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UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Director



Dear friends of UNU-LRT.

We at UNU-LRT are proud to launch an electronic version of our Newsletter. The Newsletter should act as a forum to keep in touch and tell former fellows and partners about the activities of UNU-LRT. In this first issue, we tell about this year's activities, including the ongoing six-month training programme, the programme's international guest lecturers and the newly adopted UNU-LRT Gender Equality Policy. Moreover, you can read about the meeting of two UNU-LRT fellows with the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and about the success of a former fellow. We hope that you will enjoy the Newsletter and that you will keep in touch with us.

Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, UNU-LRT Director.



UNU-LRT Programme 2013

This year, the UNU-LRT six-month training programme started about a month earlier than in previous years, or on Tuesday 12 March and the programme will proceed until graduation day on 19 September 2013. This year a total of 11 fellows (five women and six men) started the programme from eight countries in Africa and Central Asia, namely Mongolia (1 fellow), Kyrgyzstan (2), Niger (2), Ghana (1), Ethiopia (1), Uganda (2), Malawi (1) and Namibia (1).

The first three months of the six-months programme were devoted to lectures at the research campus of the Agricultural University of Iceland in Keldnaholt. A new framework for the lectures, consisting of six modules that entail a typical project management cycle, was introduced. The first module was an orientation and introduction to Icelandic society, followed by module 2 which was comprised of the course principles and framework. Module 3 dealt with the fundamentals of land management, which was the most comprehensive module that stretched over five weeks. Module 4 covered land management planning and also extended over few weeks, while the last two modules which covered implementation (module 5) and evaluation (module 6) prolonged over approximately two weeks each.

The lectures at Keldnaholt were broken up by short field trips, e.g. to Thingvellir National Park and near surroundings, as well as an International Conference in Reykjavik on Soil Carbon Sequestration for climate, food security and ecosystem services. Over 200 guests participated in that conference. The UNU-LRT fellows gave a presentation in the conference's plenary session entitled: *Soil carbon and the quest for land quality – Experiences from Africa and Asia*, presented on behalf of the fellows by Ms. Wellencia Clara Mukaru from Namibia. Furthermore a former fellow, Ms. Tigist Araya Gessesse, from Ethiopia who graduated from the Land Restoration Training Programme in 2009, presented results from her studies on soil organic carbon accumulation under different land-uses in Gergera watershed in Tigray, Ethiopia, in one of the four paralleled sessions of the conference. Her studies on the subject are a part of her PhD studies at Bonn University in Germany.

When the period of lectures was over the fellows moved to Gunnarsholt, the headquarters of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, where they will stay until late August and work on their individual projects. Ahead is a busy time for the fellows as their projects are due in middle of September. The UNU-LRT team wishes them good luck with their work ahead.

Gender Equality Policy

The commitment of UNU-LRT to gender equality is based on the principle that gender equality is a human rights issue as well as a means to achieve sustainable development. Promoting gender equality is an essential part of the UNU-LRT programme. Consequently, UNU-LRT has formed its own Gender Equality Policy, composed by Ms. Sjöfn Vilhelmsdóttir, a lecturer at UNU-LRT and a PhD student at the University of Iceland, in cooperation with the UNU-LRT director and staff. The Policy was approved in a UNU-LRT Board meeting in June this year.



International guest lecturers

In May, the UNU-LRT fellows received Dr. Richard Thomas, Assistant Director for the Dryland Ecosystems Programme at UNU-INWEH in Canada, as a guest lecturer for two days on management of dryland resources. This was Dr. Thomas' second visit as a lecturer at the UNU-LRT programme.

In June, another international guest lecturer visited Iceland to teach a short course on evaluation of restoration outcome. This was Dr. Jeffrey Herrick, a research soil scientist from the Jornada Research Unit, USDA-ARS, New Mexico, USA. In addition to the fellows, several specialists from the Agricultural University of Iceland and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland attended the course. Dr. Herrick's teaching included designing and establishing monitoring and evaluation system, and gathering and managing information. Furthermore, he taught about the importance of land potential when creating restoration and management plans. Like Dr. Thomas, this was Dr. Herrick's second time as a guest lecturer at UNU-LRT. He also lectured at the programme in 2012, then focusing on land potential and rangeland health assessment.



UNU-LRT fellows meet Mr. Ban Ki-moon

United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon visited Iceland in the beginning of July. Two fellows from each of the UNU programmes in Iceland that had fellows studying at that time were invited to have lunch with the Secretary General and his entourage along with the Directors of the UNU programmes, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Iceland and other dignitaries. Out of the current fellows from each UNU programme, i.e. Land Restoration Training Programme and Geothermal Training Programme, one from each programme was selected to give a speech at the lunch. Ms. Olive Chemutai from Uganda was the one who addressed the gathering on behalf of the UNU-LRT fellows. After the lunch, Mr. Ban Ki-moon gave an open lecture at the University of Iceland which the fellows also attended. In his speech, Mr. Ban Ki-moon stressed the importance of education, women's rights and sustainable development, all elements that UNU-LRT highly endorses.



News from a former fellow

A former fellow from Ghana, Ms. Esther Ekua Amoako, wrote to the UNU-LRT staff earlier this month with some exciting news. Inspired by the training at UNU-LRT, she organized an environmental education in her community in the Northern Region in Ghana. In a letter to the UNU-LRT staff she wrote: "I had this passion to do environmental education but did not know exactly how to go about it. The lectures in environmental literacy, restoration, and linking knowledge, action, visioning and strategic development [in the UNU-LRT programme] gave me a sense of direction. Environmental literacy clubs in three basic schools have been

formed and launched. I see this as launching a dream".

After Esther's graduation from the UNU-LRT programme in 2012 she returned to her position as a lecturer at the University for Development Studies in Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana. She has received great support from the staff of the Faculty of Renewable Resources in her educational efforts with the Ghanaian youth.



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