



United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Questionnaire 2024

United Nations University

Executive Summary

The United Nations University (UNU) conducts policy-relevant research to address urgent global issues and provide evidence-based solutions. In 2024, the University undertook several activities towards enhancing and increasing awareness on the rights and inclusion of Indigenous peoples.

In its publications and projects, UNU highlighted Indigenous perceptions of nature and well-being, focusing on Indigenous perspectives from India, Mexico, Samoa and South Africa. The University also presented a multidisciplinary approach to Indigenous challenges during migration, culminating in a framework for rights literacy to support their human rights and pursuit of justice during migration. Moreover, UNU advocated for the inclusion of diverse Indigenous perspectives in governance with studies on the Arctic region and the typology of nature's values.

Further research by UNU also engaged Indigenous youth in Canada, underscoring the multiple food and health security realities that impacts them. Through participatory research activities, UNU identified the potential for Indigenous knowledge systems and art workshops for Safer Sex Efficacy (SSE) and HIV prevention. It also presented the need for structural interventions to improve the food security, and sexual and mental health of Indigenous youth in the region. This research contributed to the UN's efforts towards ending HIV and AIDS by 2030. Finally, UNU undertook an event spotlighting the work by Indigenous communities in Brazil working to protect and preserve their environment amidst environmental destruction.

In support of the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, UNU organised several key events. The Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), co-chaired by UNU, focused on the role of emerging technologies in enhancing sustainability efforts within higher education. Additionally, UNU-IAS organised two side events; one highlighting the unique role of cities in accelerating climate action and SDG progress with synergistic solutions, and another discussing the Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS), a flagship program that provides small-



scale financing to bolster biodiversity conservation efforts - highlighting the key role of women and local communities in driving sustainable development. These events contributed to critical discussions on advancing sustainability and achieving the SDGs.

To support SDG reporting and monitoring, UNU-INWEH hosted two seminars; one, on a tool to assist the development of effective water policies through synthesising data into a fit-for-policy evidence framework, and the other on incorporating monitoring into watershed management for better decision-making. UNU-EGOV hosted seminars on indicators used to assess the impact of eGovernment systems on good governance and the use of context-sensitive indicators for Smart City Measurements. UNU-IIGH hosted a webinar on the Access to Medicine Index (AtMI) with a critique of its usability as an accountability mechanism and for the regulation of pharmaceutical companies. Finally, UNU-MERIT presented at the Science Summit of the UNGA on appropriately measuring innovation for SDGs achievement, particularly in Africa.

UNU indirectly contributes to the VNR process by providing retrospective reviews of countries' previous VNRs and sharing knowledge and recommendations valuable for future VNRs.

Through these activities, UNU has played a key role in fostering knowledge-sharing, advancing global policy dialogue, and strengthening SDG reporting and monitoring efforts.

A. Recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and input to the 2025 session

i. Please provide information on measures taken since your last update to the Forum on the implementation or planned implementation of the recommendations of the PFII.

UNU has continued, through its research, projects and programming, to advance the rights of indigenous peoples through targeted research on Indigenous perspectives and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the University's projects.

ii. The theme of the 2025 PFII session is "Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within United Nations Member States and the United Nations system, including identifying good practices and addressing



challenges.” Please include information on any publications, projects, reports, or activities relevant to this theme.

In 2024, UNU has contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through several publications, projects and events.

The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), in partnership with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), is undertaking a project on reconceiving well-being through the lens of Indigenous people. The project, “Reconceptualizing Well-being to Foster a Sustainable Society through Indigenous and Youth Perspectives from the Global South,” considers four case studies in India, Mexico, Samoa and South Africa to understand Indigenous notions of well-being. The expected outcome of this research is a nature-inclusive well-being framework that integrates indigenous values, contributing to the global discourse on sustainability. In line with this project, a policy brief was published on “[Reframing the Concept of Well-being and One Health Leveraging Indigenous Knowledge](#).” This brief provided insight into nature-based Indigenous ontology and evaluated the interconnection of health, well-being, and sustainability through the lens of Indigenous Knowledge.

The United Nations University Centre for Policy Research (UNU-CPR) published a research report examining Indigenous migration and human rights. The report, “[KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: A Critical Rights Literacy Framework Based on Indigenous Migrant Practices across Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States](#),” drew from the practices Indigenous communities undertake to defend their rights and seek justice amidst their migration. The report proposed a framework for rights literacy, which involves valuing Indigenous Knowledges, Networks, Ownership, and Words, hence the acronym KNOW.

On World Environment Day, the United Nations University Institute Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT) hosted a special screening event for a [documentary on Indigenous people and nature](#). The documentary, “We Are Guardians,” follows a group of Indigenous people working to protect the Brazilian Amazon forest and preserve their environmental and human rights in the face of large-scale environmental destruction and corruption. The event was undertaken in collaboration with United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC), with support from Lumière Cinema and Gemeente Maastricht.



In 2023, United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS) published a policy brief on '[Filling the Void': Engaging Indigenous Peoples in Arctic Environmental Governance](#)'. The brief contributed to the understanding of the roles of Indigenous Peoples' Organisations in the context-specific environmental governance challenges in the Arctic Region. It also provided a reference for designing long-term solutions and for advancing understanding and capacity for researchers and practitioners interested in the region through better and up-to-date knowledge.

UNU-IAS also published a journal article in 2023 on '[Diverse values of nature for sustainability](#)'. The article centred on the typology of the many values of nature and their considerations in decision-making. The study reviewed contributions from Indigenous knowledge holders and presented the benefits from local empowerment and recognition of local views, especially for Indigenous communities. It argued for a more inclusive understanding of nature's values and creating space for the diversity of values in science and policy.

iii. Please provide information on efforts to ensure the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the international decades declared by the General Assembly, such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development" (2018-2028), the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022 - 2032) and other relevant international decades and processes, including CEDAW General recommendation 39 on Indigenous women and girls.

The United Nations University Institute on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) undertook studies involving Northern and Indigenous youth from the Northwest Territories, Canada, a region disproportionately affected by Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). This research was in alignment with the [Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030](#), adopted by the General Assembly on 8 June 2021.

From these studies, the institute published three journal articles on the theme of health and food security vis-a-vis Indigenous peoples.



- The article, “[Land-Based Retreats as a Method for Building Enabling Environments for HIV Prevention with Northern and Indigenous Adolescents in the Northwest Territories, Canada: Mixed-Methods Findings](#),” examined the potential of land-based peer leader retreats (PLR) in building HIV-prevention enabling environments among Northern and Indigenous youth in the NWT. PLRs are grounded in Indigenous principles and ways of knowing, acknowledging the land as a physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual being with the potential to facilitate (re)connection to culture, community, and self. With a noted increase in Safer Sex Efficacy (SSE) after the PLRs, the study found that PLRs have the potential to cultivate technical and transformative communication to facilitate HIV prevention with youth in Canada’s North.
- Through the “[Human immunodeficiency virus prevention outcomes associated with arts-based sexual health workshop participation among Northern and Indigenous in the Northwest Territories, Canada](#),” UNU-INWEH investigated the sexual health outcomes among Northern and Indigenous youth associated with participation in arts-based sexual health workshops. The study found that workshop participation was associated with increased STI knowledge across all demographics, supporting existing research highlighting the transformative potential of arts-based interventions. Furthermore, the study identified the continued benefit of sexual health workshop participation in increasing HIV/STI risk perception and safer sex self-efficacy among former participants.
- The manuscript, “[Examining Pathways from Food Insecurity to Safer Sex Efficacy Among Northern and Indigenous Adolescents in the Northwest Territories, Canada](#),” explored the pathways from food insecurity to safer sex efficacy, as part of sexual wellbeing. The study done in 2023 identified indirect effects from food insecurity to condom use SSE through resilience and depression, and from food insecurity to situational SSE through resilience. The conceptual underpinning of the research was the understanding that food insecurity is a social determinant of adolescent sexual health via reduced safer sex self-efficacy. As such, the study called for structural interventions to address food insecurity, alongside resilience-focused strategies that address the intersection of sexual and mental health.



- iv. Has your entity responded to the 2022 UNPFII recommendation² paragraph 85... *The Permanent Forum urges all United Nations entities and States parties to treaties concerning the environment, biodiversity, and the climate to eliminate the use of the term “local communities” in conjunction with indigenous peoples, so that the term “indigenous peoples and local communities” would be abolished.***

UNU has not formally responded to this recommendation from the UNPFII, however, it recognises the differences in terminology and encourages clarity and specificity in language and action from its researchers and project managers when engaging with either local communities or Indigenous peoples.

B. System-Wide Action Plan to achieve the ends of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

- i. The Permanent Forum will follow up on progress made on the SWAP implementation as part of its discussion on the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples during its 2025 session. Please provide an analysis of actions taken by your agency, fund and/or programme on the six key elements of SWAP, since your last update to the Forum⁴.**

UNU has not been directly involved in the implementation of the SWAP due to the relatively limited scope of its research in this specific area. However, UNU closely monitors developments related to the SWAP and remains engaged with the broader discussions on system-wide coordination and integration within the UN framework.

C. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- i. Please describe any activities your entity has organized since the last reporting period to accelerate progress across a range of SDGs, demonstrating the interlinkages across goals and targets and if applicable, providing examples of translating global goals into local actions. In your response, please consider**



referring to SDGs relevant to the theme of the 2025 session of the Forum, including SDGs 5, 7, 10, 13 and 16.

UNU's dual role as both a high-level research and teaching institution and a think tank for the UN system enables it to foster cross-sector collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders, spanning the UN system, academic communities, and international policymakers. It serves as a bridge between the UN and the global academic community, while also building capacity, particularly in developing countries, and providing a platform for dialogue and innovative ideas. As a unique, decentralised network of 13 institutes, UNU has cultivated and sustained multistakeholder partnerships at local, national, regional, and global levels.

Since the adoption of the SDGs by the UN General Assembly in 2015, UNU has remained steadfast in advancing solutions across all SDGs. The network of UNU institutes is actively engaged in a wide range of research projects, publications, and events that contribute to the global SDG agenda.

SDG 5 – Gender equality:

- UNU Macau and UN Women launched a partnership to enhance digital security for gender equality advocates in South-East Asia. The initiative, titled "*Training of Trainers to Strengthen Digital Security and Cyber Resilience of Gender Equality and Women's Rights Advocates*," took place in Bangkok on March 27-28, 2024. The program emphasises the importance of digital empowerment in creating safe online spaces. By leveraging the knowledge and experiences of women and girls, and building their digital skills, the initiative seeks to advance gender equality and strengthen the resilience of women's rights advocates in the digital age.

SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy:

- Through the *APV-MaGa project*, UNU-VIE is advancing agrophotovoltaics (APV) in Mali and The Gambia to enhance food security, water access, and energy production in climate-vulnerable rural areas. By integrating solar energy with agricultural systems, the project aims to improve resilience against climate change, optimise water and energy use, and boost local livelihoods. Pilot projects, including solar-powered



irrigation and cold storage systems, are designed to empower local populations and provide sustainable, scalable solutions for local communities.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

- The UNU-IIGH launched a working paper on *Global Health Governance and the Challenge of Holding Power to Account*, focusing on the intricate relationships between governance, power, and accountability within global health systems. The paper highlights the urgent need for accountability frameworks that address health disparities, particularly in vulnerable populations in the Global South. It explores challenges in holding powerful actors accountable and proposes strategies to strengthen governance structures, prioritising the needs of marginalised communities in health policies. Through this work, UNU-IIGH contributes to advancing more equitable global health systems and promoting fairness and justice in health access and outcomes worldwide.

SDG 13 – Climate Action

- UNU-IAS launched a side event of the 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference showcasing the *Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative (COMDEKS) programme* and its role in advancing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The session emphasised the critical role of community-led initiatives in the sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. It spotlighted successful local actions from Cambodia, Colombia, and Türkiye, where communities have implemented integrated, nature-based solutions to safeguard biodiversity while enhancing livelihoods. These efforts highlighted how locally driven approaches contribute to global biodiversity targets. The event underscored the importance of empowering communities, sharing knowledge, and scaling up these initiatives to support both conservation and sustainable development.

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- UNU-EGOV, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), launched the *SEADGov forum* to strengthen governance in the region through digital technologies. Held in Gaborone, Botswana, on 25-26 June 2024, the forum served as a collaborative space for governments, international organisations,



and civil society to share best practices and discuss solutions aimed at building more transparent and accountable institutions. By addressing the challenges and opportunities of digital governance, the forum promoted regional collaboration and empowered citizens through technology.

On the localisation of SDGs, UNU-IAS co-organised a workshop in collaboration with UNU-CRIS and Waseda University Brussels Office. The event, “[Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals – Asian and European Perspectives and Beyond](#),” discussed adapting the goals to the needs and priorities of local regions or communities, while aligning with local and global frameworks. Discussions in [the workshop](#) touched on assessments of local SDG monitoring, participatory action research in multi-stakeholder processes, initiatives such as the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), and transforming governance for SDG localisation.

UNU’s internal project management system, Pelikan, tracks expenditures related to the advancement of SDG targets, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and that each initiative aligns with the broader goals of sustainable development.

UNU’s website also highlights and tracks the University’s contributions to the SDGs in its projects, publications and events along the five themes of People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. A comprehensive view of UNU’s recent progress can be found here: <https://unu.edu/topics>

ii. Please describe any activities your entity organized in support of the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and/or reports and activities that supported SDG reporting and monitoring or a VNR process at the national, regional, or global level.

UNU plays a significant role in advancing global policy dialogue on the SDGs through its research, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships, thus contributing to global forums and discussions.

At the 2024 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), co-chaired by UNU, organised a special event on the potential of emerging technologies to enhance sustainability efforts in higher education.



The event, held on 15 July 2024, on the theme of '[The Future of Higher Education for Sustainable Development](#)', featured discussions on how emerging technologies such as AI can advance the SDGs, as well as innovative practices to promote sustainability and enhance partnerships in higher education.

Additionally, on 16 July 2024, UNU-IAS contributed to a special event at the HLPF on the theme '[Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want through Climate and SDGs Synergy](#)'. The institute director spoke at a roundtable stressing the unique role of cities in synergistic solutions to accelerate climate action and progress. Drawing on UNU research, the director highlighted three urgent efforts required towards this: systemic efforts for integrated climate action policy and planning, effective multi-level governance, and capacity building in cities and for policymakers.

On 17 July 2024, UNU-IAS organised a side event at the Forum to spotlight the '[Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative \(COMDEKS\)](#)', a programme that supports community-led initiatives for the sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources. Discussions at the event centred around the impact of COMDEKS on SDGs and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) at the local level. Local practitioners from Cameroon, Peru and Türkiye shared their experiences with COMDEKS projects, underscoring the crucial role of grassroots initiatives in achieving sustainable development while empowering women as key agents of change in their communities.

UNU is also involved in activities that support SDG reporting and monitoring:

- UNU-INWEH through its Science Talks event series hosted two seminars on:
 - '[Sustainable Development Goal 6 - Policy Support System \(SDG-PSS\)](#)' - this seminar centred around the use of the Policy Support System (SDG-PSS), a tool which synthesises data and information from different sources and translates into a 'fit-for-policy' evidence framework. The talk highlighted the significance of enabling environments for the achievement of SDG 6 targets at the national level, presenting SDG-PSS as an opportunity to develop and implement effective water policies in the SDG era.
 - '[Using Environmental Monitoring Data to Improve Integrated Watershed Management](#)'. The seminar emphasised the necessity of integrating monitoring into cumulative effects management systems. The speaker



highlighted the importance of incorporating monitoring and modelling components into a regional management system that can provide support and feedback to regional modelling and planning, and the need for better coordination among regional actors.

- UNU-EGOV hosted three seminars:
 - On the use of embedded indicators to assess the impact of eGovernment systems on good governance, the seminar, “[Rethinking the eGovernment Survey to serve the purpose of good governance](#),” focused on tools for assessing the impact of eGovernment on good governance. It featured proposals for the embedding of eGovernment indicator systems into the ICT industry and related sectors for improved governance and better practices in public administration.
 - The ‘[Development of Digital Government at the subnational level: measurement experiences from Latin America](#)’ seminar presented experiences on the measurement of the development of digital government at the subnational level in Latin America. It also compared national indexes such as the EGDI (UNDESA) and the GTMI (World Bank) with subnational indexes that highlight internal contrasts, especially in federal nations like Mexico and Brazil. It emphasised the assessment, monitoring, and promotion of local digital development for the enhancement of governance and the delivery of public services with similar standards across nations at various regional levels.
 - On ‘[Smart Cities Measurements and Challenges to Address the Local Context](#)’The , the seminar highlighted the use of Smart City Measurements to improve people’s quality of life and create adaptive mitigation strategies in cities. It included discussions on the use of context-sensitive indicators in SCM frameworks for Smart Cities, especially for international and national measurements, with an analysis of SCM frameworks, local context, and measurement adoption by cities in Brazil.
- UNU-EGOV also launched the ‘[Portugal EGOV Index](#)’ project, the objective of which is the assessment of Portugal’s performance in the main international benchmarks on digital governance: analysis, recommendations, monitoring, and capacity development. The project seeks to enhance Portugal's digital governance via strategic analysis and action plans, focusing on international benchmarks, continual



improvements, and stakeholder engagement. Such aligns with the contribution of digital governance to the achievement of SDGs.

- UNU-IIGH hosted a webinar on '[The Access to Medicines Index \(AtMI\): Catalyst for Change or Barrier to Access?](#)'. The event focused on the use and effectiveness of the Access to Medicine Index. It critically interrogated the use of the "league table" as an accountability mechanism to improve access to medicines and explore why such mechanisms might paradoxically weaken efforts to regulate pharmaceutical companies.
- UNU-MERIT presented at the Science Summit at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly on the topic '[Are we using the right metrics? Towards a research agenda for measuring how innovation drives the SDGs in Africa](#)', highlighting the contribution of research and innovation (R&I) to the achievement of SDGs.

UNU through its institutes indirectly contributes to the VNR process by sharing knowledge and recommendations that will be of value to future VNRs. For example, UNU-IAS has prepared policy briefs providing recommendations to policymakers engaged to strengthen climate strategies towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda, based on analysis of completed VNR such as the 2023 Policy Brief on [Accelerating Climate Action in Africa: Insights from the 2022 Voluntary National Reviews](#).