



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY

**UNU-LRT**

Land Restoration Training Programme

## NEWSLETTER

### Dear Friends of UNU-LRT

The year 2013 has come to an end. This was a productive year for UNU-LRT so in our Christmas Newsletter we look back at the achievements and milestones reached since we posted our last Newsletter in August this year.

We send our best wishes for the festive season ahead and wish you a Happy New Year.

*Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, Berglind Orradottir and Halldora Traustadottir*



### UNU-LRT 2013 Graduation of fellows

On 19 September this year, 10 fellows graduated from the annual six-month training programme, five women and five men from seven countries, the Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan (2 fellows) and Mongolia (1), and the African Sub-Saharan countries of Ethiopia (1), Ghana (1), Namibia (1), Niger (2) and Uganda (2). Ten days before the graduation fellows presented their individual projects in an open seminar in the Auditorium in Keldnaholt. Everyone delivered an excellent presentation and the seminar was well attended. The fellows had been working on their projects for over three months under the guidance of their respective supervisors and the written report, as well as the oral presentation, was their final requirement before graduation. The projects varied widely, from soil quality assessment of cultivated volcanic soils in

Southwest Iceland and monitoring restoration progress in Helliheiði in Iceland, to examining vegetation conditions in various communities in the Khongor district in Mongolia and exploring local beliefs for the benefits of land restoration in Ghana, just to name a few of the subjects researched.

During the graduation ceremony, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, addressed the gathering, as well as the UNU-LRT Programme Director Dr Hafþís Hanna Aegisdóttir and the Chair of the UNU-LRT Board, Mr Sveinn Runólfsson, Director of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland. Moreover, two of the graduating fellows gave a speech on behalf of the fellows, Mr Enock Ssekuubwa from Uganda and Ms Tserennadmid Bataa from Mongolia. The UNU-LRT team wishes all the fellows the very best in the future.



## Conference participation: SER

The UNU-LRT Programme Director and Deputy Programme Director attended the fifth world conference of the Society of Ecological Restoration (SER) held in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, from 6 to 11 October 2013. They gave a presentation entitled *Education for sustainable development with a focus on land restoration - what is its impact?* and presented a poster that focused on the UNU-LRT training and capacity building as an essential part of reaching a sustainable future. Furthermore, a former UNU-LRT fellow from 2011, Ms Altantsetseg Balt from Mongolia, attended the conference. She works for the Mongolian mining company Oyu Tolgoi LLC in restoring mined land.

Four scientists from the Agricultural University of Iceland and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, who teach and supervise in the UNU-LRT annual six-month training programme, also attended the conference and gave oral presentations on their research. About 1200 delegates attended the conference from 54 countries, representing scientists and practitioners, environmental NGOs, private corporations, government agencies, and community and indigenous leaders.



## Global Soil Week 2013, Berlin

The Global Soil Week was held in Berlin for the first time in November 2012 and this year Berlin was again the host of this multi-stakeholder event, which took place at the end of October. Over 450 participants from all over the world took part in discussing sustainable soil management and finding pathways to societal change in regards to soil protection, as the preservation and fertility of this vital resource is threatened all over the world.

UNU-LRT had two representatives at the conference: Office Manager Ms Halldora Traustadottir and Dr Johann Thorsson, who teaches extensively for the programme and serves on the UNU-LRT Studies Committee. Dr Thorsson, who is a staff member of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, one of the two implementing institutions of UNU-LRT, was also a group leader in discussions on soil engineering on the second day of the four day conference. Dr Thorsson's group discussed "Transfer to stakeholders", where he underlined the importance of transmitting and sharing information and emphasised that communicating should go both ways, i.e. it should include at least the key persons among the scientists involved as well as the stakeholders. Dr Thorsson took as an example of this the UNU-LRT programme where key persons are trained in sharing information.

The Global Soil Week is a platform for people from public administrations, research institutions, international organisations and NGOs to come together and find solutions to soil degradation. This week of focusing on soil provides a very important arena for discussions and policy making within this important topic that affect every country and the human population as a whole.

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## New brochure

In September UNU-LRT published a new improved brochure about the programme, which presents our mission statement as well as activities, the procedures for the selection of fellows, and other important information. Many photos from the annual six-month training programme decorate the brochure, which can be downloaded from the UNU-LRT website.

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## UNU-LRT videos

Before the end of this year's six-month training programme, the UNU-LRT team produced video-interviews with four fellows and asked them to express their opinions on the UNU-LRT training programme. These videos, with Mr Azamat Isakov from Kyrgyzstan, Mr Idrissa Soumana from Niger, Ms Olive Chemutai from Uganda, and Ms Wellencia Clara Mukaru from Namibia, have now been published on our website as well as on YouTube. Please check them out!

**UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY LAND RESTORATION TRAINING PROGRAMME**

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