WALAILAK UNIVERSITY

SDG REPORT 2025-2026



Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY



1. INCLUSIVE SUPPORT FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS
2. LOCAL CHEF: SUPPORTING LOCAL START-UPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY CAREERS
3. EMPOWERING LOCAL MANGOSTEEN START-UPS THROUGH SMART FARMING
4. SUPPORTING FISHER COMMUNITY START-UPS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING
5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL START-UPS

1 NO POVERTY

SDG 1 : NO POVERTY

INCLUSIVE SUPPORT FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS



Higher education plays an important role in promoting social mobility and reducing inequality by providing individuals with opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and future prospects. However, students from low-income households and disadvantaged backgrounds may face financial barriers that affect their ability to access, participate in, and successfully complete higher education. Therefore, universities have a responsibility to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which financial circumstances do not prevent students from pursuing their education. This requires universities to diagnose the specific needs and barriers faced by disadvantaged students and provide appropriate support.

The Division of Student Support and Development (DSSD) was established at the foundation of the University to specifically support disadvantaged students. The division provides scholarships, guidance, and other essential resources to address students' needs, ensuring that their academic journey is smooth, inclusive, and fulfilling, supporting for both Thai students and international students from developing countries, as outlined below:

Scholarships

WU provides general scholarships for undergraduate students, offering financial assistance tailored to individual needs. These scholarships aim to reduce financial barriers and support students in successfully completing their studies.



WU also offers tuition waiver schemes to reduce or eliminate tuition fees. In 2025, first-year students received detailed briefings on how to maintain their tuition-free status.

Tuition Waiver Scholarships

The University adopts a proactive approach to identifying and supporting students in need through interviews during the admissions process, ongoing monitoring by faculty advisors, and support request systems available both online and offline.

Tuition Waiver Scholarships

In addition, each school of WU provides scholarships to students from low-income backgrounds as supplementary financial support, helping to reduce economic barriers and enable them to complete their studies successfully.





Work-Study Opportunities

Recognizing the importance of financial independence, the University offers structured work-study programs that allow students to work up to 100 hours per semester, earning 30 baht per hour. This initiative not only helps students manage their living expenses but also equips them with practical skills, work experience, and a sense of responsibility that supports their future career development.

Awards for Excellence

WU actively promotes academic and extracurricular excellence through a range of recognition schemes:

Top Academic Achievers: Students ranked within the top 5% of their courses receive formal recognition each semester, encouraging continuous academic performance.

Sports Scholarships: Outstanding student-athletes representing the University are granted tuition and housing fee waivers, supporting both their education and athletic development.

Housing and Meals

For students demonstrating exceptional academic or athletic performance, scholarships may be extended to cover accommodation and meal expenses. These provisions help reduce the cost of living and ensure that students can focus on their studies and personal development. In addition, income earned through work-study programs further supports students in managing their daily expenses.

Additional Support for Low-Income Students

To further strengthen inclusive support, WU provides a range of essential services aimed at enhancing student well-being and reducing financial stress:

Food Assistance: Meal plans and targeted food support programs ensure students have consistent access to nutritious meals.

Housing Assistance: Affordable and subsidized on-campus accommodation is provided for students in need.

Transportation Assistance: Free on-campus transportation and additional financial support help reduce commuting costs.

Legal Services: Free legal consultation and assistance are available to help students address legal concerns and protect their rights.

In 2025, a total of 1,125 students received scholarships valued at 73,496,950 baht, demonstrating WU's strong and sustained institutional commitment to supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Among them, 40 students from low-income, lower-middle-income, and developing countries received support, including students from Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, the Philippines, Ukraine, Belarus, and Azerbaijan.

To further strengthen inclusive support, WU provides essential services aimed at reducing barriers to higher education. Approximately 85% of students benefit from support measures that help address financial barriers to studying, with the extent of support measured through financial assistance and academic, welfare, employment, housing, food, transportation, and legal support. Through these integrated mechanisms, WU promotes an inclusive and equitable learning environment where financial circumstances do not prevent students from accessing, participating in, and completing higher education.

LOCAL CHEF: SUPPORTING LOCAL START-UPS FOR SUSTAINABILITY CAREERS



Local start-up business operators play an important role in creating employment, generating household income, preserving local culture, and strengthening regional economies. However, many local entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing professional knowledge, technology, business management expertise, and markets needed to improve their competitiveness and long-term sustainability. As institutions of knowledge and innovation, universities have an important role in diagnosing the specific challenges and needs of local entrepreneurs and providing targeted support based on these assessments, while sharing their expertise with local communities and transforming academic knowledge into practical solutions. Supporting local enterprises therefore enables universities to contribute directly to inclusive economic development, strengthen community resilience, and promote sustainable livelihoods beyond the university campus.

In 2025, WU collaborated with the Department of Industrial Promotion and the Thailand Creative Culture Agency to implement the Local Chef Restaurant Initiative. This initiative aimed to empower local restaurant entrepreneurs and promote a sustainable grassroots economy in Southern Thailand. A total of 22 OTOP local restaurant businesses across the region participated, all of which operate with a focus on sustainability and community-based development.

The initiative provided a series of training and mentorship programs, enabling participants to leverage WU's academic resources and expertise. Key topics included creative menu development for value addition, food cost calculation and pricing strategies, culinary innovation and ingredient utilization, food safety standards and hygiene practices, food photography, kitchen management, SAN and SAN Plus certification processes, as well as marketing, branding, and storytelling strategies. Importantly, each participating restaurant was guided in developing unique signature menus to enhance its identity and market competitiveness.





The impact assessment demonstrated significant outcomes. All participating restaurants reported income growth exceeding 10%, reflecting improved business performance and resilience. The initiative generated an immediate economic impact of approximately 52,946,616 baht on the grassroots economy, with projected long-term benefits exceeding 158,839,848 baht over the following three years. Beyond financial gains, the initiative strengthened local capacity, preserved culinary heritage, and fostered sustainable community development.

EMPOWERING LOCAL MANGOSTEEN START-UPS THROUGH SMART FARMING

For many years, local mangosteen start-ups in Wang Ang Subdistrict, Cha-uat District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, have embraced sustainable agricultural practices by minimizing the use of chemical inputs and promoting organic fertilizers developed from local wisdom. These efforts have reflected the community's commitment to environmentally friendly farming while preserving the quality of one of southern Thailand's most renowned fruits.



Despite their dedication to sustainable agriculture, the local farmers continued to face significant challenges. A diagnostic assessment was conducted to identify the underlying soil and crop health problems affecting mangosteen production. The assessment identified several key challenges, including soil degradation, increased soil acidity, reduced water retention capacity, and soil compaction resulting from years of intensive chemical fertilizer use. These conditions weakened mangosteen trees, contributing to leaf spot and leaf curl diseases, while also reducing fruit size and quality. As a result, many mangosteens failed to meet export standards, limiting farmers' income and market opportunities.

Recognizing these challenges, WU launched an outreach project titled “Empowering Learning Innovator in Cha-uat Mangosteen Community for Export Quality Produce”, to support local mangosteen start-ups. Through education, hands-on training workshops, and access to the University's expertise, laboratories, and research facilities, the project introduced practical and science-based solutions that could be readily adopted by the community.

One of the project's key innovations was the development of an organic fertilizer produced from mangosteen waste, enabling farmers to recycle agricultural by-products into nutrient-rich fertilizer. Applied after harvesting and during the following four weeks, the fertilizer helps restore soil fertility, improve tree health, and reduce dependence on commercial chemical fertilizers, thereby lowering production costs while improving long-term soil sustainability.

To further promote a circular economy, WU introduced knowledge on producing biochar from mangosteen shell residues. Instead of being discarded as agricultural waste, the shells are transformed into valuable biochar that can be used in various value-added products, including biochar soap. Approximately 200 kilograms of mangosteen shell residues can be processed into raw materials for the production of around 12,000 bars of biochar soap, each valued at approximately 120 baht, creating an estimated annual income of 1.44 million baht.

To strengthen climate-smart agriculture, WU also installed NB-IoT Environmental Monitoring Stations in local farming areas at no cost to the community. These smart monitoring stations continuously collect real-time environmental data, including temperature, humidity, rainfall, and other relevant environmental conditions. The information enables farmers to make



informed decisions on irrigation, fertilization, disease prevention, and harvest planning, improving productivity while reducing risks associated with changing weather conditions.

To recognize the project's outstanding impact and ensure its continued expansion, in 2025 the outreach initiative received the "Excellence Communal Innovation" Award from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) at the Meeting and Exhibition of Thailand's Community Mobilization. The award highlights the project's success in translating



Through the integration of scientific research, sustainable agricultural practices, circular economy principles, and smart farming technologies, Walailak University has empowered local mangosteen start-ups to enhance productivity, reduce production costs, minimize environmental impacts, and generate additional income from agricultural by-products.

SUPPORTING FISHER COMMUNITY START-UPS THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING



Local community-based fishery start-ups in the Ban Nai Thung Community have significant potential to support local livelihoods and food security, but community entrepreneurs have faced challenges in financial management, accounting, production cost calculation, product development, and business management. Limited access to systematic financial information and business knowledge can make it difficult for local producers to accurately assess production costs, control expenses, determine appropriate pricing, and make informed decisions for business development. Recognizing these challenges, WU conducted a diagnostic assessment of the community's financial and business management needs to identify key areas requiring support and to develop appropriate capacity-building activities.

WU supported the sustainable development of the Ban Nai Thung Community through academic outreach and capacity-building activities aimed at strengthening and assisting local community-based fishery start-ups. The initiative aimed to develop standards for coastal fishery products. The University worked closely with community members to enhance their knowledge and practical skills in financial management, accounting, product development, packaging design, online marketing, and business management.



These efforts aimed to build a strong community-based economic model that enabled local residents to improve their livelihoods while promoting the sustainable use of coastal resources.

The initiative began with a preparatory meeting involving relevant stakeholders to assess the community's existing financial and accounting practices and identify areas for improvement. The discussion focused on practical aspects of enterprise accounting, including collecting and recording financial information, classifying income and expenses, and calculating production costs.





WU subsequently conducted training activities in the community to provide knowledge, skills, and technologies relevant to local start-ups. The training covered product development, packaging design, online marketing, business management, and financial and enterprise accounting. In packaging design, community members learned how to develop or improve packaging by considering functionality, aesthetics, affordability, and the use of locally appropriate materials. The training also emphasized creating a distinctive community identity through packaging while ensuring that the designs could be produced using simple processes and low-cost materials.

Community members were introduced to accounting practices through digital applications, which supported the development of modern entrepreneurial skills.



The University also organized training workshops and mentoring programs on production cost calculation for seafood products in the Ban Nai Thung Community. Participants practiced recording and classifying revenues and expenses and calculating the actual production costs of their products. By working with real business data, they were able to better understand their cost structures, identify opportunities to reduce unnecessary expenses, and improve the efficiency and profitability of their enterprises.

Through these activities, WU integrated academic knowledge with practical community needs. The initiative promoted sustainable livelihoods, food security, responsible resource management, and sustainable coastal fisheries. The initiative also equipped local residents with skills in financial literacy, business management, product development, and marketing that could be directly applied to their livelihoods and community enterprises. The impact was measured by a 45% reduction in the cost of capital after participants applied the knowledge gained through the training.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL START-UPS



Local start-ups and innovation-driven businesses play an important role in strengthening regional economies, creating employment, and addressing social and environmental challenges. However, many emerging businesses face difficulties in accessing sufficient financial resources to develop innovative products and services, adopt new technologies, and expand their markets. Conducting diagnostic assessments to identify the specific financial, technological, and business development needs of local start-ups, together with providing targeted financial assistance and technical support, is therefore essential to help local start-ups transform innovative ideas into financially viable and socially sustainable businesses.

In 2025, WU provided financial assistance to local start-ups through the Market Expansion Project for Innovation Businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor (SEC), with a total funding allocation of more than 15 million baht, with support from the National Innovation Agency (Public Organization) under the Strategic Innovation Mechanism for driving the expansion of innovation businesses in the Southern Economic Corridor. The project aimed to strengthen innovation-driven enterprises in Chumphon, Ranong, Surat Thani, and Nakhon Si Thammarat, while assessing the economic and social impacts generated by the supported innovation projects.

Through the project, 12 innovation projects received financial support, with a combined funding value of 15 million baht and a total project investment value of 27,135,122.50 baht. The initiative focuses on two key sectors: agriculture and food industries, and tourism and wellness industries. By providing financial resources alongside access to academic expertise, technology, and professional knowledge, WU aims to help local start-ups strengthen their capabilities, develop innovative solutions, and expand their businesses.



The supported projects cover a diverse range of innovations responding to local economic and sustainability needs. These include an energy-efficient hot water and air-conditioning system for the tourism industry, supported with 1,485,561.25 baht; an automated cocoa bean roasting service using AI technology, supported with 1,200,000 baht; and a comprehensive plant-based protein food service for healthy food businesses, supported with 952,000 baht. A project developing electric boats for low-carbon tourism received 1,500,000 baht, while a system for monitoring hygiene, safety, and environmental standards for wellness tourism businesses received 1,500,000 baht.



Other supported innovations include an AI-powered oil palm grading platform, which received 1,000,000 baht in funding; the development of Trichoderma technology for safe agriculture, supported with 1,460,000 baht; and an advertising and service platform for tourism and MICE businesses, supported with 1,500,000 baht. The project also supported microwave technology services for drying food and agricultural products with 900,000 baht, a high-protein meal replacement program for weight management with 1,400,000 baht, a virtual tourism platform using Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies with 1,000,000 baht, and a smart-farm system for managing off-season mangosteen production with 1,100,000 baht.

The initiative also promoted collaboration between local start-ups, experts, and WU as a regional knowledge institution. This collaboration enabled businesses to access academic knowledge, technological expertise, and innovation support while allowing the University to apply its research and expertise to real-world economic and community needs. Such partnerships contributed to strengthening the local innovation ecosystem and created opportunities for businesses to develop solutions that responded to regional challenges.

The impact of the financial assistance was measured by the extent to which local start-ups improved their competitiveness, expanded their markets, adopted appropriate technologies, and developed new products and services. At the same time, innovations in energy efficiency, low-carbon tourism, safe agriculture, food technology, and digital tourism contributed to broader social and environmental benefits. By connecting financial support with knowledge, innovation, and local expertise, The university created an enabling environment for start-ups to grow while contributing to a more resilient and sustainable regional economy.