

Education as the key to sustainable development and global competitiveness

International workshop for university rectors organized by the UEM in Indonesia

(Wuppertal, May 16, 2025) – Under the title “Partnership and Networking for a Sustainable and Competitive Education System through Church Institutions,” the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) held an international workshop for rectors with leading representatives of church universities and training centers from Africa, Asia, and Europe in Jakarta, Indonesia, from May 7 to 12, 2025.

The workshop aimed to strengthen church-based educational institutions in their central role for social development and pave the way for their international recognition and accreditation. “Education, training, and empowerment are at the heart of our commitment to development,” says UEM. Especially in times of increasing globalization, it is crucial that church universities do not act separately, but actively form networks and meet international standards.

Worldwide recognition of educational qualifications

A key concern was the issue of worldwide recognition of church qualifications. Many graduates from the Global South are confronted with the problem that their qualifications are not recognized when they transfer to European universities. This is where UEM comes in: the workshop aims to strengthen quality standards, improve accreditation processes, and prepare church institutions for international requirements.

Topics discussed included the role of religious education in secularized and competitive societies and the need to question misguided theological concepts. The aim is to promote sustainable, realistic, and context-sensitive theological education.

Around 20 rectors and directors of church universities and educational institutions from China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Namibia, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Tanzania, and from Germany, including the University of Münster, the Ruhr University Bochum, the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt, and the Institute for Diaconal Science and Diaconal Management in Bielefeld.

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Ethical foundations for dealing with artificial intelligence

“The term sustainability is often associated exclusively with environmental issues. We have now also brought it into the focus of education experts. UEM sees a particular responsibility in dealing with artificial intelligence (AI): Education must not only be future-oriented, but also ethically sound. The aim is not to turn learners into passive consumers of AI-generated content, but to enable them to engage actively, creatively, and critically. The goal should be to promote originality, innovation, and personal responsibility instead of a “copy and paste” mentality.

UEM can proudly say that it has remained true to its mission, as it promotes high-quality, intercultural education as a contribution to a just and sustainable world. To this end, we have overcome geographical distances and brought together people from different backgrounds and cultures. In the global education discourse, we have contributed a building brick to the great workshop of world education—a stone that makes our common house more stable and sustainable,” said Pastor Félicité Ngnintedem, head of the Global Programs division at UEM and responsible for the content of the conference.

International networking

The workshop placed particular emphasis on building sustainable partnerships between the institutions. The dialogue promoted intensive South-South and North-South cooperation with the aim of creating exchange formats for students and teachers and developing synergies between the institutions. UEM sees churches as essential actors in civil society with a responsibility to provide high-quality education regardless of origin or religious affiliation. The workshop marked an important step on this path toward a better-connected, more equitable, and sustainable global education system.

About „UEM“

The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) with offices in Wuppertal, Indonesia and Tanzania is an international, equal community of 39 members, including 32 Protestant churches in Africa and Asia as well as six Protestant churches and the v. Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel in Germany. The UEM consistently pursues a holistic understanding of mission. This includes improving the living conditions of suffering and disadvantaged people while respecting their personal dignity and taking their cultural context into account.