



**UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY**

UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY LAND RESTORATION TRAINING PROGRAMME

Combating land degradation with sustainable
and ecologically sound solutions





UNU-LRT MISSION

The mission of the United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT) is to train specialists from developing countries to combat land degradation and restore degraded land, and to assist strengthening institutional capacity and gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management.

Land degradation is a global challenge that has high impact on the environment, climate and human societies. Its effect threatens human welfare and survival, particularly in poor countries where people's livelihoods directly depend on the productivity of the land and resources to deal with these challenges are limited.

The main concern of UNU-LRT is land degradation, soil erosion and unsustainable land use. Efforts to combat these challenges are often hampered by lack of knowledge, capacity and social motivation in the affected areas. The programme cooperates with people from developing countries to break down these barriers to effectively manage natural resources, emphasising women's empowerment in all steps of that advancement.

UNU-LRT has a strong commitment to the principles of the United Nations University. UNU-LRT contributes to resolving urgent global challenges through generating and sharing knowledge and capacity building in developing countries. The programme strongly relates to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and other international conventions that deal with environmental preservation and the alleviation of poverty, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Furthermore, the programme contributes directly to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (SDG 15), take urgent actions against climate change (SDG 13), end extreme poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2), ensuring access of quality education (SDG 4) promoting gender equality (SDG 5) and ensuring sustainable production (SDG 12).

UNU-LRT core values

- **Sustainability:** today's problems have to be addressed in a way that fulfils the needs of present generations without compromising the needs of future generations. UNU-LRT applies principles of sustainability to all aspects of its educational and research activities.
- **Cooperation:** UNU-LRT strengthens cooperation between individuals and partner institutions that play a key role in land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries.
- **Gender equality:** UNU-LRT promotes gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management through gender-sensitive capacity building. This is done by intergrading gender equality perspectives into the programme organization and training activities.

WHO WE ARE

The United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT) is based in Iceland and offers training in restoration of degraded land and sustainable land management. The programme is implemented jointly by the Agricultural University of Iceland and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, and builds on the knowledge and expertise of different partners by liaising with a wide range of Icelandic institutions, other UNU programmes, and international institutions and organisations.

UNU-LRT is funded by the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs as a part of the government's development cooperation efforts. The programme was launched in 2007 and became a United Nations University training programme in 2010.



WHAT WE DO

UNU-LRT works with individuals and partner institutions that have been identified as playing a significant role in land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries. The core activity of UNU-LRT is the six-month training programme in Iceland. The training of the fellows is considered a contribution to institutional capacity building. In addition, UNU-LRT organizes short courses in partner countries and offers scholarships to former UNU-LRT fellows to pursue graduate studies at Icelandic universities.



Six-month training programme

UNU-LRT offers an intensive six-month postgraduate training course on ecological restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems, custom built for professionals in partner countries faced with severe land degradation. The course is held annually and generally runs from March to September. The training provides participants with knowledge and skills needed to contribute to the activities in their own organizations and act as change agents back home.

The candidates for UNU-LRT are proposed by partner institutions and organisations in developing countries. Candidates are evaluated and selected through an extensive personal interview in their home countries. Candidates must hold a university degree and have at least one year of experience working in the field of specialisation that they will pursue at UNU-LRT. Candidates have to be able to communicate in English (speak, read and write) and be under the age of 40.

The first half of the six-month training is dedicated to lectures, practical training, field visits, exercises and group work where the focus is on active participation of each fellow. The topics covered include, for example:

- drivers of degradation
- basic soil and erosion processes
- interaction of climate change and land degradation
- restoration of ecological functions
- environmental governance and land management planning
- planning and evaluation of restoration projects
- communication and conflict management

In the second half of the training, the focus is on individual research work which is tailored to the academic and practical background and needs of the fellows and their institutions. The research work is completed by submitting a written report and delivering an oral presentation. Qualified research reports are published on the UNU-LRT website. To date, over 100 fellows from 12 countries have participated in the UNU-LRT six-month training programme in Iceland.

Other activities

UNU-LRT provides financial and technical support to develop and deliver short courses in partner countries. These courses are designed and run in cooperation between specialists from UNU-LRT and the partner institutions, often engaging the expertise of former UNU-LRT fellows.

UNU-LRT contributes to the development of educational materials, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and encourages building bridges between disciplines, like business education and environmental sciences.

UNU-LRT offers scholarships to former fellows to pursue graduate studies at Icelandic universities in land restoration and related subjects.

UNU-LRT also participates in conferences related to issues of land restoration and sustainable land management through planning and attending symposiums and workshops, as well as supporting former fellows to present their work.

WHERE WE WORK

UNU-LRT works with partner institutions that play a key role in land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries. These include universities, research and implementation institutions, environmental agencies, local governments, ministries and NGOs. UNU-LRT has so far supported fellows from 13 partner countries in Africa and Central Asia.



★ Location of UNU-LRT

● Countries fellows come from

WHY ICELAND?

When Iceland became a sovereign state in 1918, after more than six centuries under colonial rule, it was faced with severe land degradation problems caused by over-exploitation through wood cutting and overgrazing under harsh natural conditions.

To halt the destructive forces, unique legislation was passed in 1907, aimed at halting soil erosion and restoring lost and degraded woodlands. Iceland's more than 100 years of such nationally concerted efforts is one of the longest standing in the world. The numerous success stories about stabilising degraded land serve as examples to demonstrate how current international objectives can also be achieved.

Although problems have not all been solved, over the last century Iceland has gained wide experience and knowledge on how to combat land degradation, soil erosion and on restoration. At the same time, Icelandic society has developed from being one of the poorest in Europe to a modern society with a competent research and university sector.



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United Nations University
Land Restoration Training Programme
Agricultural University of Iceland
Árleyni 22, Keldnaholt
IS-112 Reykjavík
Iceland
Tel.: +354 433 5000

Webpage: www.unulrt.is | E-mail: unulrt@unulrt.is
Facebook: www.facebook.com/unulrt | Twitter: [@UNULRT](https://twitter.com/UNULRT)