

## RESEARCH FOCUS

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UNU-EHS, established in December 2003, is part of the United Nations University (UNU) system, a worldwide network of Research and Training Institutes. Its mission is to advance human security through knowledge-based approaches to reducing vulnerability and environmental risks.

The Institute explores problems and promotes solutions related to the environmental dimensions of human security, a concept which puts the individual, social groups and their livelihoods at the centre of debate, analysis and policy.

UNU-EHS aims at scientific excellence in two broad thematic areas:

- Vulnerability assessment, resilience analysis, risk management and adaptation strategies within linked human-environment systems; and
- Internal displacement and transboundary migration due to environmental push-factors.

The interdisciplinary research examines the impacts of major drivers affecting human security, such as rapid- and gradual-onset environmental change – including climate change. The drivers include phenomena, such as floods, desertification and land degradation, water depletion and water quality deterioration, and a range of climate change impacts. The research explores ways to improve human security through vulnerability reduction, disaster risk management and adaptation strategies.

## POLICY RELEVANT RESEARCH

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Research areas, such as environmentally forced migration and vulnerability and resilience assessment related to disaster risk reduction, are highly relevant to the United Nations System, the international scientific community and to political agendas. The research and its science-based approaches create opportunities to link policymakers with outstanding, applied academic research.

## SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES

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**UNU-EHS is actively involved in a series of collaborative research projects working on**

- detailed vulnerability assessment of communities and systems exposed to hazards such as floods, sea level rise and droughts, but also peoples facing groundwater degradation problems in Africa and Asia;
- technical and institutional policy relevant solutions addressing land degradation issues in Central Asia;
- assessment of water quality risks posed to human and ecosystem health in various countries in Asia;
- human-centred tsunami early warning in Asia;
- reducing vulnerability and risk to strengthen adaptive governance through urban adaptation strategies;
- links between human security and environmentally-induced migration in hot spot areas of the world, including fragile states;
- assessing the evidence on how risk management and risk transfer approaches can assist in areas affected by climate change.

**Other activities include**

- graduate education and research training, such as the annual PhD block course on vulnerability and resilience in disaster risk reduction and the summer academy of the Munich Re Foundation/UNU-EHS Chair on Social Vulnerability;
- the development of MSc and PhD degree programmes on Environmental Risk and Human Security in cooperation with the University of Bonn;
- institutional capacity-building and networking to strengthen research capacities of partners on policy relevant topics related to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change;
- maintaining strong partnerships with advanced research and teaching institutions as well as United Nations agencies and civil society organizations in order to strengthen the research capacities of national partners in developing countries.

## THE INSTITUTE

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UNU-EHS is composed of the following academic sections:

**Environmental Migration, Social Vulnerability & Adaptation Section – EMSVA**

EMSVA undertakes empirical research on environmentally-induced migration and social vulnerability. The section also addresses climate change adaptation including a range of activities such as disaster risk reduction and insurance-related approaches to help vulnerable countries and communities.

**Vulnerability Assessment, Risk Management & Adaptive Planning Section – VARMAP**

VARMAP develops frameworks, models and tools to assess vulnerability and risk linked to natural hazards using quantitative and qualitative measures. Additionally, the section explores options to reduce vulnerability and risk and to strengthen adaptive governance, e.g., through urban adaptation strategies in the context of extreme climate-related events and gradual changes.

**Environmental Vulnerability & Energy Security Section – EVES**

EVES explores environmental deterioration processes such as water and land degradation. Particularly, the section looks at remedial measures, resources availability and robustness of ecosystem services, all within the context of socioecological systems affected by natural hazards. The section further investigates the energy security – environmental impacts nexus.

**Enhancing Graduate Educational Capacities for Human Security Section – EGECHS**

EGECHS investigates the teaching – research nexus to enhance the graduate education and research training of the Institute. The section develops open educational resources on vulnerability and risk for sharing with educators, students and self-learners to use, reuse and adapt them in teaching, learning and research.

## PUBLISHING FOR DECISION MAKERS AND THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

Publication Series of UNU-EHS:

- **InterSecTions – Interdisciplinary Security Connections** provides thought-provoking articles and monographs for policymakers and decision makers
- **SOURCE – Studies Of the University: Research, Counsel, Education** targets students, scholars and professionals seeking in-depth background information on topics relevant to UNU-EHS
- **Graduate Research Series** provides a forum for young scientists to publish dissertations and/or Master theses
- **Policy Brief** series presents summaries of key findings for policymakers and decision makers
- **Research Brief** series puts forth research findings for scientists and practitioners

Academic Publications:

The academic staff of UNU-EHS regularly presents its research results at scientific conferences, and makes its papers available in peer-reviewed publications.

## MISSION STATEMENT

*Advancing human security through knowledge-based approaches to reducing vulnerability and environmental risks*

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Institute spearheads UNU's research and capacity development activities in the broad interdisciplinary field of risk and vulnerability including knowledge-based adaptation and resilience strategies.

UNU-EHS addresses the risk and vulnerability aspects of human security and the consequences of complex environmental hazards for sustainable development. The work of UNU-EHS helps to improve the in-depth understanding of the cause-effect relationships to find ways to reduce risks and vulnerabilities. The Institute supports policymakers and decision makers with evidence-based research and information.



UNITED NATIONS  
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