

United International University (UIU)

Annual Sustainability Report 2024

Focus SDG: No Poverty (SDG 1)

Introduction

At UIU, we believe education is one of the most powerful tools to break the cycle of poverty. Our mission goes beyond academics; we strive to remove financial barriers, create opportunities, and empower young people to become change-makers in society.

Throughout 2024, our initiatives under **SDG 1- No Poverty** focused on financial support, affordable services, research and innovation, and entrepreneurship have helped students from low-income families to continue their education, nurtured new ventures, and extended opportunities to disadvantaged communities.

1. Making Education Accessible

UIU has always prioritized financial support to ensure that no capable student is left behind due to economic hardship. Every trimester, the top 15% of students in each class receive a full (100%) tuition waiver.

In the year 2022, an NGO called “Happy Homes” nominated a student who got a 50% waiver on tuition fees, and is still continuing her educational journey with United International University.

Scholarships & Waivers:

Scholarship and Financial aid are received by over 75% students annually.

Categories includes:

- Extra Meritorious Scholarship
- Freedom Fighter Scholarship
- Special scholarships include, NGO-supported waivers

Assistantships:

Additional assistantship opportunities are provided by UIU. These programs allow students to earn and support their academic expenses.

Categories includes:

- Teaching Assistantships (TA)
- Undergraduate Assistantships (UGA)
- Graduate Assistantships (GA)

International Student Support:

UIU provides various scholarship opportunities for the international students as well as the diverse international student community on campus.

- 25% Direct Admission Scholarship for all international students through the Center for International Affairs and Cooperation (CIAC).
- 100% Scholarships available for students recommended by embassies from countries such as India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Palestine, and Turkey.
- The international student community includes students from Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Palestine, Nigeria, and Bhutan. Write a heading for this.

Impact:

More than 4,500 students from low-income families were able to pursue higher education at UIU in the year 2024.

2. Affordable Campus Life

We recognize that the cost of living can create additional pressure for students from underprivileged backgrounds. To ease this:

Transportation:

UIU provides a highly subsidized shuttle service with 112 daily trips. Students save an estimated Tk. 134,400 daily compared to local transport costs. Long-route transportation is also subsidized by 75%.

Meals:

The campus canteen offers affordable meals, such as a chicken meal for Tk. 65, nearly half the outside cost.

Housing:

Hostel facilities are 25% cheaper than local rentals, ensuring safe and affordable living arrangements.

Impact:

Affordable campus life means students don't have to choose between education and survival. It keeps them in school, reduces immediate poverty pressure, and equips them to break free from long-term poverty.

3. Research, Innovation & Policy Impact

Poverty alleviation requires new ideas, and UIU's Institute of Research, Innovation, Incubation, and Commercialization (IRIIC) plays a key role in this.

Launchpad Program:

Supported 45 student startup teams with mentorship and seed funding. 18 teams successfully graduated, receiving Tk. 7.5 lakh in funding.

Launchpad by UIHP@UIU is a flagship startup incubation program of United International University that fosters entrepreneurship and innovation among students. Since its inception, the program has supported over 45 teams from 30 universities in its first cycle, offering mentorship and seed funding, with 18 teams successfully graduating and receiving a total of 7.5 lakh taka in funding. Held throughout the year, Launchpad provides expert mentorship, hands-on support, and funding opportunities up to Tk 150,000, empowering young innovators to build impactful ventures. With a diverse cohort of students from various disciplines and universities, Launchpad by UIHP@UIU bridges academic knowledge with real world entrepreneurial practice, exemplifying UIU's commitment to nurturing future leaders and advancing Bangladesh's startup ecosystem.

Example with pictures: A team developed a low-cost smart irrigation system designed for small farmers, enabling them to save water, reduce costs, and improve crop yields. This solution directly supports rural families struggling with poverty.

Another team built an affordable e-learning platform for underprivileged students in rural Bangladesh, bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal education opportunities.

Research & Innovation (R&I) Week 2024

The Institute of Research, Innovation, Incubation, and Commercialization (IRIIC) at United International University organized Research & Innovation (R&I) Week 2024, a flagship academic event held from December 1 to 4, 2024.

The program was inaugurated by Professor M. Zahid Hasan, Eugene Higgins Professor of Physics at Princeton University and Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. The four-day event featured keynote sessions and discussions led by distinguished academics and researchers including Md. Mujibur Rahman, Al-Sakib Khan Pathan, Gausul Azam Arafat Ahmed, Prof. Emeritus M. Rezwan Khan, Dr. Md. Qamruzzaman, Qazi Nurus Sofa, Shah Shuja, Sharif Ahmed Mukul, Tapan Kumar Roy, and Nazra Sabet.

The week provided a vibrant platform for students, faculty, and industry experts to exchange ideas on innovation, socio-economic development, and sustainable technology. It showcased UIU's commitment to connecting academic research with real-world challenges such as poverty reduction, economic inequality, and inclusive growth.

Through this program UIU ensures **Knowledge Creation for Poverty Solutions**: The sessions generate actionable insights on how technological innovation and research can be harnessed to tackle poverty, improve access to education, and foster social inclusion.

Capacity Building: By engaging students and young researchers in discussions on sustainable innovation, the program enhanced their ability to design projects addressing community-level poverty and unemployment challenges. **Collaboration & Policy Dialogue:** The event strengthened partnerships between academia, industry, and government—laying the groundwork for future projects focused on economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

Additionally this sort of program also **Promotes a Research Culture:** R&I Week inspired students to pursue research-driven careers and encouraged multidisciplinary collaboration that supports national development goals, **Create Global Networking:** The participation of internationally renowned scholars elevated UIU's global standing and opened doors for joint initiatives that could attract international funding for social impact research and ensure an **Innovation Ecosystem Growth:** The event complemented UIU's startup and incubation programs, linking innovative research with entrepreneurship and commercialization opportunities that can create jobs and reduce economic vulnerability.

Policy Dialogues:

Hosted the Bangladesh Corpus Lecture Series, focusing on socio-economic issues, poverty, and inclusive development.

The Bangladesh Corpus: Public Lecture Series-2024 was successfully held at the Institute of Research, Innovation, Incubation, and Commercialization (IRIIC) at United International University (UIU). The event featured a series of thought-provoking lectures delivered by distinguished experts, focusing on Bangladesh's evolving socio-economic landscape, poverty issues, technological advancements, and research initiatives. Attendees, including students, faculty, and professionals, engaged in enriching discussions that underscored the importance of research, innovation, and evidence-based policy in driving national progress. The lecture series aimed to inspire and educate participants, promoting critical thinking and collaboration for future advancements.

Workshops for Accessibility:

Conducted research workshops on affordable stroke rehabilitation and AI-driven medical screening tools, making healthcare more accessible for vulnerable communities.

The AI-driven Endometriosis Screening Tool, designed with AIMS Lab, provides early diagnosis at a fraction of the usual cost. This helps low-income women access healthcare that was previously unaffordable.

Research Funding:

Tk. 118 million was allocated across multidisciplinary research projects, including social science and economics, directly contributing to anti-poverty policies.

4. Entrepreneurship & Employment Opportunities

Through the Entrepreneur Development Forum (EDF) and IRIIC, UIU has created platforms for students to develop entrepreneurial skills and create livelihoods.

Youth Co:lab Springboard Program 6.0: was successfully held in the IRIIC, UIU in March 2024, was a dynamic platform designed to empower young entrepreneurs and innovators. This event aimed to foster youth-driven innovations and entrepreneurship, focusing on social and sustainable impact, by providing mentorship, networking opportunities, and skill-building workshops. Participants presented innovative ideas addressing critical challenges, with the program supporting them in refining their solutions for real-world implementation and scaling.

EntrepreNEXT Series: Showcased inspiring stories of entrepreneurs who started with very little and built successful businesses.

Startup Sprint 1.0: In partnership with YSSE, trained students to launch sustainable, youth-driven businesses.

Banik Bazar 2024: A flagship business simulation where students set up stalls, sold products, and gained real-life business experience.

Job Fair for Persons with Disabilities: In collaboration with BCC and CSID, UIU helped create job opportunities for people with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity in the labor market.

Overall Impact of Entrepreneurship & Employment Initiatives (2024) can be titled as, **Empowering Youth Through Skills & Innovation**: Over a thousand students participated in EDF-led events that provided practical experience in business development, marketing, innovation, and digital branding, **Job Creation & Economic Inclusion**: Many students launched startups or freelance careers after these events, contributing to job creation and local economic development directly supporting SDG 1: No Poverty through income generation and empowerment, **Bridging Academia and Industry**: Collaborations with leading companies like Berger Paints, Grameenphone, and GREE & KONKA allowed students to engage with real business leaders, turning theoretical learning into practical skill-building, **Encouraging Equal Opportunity**: Programs such as the FICCI Leader's Talks highlighted gender inclusion and the importance of women's participation in entrepreneurship and leadership, **Building a Sustainable Entrepreneurial Ecosystem**: The EDF's consistent activities throughout the year cultivated a campus culture of entrepreneurship—encouraging students from all backgrounds, including those from low-income families, to envision entrepreneurship as a viable path out of poverty.

UIU's initiatives to create Entrepreneurship & Employment Opportunities 2024 created a powerful momentum for youth-led entrepreneurship and employment generation. By providing hands-on learning experiences, mentorship, and industry exposure, UIU continues to prepare its students not only to seek jobs but to create them—a crucial driver in achieving SDG 1: No Poverty.

5. Community and Global Engagement

Our commitment extends beyond our campus: Health awareness programs on nutrition, sanitation, and housing. Partnerships with organizations such as UNICEF, Turtle Venture, and Unilever to support youth entrepreneurship and community development. Active participation in policy-making discussions at local and national levels to promote strategies for poverty reduction.

In 2024, the Institute of Research, Innovation, Incubation, and Commercialization (IRIIC) at United International University (UIU) strengthened its partnerships with leading organizations across education, finance, industry, and governance to expand opportunities for research, innovation, and skill development.

Several key Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed during the year:

UIU x Onnorokom EdTech Ltd. (October 29, 2024) a collaboration aimed at advancing educational technology research and commercialization, designed to enhance digital learning experiences and build stronger bridges between academia and the EdTech industry.

UIU x LankaBangla Finance Ltd. (September 2024) this partnership promotes industry-academia collaboration in business innovation, offering students access to financial industry insights, case-based learning, and joint research on financial inclusion and economic development.

UIU x Intelligent Police Research Center (IPRIC) (July 28, 2024) this MoU supports research and innovation in policing and public safety, creating pathways for data-driven research, smart governance initiatives, and community resilience studies.

UIU x FBCCI Innovation & Research Centre (FBCCI IRC) (July 8, 2024) a significant national partnership focused on joint research in both government and private sectors, fostering innovation-driven growth and contributing to sustainable economic policy development.

Additionally, Professor Khondaker A. Mamun, Ph.D., Founder and Director of AIMS Lab and Director of IRIIC, received the prestigious Study UK Alumni Award 2023–24 from the British Council in the Business & Innovation category. This recognition celebrates his leadership in advancing research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in Bangladesh's higher education sector.

These collaborations and recognitions reinforce UIU's position as a national leader in research and innovation. By linking academic excellence with industry, governance, and global networks, UIU continues to empower its students to become innovators, entrepreneurs, and agents of poverty reduction—reflecting the spirit of SDG 1: No Poverty. These approaches also create opportunities like, **Real-World Exposure:** These collaborations provide students with direct engagement in industry-oriented projects, internships, and innovation labs, helping them apply classroom knowledge to real economic and social challenges, **Enhanced Employability:** By partnering with organizations in finance, technology, and governance, UIU equips its graduates with industry-relevant skills, improving their employability and professional readiness, **Research and Innovation Opportunities:** Students

gain access to collaborative research grants, innovation competitions, and incubation support for startup ideas aligned with national and global development goals, **Pathway to Poverty Reduction:** Partnerships in inclusive finance, EdTech, and governance support SDG 1 by enabling students—particularly those from low-income backgrounds—to gain skills, funding, and career pathways that lead to financial independence, **Global Recognition:** Awards such as the British Council Study UK Alumni Award enhance UIU's international reputation, attracting more partnerships, resources, and talented students committed to sustainable development.

Conclusion

In 2024, UIU demonstrated how education, innovation, and entrepreneurship can directly fight poverty. By lifting financial burdens, fostering entrepreneurial spirit, and promoting inclusive policies, we are building a generation capable of breaking the cycle of poverty, not just for themselves, but for their families and communities.

United International University stands firm in its pledge: education for all, opportunities for all, and poverty for none.