

Programme impact report

Sustainable Micro-internships - December 2024, January 2025 and February 2025

Sustainable Micro-internships

The Sustainable Micro-internships provided 874 students from across the U21 network with the opportunity to work with peers across the globe, share knowledge and expertise, immerse themselves into an organization, and tackle a real-life Sustainable Development Goal related challenge that they then pitched to a senior leader from the organization.

The Sustainable Micro-internships are designed to develop key leadership skills and competencies, including:

- **Agility** - the ability to adapt to new environments, to grasp topics outside of an academic specialism and to work with difference
- **International collaboration** - first-hand experience of working across different time zones, languages and cultures, and bringing together global knowledge
- **Influence** - the ability to build trust and solve complex problems quickly
- **Presentation skills** - the ability to clearly convey complex information to stakeholders
- **Teamwork** - the ability to work with a new and globally diverse team to deliver a solution

Across the six Sustainable Micro-internships, 874 participants took part, representing 18 countries and 26 universities.

The Sustainable Micro-internship hosts represented six organizations from six countries.

Programme overview

874 students

took part in the Sustainable Micro-internships

651 students

completed the Sustainable Micro-internships

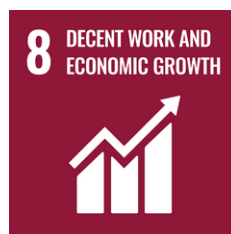
(74% of those that began the Sustainable Micro-internships)

585 students

passed the post-programme assessment and received the **Leading Change micro-credential** to demonstrate the skills they developed

(90% of those eligible)

The Sustainable Micro-internships focused on three of the Sustainable Development Goals:



The challenges

In each Sustainable Micro-internship, the students were set a real-life organizational challenge to explore and develop solutions to by a senior leader from that organization. The six leaders and challenges were:

Sustainable Micro-internship 1

Mangal Pandey, CEO, Key Education Foundation

How do we help parents to understand the importance of play for children as a learning and development tool?

Sustainable Micro-internship 2

Iveta Pudilova, Chief Executive Officer, Happy Autistic Lady

How do Happy Autistic Lady announce our secondary brand, National Neurodiversity Training, in an effective way that maintains the integrity of both brands?

Sustainable Micro-internship 3

Priya Agwaral, Founder and Director, Antarang Foundation

How can we develop a fundraising campaign for Antarang Foundation that build the profile and capacity of our Communications team?

The challenges

Sustainable Micro-internship 4

Dana Lee, Global Director, Generation

How can Generation integrate the use of AI in our practice?

Sustainable Micro-internship 5

Saugat Gautam, Programme Manager - South Asia, International Commission of Jurists

How can informal groups and institutions with limited resources share information with each other and come together for joint advocacy and coordination?

Sustainable Micro-internship 6

Andrew Morrow, Projects Manager, Northern Ireland Alternatives

How can we promote the practice of Restorative Justice to the communities that we work with?

Programme impact

The Sustainable Micro-internships are designed to develop participants' key leadership skills and competencies. Before starting the programme and upon completion of the programme, participants were asked to score themselves 1 - 6, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 6 represents strongly agree, against a range of criteria.

Question	Pre-programme	Post-programme
I feel (more) confident collaborating internationally	4.78 SMI 1: 4.78 SMI 2: 4.58 SMI 3: 4.95 SMI 4: 4.72 SMI 5: 4.93 SMI 6: 4.74	5.31 SMI 1: 5.39 SMI 2: 5.23 SMI 3: 5.35 SMI 4: 5.37 SMI 5: 5.16 SMI 6: 5.34
I am (better) able to adapt to new environments and areas outside of my academic specialism	4.86 SMI 1: 4.78 SMI 2: 4.58 SMI 3: 5.02 SMI 4: 4.79 SMI 5: 4.99 SMI 6: 4.97	5.16 SMI 1: 5.29 SMI 2: 5.12 SMI 3: 5.21 SMI 4: 5.21 SMI 5: 5.10 SMI 6: 5.04
I feel (more) confident in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals	4.69 SMI 1: 4.75 SMI 2: 4.61 SMI 3: 4.83 SMI 4: 4.55 SMI 5: 4.72 SMI 6: 4.69	5.06 SMI 1: 5.20 SMI 2: 4.88 SMI 3: 5.11 SMI 4: 5.05 SMI 5: 5.11 SMI 6: 5.02

Programme impact

Question	Pre-programme	Post-programme
I feel connected to U21 students around the world	3.59 SMI 1: 3.82 SMI 2: 3.26 SMI 3: 3.92 SMI 4: 3.59 SMI 5: 3.49 SMI 6: 3.45	5.13 SMI 1: 5.14 SMI 2: 5.15 SMI 3: 5.14 SMI 4: 5.10 SMI 5: 5.13 SMI 6: 5.10
I feel (better) prepared to lead a project set by a leader in the workplace	4.43 SMI 1: 4.38 SMI 2: 4.17 SMI 3: 4.75 SMI 4: 4.40 SMI 5: 4.52 SMI 6: 4.36	5.10 SMI 1: 5.20 SMI 2: 5.09 SMI 3: 5.07 SMI 4: 5.14 SMI 5: 5.04 SMI 6: 5.04
I (am more likely to) seek out international collaboration or learning opportunities (in the future)	4.69 SMI 1: 4.75 SMI 2: 4.61 SMI 3: 4.83 SMI 4: 4.55 SMI 5: 4.72 SMI 6: 4.69	5.06 SMI 1: 5.20 SMI 2: 4.88 SMI 3: 5.11 SMI 4: 5.05 SMI 5: 5.11 SMI 6: 5.02
This programme has been good value for my time	5.32 SMI 1: 5.45 SMI 2: 5.19 SMI 3: 5.32 SMI 4: 5.33 SMI 5: 5.41 SMI 6: 5.24	5.31 SMI 1: 5.50 SMI 2: 5.31 SMI 3: 5.24 SMI 4: 5.24 SMI 5: 5.34 SMI 6: 5.21
I would recommend this programme to a friend/colleague		

Participant feedback

"I would describe this programme as an incredible opportunity to engage with university students from around the world. It provides a unique platform to exchange ideas, perspectives, and experiences across cultures, fostering a global network of like-minded individuals committed to creating positive change. By collaborating with peers from diverse backgrounds, participants not only gain a broader understanding of global issues but also develop valuable skills in communication, leadership, and problem-solving. This program encourages personal growth and inspires action towards addressing the world's most pressing challenges, making it an enriching experience for anyone passionate about sustainable development and global citizenship."

-Participant, Korea University

"The programme pushes you out of your comfort zone by putting you in an unfamiliar environment with the freedom to interpret the given problems in your own way. This naturally leads to a diverse range of ideas. By bringing together different perspectives, ideas and recognizing what others find important, you can develop truly innovative solutions to the given problems. Since these dynamics are common in the workplace, learning how to navigate them now is essential for the future."

-Participant, KU Leuven

"This programme benefits you by introducing so many individuals with the common goal to improve their skills. To learn the ability to collaborate alongside people with like-minded and different-thinking as this allows for a creative and innovative environment to foster."

-Participant, Lund University

"I think this programme was an excellent experience in so many different ways. Picking up the challenge presented by Generation, conducting research and developing an idea helped sharpen many skills which could be applied to the workplace. Managing my time and other commitments was another thing I got to work on during the course of this micro-internship. Even for those who are shy, hesitant or lack the confidence to try something new, I would say this is a great starting point. From the comfort of your home or wherever in the world you may be located you can push the limits of your comfort zone, challenge yourself and connect with individuals from across the globe. By engaging with others in this way and working together on a common goal I think you really do learn a lot about yourself and your abilities."

-Participant, McMaster University

Participant feedback

"This programme offers a powerful opportunity to address inequalities among Indian children by fostering collaboration among people from diverse backgrounds worldwide. Sharing ideas and perspectives sparks innovative solutions and encourages a global focus on human rights and equity. Ultimately, it promotes sustainable development by creating a more inclusive future where every child has access to holistic growth and well-being opportunities."

-Participant, National University of Singapore

"Before this programme, I had never had the opportunity to communicate with peers from other countries. At the beginning, I was quite worried that my team members might exclude me from their discussions because of my poor English skills. I feared that I wouldn't be able to express myself clearly or understand what they were saying. However, as the programme progressed, I realized that my concerns were unfounded. Everyone in the team was extremely supportive and friendly. They were always ready to listen to others' ideas, regardless of language barriers, and they were more than willing to lend a helping hand when needed. Whenever I struggled with a task or had trouble understanding something, someone would step in to assist me or explain it in a way that I could grasp. This sense of camaraderie and mutual support made the experience incredibly rewarding. The internship not only helped me improve my language skills but also broadened my horizons and gave me a deeper understanding of different cultures. It has truly been an unforgettable experience for me, and it has greatly encouraged me to connect with more international students in the future. I now feel more confident in my ability to communicate and collaborate with people from diverse backgrounds, and I look forward to the many opportunities that lie ahead."

-Participant, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

"This programme offers numerous benefits and is a valuable experience for both personal and professional growth. It helps you develop essential skills such as cultural dialogue, collaboration, time management, cultural intelligence, and empathy. Additionally, it provides networking opportunities with like-minded individuals from around the world who are passionate about intercultural exchange, sustainability, and leadership."

-Participant, Tecnológico de Monterrey

Participant feedback

"This programme has allowed me to understand the benefits of working with people from a diverse range of backgrounds, as we all had varying approaches and ideas regarding our project and so our team was fairly strong across a range of areas. It was also interesting working on something that I wouldn't get to in my degree and using my brain differently than I do day to day."

-Participant, The University of Edinburgh

"This programme allows you to prepare for real-life scenarios in which you need to collaborate with people from different fields to build a solution together. There are several personal skills involved, such as teamwork, communication, and organization, and the programme will help you to develop all of them, together with various professional skills such as professional writing and presentations. Working with like-minded peers makes the process smooth and fun, and you also get to learn about different cultures and perspectives from around the world."

-Participant, The University of Hong Kong

This is a fantastic program where students from all around the globe get to interact with each other and share their thoughts regarding a particular task. The collaborative aspect of the program is great.

-Participant, The University of Melbourne

"This was a really valuable experience where you learn how to communicate clearly and understand the importance of listening to everyone's ideas."

-Participant, The University of Queensland

"The programme helped in collaborating and meeting people all over the world. It is inspiring to see people everywhere working towards the same goal and communicating with each other despite the time zone differences. Moreover, it provided hands-on experience on dealing with a real case which boosted confidence."

-Participant, The University of Sydney

"It was a truly amazing experience for me to work in an internship which targeted practical work engagement in international business. I am thankful for the chance to work with students from various cultural and educational backgrounds and being able to form an efficient team and perform the tasks collaboratively."

-Participant, University College Dublin

Participant feedback

"The international network and community you build through this program are truly unique. It's a rare opportunity, especially before entering the workforce, to immerse yourself in such an experience. Choosing a topic you're passionate about and using it to develop your skills makes it even more rewarding. This program helped me gain a deeper appreciation for our global society. While intercultural connections can sometimes be challenging, they offer valuable lessons and support you just as much."

-Participant, University of Amsterdam

"It is an excellent way to gain unique perspectives different to your own from people of different backgrounds around the world. I have never participated in something like this before and was admittedly very nervous but overall it was a very positive experience."

-Participant, University of Auckland

"This sustainable micro-internship was both fun and challenging. This was the first time I'd collaborated with such a global team which was really interesting. Equally, this was also the first time I'd applied my skills to an area completely outside my academic discipline but after completing the course I'd feel more comfortable doing it again in the future. Overall I'd definitely recommend the scheme for the personal employability and team-working skills it provides."

-Participant, University of Birmingham

"This programme connected me with people from all over the world to work collaboratively on a betterment project. I discovered my own talents, advanced my leaderships skills, and even made new friendships. I felt pride in my ideas being utilized to help regions in need, in this case Nepal. Knowing that you are possibly helping others around the world is the biggest benefit of this programme."

-Participant, University of California, Davis

"The U21 Sustainable Micro-Internship is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of students from around the world while tackling real-world sustainability challenges. The program enhances cross-cultural communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills—all in a fully virtual and flexible format. It provides hands-on experience with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), helping participants develop a global mindset and practical insights into sustainability issues. Additionally, the experience strengthens professional skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership, making it a valuable addition to both academic and career journeys."

-Participant, University of Connecticut

Participant feedback

"I am really grateful for this opportunity, and I would love to recommend it to my friends. I feel more confident after the programme as it really broadened my perspective about the sustainable goal challenges and also give me a totally new exposure to look at things. Getting to know the ideas of other countries' students was like getting a new lens to look at the issues."

-Participant, University of Delhi

"The knowledge and skills I gained from the Sustainable Micro-internship through U21 Common Purpose will significantly impact my future life, leadership, and studies. The program provided me with a unique opportunity to engage in AI practices and problem-solving in a global context, which will shape how I approach both academic and personal challenges moving forward. From a leadership perspective, I have learned the importance of collaborative decision-making, inclusivity, and systems thinking in addressing complex issues. These insights will guide me in leading projects and teams in the future."

-Participant, University of Glasgow

"The Common Purpose U21 Programme has been such a great experience for me. It helped me learn how to work with people from different cultural backgrounds and improved my ability to lead in diverse situations. I've gained practical leadership skills, especially through working on real-world challenges with an international team. It also boosted my confidence, critical thinking, and teamwork skills. On top of that, I've made meaningful connections with people from other universities, which I know will benefit me in the future. This programme has really prepared me to face global challenges and stand out as a leader."

-Participant, University of Johannesburg

"This programme gave me hands-on experience in international teamwork and leadership. It boosted my confidence to tackle sustainability challenges while connecting me with passionate U21 peers around the globe. Overall, it was an enriching, real-world opportunity that truly prepared me for future global projects."

-Participant, University of Maryland

Participant feedback

"The programme was extremely valuable in learning to cooperate and communicate internationally. There are many challenges to face, such as differences in time zones and cultural barriers, but learning to work around these leads to sharing a wider range of knowledge. By collaborating with people from diverse backgrounds, we gained fresh perspectives that encouraged creativity and innovation. This was helpful when coming up with different ideas for the project and deciding which to use."

-Participant, University of Nottingham

"This programme was a great way to challenge myself to think creatively in a real-world context. It gave me the chance to collaborate with others internationally and learn more about their different perspectives."

-Participant, UNSW Sydney

"I think being able to coordinate tasks with people across different time zones is a unique skill, and one that is often underestimated when we talk about collaboration and cross-cultural communication. The project's time frame simulated a real work environment, where projects need to be completed swiftly and you may find yourself needing to quickly develop expertise on an unfamiliar topic. I found this experience to be very practical, and the topic was highly relevant to current pressing questions in economic and working life."

-Participant, Waseda University

