



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY

UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

## NEWSLETTER

Newsletter December 2017

### Season's greetings

The year 2017 will soon come to an end. It was a productive year for UNU-LRT. We held the first short course in a partner country in Africa and have started developing another course to be held in a partner country in Asia in 2018. UNU-LRT awarded, for the first time, an MSc scholarship to a former fellow and launched a massive open online course (MOOC) on *Landscape restoration for sustainable development: A business approach*, with our partners in the ENABLE consortium. UNU-LRT organized and participated in side events on restoration of healthy ecosystems and on land degradation and climate change at the UNCCD COP13 in Ordos, China, and the UNFCCC COP23 in Bonn, Germany. Institutional linkages were established with a new partner country in Asia, Tajikistan, our 13<sup>th</sup> partner country, and a new part-time staff member was hired. These are some of the highlights of 2017 – the year we celebrated our 10-year anniversary.

We thank all of our collaborators for the good cooperation during the year and we look forward to a continuing fruitful cooperation. We send our best wishes for the festive season ahead and wish you a Happy New Year.

The UNU-LRT Team



UNU-LRT staff and fellows of 2017

### Graduation

On 13 September, 14 fellows graduated from the UNU-LRT six-month training programme in Iceland. The total number of graduated fellows is now over 100 fellows from 12 countries, since the programme was launched in 2007. The fellows this year came from Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mongolia, Niger, Uganda and Uzbekistan.

At the graduation ceremony, the Permanent Secretary of State, Mr Sturla Sigurjonsson, addressed the fellows and invited guests, as well as Dr Arni Bragason, the Chair of the UNU-LRT Board and Director of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, and the UNU-LRT Director. Two of the graduating fellows, Ms Badam Ariya from Mongolia and Mr Emmanuel Lignule from Ghana, also gave a speech on behalf of the graduating fellows, followed by a song by Ms Beatrice Dossah from Ghana, inspired by her project work at UNU-LRT and performed by her and Mr Emmanuel Mwachunga from Malawi. Finally, Dr Bjorn Thorsteinsson, the Rector of the Agricultural University of Iceland, provided final remarks and closed the ceremony.

The following day, and also the fellows' last day in Iceland, the UNU-LRT fellows and staff visited the President of Iceland, Mr Gudni Th. Johannesson, at the presidential residence at Bessastadir. Mr Johannesson warmly welcomed the fellows and showed them the archaeological findings in the permanent exhibition in the basement of the presidential residence. The fellows got the opportunity to introduce themselves and exchange some thoughts about land restoration, climate change and other pressing global environmental issues.

### Evaluation of the UNU Training Programmes in Iceland

In 2017, UNU-LRT went through an extensive external evaluation carried out by the Scandinavian consultancy company NIRAS. The evaluation also included the other UNU training programmes in Iceland on geothermal, fisheries and gender equality.

The final evaluation report was published in October this year (see: <http://www.iceida.is/media/pdf/Evaluation-of-the-UNU-Programmes-in-Iceland.pdf>).

The results of the evaluation are very positive and show that the four UNU training programmes are highly relevant to the trained specialists (the fellows) and their institutions, i.e. the partners of the UNU programmes in developing countries. Moreover, the programmes are very relevant to the Icelandic development cooperation strategy. It was affirmed in the evaluation that the four programmes provide training of high quality and that the balance between theory, practice and social needs is good. Further, it was stated that the activities of the four programmes are all relevant to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, both directly and indirectly, and that cost comparison to other capacity development efforts in developed countries is at a reasonable level.

According to the report, there is also room for improvement for the four programmes. Several recommendations were put forward in the report and UNU-LRT will carefully explore these to improve the programme further.

United Nations  
University

United  
Nations University  
Land Restoration  
Training Programme

United Nations  
University  
Geothermal Training  
Programme

United Nations  
University Fisheries  
Training Programme

United  
Nations University  
Gender Equality  
Studies and Training  
Programme

Icelandic Ministry  
for Foreign Affairs

Agricultural University  
of Iceland

Soil Conservation  
Service of Iceland

Find out about the mission and vision of UNU-LRT in its Strategic Plan 2017-2021 [here](#)

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

Connect with us on social media:

[facebook.com/unulrt](https://www.facebook.com/unulrt)

Follow us [@UNULRT](#)

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 to assist partner institutions in strengthening institutional capacity and gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable



Participants and facilitators of the short course in Kasese

### Short course in Uganda and Mongolia

This Autumn, UNU-LRT offered a short course in Uganda on "Sustainable land management, land restoration and linkages to climate change". The 9-day course was organized in cooperation with the Ugandan partner institutions of UNU-LRT, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and Makerere University. The course was held in Kasese municipality in Western Uganda and the participants were 25 officers from 18 different districts in Western Uganda, who all work on land issues within their districts.

During the course, the participants took part in interactive lectures, group assignments and exercises as well as two short field trips to visit restoration sites. The final day of the course was devoted to a comprehensive evaluation of the course content and practicalities. The outcome of the evaluation showed that the course was very well received by the participants and that they now feel better equipped to deal with unsustainable land use in this time of climate change. Overall, this first UNU-LRT short course held in a partner country turned out to be a successful one according to both participants and facilitators. The course team included three instructors from Iceland, seven instructors from Uganda, and four additional support staff. A similar course will be given in another district in Uganda in 2018.

UNU-LRT is developing another short course to be held in Mongolia. The working title of this course is: Improving knowledge transfer for sustainable rangeland management under climate change. The course will be held in summer 2018.



The course development team for the course in Mongolia met in October in Iceland

---

### Participation in UNCCD & UNFCCC

The UNU-LRT Director participated in the UNCCD COP13 in Ordos, China. At the conference, UNU-LRT organized a side event together with our Mongolian partners. The title of the side event was "Partnering to restore healthy ecosystems: Lessons from Iceland and Mongolia". At the event, Ms Mungalag Ulambayar from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Mongolia gave the opening remarks. The UNU-LRT Director then gave a short overview of the activities of UNU-LRT and how the training has influenced Mongolian fellows and Ms Bayarmaa Chimedtseren presented the work of the Green Gold Project in Mongolia. The event ended with a short presentation from five former UNU-LRT fellows who gave examples on achievement of sustainable land management practices built on multi-stakeholder collaboration. The side event was well received and both presenters and guest at the side event were interviewed for local television after the event.



From the UNCCD meeting in China. Former UNU-LRT fellow, Ms Sumjidmaa Sainnemekh, is presenting.

UNU-LRT was also represented at the UNFCCC COP23 in Bonn, Germany, in early November. UNU-LRT was invited to collaborate in a side event on "Climate change and land degradation" that was jointly organized by the Centre for Development Research of the University of Bonn (ZEF), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and UNU. During the event the UNU-LRT Director gave a talk entitled "Climate change - land degradation interactions: Biophysical aspects" and participated in a panel discussion together with Youba Sokona, Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Claudia Ringler, Deputy Director of the Environment and Production Technology Division of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Johns Muleso Kharika, Head of the Science, Technology and Implementation Unit of UNCCD.

---



### New partner country - Tajikistan

The Deputy Director of UNU-LRT visited Tajikistan this autumn. This was the first visit to Tajikistan by a UNU-LRT delegate. The purpose of the visit was to establish links to organizations in Tajikistan that work on land issues, and to interview potential candidates for the UNU-LRT six-month training programme.

CAMP Tabiat, a partner branch of CAMP Alatoo (an important partner of UNU-LRT in Kyrgyzstan), provided much help with organizing the visit, and the GIZ office (the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital city, also assisted with connecting with local organizations. Visits and interviews were conducted in Dushanbe and in Khorog, the capital of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) in Tajikistan where CAMP Tabiat is based. In those visits the UNU-LRT Deputy Director was introduced to land degradation challenges, restoration work and capacity needs in Tajikistan. If all goes as planned, UNU-LRT will receive the first fellows from Tajikistan next year.

---

### News from former fellows

The former fellows of the Land Restoration Training programme have now exceeded 100 specialists from twelve countries in Central Asia and Africa. Many of them have studied further after returning home, as well as being promoted in their work and/or started new exciting projects. We asked former fellows to share their new endeavours with us, and the following news has reached us:

**Ms Paulina Lokongo** from Uganda was awarded a fellowship for an MSc in Geo-Information Science and Earth Observations for Natural Resource Management at a university in Enschede, the Netherlands. **Ms Merkeb Woldu** will start her PhD studies in Soil Science and Agronomy at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) in Norway in January 2018. **Ms Chantsalkham Jamsranjav** from Mongolia, received a scholarship from the American Association of University Women to do her post-doctoral study at Colorado State University, USA, where she is now studying herders' traditional ecological knowledge, with focus on understanding what indicators herders use in defining rangeland health and degradation, what they observe about changes on rangelands and climate across ecological zones in Mongolia, and what the causes of these changes are. Her findings might become helpful to develop integrated indicators and monitoring protocols that are meaningful, credible and useful to herders, land managers and scientists. **Mr Kwabena Abrefa Nketia** from Ghana, is working on a project in Germany for his PhD entitled: Space time modelling of seasonal soil moisture in the savannah regions of Ghana. The project is meant to develop a spatio-temporal seasonal soil moisture predictive model that generates soil moisture and drought information on the rootable depth zone of soils in the savannah regions of Ghana. **Ms Uuganzaya Myagmarjav** from Mongolia, defended her PhD this year at the Mongolian University of Life Sciences. Her dissertation was entitled "Transformation of growth regulating AtGRF2 gene of *Arabidopsis thaliana* into *Medicago* genome". Moreover, Ms Myagmarjav won first prize for the "Best paper awards" for her PhD thesis, an award granted to both PhD and Master's students. Finally, **Mr Enock Ssekuubwa** from Uganda, who is now studying for his PhD in Norway, co-authored two articles published in two journals; in *African Journal of Ecology* (see: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aje.12393/full>) and *Restoration Ecology* (see: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rec.12629/full>)

Others have progressed in their work. **Mr Principal Mdolo** from Malawi, was promoted to the post of a Weekend Programmes Coordinator at the NRC Campus of the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, which is equivalent to the position of Head of a Department. According to Mr Mdolo, the knowledge and skills that he gained through the UNU-LRT training contributed significantly to the attainment of the post. **Mr Alhassan Nuhu Jinbaani** from Ghana has been promoted to a Principal Technologist at the CSIR-Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) in Tamale. Lastly, **Mr Charles Otim**, a former Natural Resources Officer in Amuria District Uganda, joined the Ministry of Water and Environment to work for the World Bank funded "Water Management Development Project" as an Environment Specialist. He is responsible for ensuring the implementation of Environmental and Social Safeguards, which covers aspects of ecosystem restoration, and the welfare of the workers and the community, among other tasks.

The UNU-LRT Team congratulates the fellows on their new accomplishments.

---

### Land Restoration Training programme 10 years!

The Land Restoration Training Programme was launched in 2007 with a seven-week pilot training course in land restoration and sustainable land management. Five participants from four countries were invited to Iceland from August to October, in connection with an international forum on Soil, Society and Global Change which took place on 31 August – 4 September that year, celebrating the centenary of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI).

The first trial period for a full six-month training programme was held in 2008, with six participants, and gradually since then, the number of fellows has been growing steadily. In 2010, the LRT training programme became a part of the United Nations University (UNU), with a contract signed in the beginning of 2010 between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Agricultural University of Iceland, the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland and the UNU.

Now, 10 years after the launch, the Land Restoration Training Programme has graduated 101 specialists in land restoration and sustainable land management, from 12 countries in Africa and Central Asia, 46 women and 55 men.

On this occasion the UNU-LRT Team thanks all our partners and collaborators for the fruitful cooperation that has resulted in the growth and maturity of the programme. We look forward to continuing fruitful cooperation.