



UNITED NATIONS
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UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

NEWSLETTER

Greetings from UNU-LRT

The year 2015 will soon come to an end and 2016 is about to commence. This was a productive year for UNU-LRT and in this Newsletter we look back at the achievements and milestones reached since we posted our last Newsletter in September this year.

We thank our collaborators for good cooperation in 2015 and wish you all a prosperous New Year 2016 and success in raising awareness of the importance of combating land degradation and restoring degraded land.

Symposium on capacity building at World Conference on Ecological Restoration

In August, a large group of professionals connected to UNU-LRT participated in the 6th World Conference on Ecological Restoration that was held in Manchester, U.K. Among them were three former fellows of UNU-LRT, from Ghana, Mongolia and Uzbekistan, who were sponsored by UNU-LRT to participate in the conference. At the conference UNU-LRT held a symposium entitled: *Capacity Building to Restore Resilient Ecosystems in Developing Countries*. Two of the former fellows, from Ghana and Mongolia, gave talks at the Symposium on the restoration needs and actions in their respective countries. UNU-LRT Director presented capacity building activities at UNU-LRT and Dr Steve Whisenant and Dr Jeff Herrick shared their experiences and views on the needs and effectiveness of capacity building. UNU-LRT issued a brochure about the symposium which can be read [here](#).

The three former UNU-LRT fellows that were sponsored to participate in the Conference were: Dr Bulgamaa Densambuu (2007 former fellow), Mr Toshpulot Rajabov (2009) and Ms Esther Ekua Amoako (2012). All of them gave talks in the different sessions of the Conference. One of these presentations was authored by four former fellows of UNU-LRT, i.e. Ms Altantsetseg Balt (2011), Dr Bulgamaa Densambuu (2007), Mr Budbaatar Ulambayar (2015) and Ms Sumjidmaa Sainnemekh (2014). Additionally, two other former fellows were invited to attend the conference but were not able to attend.



Symposium participants (left). Ms Esther Amoako, former UNU-LRT fellow from Ghana, presenting at the symposium (right)

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Find out about the mission and vision of UNU-LRT in its Strategic Plan 2011-2016 [here](#)

[Here](#) you can read about the Gender Equality Policy of UNU-LRT

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UNCCD COP12 in Ankara



UNU-LRT Director with moderator of UNU-LRT side event, Dr Richard Thomas, Director of the CGIAR Research Programme on Drylands System (left) and outdoor demonstration on how to use LandPKS (right)

In October, the UNU-LRT Director attended the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), COP12, in Ankara, Turkey. UNU-LRT organized a side event at COP12, which presented the annual six-month training programme as a model for providing the capacity building necessary to support land degradation neutrality initiatives. At the event, Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir (UNU-LRT Director) presented the activities of the six-month training programme and Mr Azamat Isakov, Director of CAMP Alatoo in Kyrgyzstan and former UNU-LRT fellow, shared how UNU-LRT training has contributed to the capacity building accomplished by his organization. Dr Jeff Herrick, Soil Scientist at the USDA Agricultural Research Service, reviewed the key lessons learned on how to design a capacity building programme to achieve land degradation neutrality initiatives. UNU-LRT issued a flyer for the Symposium which can be read [here](#).

UNU-LRT also participated in another side event at COP12 on the Global Land-Potential Knowledge System (LandPKS), which allows the potential of land to be defined by using mobile apps. The UNU-LRT 2015 fellows attended lectures and hands-on training in using the apps in the six-month training period this year, and at the event a [video](#) with their feedback was released.

United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme offers training of specialists from developing countries to combat land degradation and restore degraded land. The programme aims at assisting partner institutions in strengthening institutional capacity and gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries.

Climate Conference COP21 in Paris



Panel discussion at the side event Desertification and Land Restoration – The Climate Connection at UNFCCC COP12 in Paris

UNU-LRT participated in a side event at the Climate Conference (COP21) in Paris in early December. The title of the side event was *Desertification and Land Restoration – the Climate Connection*. The side event focused on the challenges of land degradation, the goal of a land degradation-neutral world, the benefits of soil carbon sequestration, and the importance of land restoration capacity building. UNU-LRT Director Dr Hafdis Hanna

Aegisdottir gave a talk on the importance of training people to become change agents in order to combat land degradation, restore degraded land and mitigate and adapt to climate change. Ms Monique Barbut, the Executive Secretary of UNCCD, linked climate change and land degradation neutrality in her talk and emphasized the importance of reversing land degradation and restoring land to reach the goals of the Rio conventions (CBD, FCCC and CCD) and for reaching the Global Goals. Others presenting at the event were Mr Sveinn Runolfsson, Director of SCSl, and Dr Davdin Davgadorj from the Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the UN. The Icelandic Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Ms Sigrun Magnúsdóttir, presented the opening remarks at the event, which was organized by the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources of Iceland.

A recording from the event can be viewed [here](#).

Graduation at UNU-LRT



From graduation day

On 17 September, 13 fellows graduated from the UNU-LRT six-month training programme, seven women and six men. The fellows came from seven different countries in two continents. At the graduation ceremony the UNU-LRT Director, Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdóttir, the Permanent Secretary of State, Mr Stefan Haukur Johannesson, and the Chair of the UNU-LRT Board, Mr Sveinn Runolfsson, addressed the fellows and guests. Addresses were also given by two graduating fellows, Ms Uuganzaya Myagmarjav from Mongolia and Mr Emmanuel Chidiwa Mbewe from Malawi, who spoke on behalf of the 2015 cohort of fellows.

The final output of the fellows' work at UNU-LRT was an individually-based research project, which they turned in and presented at an open seminar shortly before graduation. The projects were very diverse, ranging from studies on restoration treatment effects on soils, vegetation and water processes to studies on socioeconomic constraints affecting the adoption of sustainable land management practices and policies in fellows' countries. UNU-LRT congratulates once again the fellows of 2015 and wishes them all the best in the future.

UN Global Goals for sustainable development

In September, a set of 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development were formally adopted at a special UN summit in New York. The goals raise great expectations and set the stage for the next 15 years. Their predecessors, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), focused mainly on the human aspects of development. The Global Goals go beyond this by integrating the role of ecosystems in sustaining human well-being. This is a major step to ensure a better balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

Goal #15: To *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*, is the main concern of UNU-LRT and linked to its vision. It addresses land degradation and desertification, which are two of the most important global environmental challenges of our times. If we succeed in halting land degradation, restoring resilient and well-functioning ecosystems, and attaining sustainable land management, we will at the same time influence and achieve many of the other goals. Achieving Goal #15 will, for example, help to alleviate poverty (Goal #1), increase food security and end hunger (Goal #2), foster economic prosperity (Goal #8), mitigate climate change (Goal #13) and increase the resilience of ecosystems and societies to future challenges. Thus it is vital that substantial and focused effort is put into achieving Goal #15 which is also the goal of UNU-LRT.

During the 17 days leading up to the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September, UNU experts authored brief articles about each of the 17 Goals. UNU-LRT wrote about Goal #15. You can find these articles [here](#).



The International Year of Soils



The year 2015 was appointed the International Year of Soils by the UN and this has been celebrated throughout the year by UNU-LRT, in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI) and the UN Society in Iceland. Several luncheon meetings were organized at a café in central Reykjavik where people who are in many ways connected to soils gave short talks about their speciality, including soils & food and food waste, soils & education, soils & culture, and soils & economy. The final event of celebrating the International Year of Soils was held at the end of November. The meeting was very well attended by the public and among them was Madam Vigdis Finnbogadottir, former president of Iceland and UNESCO goodwill ambassador for languages. The UNU-LRT Director co-chaired the meeting with the chairman of the UN Society in Iceland and there were very interesting talks and a stimulating panel discussion.



The event's organizing committee with former president Madam Vigdis Finnbogadottir

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