliance auditing procedures, even as lockdowns and travel restrictions have limited the ability for frontline responders to conduct on-site inspections of working conditions. It further introduced technical modifications that have been made to the Apprise Audit mobile solution to enable the remote collection of worker feedback, and the implications for social auditing in a post-COVID world.

Selected events

How is COVID-19 Changing Development?
In 2020, UNU-WIDER launched an online webinar series that featured a line-up of eminent researchers and development specialists who presented new research on the implications of COVID-19 for global development efforts and its economic and social impacts for the Global South.

Overcoming the COVID-19 Crisis with SDGs as a Compass for a More Sustainable Society
UNU-IAS helped to advance localisation of the SDGs in Japan at both national and local levels. The institute served as a member of the multi-stakeholder consultative SDGs Promotion Roundtable, which, at an event in July, adopted a set of recommendations for incorporating the SDGs as a guiding principle in Japan’s COVID-19 response and recovery. The recommendations were submitted to the Prime Minister of Japan in July.

Sustainable Finance’s Role in Reducing Modern Slavery: COVID-19’s Lessons on Protecting the Most Vulnerable
This UNU-CPR webinar, held in July as a side event to the UN’s High-Level Political Forum, explored the role of sustainable finance in addressing modern slavery and human trafficking, with a particular focus on lessons learned from the COVID-19 era.
Our Work on the Global Goals

UNU is a trusted, independent source of evidence-based research that addresses the most important policy debates of our time. UNU influences and engages in UN policy processes both indirectly, by feeding its research findings and analyses into the policy discourse and debates; and directly, by engaging with policy actors as a neutral voice on politically sensitive topics and collaborating with other UN system entities to generate relevant knowledge and tailored outputs.

Further, as an observer in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (the highest-level coordination forum of the UN system), UNU has access to the evolving policy needs of the United Nations and its Member States. UNU is thus able to connect emerging global policy priorities with academic and research communities worldwide, who otherwise would have limited awareness of the UN’s needs, thereby helping to fill the chronic “research–policy gap”. In addition to supporting UN policy processes, UNU helps to enhance national and institutional capacities and contributes to improving the lives of marginalised populations.

196
Active Projects

UNU research addresses every SDG. Most projects contribute to multiple Goals.
In 2020, UNU’s contributions were particularly evident in the context of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, the 2030 Agenda lays out a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At the heart of this agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address a wide range of global challenges, with the aim of improving human lives, achieving peaceful and inclusive societies, and protecting the environment.

Because it adopts an approach that is interdisciplinary and holistic, UNU’s research can help policymakers to better understand the interconnections among the SDGs and the potential for positive knock-on effects among the different implementation options. The following six sections introduce some of the activities, achievements, and outputs of UNU’s research in 2020, presented within the context of the 17 SDGs and their interlinkages.

Most of the projects and activities introduced in these sections were undertaken by UNU in collaboration with and/or funded by multiple stakeholders who, due to space restrictions, are not specifically named herein.
Individual Welfare

The first four SDGs – 1. No poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being, and 4. Quality education – are highly interconnected goals that focus on essential human needs. Individuals and families who live in poverty are more likely to suffer from hunger; inadequate access to basic healthcare and lack of proper nutrition adversely impact health and well-being; and poverty, hunger, and poor health hinder access to educational opportunities, which limits advancement. This can lead to a vicious cycle of continued deprivation.

PROJECT
Monitoring and Evaluation of WFP’s Country Strategic Plan in Kenya from 2019 to 2023
This UNU-MERIT project assesses the outcomes of the World Food Programme’s humanitarian and development aid for refugees and vulnerable populations affected by natural and human-caused disasters in Kenya. This helps ensure that targeted groups have access to food supplies and can meet their sustenance and nutritional needs throughout the year. The project is also assessing the technological innovations (such as mobile phones, mobile money systems, and electronic bank cards) that are being used to deliver social transfers.

PROJECT
Characterizing Drought Risks and Impacts (GlobeDrought)
Droughts are among the most damaging and least understood natural hazards, often leading to manifold and cascading impacts on different sectors. In 2020, UNU-EHS led several work packages within GlobeDrought, an interdisciplinary consortium that is seeking to develop, test, and implement a global drought information system. Project outputs to date include (i) a review of drought risk assessments, identification of persisting gaps, and preparation of suggested a future research agenda; (ii) assessments of drought risk for agricultural systems at global and regional scales; and (iii) development of an e-learning platform.

PROJECT
Developing Tools to Reduce the Risks of WASH-related Diseases and Water Pollution
This UNU-INWEH project is developing new tools that can assess the vulnerability of countries to water-related infectious diseases. The project also evaluates the state of scientific evidence and interventions that deal with human antimicrobial resistance (AMR) risks – that is, drug resistance to bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi. Antimicrobial contamination of surface water is of particular concern in Asia and Africa, with an estimated 70,000 people worldwide dying annually due to AMR. A primary objective of the research is to redevelop UNU-INWEH’s Water-Associated Disease Index as an online tool that can measure, map, and inform government interventions.

PROJECT
Gender and Health Policy Hub
This initiative, coordinated by UNU-IIGH, is a unique global platform established to consolidate the best, policy-relevant evidence on gender integration in health policies and programmes. This includes identifying what approaches have been effective; what they have achieved, and how; and where and why positive change has been generated. The hub engages a network of policymakers, academics, and implementers to generate evidence on topics prioritised by the gender and global health community, and to mobilise policy engagement for action.
PROJECT
Gender and Intersectionality in Implementation Research
UNU-IIGH is collaborating with the World Health Organization on a new module to supplement a massive open online course on implementation research offered by the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. This module will promote the recognition that sex and gender are key drivers of health outcomes and help develop informed research programmes that can adequately and appropriately address sex and gender and other drivers of ill-health – particularly pertaining to infectious diseases of poverty.

JOURNAL ARTICLE
“Investing in the Health of Girls and Women: A Best Buy for Sustainable Development”
“Investing in women’s health could redress violations in women’s rights and gender inequities, as well as generating disproportionately large health, economic, social, and environmental gains.... Indeed, investments in women’s health should be used for more gender transformative and multisectoral approaches to maximise benefits beyond health.”
(by Michelle Remme & Gabriela Frenando (UNU-IIGH), et al.; published in The BMJ, June)

PUBLICATION
Multidimensional Poverty Assessment for the Kyrgyz Republic
This UNU-MERIT-authored report, published by UNICEF Kyrgyzstan, proposes a methodology for multidimensional poverty assessment, including a "tracking tool" to monitor the country’s progress on core aspects of well-being.

PROJECT
Sexual and Reproductive Health Services under Universal Health Coverage
UNU-IIGH undertook an analysis of the design and implementation of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services provided in Malaysia, and the possible entry points of integrating these services into an integrated package for universal health coverage. This Malaysian case study will be highlighted in a new World Health Organization Handbook on integrating SRHR services into universal health coverage for low- and middle-income countries.

PROJECT
The Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Programme
This UNU-MERIT project helps redefine the strategic plan for the six countries forming the Greater Mekong Subregion with the goal to attain higher per capita income and living standards for all in a context of cross-country income convergence. UNU-MERIT is contributing to the analysis of industrialisation upgrading and diversification possibilities in the region.
“Enhancing Sustainability in Traditional Agriculture: Indicators for Monitoring the Conservation of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) in Japan”

The GIAHS Programme provides an opportunity to promote traditional farming practices and its contributions to sustainable agriculture and global food security. For example, the traditional species in GIAHS-designated sites are found to be resilient and have a strong resistance to pests and diseases. The data and insights obtained from GIAHS can contribute to the collective knowledge for small-scale farming around the world.

(by Sheryl Rose Reyes, Evonne You, & Osamu Saito (UNU-IAS), et al.; published in Sustainability, July)

**Activity**

Western Pacific Implementation Research Training Centre

UNU-IIGH supported the Malaysian Ministry of Health in a successful competitive bid requesting to the World Health Organization to fund establishment of a Regional Training Centre for implementation research in the Western Pacific. This centre will serve as a regional resource hub to highlight Malaysia’s growing global experience.

ESD for 2030

UNU-IAS has been closely involved in formulating the global framework “Education for Sustainable Development Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (ESD for 2030)”. Contributions included providing examples of best practices, needed competencies, and recommendations for indicators, working in close cooperation with UNESCO. UNU-IAS is also playing a leading role in the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative by building partnerships between the United Nations and academia that will be critical for implementing ESD for the 2030 Agenda.

**Training**

Early Career Researcher Workshop

UNU-IIGH has developed an online workshop series for early career health researchers from the Global South. Participants have an opportunity to interact with high-level health policy analysts and specialists and discuss the challenges of closing the research-to-policy cycle. The first workshop was held in October.
Social Equity and Stability

Persistent inequalities, whether in terms of wealth, power, opportunity, or treatment, inevitably contribute to societal instability and non-sustainability. Two of the SDGs – 5. Gender equality and 10. Reduced inequality – specifically address issues of social disparity. Another SDG – 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – focuses on the importance of ensuring security, human rights, and access to justice for all. Nondiscriminatory governance and social justice are prerequisites for ensuring the SDG pledge of “leaving no one behind” regarding physical security and access to education, healthcare, and employment.

**PROJECT**
**Managing Exits from Armed Conflict**
This UNU-CPR initiative is a multi-year collaboration to develop a unified, rigorous approach to (i) examining how and why individuals exit armed conflict and (ii) evaluating the efficacy of interventions meant to help support their transition to civilian life. The project, involving multiple UN partners, UN Member States, and researchers, has produced an approach for assessing the impact of interventions that support conflict exits as well as a standard vision for what reintegration “success” looks like across the United Nations. Testing of the project’s assessment tools is underway in pilot studies in Nigeria and Colombia.

**PROJECT**
**The UN Security Council and Transitional Justice: Impact and Practice**
This UNU-CPR project addresses two related questions: “How has Security Council language on transitional justice changed over time?” and “What impacts have Security Council approaches had in transitional justice settings?”. Through case studies in selected countries, the project is helping to increase our understanding of both the evolution and the effectiveness of the Security Council’s approach to transitional justice, and will provide overarching recommendations to inform more impactful practice in the future.

**PROJECT**
**Clientelist Politics and Economic Development - Theories, Perspectives and New Directions**
This UNU-WIDER project is building and deepening connections between disparate literature on clientelist politics (the provision of goods or services in exchange for electoral support) and economic development. It focuses on how clientelist politics affects the poorest of the poor and how it influences development – both via impact on state capacity and state-society relations and on policymaking by elected leaders. The project draws on expertise and ongoing research on clientelism in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia as well as cross-country analyses.

**PROJECT**
**Social Mobility in the Global South - Concepts, Measures, and Determinants**
Concerns about rising inequality have engendered a renewed interest in social mobility: that is, the ability to move from a lower- to a higher-level occupational status, social class, or income group. This UNU-WIDER project, which gathers experts from around the world and from a variety of fields (economics, anthropology, sociology, economic history, and political science), is analysing what we know about social mobility in developing countries. The project conceptualises innovative methodologies for further research and develops policy input that can improve the future mobility of people in developing countries.
PROJECT

Implications of Blockchain Technology on Provision of Electronic Administration Services Provided by Public Authorities

This UNU-EGOV research project mapped the potential use, adoption, and implementation offered by blockchain technology to support government services operations in relation with compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules and principles. It identified the limits that blockchain technology presents vis-a-vis GDPR compliance and compiled a catalogue of recommendations and measures for tackling the challenges arising from the interplay between technology and regulation.

PROJECT

Developer’s Dilemma – Structural Transformation, Inequality Dynamics, and Inclusive Growth

One of the core issues present in the pursuit of development is how to handle the potential tradeoff between structural change and inclusive growth. This UNU-WIDER project will deepen our understanding of this “developer’s dilemma” by creating a roadmap for navigating the different roads to structural transformation and comprehending how each pathway shapes development. The research distils wide-ranging insights derived from a global survey and case studies of low- and middle-income countries in South America, Africa, and Asia.
**PUBLICATION**
*The Political Practice of Peacekeeping*
This UNU-CPR report provides a study of how strategies for peace operations are being developed and implemented across five major peacekeeping missions, with recommendations for improvements.

**PROJECT**
*Inequality and Governance in Unstable Democracies – The Mediating Role of Trust*
As a core partner of this consortium-implemented project, UNU-WIDER is leading a Mozambique case study to develop a new theory and provide empirical evidence on the relationship between inequality and governance, and on how social trust and trust towards institutions shapes this relationship, notably if democratic structures are unstable or under threat. In 2020, UNU-WIDER expanded its research to consider how this trust has facilitated or hindered the spread of the coronavirus and measures to contain it.

**EVENT**
*“The Political Practice of Peacekeeping”*
This September online event launched the UNU-CPR co-authored report *The Political Practice of Peacekeeping: How Strategies for Peace Operations are Developed and Implemented.*

**PROJECT**
*Web Accessibility for People with Disabilities in Georgia*
UNU-EGOV supported the Government of Georgia in upgrading national policy documents and legislation on disability to comply with the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with special emphasis on access to information. The aim of this UNDP-funded project is to elaborate guidelines for developing national standards on Accessible Information and Communications Technologies for Georgia.
“When the Disaster Strikes: Gendered (Im)Mobility in Bangladesh”
“Gender has been shown to be immobilising or ‘trapping’ people in different ways during the cyclone strikes in Bangladesh. Women and men faced psychologically and emotionally paralysing effects from their expected gender roles… [and] not all people had the same ability to move.”
(by Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson (UNU-EHS); published in Climate Risk Management, June)

“Challenges and Priorities for Delivering on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 Years On”
“In priority areas, such as health security and diplomacy, migration, and climate change adaptation and mitigation, there remains an unequal representation, not only of women in general, but women from LMICs [low- and middle-income countries] in particular, in the publication and high-level presentation of the issues for women from their own contexts. Women’s front-line perspectives are not fully acknowledged and included in these domains.”
(by Pascale Allotey (UNU-IIGH) & Fatima Denton (UNU-IIGH); published in The Lancet, September)

“An Epidemiological Perspective on Labor Trafficking”
“[R]esearchers, policymakers, and NGOs … frequently claim that trafficking has reached ‘epidemic proportions’. If such is the case, then using tools from public health and epidemiology can help to generate novel insights in the way we conceptualize, research, and address the problem of trafficking.”
(by Michael Gallo & Hannah Thinyane (UNU Macau), et al.; published in Journal of Human Trafficking, September)

Progress in Women’s Health
UNU-IIGH collaborated with the World Health Organization and the British Medical Journal to co-commission and edit a collection of review and analytical papers exploring progress in women’s health since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago. The series was launched at the World Health Summit in Berlin in October. Evidence generated from the reviews is contributing to the gender programme for various disease control efforts at WHO.

The Changing Global Order - Challenges and Prospects
This UNU-CRIS book explores the implications of the rapid and fundamental changes in the international, global system. It emphasises the role of regional organisations within global governance institutions such as the United Nations.

“UN Sanctions and Mediation”
At this January presentation event in Geneva, project managers discussed the findings of the UNU-CPR co-authored report UN Sanctions and Mediation: Establishing Evidence to Inform Practice and discussed their implications for international policy and practice.
PROJECT
A Strategy to Enhance and Sustain the ICT Function in the Government of Uganda
This UNU-EGOV project strengthened the capacity of Uganda’s ministries, central government agencies, and local authorities in pursuit of sustainable ICT-related public policy. The project focused on the digital transformation of both the public sector and society at large and supported national development goals set out in strategies such as Vision 2040 and the 2nd National Development Plan.

PUBLICATION
Roots of Dissent: Trade Liberalization and the Rise of Populism in Brazil
This joint UNU-MERIT and UNU-WIDER working paper provides new evidence tracing the rise of populism in Brazil, through both the victories of presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2002 and Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, to the regional economic shocks caused by a process of trade liberalisation that began in the early 1990s.

PUBLICATION
Hybrid Conflict, Hybrid Peace
This UNU-CPR report investigates how pro-government militias can help or hurt prospects for sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding. It is based on in-depth field research in Iraq, Nigeria, and Somalia.

ACTIVITY
Digital Governance Strategy
In 2020, UNU-EGOV acted as adviser to the Permanent Committee for Digital Governance of the Community of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries, providing insights and recommendations regarding the Digital Governance Agenda for the Community and its Members. UNU-EGOV also collaborated with the Government of Cape Verde and the Government of São Tomé and Principe on improving their national strategies for digital governance to better facilitate information and service delivery, encourage citizen participation, and enhance accountability, transparency, and effectiveness.

TOOL
Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking and Forced Labor
The Apprise mobile tool developed by a UNU Macau project has contributed to improving the initial screening issues of identifying victims of human trafficking, including communication, trust, and privacy. Piloted in Thailand, Apprise allows secure and confidential interviews of vulnerable individuals to be conducted via a headset, in the interviewees’ own language. The tool has since been used in victim identification across such industries as fishing, manufacturing, and sex work.

TRAINING
Master of Science Programme in Public Policy and Human Development
This double-degree MSc programme, offered by UNU-MERIT and Maastricht University, trains students in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy and governance tools, with an emphasis on how public policy can be dealt with most effectively and efficiently.
PhD Programme on Innovation, Economics and Governance for Development
This multidisciplinary PhD programme, organised by UNU-MERIT, provides advanced training in the knowledge and skills most relevant to the economics of technology, migration, and innovation, as well as on the topics of governance, social protection, and public policy analysis.

Fighting Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Certificate
Through its Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative, UNU-CPR worked with the Associations of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists to launch this free online training course in June. With this initiative, UNU-CPR raises awareness about the financial footprints left by modern slavery and human trafficking and provides a framework to help mitigate and remedy these risks.

Cyber Resilience in Asia-Pacific: A Review of National Cybersecurity Strategies
This UNU Macau report highlights the importance of considering cyber resilience at all levels – individual, community, national, and global – and offers recommendations on how countries could operationalise the whole of societal cyber resilience.

Digital Government Transformation
This massive open online course, developed by UNU-EGOV, covers the stages of the digital government evolution, from the basics of information systems, through Government 1.0 (digital transformation foundations) and Government 2.0 (collaborative government) to Government 3.0 (disruptive technologies in data-driven policymaking and public service).
Even in an inclusive and equitable society, stability cannot be maintained unless the social order is supported by a sustainable system of infrastructure. Three of the SDGs — 8. Decent work and economic growth, 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, and 11. Sustainable cities and communities – focus on the structures and activities that underpin the functioning of society and our daily lives and livelihoods, with the aim of promoting sustainable, innovative, and inclusive economic growth and resilient human settlements.

**PROJECT**

**Increasing Resilience to Water- and Climate-related Risks and Operationalizing Water Security**

This UNU-INWEH project focuses on multiple global assessments, including those on water-related disasters and their health impacts, societal challenges in flood early warning systems, and the risks of ageing water storage infrastructure. The current phase of the project focuses on assessing the present status of (and risks posed by) ageing dams, identifying dam removal practices around the world and lessons learned, and developing a decision tool to support the process of managing the risks of ageing dams and their removal/reoperation.

**PROJECT**

**IPIC Local e-Government in Portugal**

Electronic governance initiatives, structures, and practices at the regional and municipal levels are a central concern within UNU-EGOV policy-driven research. In 2020, UNU-EGOV participated in project focused to assess local e-government dynamics in Portugal from the perspective of their web presence and the related conditions and available resources. Work included assessing and reporting on over 300 local government websites (an “Index of Local Government Online Presence”) and formulating guidelines for the development and maintenance of websites for public institutions.

**PUBLICATION**

**Water and Migration: A Global Overview**

This UNU-INWEH report develops a framework for aggregating water-related causes and consequences of migration, and interpreting them in various socioecological, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical settings. It also examines how international and inter-agency cooperation agreements and policies either reflect or ignore water and climate crises as direct or indirect triggers to migration.

**PROJECT**

**Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D)**

UNU-MERIT implemented an evaluation of the first phase of a project operated by the International Organization for Migration-The Netherlands on diaspora return programmes. The evaluation assessed why diaspora members and host institutions chose to participate in the programme, what expectations they had, as well as the experiences of the programme’s stakeholders. The work involved 350 interviews and several rounds of fieldwork in Africa and the Middle East.
PROJECT

Gov 3.0 - Scientific Foundations Training and Entrepreneurship Activities in the Domain of ICT-enabled Governance
This Erasmus+ project, co-implemented by UNU-EGOV, developed new methods for road-mapping research priorities, new curricula for post-secondary-level teaching, and new approaches for fostering entrepreneurship attempts. It focused on the concept of Government 3.0 as a vivid scientific domain that encompasses electronic government, ICT-enabled governance, and digital government towards decision support for public value creation.

PROJECT

Towards Inclusive Development in Myanmar
This UNU-WIDER project strengthened evidence-based policymaking and analysis in Myanmar, thus supporting the country’s move through a challenging structural and developmental transformation. Focused on the industrial small- and medium-enterprise sector, the project established an enterprise monitoring system and a social accounting matrix to strengthen national capacity to address the development potential of the private business sector as well as the government’s analytical capabilities.

PROJECT

SOUTHMOD: Simulating Tax and Benefit Policies for Development
This UNU-WIDER project supports the building and use of tax-benefit microsimulation models in eight developing countries across three continents. It is developing models that allow the effects of different policy scenarios on poverty, inequality, and government revenues to be analysed and compared. Within each country, UNU-WIDER supports a national team on how to build and use models that are appropriate for their respective country context. An integral part of the SOUTHMOD project’s capacity building mandate is regular in-country training on the different country models for the national stakeholders. In 2020, trainings were organised in Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

PROJECT

Transforming Informal Work and Livelihoods
This UNU-WIDER project looks at what we know about the patterns, causes, and consequences of informality to provide knowledge for better policymaking with respect to the informal sector. This work is particularly applicable to developing countries, where the informal sector remains a persistent phenomenon in spite of rapid economic growth in recent decades. In 2020, research was expanded to examine which policies could help mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic and government lockdown policies on the livelihoods of informal workers.

PUBLICATION

Involuntary Migration, Inequality, and Integration
A special issue of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, edited by UNU-WIDER, surveyed experiences of global migrants with a focus on inequality between migrants and host populations in countries of settlement. Articles explored what policies and programmes facilitate better and more equitable economic outcomes for migrants, based on a comparative study of two migrant populations (Vietnamese and Afghan) in four Western countries.

PUBLICATION

Mining for Change: Natural Resources and Industry in Africa
This UNU-WIDER book presents research from five countries that can help stakeholders understand how better management of the revenues and opportunities associated with natural resources can accelerate diversification and structural change in Africa.
PUBLICATION
**Industrialization and Deindustrialization in Developing Countries**
This UNU-MERIT policy brief discusses why the opportunities that manufacturing presents for economic development and employment creation are now being exhausted earlier, and with fewer benefits than in the past. It also considers policy implications for developing countries.

PUBLICATION
**Jobs and Structural Transformation in Developing Countries**
This UNU-MERIT policy brief examines whether 21st-century industrial policies are successful in promoting structural transformation in a world characterised by globalisation of production, new technologies, and the services revolution, and offers recommendations.

PUBLICATION
**30 Innovations Linking Disaster Risk Reduction with Sustainable Development Goals**
This UNU-IAS report explores a range of innovations that demonstrate the strong connections between disaster risk reduction and the SDGs in 10 sectors. The report highlights the complexities around the issue and emphasises the need to focus on both natural and human-made hazards, such as technological and chemical threats.

PUBLICATION
**Evolving Perspectives on ICTs in Global Souths**
This UNU Macau book presents the refereed proceedings of the 2020 International Development Informatics Association conference.

PUBLICATION
**Automation, Industrialization and Development**
This UNU-MERIT policy brief covers a range of key issues and debates regarding the extent to which automation, digitisation, and other new technologies are shaping the future of work, and highlights selected recent empirical contributions.

REPORT CHAPTER
"Local E-Government Development in Cities and Human Settlements"
“New technologies have enormous potential for improving public services delivery, but ultimately they are just a means to an end... (L)ocal e-government development needs to be people-driven rather than technology-driven. The top priorities for local government authorities should be bringing people online and increasing their satisfaction.”
(by D. Soares, D. Sarantis, & M. Lameiras (UNU-EGOV); published in United Nations E-Government Survey 2020)

INITIATIVE
**Mayors Academy for Sustainable Urban Development**
This collaborative effort by UNU-IAS and partners fostered exchange, peer-learning, and cooperation between city leaders in Asia and the Pacific on development financing frameworks and technology/innovation for urban transformation. The academy created and supported a network of local leaders who it is hoped will remain committed to sustainable urban development, and provided them with tools, strategies, and models to improve their capacity to achieve the SDGs in their constituencies.
EVENT

**Daring Cities 2020**
UNU-EHS organised three sessions of the Daring Cities 2020 programme, held in October: “Addressing Climate Risks through Planning in Growing Cities”, “Nature-Based Solutions for Cities – What Are They and How Can Their Uptake be Increased?”, and “Decarbonizing Cities: How to Build Coalitions and Get People on Board”.

**International Development Informatics Association Conference**
This online conference, organised by UNU Macau in March, covered issues of information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) in, for, and by the Global South. Topics included the positive and negative impacts of ICT4D, critical research on frontier technologies, and issues related to marginalised populations.

**“What’s Next for AI in Africa? The Opportunities and Challenges of Responsible AI Implementation in the Continent”**
This online event was organised by UNU Macau in September in support of the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation to enhance multi-stakeholder efforts on global AI (artificial intelligence) cooperation. Participants discussed the status of AI implementation in the region and how to foster AI cooperation that is inclusive of the Global South.

**PhD in Sustainability Science Programme**
This three-year multidisciplinary doctoral programme offered by UNU-IAS promotes better understanding of sustainability issues by incorporating global change perspectives, specifically those related to climate change and biodiversity.

**Migration Management Diploma Programme**
UNU-MERIT and partners conducted a session of this diploma programme in Kenya for practitioners and civil servants working in the field of migration and/or asylum. The curriculum is designed to build the capacity of those working in the field of migration.

**A South African Tax-benefit Microsimulation Model**
Starting in July, UNU-WIDER co-organised a multi-week training event for staff at the National Treasury and the South African Revenue Service. The self-paced online course introduced participants to the model, with a view to promoting its use within government for evidence-based policymaking.

**Regional Integration and Migration Governance in the Global South**
This UNU-CRIS book focuses on priorities in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Global South, a topic that traditionally is much less considered than migration to industrialised countries.
Sustainable Use of Resources

Development cannot be sustained if the resources that support it are depleted or inaccessible to some. Three of the SDGs — 6. Clean water and sanitation, 7. Affordable and clean energy, and 12. Responsible consumption and production — address the equitable distribution and sustainable production and consumption of our planet’s finite natural resources. The impacts of a failure to achieve the goals go far beyond water and energy shortages and unsustainable consumption trends; they contribute to climate change, ecosystem degradation, economic decline, and growing inequality.

PROJECT
Green Africa Transformation (GREAT) Pathways
This UNU-INRA project looks at the implications of the new EU “Green Deal” for African economies; its findings will inform discussions at the African Union–European Union Summit on green transitions in Africa and the future of the EU-Africa partnership regarding the Green Deal. The project contributes towards disseminating knowledge among African policymakers and EU stakeholders and facilitates an Africa-EU dialogue to better inform policy options and negotiations on low-carbon development trajectories.

PROJECT
Water for Sustainable Development (WSD)
This UNU-IAS project explores the social, economic, and environmental consequences of changes in the quality, quantity, and movement of water by developing scientific modelling tools and policy options. The project focuses on selected locations in Asia and the Pacific where agriculture, industries, or services linked to nature are the main sources of income. In 2020, the project contributed to UN-Water’s 2021 “World Water Development Report”, drawing from research on water and well-being in Nepal.

PROJECT
Sustainable Energy for Climate Protection
In Nigeria, a major producer of palm oil for the global market, smallholders (who make up more than 80% of the processors) make little use of the biomass residue generated in mills. There is an urgent need to explore the impacts of palm oil processing on greenhouse gas emissions and develop a strategy of a circular economy (encompassing sustainability in production and consumption) in palm oil production. This UNU-FLORES project focuses on enabling the use of sustainable bioenergy generated from the biomass-residue of palm fruits, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from smallholder palm oil production, and improving the economic benefits accruing to smallholder processors.

PUBLICATION
This UNU-ViE SCYCLE report provides the most comprehensive annual update of global e-waste statistics. It estimates that global e-waste generation will double in just 16 years (2014-2030).
Human Rights to Water and Sanitation
UNU-INRA led research to review the status of the integration, implementation, and realisation of the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation principle, and measures to “Leave-No-One-Behind in WASH” (water, sanitation, and hygiene), in eight countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe. The study produced national reports focused on the target countries, a synthesis report, and a manual to “Leave-No-One-Behind in WASH” service provision for UN Country Teams and other interested institutions.

Post-consumer High-tech Recycled Polymers for a Circular Economy (PolyCE)
The main objective of this project, by a consortium of 20 expert organisations including UNU-ViE SCYCLE, is to strengthen the recovery of plastics from waste electrical and electronic equipment. Specific aims include (i) demonstrating the feasibility of a circular model for the plastics supply and value chain; (ii) developing a grading system for recycled plastics; (iii) conducting green public procurement initiatives and consumer awareness raising campaigns across the EU; and (iv) providing policy input regarding technical feasibilities and conflicts.

Promoting Unconventional Water Resources and Technologies for Water-scarce Areas
UNU-INWEH’s work on unconventional water resources has been a coordinated initiative to build and share a global vision on such resources to trigger cooperation across UN Member States. This project has created a community of practice to support global and regional actions that highlight the role of unconventional water resources in global sustainability processes and in alleviating global water scarcity. It also offered policy-relevant and science-based technical solutions through a UN-Water analytical brief.

The Future of Electric Vehicles and Material Resources
This foresight brief, by UNU-ViE SCYCLE, analyses major challenges and opportunities in the mainstreaming of electric vehicles, and provides recommendations for ensuring their long-term resource sustainability.

“Global and Regional Potential of Wastewater as a Water, Nutrient and Energy Source”
“Once stigmatized as a waste, municipal wastewater is increasingly recognized as a valuable source of water, nutrients and energy. Despite such recognition and even though water reuse projects are ongoing in some countries in agriculture, aquaculture, aquifer recharge, agroforestry and industry, the potential of recovering these resources from waste streams remains under-explored.”
(by Manzoor Qadir (UNU-INWEH) et al.; published in Natural Resources Forum, January)

“Quantifying the Information Content of a Water Quality Monitoring Network Using Principal Component Analysis: A Case Study of the Freiberger Mulde River Basin Germany”
“In this study, we aim to identify the relevant water quality parameters and monitoring stations that are responsible for the spatial and temporal variations of basin-wide river water quality... [and] to provide an adoptable approach to evaluate the trade-offs between information provided by the monitoring network and the expenses of the monitoring activities.”
(by Thuy Nguyen, Hiroshan Hettiarachchi, & Serena Caucci (UNU-FLORES), et al.; published in Water, February)
JOURNAL ARTICLE
“Decision-makers face major challenges when trying to reduce risks of water scarcity sustainably through measures of water reuse. One of these challenges is the lack of interconnectedness between risk assessment for water scarcity and sustainability assessment for water reuse.”
(by Andrea Müller & Tamara Avellán (UNU-FLORES), et al.; published in Journal of Hydrology, August)

JOURNAL ARTICLE
“Soft Power, Discourse Coalitions, and the Proposed Inter-Basin Water Transfer between Lake Chad and the Congo River”
“These results also show that the aim of the actors involved in these discourse coalitions is essentially to increase their power and presence in the Lake Chad and Congo Basins; the soft power tools and strategies in use are instrumental in administering these aims.”
(by Ramazan Sayan, Nidhi Nagabhatla, & Marvel Ekwuribe (UNU-INWEH; published in Water Alternatives, August)

PUBLICATION
Cleaner Cooking Solutions: Moving from Charcoal to Natural Gas in Tanzania
This UNU-INRA policy brief highlights the “clean cooking revolution” happening in Tanzania and offers tips on how the shift from a dependence on charcoal to the use of natural gas can be incentivised.

PUBLICATION
The Paraná River Basin: Managing Water Resources to Sustain Ecosystem Services
This UNU-IAS book provides insight into hydrology, ecosystem services, and management of water resources in the Paraná River basin in South America. It emphasises the importance of water to the socio-economic development of the countries within the watershed.

EVENTS
Nexus Seminar Series
In 2020, UNU-FLORES co-organised six online sessions of the Nexus Seminar Series, which explores different dimensions of the Nexus Approach ranging from hands-on implementation strategies to theoretical debates. The seminars contribute to the scientific discourse on the resource nexus and sustainable soil, water, and waste management.

TOOL
SDG 6 Policy Support System
This flagship tool, developed by UNU-INWEH, helps those who lack adequate drinking water supplies or access to improved sanitation facilities. The tool contributed to improved processes and collaboration to achieve national SDG 6 targets, particularly in developing countries where data to design policies and make decisions are not always, or not easily, available. It is now used by water professionals and policymakers from 50 institutions in 34 countries, primarily in the Global South.

EVENTS
Dresden Nexus Conference 2020
UNU-FLORES co-organised this three-day online event in June under the theme “Circular Economy in a Sustainable Society”. The conference focused on how the nexus approach to the management of environmental resources contributes to the realisation and implementation of circular economy principles.
EVENT

“Stranded’ Assets Risks & Opportunities – Moving Towards Decarbonised Economies & Inclusive Growth in Africa”
This side event at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was jointly organised in July by UNU-INRA, UNU-IAS, UNU-EHS, and others. Participants discussed the risks associated with transitioning away from fossil fuels, the opportunities for diversification and sustainable development in Africa, and ways in which just recovery can be achieved through multilateralism.

EVENT

Professor Alexander Kwapong “Nature Speaks” Lecture
In the 2020 edition of this ongoing lecture series, held in February, Prof. Chris Gordon (University of Ghana) spoke on the topic of “Innovation, Transition and Disruption in Natural Resource Management: The Role of the African University”.

TRAINING

Joint PhD Programme in Integrated Management of Water, Soil, and Waste
This joint doctoral degree programme, offered by UNU-FLORES and Technische Universität Dresden addresses integrated resources management in a truly holistic way by teaching students to apply a Nexus Approach.

TRAINING

Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security
UNU-INWEH contributed to the new Global Water Partnership’s six-week massive online open course on “Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security”. The course presented topics ranging from financing mechanisms to negotiation skills, with an emphasis on the urgency of sustainable development and cooperation at multiple levels.
Environmental Preservation

We humans are not alone on this planet. We are surrounded by, and highly dependent on, other lifeforms for not only our physical sustenance but also our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Two of the SDGs — 14. Life below water and 15. Life on land — draw attention to the need to nurture and preserve our planet’s plants, animals, and other biological organisms, and the ecosystems on which their existence depends. Another SDG — 13. Climate action — looks beyond the earth’s tangible living resources to consider how to cope with anthropogenic changes in an intangible corporeality that affects everything we do.

PROJECT
Costs of Incoherence and Benefits of Coherence (COHERE)
This UNU-EGOV project supported better coherence within the Post-2015 Development Agenda for strengthening disaster and climate resilience. The project focused on two country cases: Mexico and the Philippines. The results were published in an online report as well as presented at scientific conferences, including a German government event on “Global Agendas: Towards Greater Coherence”. The project findings informed two publications published by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

PROJECT
International Satoyama Initiative
UNU-IAS serves as the Secretariat of the International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative — a global effort to realise societies in harmony with nature through the revitalisation and sustainable management of socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes for biodiversity and human well-being. The institute has been actively contributing to the development of the Post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In 2020, the project launched work on reconceptualising landscape approaches for biodiversity in the context of COVID-19.

PUBLICATION
Promoting Nature-based Solutions in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework
UNU-EHS played a leading role in the development of this policy brief that sets out general principles by which nature-based solutions can contribute to addressing biodiversity loss and helps people benefit from nature.

PUBLICATION
Climate Change and Security: Perspectives from the Field
This UNU-CPR policy brief examines the relationship between climate change and insecurity, identifying and capturing common themes and lessons across a range of areas where further work might help bolster future UN policies and practice. This brief directly supports the work of the UN’s Climate Security Mechanism and contributed to the UN Secretariat’s climate-security policy review process.
Towards Banning Rice Importation by 2023: Policy Suggestions to Reduce Potential Environmental Impacts

This UNU-INRA policy brief examines the current state of rice production management practices in Ghana. It suggests possible policy revisions that can enable Ghana to achieve domestic rice sufficiency and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

How to Improve Our Relationship with Nature after Coronavirus

“The second important driver for the emergence of zoonotic disease is biodiversity loss. With decreasing biodiversity, disease vectors — those animals that carry and transmit an infectious pathogen — are more likely to feed on vertebrates than other species which are no longer as abundant. Those species then become the primary reservoir of the pathogen.”

(by Zita Sebesvari (UNU-EHS); published in The Conversation, June)

10 Years of Initiatives and the Next 10 Years on Sustainable Biodiversity

In May, UNU-IAS held an online symposium to commemorate the UN Decade on Biodiversity. Participants discussed progress made during the decade and brainstormed ideas relating to biodiversity conservation and sustainable societies for the next 10 years.

Global Mountain Sustainability Forum (GMSF)

The first GMSF, co-organised as an online conference in October by UNU-EHS, tackled sustainability governance issues at the crossroads between international frameworks and local contributions. It focused on topics of tourism and natural resources management.

Conflict Prevention in the Era of Climate Change: Adapting the UN to Climate-Security Risks

This UNU-CPR report reviews the major scholarship on the links between climate change and violent conflict, provides case studies on climate-security dynamics in Bangladesh and Nigeria, and offers cross-cutting conclusions and recommendations for the UN system.

Development of the Blue Economy and Sustainable Aquaculture in Namibia

This online UNU-INRA seminar highlighted the promise of aquaculture as a viable industry that can make significant contributions to enhancing food security and reducing unemployment in Africa.

Joint MSc Programme on Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security

This joint degree programme, by UNU-EHS and the University of Bonn, offers a unique combination of advanced conceptual and applied engagements within the field of environmental risks and human security in an international context.

UNFCCC–UNU Early Career Climate Fellowship Programme

UNU-EHS co-administers (with UNFCCC) a programme that offers young professionals an opportunity to gain experience at the interface between international climate policy development and research.
Global Partnerships

The 16 SDGs covered thus far can only be realised with strong global partnerships and cooperation. The final SDG, 17. Partnerships for the goals, focuses on the need to build and sustain inclusive partnerships at all levels (global, regional, national, and local) that embody a set of shared principles and values that place the needs of humankind and the planet earth at the centre. UNU uses its convening power as a UN system organisation to contribute to this effort.

**PROJECT**

**Climate and Disaster Risk Financing and Preparedness in the Context of the InsuResilience Global Partnership**

Climate risk financing mechanisms are often complex and insufficiently understood by policymakers and civil society. UNU-EHS was part of a consortium of partners that implemented this project in nine countries. The effort involved mobilising local organisations from civil society, government, and the private sector to (i) enhance the understanding of Climate and Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance instruments (CDRFI) and (ii) build the necessary capacity of civil society organisations and affected population groups to enable their engagement with (and influence on) the design and implementation of CDRFI instruments in their respective countries.

**EVENT**

“Geosciences and UN Sustainable Development Goals: Pathways for the Future”

UNU-IAS co-organised this online symposium for the European Geosciences Union General Assembly in May. The focus was on regional and national efforts to steer societies towards the shared metrics of the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework.

**PROJECT**

**Waste Enforcement Forensics and Capacity Building**

This UNU-ViE SCYCLE project is helping to boost the operational activities and capacities of authorities involved in the fight against illegal trade and management of waste. The project is developing new tools and methodologies and implementing multi-stakeholder capacity building activities. It supports operational networking among practitioners in Europe and their counterparts in the Asia-Pacific region – a major destination of illicit waste shipments.

**PROJECT**

**Governance for Sustainable Development**

This UNU-IAS project contributes to discussions on implementation and follow-up of the SDGs. It proposes policies and frameworks for a long-term transformation towards sustainable societies, with a strategic focus on developing multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilise knowledge, technology, and financial resources for achieving the SDGs. The project analyses national goal-/target-setting and implementation processes and explores the role and design of (sub-)national and regional science-policy interfaces and their local and global interlinkages.
PROJECT

Global and Regional Multistakeholder Institutions
There is a growing tendency to regionalise global discussions in a “cascaded” form of governance, as can be witnessed in the context of the United Nations and related organisations. This UNU-CRIS project compares two policy areas, the internet and trade governance, in the broad field of global public goods where “multi-stakeholderism” has become a defining norm, in order to deepen our understanding of these processes and help the institutions involved to learn from each other.

PROJECT

SDG–Universities Platform
In 2020, UNU-IAS launched an initiative to enhance SDG-focused cooperation between Japanese universities. The effort engaged an initial 29 universities across Japan as members of a platform that will contribute towards achieving the SDGs, both locally and internationally; increase their presence in the international sphere; and encourage transformation to achieve more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies.

ACTIVITY

Education for Sustainable Development
UNU-IAS serves as secretariat of the 175-member Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development network, which facilitates multi-stakeholder collaboration at the local level. In 2020, UNU-IAS supported the organisation of online regional meetings that enabled members to stay connected, and exchange experiences and lessons on coping with issues caused and exacerbated by the global pandemic.

TRAINING

Intensive Core Courses
In September, UNU-IAS organised online sessions of its annual Intensive Core Courses for postgraduate students. These courses mark the beginning of the academic year and focus on essential theories and multilateral approaches to issues of sustainability and development. The 2020 courses covered the UN System and Sustainable Development; Global Change and Planetary Boundaries; and Principles of International Development Projects.

REPORT

Multi-stakeholder Approaches to Education for Sustainable Development in Local Communities: Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia
This UNESCO-Bangkok/UNU-IAS publication presents a collection of case studies from Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Asia-Pacific region. The findings demonstrate that local community engagement and action are the driving force of a sustainable society and a crucial contribution to achieving the SDGs – particularly those relating to health, biodiversity conservation, responsible consumption and production, and sustainable cities.
EVENT
“International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance”
This flagship conference of UNU-EGOV, commonly known as ICEGOV, creates a unique link between the worlds of research and policy by gathering key stakeholders of technology-enabled transformation in government. The 13th edition of ICEGOV, “Digital Governance in the Era of Disruptive Technologies and Globalisation”, was conducted online in September.

JOURNAL ARTICLE
“Monitoring Progress of the Sendai Framework Using a Geospatial Model: The Example of People Affected by Agricultural Droughts in Eastern Cape, South Africa”
“[T]his research develops and investigates a geospatial model approach using satellite remote sensing data in combination with agricultural and demographic statistics in order to derive a quantitative estimate of the number of people affected … [by] agricultural drought in South Africa in the year 2015/2016. The overall aim is to better understand the opportunities and challenges of this geospatial model approach to overcome the lack of loss and damage data…” (by Yvonne Walz, Annika Min, & Karen Dall (UNU-EHS) et al., published in Progress in Disaster Science, January)

EVENT
Regional Integration in Eurasia & the European Union: Exploring Opportunities for Collaboration
UNU-CRIS brought together academics and practitioners in this March seminar to consider the importance of regional integration in Eurasia. Topics included the Belt and Road Initiative, the capacity for further integration in the region, and the challenges of cooperation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union.

EVENT
UN75 Dialogue
UNU-MERIT participated in a dialogue that emphasised the role of young people — and their dreams, criticisms, and visions — for the future of the United Nations. The online dialogue was structured around questions and topics outlined in the UN Secretariat’s UN75 toolkit and followed by a moderated discussion a month later on United Nations Day in the Hague.

EVENT
“WIDER Annual Lecture”
The 24th WIDER Annual Lecture was delivered online by Lord Mark Malloch-Brown (former UN Deputy Secretary-General). Speaking on the topic “The UN at 75: Slow Death or New Direction?”, he discussed the possibilities for the UN to reinvent itself to overcome current challenges, such as nationalistic governments, and decreasing support for multilateralism and universal values.
Organisational Review

Beyond its roles as a research institution and UN system think tank, UNU offers a range of postgraduate programmes and specialised training opportunities across its global network. The University also disseminates the findings of its research to a range of audiences – policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and the general public – through a variety of publications, media, and events.

The following sections summarise UNU’s knowledge dissemination and outreach activities; introduce the component units of the global UNU system and the human and financial resources that enable the work of UNU; and present the University’s governance and leadership structure.
UNU Postgraduate Students

- 324 total students
  - 235 MSc
  - 89 PhD
- 38% from Developing Countries
- 57% Women

Non-degree Training Programmes and Activities

- 147 total participants
  - 141 Short-term (<2 months)
  - 6 Long-term (>2 months)
- >8900 Participants*

Research Fellows

- 127 total fellows
  - 61% Women
- 72% from Developing Countries

Interns

- 129 total interns
  - 60% Women
- 52% from Developing Countries

*Gender and nationality data for all students not available in 2005.
Knowledge Dissemination & Outreach

The focus of UNU’s dissemination effort is on getting the right knowledge to those who need it – practitioners, policymakers, academics, affected populations, and the general public – in a timely manner and in a useful form. The University does this through five main channels: publications, events, training opportunities, briefings, and mass media/online outreach.

Publications
UNU researchers disseminate the findings of their projects through a variety of publication types, including external publications – such as books (full books or chapters in edited volumes), articles in peer-reviewed journals, or articles and op-eds in magazines and newspapers – and self-published reports, policy briefs, working/discussion papers, videos, and podcasts. Many of these publications are available in both print and online form.

Over 6,900 UNU publications from the past three decades (including more than 270 that were published in 2020) are accessible online through UNU Collections (collections.unu.edu/). Many other publications not in the Collections database are available as free downloads from the websites of the institutes that prepared them.

In 2020, UNU researchers wrote, co-wrote, or edited 20 books (primarily through academic publishers such as Oxford University Press, Routledge, and Springer); contributed 145 chapters to edited volumes, and 337 articles to peer-reviewed scientific journals; and wrote/co-wrote 197 magazine or newspaper articles and op-eds. UNU published 290 discussion or working papers, 105 research or technical reports/briefs, and 59 policy briefs and reports, as well as released 221 videos or podcasts.

Events
In spite of the disruption of face-to-face meetings caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the global UNU system was able to convene more than 450 events (including 53 conferences/symposiums, 221 seminars/workshops, and 116 lectures/discussions). Most of these events were conducted online; some were targeted toward specialised audiences, but the majority were open free-of-charge to the general public. These events extended the impact and the reach of UNU research.
Postgraduate education & specialised training
UNU offers specialised postgraduate degree and non-degree training opportunities. The postgraduate degree programmes offered by UNU include master’s (MSc) degrees in:

- the Geography of Environmental Risks and Human Security (UNU-EHS & University of Bonn)
- Public Policy and Human Development (UNU-MERIT & Maastricht University)
- Sustainability (UNU-IAS)

and doctoral (PhD) degrees in:

- Integrated Management of Water, Soil, and Waste (UNU-FLORES & Technische Universität Dresden)
- Innovation, Economics, and Governance for Development (UNU-MERIT)
- Sustainability Science (UNU-IAS)

In 2020, 235 students were enrolled as master’s degree candidates and 89 as doctoral degree candidates. Among these 324 students, 38% were developing country nationals and 57% were women.

UNU also organised 147 specialised non-degree training opportunities in 2020, reaching more than 8,900 participants. These ranged from single-session workshops to multi-week courses on topics covering the gamut of UNU’s thematic areas of focus. Because of the pandemic, many other planned training sessions had to be cancelled, while some (75 in total) were modified and conducted online.

Complementing these formal study programmes and courses, many institutes typically provide research-based training opportunities that enable young scholars and researchers to enhance their skills and knowledge by working alongside UNU staff. In 2020, such on-location opportunities were limited by the global pandemic, but online programmes and “externship” alternatives were developed.

Briefings & presentations
UNU experts are regularly invited to hold in-person briefings or presentations for influential policymakers and decision-makers, government officials, and key stakeholders. At these sessions, UNU researchers provide advice in the form of tailored findings and analyses that address stakeholders’ fundamental needs and concerns.

Mass media/online outreach
UNU uses traditional media outlets and undertakes outreach via the internet, social media platforms, and a monthly email newsletter to increase the University’s visibility, raise awareness about its work, generate public support, and facilitate engagement.

- **Mass media** – In 2020, some 16,800 articles about UNU and its research were published worldwide, primarily in English (57%) but also in Chinese (10%), Japanese (9%), German (5%), Spanish (4%), and Portuguese (4%). Coverage was mainly by online news sites (61%), blogs (25%), forums (5%), newspapers (5%), magazines (1%), and news agencies (1%).

- **Internet** – During the year, UNU’s websites received 5.69 million pageviews — including more than 1.8 million pageviews for global UNU system website (unu.edu) and 1.1 million pageviews for UNU’s Our World research commentary website.

- **Social media** – As of year-end, UNU had almost 155,000 Twitter followers and more than 134,000 Facebook followers. During the year, more than 54,000 tweets and 3,000 Facebook messages mentioned UNU — primarily in English (78%) and Japanese (16%).

- **Email** – INSIGHTS, UNU’s monthly email newsletter, reached more than 28,000 subscribers.
UNU Centre provides executive management, administration, coordination, and support services to the global UNU system. In addition to the Tokyo-based Headquarters unit, UNU Centre encompasses satellite offices in Bonn, Germany (the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe) and Putrajaya, Malaysia (administrative services).

The UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER; Helsinki, Finland; established in 1985) focuses on the interlinked development challenges of transforming economies, states, and societies, with a primary emphasis on research-into-use processes.

The UNU Biotechnology Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNU-BIOLAC; Caracas, Venezuela; established in 1988) promotes the use of biotechnology for sustainable development.

The UNU Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology 3 (UNU-MERIT; Maastricht, Netherlands; established in 1988) explores the social, political, and economic factors that drive technological innovation, covering all aspects of governance and policy development.

The UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA; Accra, Ghana; established in 1988) undertakes policy-relevant research and provides cutting-edge knowledge about sustainable responses to natural resources management challenges throughout Africa.

The UNU Institute in Macau 4 (UNU Macau; Macau, SAR, China; established in 1992) focuses on the challenges faced by developing societies through high-impact innovations in human-centred information, computing, and communication technologies.

The UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability 5 (UNU-IAS; Tokyo, Japan; established in 1996) advances efforts to achieve a more sustainable future through policy-oriented research and capacity development in three areas: transformations toward sustainable societies, natural capital and biodiversity, and global change and resilience.

The UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH, Hamilton, ON, Canada; established in 1998) contributes to resolving pressing water challenges by analysing and synthesising existing knowledge, conducting research to identify emerging policy issues, and applying scalable, science-based solutions.

The UNU Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS; Bruges, Belgium; established in 2001) focuses on new forms of governance and cooperation, including the provision of global and regional public goods, and the processes and consequences of intra- and inter-regional integration.

2 In this document, the term “institutes” encompasses the global UNU system’s 14 academic units, not just the ten units that contain “institute” as part of their name.
3 This institute was established in 1988 as the UNU Institute for New Technologies (UNU-INTECH); it was renamed in 2006 when UNU-INTECH was integrated with the Maastricht Economic Research Institute on Innovation and Technology.
4 This institute was previously named the UNU International Institute for Software Technology (UNU-IIIST).
5 UNU-IAS was established in 1996 as the UNU Institute of Advanced Studies. The acronym was retained, but the name changed as above in 2014 when UNU-IAS was consolidated with the UNU Institute for Sustainability and Peace (established 2009).
The **UNU Institute for Environment and Human Security** (UNU-EHS; Bonn, Germany; established in 2003) contributes to solving the challenges of global environmental change, with a focus on environmentally driven vulnerability and risks and interplay between ecological and societal factors.

The **UNU International Institute for Global Health** (UNU-IIGH; Kuala Lumpur; established in 2007) advances evidence-based policy on key health issues, with a particular focus on gender mainstreaming in health systems and helping decision-makers in the Global South engage with global health challenges.

The **UNU Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and of Resources** (UNU-FLORES; Dresden, Germany; established in 2012) develops strategies to resolve problems in the sustainable use and integrated management of environmental resources, particularly water, soil, waste, and other geo-resources.

The **UNU Centre for Policy Research** (UNU-CPR; New York, NY, USA; established in 2014) generates innovative solutions to global public policy challenges, contributes to the major policy debates at the United Nations, and represents the UNU Rector and UNU institutes at UN Headquarters.

The **UNU Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance** (UNU-EGOV; Guimarães, Portugal; established in 2015) works at the intersection of governance, technology, and development, translating its research findings into relevant policy instruments.

The **Sustainable Cycles Programme** (UNU-ViE SCYCLE; Bonn, Germany) has been hosted since 2016 by the UNU Vice-Rectorate in Europe. SCYCLE focuses on the sustainable production, consumption/usage, and disposal of the lifecycles of electrical and electronic equipment (e-waste).

---

6 Prior to 2015, UNU-EGOV operated as an e-governance research programme of UNU-IIST.
7 Prior to its hosting by UNU-VIE, SCYCLE was a Bonn-based operating unit of UNU-IAS. In 2020, based on an agreement between UNU and UNITAR, SCYCLE began transitioning to become a unit of UNITAR.
**Human & Financial Resources**

UNU is an inclusive employer, committed to ensuring that its workplace culture is tolerant of cultural, racial, sexual, and other differences; is gender balanced; supports the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities; and is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse.

The global UNU system comprises a diverse group of personnel possessing broad and in-depth expertise. The University’s personnel include a combination of:

- Professional (P-1 level and higher) and General Service (GS) staff, who are appointed in accordance with UN Staff Regulations and Rules
- visiting scholars, research associates, postdoctoral fellows, and administrative and academic services personnel, who are employed on UNU Personnel Service Agreements (PSAs)
- external specialists, experts, and services personnel, who are employed on part-time or limited-term UNU Consultant Contracts (CTCs)

As of year-end 2020, the global UNU system had a personnel complement of 740, of whom 55% were women (including 50% of institute directors) and 42% were developing country nationals. Of these personnel, 10% held Professional appointments, 7% held GS appointments, 32% were employed as PSAs, and 51% were CTCs.

**Finances**

UNU receives no funds from the regular UN budget. The University is funded entirely through voluntary contributions in the form of institutional funding (recurring host country contributions supplemented by investment income derived from the UNU Endowment Fund) and special project contributions (obtained from UN Member States, foundations, agencies, international organisations, and other sources) for specific projects.

The approved UNU budget for the 2020–2021 biennium is 112.5 million USD: 51.1 million USD for academic programme and specific project expenses, 42.7 million USD for staffing and personnel costs, and 18.7 million USD for general expenses.

While the 2020 finances of some UNU institutes were impacted by the pandemic — some saw a slight reduction in contributions while others were able to secure significant new COVID-related funding — UNU’s finances overall for the year were relatively stable.
The contributions received by UNU in calendar year 2020 amounted to more than 32.8 million USD: 24.6 million USD from host country and other governments and 8.2 million USD from other contributors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBER STATES</th>
<th>US Dollars*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>872,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,480,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union (European Commission)</td>
<td>99,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2,926,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5,470,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>47,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>6,411,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea, Republic of</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau SAR (China)</td>
<td>526,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>251,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2,464,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principality of Liechtenstein</td>
<td>101,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>868,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>340,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>1,490,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>58,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,170,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,630,759</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTHER CONTRIBUTORS</th>
<th>US Dollars*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre)</td>
<td>21,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank (Metro Manila, Philippines)</td>
<td>135,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
<td>727,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft</td>
<td>36,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH</td>
<td>135,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt e.V. (DLR)</td>
<td>521,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurac Research</td>
<td>414,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Market Association</td>
<td>45,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Foundation</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurt School of Finance &amp; Management</td>
<td>615,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of Development Studies (IDS)</td>
<td>76,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
<td>127,872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</td>
<td>192,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishikawa Prefecture</td>
<td>234,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan Society for the Promotion of Science</td>
<td>236,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keio University (Keio Research Institute at SFC)</td>
<td>31,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanazawa City</td>
<td>234,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGT Group</td>
<td>53,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liechtensteinischer Bankenverband (Liechtenstein Bankers’ Association)</td>
<td>51,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht City Council</td>
<td>320,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maastricht Graduate School of Governance</td>
<td>280,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macao Science and Technology Development Fund (STDF)</td>
<td>25,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>112,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich Climate Insurance Initiative</td>
<td>412,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich Re Foundation</td>
<td>77,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munich Re Insurance (Münchener Rückversicherung)</td>
<td>29,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute For Environment Studies (NIFES)</td>
<td>54,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resona Holdings, Inc.</td>
<td>95,158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stichting Maastricht Economic Research Institute on Innovation and Technology</td>
<td>205,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarom Foundation</td>
<td>20,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Japan Foundation for the United Nation University (JFUNU)</td>
<td>153,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Treasury of the Republic of South Africa</td>
<td>1,030,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade &amp; Industrial Policy Strategies TIPS</td>
<td>213,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)</td>
<td>37,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</td>
<td>308,982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)</td>
<td>82,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)</td>
<td>130,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vereniging Nederlandse Verwijdering Metaalre Producten (NVMP)</td>
<td>112,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vereniging Nederlandse Verwijdering Metaalre Producten (NVMP)</td>
<td>112,706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Subtotal** | **8,235,711** |
| **Total**    | **32,866,470** |

Contribution figures are converted to US dollar equivalents and rounded to the nearest dollar; subtotals may reflect rounding approximations.
Governance & Leadership

Oversight of UNU’s operations and academic activities is exercised by five governance and leadership structures. Three of these – the UNU Council, UNU Rectorate, and UNU Administration – function systemwide while two – UNU institute directors and UNU institute advisory boards/committees – have institute-specific roles.

The **UNU Council** oversees the affairs of the global UNU system. The Council’s responsibilities include approval of the UNU Work Programme and Budget and adoption of University-wide statutes and policies. The UNU Council reports on the work of the University to the UN General Assembly, the UN Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Board of UNESCO.

The UNU Council comprises 12 appointed members who serve six-year terms (in an individual capacity, not as representatives of their countries), the UNU Rector, and three ex officio members from the UN system (the UN Secretary-General, UNESCO Director-General, and UNITAR Executive Director). The UNU Council met twice in 2020, in its 73rd Session (June) and 74th Session (December); due to the ongoing global pandemic, both sessions were organised as online meetings.

The **UNU Rectorate** provides management direction for the University and coordinates policy development activities within the UNU system. The Rector, who holds the rank of UN Under-Secretary-General, is the chief academic and administrative officer of UNU. He is assisted by two Vice-Rectors (one in Tokyo, Japan, and one in Bonn, Germany) and the Tokyo-based Office of the Rector.

**UNU Administration** is responsible for development of unified standards, financial/treasury system management, and budget reporting to the UNU Council, as well as for providing HR, financial, and procurement services to the global UNU system. UNU Administration, headed by the Director of Administration, has offices in Tokyo and in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

In addition to these University-wide governance and leadership bodies, each of UNU’s 14 institutes is headed by a Director who has overall responsibility for the direction, organisation, administration, and programmes of their institute. The institute directors report to the Rector, and collectively meet (along with senior Office of the Rector and Administration officers) in annual Conference of Directors (CONDIR) as well as periodic “All Directors Virtual Call” sessions to discuss matters of systemwide policy and coordination.

Each UNU institute benefits from the guidance of an **Advisory Board/Committee**, typically comprising at least three appointed members plus the UNU Rector and the institute Director. These bodies play an active role in advising on thematic programming and management of their respective UNU institutes, including on quality assurance matters and fundraising efforts.
UNU Council 2020

APPOINTED MEMBERS

• Ms Angela Kane (Germany), UNU Council Chair — Senior Fellow, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation; Professor, Sciences Po
• Prof. Carlos Henrique de Brito Cruz (Brazil) — Senior Vice President, Elsevier Research Networks
• Dr Denisa Čiderová (Slovakia) — Associate Professor in the Department of International Trade and Liaison for Idea Puzzle at the University of Economics in Bratislava
• Dr Comfort Ero (United Kingdom) — Programme Director, Crisis Group
• Dr Xin Fang (China) — Professor, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences
• Ms Isabel Guerrero Pulgar (Chile) — Executive Director IMAGO Global Grassroots; Lecturer at Harvard Kennedy School
• Prof. Adam Habib (South Africa) — Director, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London
• Dr Segenet Kelemu (Ethiopia) — Director General and CEO, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology
• Dr Radha Kumar (India) — Policy Analyst
• Amb. Tsuneo Nishida (Japan) — Special Advisor to the President of Kanagawa University; Honorary Director of the Institute for Peace Science, Hiroshima University
• Prof. Funmi Olonisakin (United Kingdom & Nigeria) — Vice-President & Vice-Principal International and Professor of Security, Leadership & Development, King’s College London
• Prof. Brenda Yeoh (Singapore) — Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS

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

UNU Management Group Members

• Rector David M. Malone
• Senior Vice-Rector Taikan Oki
• Vice-Rector in Europe Shen Xiaomeng
• Director of Administration Joan Sawe
• Executive Officer Sabine Becker-Thierry

UNU Institute Directors

• UNU-BIOLAC Programme Coordinator Ivan Galindo-Castro
• UNU-CPR Executive Director David Passarelli
• UNU-CRIS Director ad interim Philippe De Lombaerde
• UNU-EGOV Head Delfina Soares
• UNU-EHS Director Shen Xiaomeng
• UNU-FLORES Director Edeltraud Günther
• UNU-IAS Director Shinobu Yamaguchi
• UNU-IIGH Director Pascale Allotey
• UNU-INRA Director Fatima Denton
• UNU-INWEH Director Vladimir Smakhtin
• UNU Macau Director Jingbo Huang
• UNU-MERIT Director Bartel Van De Walle
• UNU-ViE SCYCLE Programme Director Rüdiger Kühr
• UNU-WIDER Director Kunal Sen