



UNITED NATIONS
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UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

NEWSLETTER

Dear friends of UNU-LRT

At the end of the year, it is time to look back and reflect on the work of this year as well as looking ahead. In this newsletter we bring you news of both past and future events at UNU-LRT, which we hope you will enjoy. 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



Photo: Ban Ki-moon with the UNU-LRT staff and Dr Arni Bragason, Chair of UNU-LRT Board and SCSII Director

UN Secretary General introduced to UNU programmes in Iceland

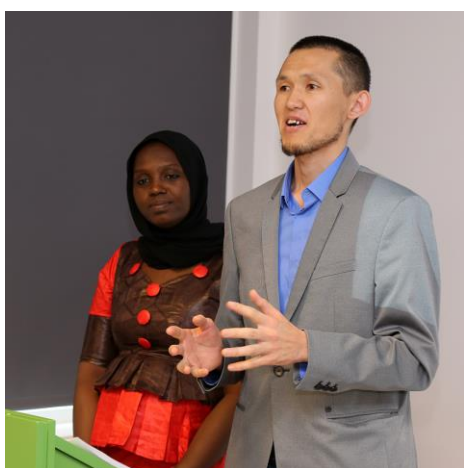
During the first week of October, the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, visited Iceland and met with representatives from the four UNU programmes in Iceland. A meeting was held at the National Museum of Iceland where the UNU-LRT Director, Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, presented the UNU programmes, the Geothermal, Fisheries, Gender Equality and the Land Restoration training programmes to the Secretary General and his team. A video with a message from a former fellow of the Land Restoration Training Programme, Dr Bulgamaa Densambu from Mongolia, was played as well, where she talked about how the training of the Mongolian fellows has impacted institutional capacity building in Mongolia. Eighteen professionals from Mongolia have now graduated from UNU-LRT and the training has had great impact on the capacity building of the graduated professionals and their work places, making them better capable of meeting the challenges Mongolia is facing with land issues and climate change. After the formal introduction of the programmes there was time to socialize and talk with the Secretary General, who was visiting Iceland for the second time.



Graduation at UNU-LRT

Eleven fellows graduated from the six-month training programme on 14 September. The fellows came from Ghana (3 fellows), Lesotho (2), Malawi (1), Niger (1) and Uganda (1) in Africa and Kyrgyzstan (1) and Mongolia (2) in Central Asia, five women and six men. The fellows had presented their final research projects in an open seminar at the Agricultural University of Iceland a week before the graduation.

At the graduation ceremony, the Permanent Secretary of State, Mr Stefan Haukur Johannesson and the Rector of the Agricultural University of Iceland, Dr Björn Thorsteinsson, handed out the graduation certificates to the fellows. Mr Johannesson gave a speech where he stressed the importance of land restoration and sustainable land management to improve food security and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Dr Arni Bragason, the new Director of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI) and the Chair of the UNU-LRT Board, also gave a speech and shared his positive experience of receiving his first UNU-LRT group of fellows in Gunnarsholt, the Headquarters of SCSI. Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, the UNU-LRT Director, also addressed the fellows and the invited guests, and finally, two of the graduating fellows: Ms Mariama Boubou Diallo Oumarou from Niger and Mr Zhyrgalbek Kozhombardiev from Kyrgyzstan, gave a speech on behalf of the fellows.



This was the tenth graduation of fellows from the Land Restoration Training Programme, which became a part of the United Nations University (UNU) in 2010. Since the launch of the programme in 2007, 87 fellows have graduated with almost equal numbers of men and women or 42 women (48%) and 45 men (52%).



Fellows' participation in an international conference

The same week as the UNU-LRT graduation took place, an international conference on *Grazing in a changing Nordic region* was held in Reykjavik, with the participation of UNU-LRT and UNU-LRT fellows. The fellows gave a presentation entitled *Land tenure and policy implications on grazing: Lessons from Africa and Central Asia*. It was Ms Malipholo Eleanor Hae from Lesotho who gave the talk on behalf of the fellows. The talk was very well received and generated a stimulating discussion.

Six of the UNU-LRT fellows also presented posters at the conference. The posters presented were:

- 1) *Multi-nutritional feed blocks: A strategy to combat fodder shortages for livestock in Niger*, by MB Diallo Oumarou, from the National Institute of Agronomic Research (INRAN) in Niger Republic, with her colleague from INRAN, A Dan Gomma.
- 2) *Implication of cropping systems on conditions of grazing land: A Case of Kyrgyzstan and Malawi*, by P Mdolo from the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Malawi, and Z Kozhombardiev, from the Public Foundation CAMP Alatoo in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- 3) *Improving livelihoods of smallholder livestock farmers of Northern Ghana through sustainable grassland management: The impact of innovation platform*, by AN Jinbaani, from the CSIR-Savanna Agricultural Research Institute in Ghana, VA Quansah, from the Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources, University for Development Studies in Ghana, and IO Ansah, from the CSIR-Soil Research Institute in Ghana.

The UNU-LRT team also had a poster entitled *UN University Land Restoration Training Programme: capacity building in land management and restoration*.

The conference was organized by NordGen in cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland. Further information about the conference can be found on its website <http://www.nordicgrazing2016.org/>



Photo: Representatives of UNU-LRT and the Ugandan partners

Short course in Uganda in preparation

Since last year, UNU-LRT has been developing a short course on sustainable land management and land restoration and their interrelations with climate change to be held in Uganda next year. The Government of Iceland assigned a grant to UNU-LRT as part of its three-year climate change action plan, intended to sharpen Iceland's focus on climate change issues and to strengthen efforts in the policy area in order to achieve demonstrable results in the reduction of net emissions.

Preparations are going well and UNU-LRT is planning the course with its Ugandan partners, Makerere University in Kampala and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) on behalf of the local governments in Uganda's 112 districts. The focus of the course will be directly linked to the Global Development Goal #13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts) and Goal number 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).

This short course will be the first course organized by UNU-LRT in a partner country and it is a part of the Strategic Plan of UNU-LRT to continue to develop and organize courses in other partner countries as well.



Photo: Sjöfn Vilhelmsdottir

New member of the UNU-LRT Studies Committee

The UNU-LRT programme is academically governed by a Studies Committee, chaired by the Programme Director. The Studies Committee includes members from leading Icelandic research institutes and universities in the area of land restoration and sustainable land management. This month, a new member was added to the team of seven, now making the members eight in total. Ms Sjöfn Vilhelmsdottir has been connected to the programme as a lecturer and a supervisor since the Programme was launched. Ms Vilhelmsdottir is a Political Scientist by training and serves now as the Director at the Institute for Public Administration and Politics at the University of Iceland.

Other experts on the Committee come from the Agricultural University of Iceland, the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland and the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources. They all teach in the six-month training programme and supervise the fellows in their individual research projects. The Studies Committee also develops detailed study plans and teaching materials in collaboration with the staff of the UNU-LRT. Furthermore, the Committee is very important in setting the academic standards for the UNU-LRT programme.



News from former fellows

We are always excited when it comes to news of former UNU-LRT fellows. A few of the former fellows have contacted us to inform us about their accomplishments and new projects.

Dr **Toshpulot Rajabov**, a fellow from Uzbekistan in 2009, has been appointed as the Head of the Department of Preparation of Scientific-Research and Scientific-Pedagogical Personnel of Samarkand State University. In his new position he is responsible for preparation, support and guidance of PhD doctorates and for running all research projects at the University.

Mr **Moustapha Ibrahim**, from Niger Republic, has been appointed the Head of the National Division of Land Restoration at the Technical Directorate of Forest Management, Afforestation and Sustainable Development for the Directorate of Environment, Urban Sanitation and Sustainable Development, in Niamey, Niger. Mr Ibrahim was a UNU-LRT fellow in 2010.

Mr **Hagdu Hishe** from Ethiopia, who was a UNU-LRT fellow in 2011, received a post-MSc research fellowship at the African Academic of Science, funded by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. He is now an Assistant Professor of Forestry and Geo-information at Mekelle University in Ethiopia and has served as an Acting Department Head in the Department of Land Resources Management and Environmental Protection for six months. Recently, Mr Hishe has published his work and one of his articles in the Journal of Applied Remote Sensing, published in December 2015 can be found at this link: <http://remotesensing.spiedigitallibrary.org/article.aspx?articleid=2479729>.

Dr **Nadira Degembaeva** from Kyrgyzstan, and a UNU-LRT fellow in 2015, has taken a new position as a Field Manager with the public foundation – and a UNU-LRT partner institution – CAMP Alatoo in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, she is still working at the Naryn State University, named after S Naamatov, as a part-time researcher focusing on research work on the Naryn River floodplains. Some of Ms Degembaeva's new projects at CAMP Alatoo include "Conservation of biodiversity through integration of pasture and wildlife management" and "Ecosystem approaches for adaptation to climate change in mountainous regions of Central Asia". The latter project is led by a former UNU-LRT fellow, also from the 2015-cohort, Ms **Salamatkhan Dzhumabaeva**, who also works at CAMP Alatoo. It is a regional project that is carried out in three countries: Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and funded by the International Climate Initiative (ICI) and implemented by GIZ (The German Development Cooperation Agency).

Another fellow from the 2015-group, Ms **Uuganzaya Myagmarjav**, a researcher at the Research Institute of Animal Husbandry in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, has served as Deputy Head of the Department for Rangeland and Animal Nutrition at her Institution since mid-June this year. Furthermore, Ms Myagmarjav was elected second best researcher at the Institute in 2015 and became a member of the Agricultural Biotechnology Committee at Mongolian State University of Life Sciences in January this year. This year she won a yearly competition of Master's and PhD students, in the field of animal production at the Mongolian University of Life Sciences and with it a research grant for her PhD studies.

Finally, Ms **Mary Jude Namulema**, also a 2015-alumni, attended a conference in Austria, the European Geosciences Union conference in April 2016. She gave a talk based on her individual

research at UNU-LRT, entitled *The Relevance of wetland economic valuation in Uganda - A case study of Kiyanja-Kaku wetland in Lwengo District-Central Uganda*.

The UNU-LRT team congratulates the former fellows on their accomplishments!

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY LAND RESTORATION TRAINING PROGRAMME

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