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UNU-LRT

Land Restoration Training Programme



UNU Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT)

Annual Report 2016

United Nations University Land Restoration
Training Programme

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DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY FOR 2016

Dear friends of UNU-LRT,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the 2016 Annual report of UNU-LRT.

The year 2016 was a good year for UNU-LRT. On 14 September, 11 fellows graduated successfully from the annual six-month training programme. We were honoured to welcome two international guest lecturers to lecture at the programme. The first guest lecturer was Dr Patrick Shaver, a rangeland management specialist at the USDA-Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service, whose lectures included ecological processes and grazing management principles, and who also gave an open lecture at the National Museum of Iceland on the management history and condition of rangelands in the USA and how rangeland condition today is historically tied to policy and actions in the past. The second guest lecturer was Ms Susan Muska, a documentary filmmaker and a speech coach, who came for the third consecutive year to train the fellows in presentation techniques.

Other highlights of the year were: 1) a grant that UNU-LRT received with European partners. The received grant is under the framework of the ERASMUS+ CALL 2016 KA2, and the project is entitled *European Network for Advancement of Business and Landscape Education (ENABLE)*; 2) the international conference *Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region* that was held in Reykjavik, Iceland, in September; the conference brought together specialists, academics and policymakers for an interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge and experiences, with the hope of contributing to sustainable management of land utilized for grazing; 3) meetings in Uganda to prepare for the first short course to be held in Kasese, western Uganda in 2017; and lastly 4) a visit by the UN's Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, who attended a meeting with representatives from the four UNU training programmes in Iceland. The meeting took place at the



National Museum of Iceland and the UNU-LRT introduced the activities and missions of the four respective programmes and how they meet the challenges presented in the newly adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir
UNU-LRT Director



ABOUT UNU-LRT

The United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT) was established in early 2010. The mission of UNU-LRT is to train specialists from developing countries to combat land degradation and restore degraded land, and to assist strengthening institutional capacity and gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries that are faced with land degradation.

The programme started as a three-year pilot project in 2007, aiming at becoming a UNU training programme by the end of the pilot phase. After a successful mid-term evaluation by an international evaluator, the programme was accepted as a UNU training programme. The programme is implemented jointly by the Agricultural University of Iceland (AUI) and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland (SCSI). UNU-LRT is also supported by a wide range of other Icelandic institutions, UNU programmes and international institutions.

Since the programme was launched in 2007, a total of 87 fellows have graduated from the programme, 42 women and 45 men. The fellows have come from the following countries in Africa and Central Asia: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Tunisia, Uganda, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

UNU-LRT is governed by a board of representatives of AUI, SCSI, the Icelandic Forest Service (IFS), the United Nations University (UNU), and an expert nominated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Moreover, a Studies Committee academically governs the programme, chaired by the UNU-LRT Director. The Studies Committee consists of members from leading research institutes and universities working in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management.

The main activity of UNU-LRT is an annual intensive six-month postgraduate training programme on land restoration and sustainable land management. The first half of the training is dedicated to course work which includes lectures, practical training, field visits, exercises, and group work where the focus is on



the active participation of each fellow. In the latter half of the training, the focus is on individual research projects that are tailored to the academic and practical background and needs of the individual fellows and their institutions.

UNU-LRT has a webpage (www.unulrt.is) where information about the programme, the latest news and the individual projects of former fellows are accessible. Furthermore, UNU-LRT has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/unulrt) and a twitter account (@UNULRT).

PROGRESS REPORT

SIX-MONTH TRAINING PROGRAMME 2016

The six-month training programme began on 14 March with 11 fellows, five women and six men, from six countries: Mongolia (2 fellows), Kyrgyzstan (1), Ghana (3), Lesotho (2), Malawi (1), Niger (1) and Uganda (1). The group graduated on 14 September and received their certificates from the Rector of the Agricultural University of Iceland, Dr Björn Thorsteinsson, and the Permanent Secretary of State, Mr Stefan Haukur Johannesson, who also addressed the fellows and invited guests. Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, UNU-LRT Director, and Dr Arni Bragason, the new Director of the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland and the Chair of UNU-LRT Board, also gave speeches, as did two of the graduating fellows, Ms Mariama Boubou Diallo Oumarou from Niger and Mr Zhyrgalbek Kozhombardiev from Kyrgyzstan, who spoke on behalf of the 2016 cohort of fellows. During the previous week, the fellows had presented the results of their respective individual research projects at an open seminar at the Keldnaholt research campus of AUI.

This year the curriculum of the six-month training programme was overhauled, but it is regularly revised and developed by the UNU-LRT Studies Committee. With the new changes, the curriculum of the six-month training programme is divided into eight modules. The first six modules are organized according to the UNU-LRT project cycle framework where the first three modules provide the



programme's backbone, the basic knowledge and understanding needed to use the project cycle, which is then the focus of modules four to six. By applying the project cycle as a process management framework in the six-month training curriculum, the theoretical and practical aspects of land issues and project management are effectively linked. Modules one to six include lectures, practical training, exercises, diverse field visits and individual and group work. Module seven is on special topics that vary from one year to another and includes each year's international guest lecturer(s). The last module (module eight) focuses on the development of individual research projects, an integral part of the training programme, where fellows work closely with their supervisors in Iceland on a research topic of their choice. The individual research projects are aimed at increasing knowledge and developing relevant skillsets on a topic relevant to the work of the fellows in their home countries.

Two international guest lecturers lectured at the training programme in 2016. Ms Susan Muska, an American documentary filmmaker and a speech coach, came for the third consecutive year to train the fellows in presentation techniques. She gave lectures and interactive training sessions on how to give successful and high impact oral presentations. Dr Patrick Shaver was the second international lecturer, also an American, with 40 years of experience as a rangeland management specialist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service. He has extensive experience in working with private landowners, and state and federal agencies in rangeland management planning, inventory and monitoring, grazing management, and ecological site concept development, e.g. in the USA, Argentina, Kenya, Mongolia, and Russia. Dr Shaver gave a series of lectures on ecological processes and grazing management principles; land health, inventory, and monitoring; and grazing management schemes and case studies. Dr Shaver also gave an open lecture at the National Museum of Iceland on the management history and condition of rangelands in the USA and how rangeland condition today is historically tied to policy and actions in the past.

Apart from the two international lecturers, the UNU-LRT fellows also got the exceptional opportunity to meet and discuss with the renowned scientist, wildlife conservation activist and UN Messenger of Peace, Dr Jane Goodall, in

a masterclass held at the University of Iceland. The masterclass with the UNU-LRT fellows and graduate students from the University of Iceland was a part of Dr Goodall's programme in Iceland. She also gave an open lecture, which the UNU-LRT fellows and staff attended, and she met with conservation and wildlife enthusiasts. Dr Goodall first became famous for her pioneer research on chimpanzees in the late 1950's. She has for a long time been active in inspiring action on conserving endangered animal species, as well as encouraging people all over the world to make the world a better place for people, animals, and preserving the environment we share. She established the Jane Goodall Institute in 1977, which focuses on wildlife research, education, and conservation.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Visit of the UN General Secretary

The UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, attended a meeting with representatives from the four UNU training programmes in Iceland. Apart from the UNU-LRT programme, there are also training programmes on geothermal energy (UNU-GTP), fisheries (UNU-FTP) and gender equality (UNU-GEST). The meeting took place at the National Museum of Iceland and the UNU-LRT Director, Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir, introduced the activities and missions of the four respective programmes and how they meet the challenges presented in the newly adopted United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

At the meeting, fellows also gave input on their experience of the UNU training in Iceland and its impact on their work in their home countries. On behalf of UNU-LRT, Dr Bulgamaa Densambuu, a former UNU-LRT fellow from Mongolia, presented - through a video message – the impact of the UNU-LRT training on institutional capacity building in Mongolia. Eighteen professionals from Mongolia have now graduated from the UNU-LRT training programme and the training has had a great impact on the capacity building of the graduated professionals and their workplaces, making them better capable of meeting the challenges Mongolia is facing with land issues and climate change.





This is the second visit of the UN Secretary General in Iceland. The last time Mr Ban Ki-moon was in Iceland in 2013 two of the UNU-LRT fellows got the opportunity to meet with him and share their experience of the training and how it would benefit to their institutional capacity back home.

International conference on grazing

The international conference *Grazing in a changing Nordic region* was held in Reykjavik Iceland, 12-16 September 2016. The conference brought together specialists, academics, and policymakers for an interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge and experiences, with the hope of contributing to sustainable management of land utilized for grazing. The conference was organized by NordGen in co-operation with the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland.

The fellows in the UNU-LRT six-month training programme participated in the conference and gave a presentation entitled *Land tenure and policy implications on grazing: Lessons from Africa and Central Asia*. Ms Malipholo Eleanor Hae, from Lesotho, gave the talk on behalf of the UNU-LRT fellows. The talk was well received and generated stimulating discussion.

Six of the UNU-LRT fellows also presented posters (three posters altogether) and the UNU-LRT team presented one poster at the conference.

Short course in Uganda

UNU-LRT is preparing capacity building training courses, to be initiated in Uganda, on sustainable land use, land restoration and interrelations with climate change. The course will take place in Uganda in co-operation with the main partners of UNU-LRT in the country, Makerere University and the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA). Preparation meetings were held in Iceland during the first half of the year, and in July and August preparation meetings were held in Kampala, Uganda, among the three partners. In these meetings, a curriculum development team was formed and meetings were scheduled for the team to work on and agree the curriculum of the upcoming short course. The curriculum development team met in Kampala and in Kasese - the location where the short course will be held in 2017 - in the beginning of November 2016. A five module, nine-day course was drafted as well as session plans for each module.

The working meetings were successful, and the curriculum development team continues to work on the development of the short course.

Collaboration with IFAD on training in Lesotho

An inception workshop of the Wool and Mohair Promotion Project (WMPP) was held in Lesotho from 13-16 June 2016. Dr Johann Thorsson, specialist from the Soil Conservation Service and a UNU-LRT Studies Committee member, participated in the meeting on behalf of UNU-LRT. During the meeting, Dr Thorsson introduced UNU-LRT and the programme's potential to develop training in Lesotho that would support the WMPP.

ENABLE: ERASMUS+ project

UNU-LRT received a grant under the framework of the ERASMUS+ CALL 2016 KA2. The grant to UNU-LRT is about 85,000 Euros over a three-year period. The project is entitled *European Network for Advancement of Business and Landscape Education* (ENABLE) and is carried out in partnership with Rotterdam School of Management (Erasmus University Rotterdam business school), Commonland, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), and Estoril Global (Portugal).

The ENABLE project formally started on 1 September 2016 and will end on 31 August 2019. Deputy Director Berglind Orradottir attended the kick-off transnational meeting, which was held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 28 and 29 September 2016. Representatives from all five partners of the ENABLE project attended the meeting. In this first meeting procedures, finance, governance and means of communication in the project were discussed and agreed upon, and work on the four outputs of the project started.

The first output of the ENABLE partnership will be a seven-week massive open online course (MOOC) which has the working title "Connecting Economy & Ecology through Integrated Landscape Management: How to design sustainable business models?" UNU-LRT will contribute to all the weeks of this MOOC but will be responsible for two weeks on 1) land degradation and restoration of degraded land and 2) the economics of land degradation.



CONDIR 2016

The UNU *Conference of Directors* (CONDIR) was held at the UNU headquarters in Tokyo, Japan, in mid-December. In 2017, UNU-LRT Director is expected to take over the rotational responsibility of representing the UNU Programmes in Iceland to the UNU, which Mr Ludvik Georgsson, the UNU-GTP Director, has been in charge of for the past several years. Therefore, both Mr Georgsson and Dr Aegisdottir attended the CONDIR meeting in Tokyo this year.

EVALUATION OF UNU-LRT

Every year the UNU-LRT six-month training programme is evaluated weekly throughout the three month period of lectures, short field visits and group work. After the two excursions during the summer and after lectures in Gunnarsholt, the fellows are also requested to fill out evaluation sheets. At the end of the six-month training, the programme is evaluated thoroughly, both by filling out an anonymous written evaluation as well as by group discussion with the fellows. In 2016, this evaluation day took place on 12 September. All eleven fellows agreed or strongly agreed that the training programme met their expectations. They were very satisfied with the general support from the UNU-LRT staff and they all thought the individual project work would be useful for them in their future work. Finally, they were all satisfied with the organisation as well as logistical matter.





UNU-LRT SITE VISITS

The candidates for the UNU-LRT six-month training programme are carefully selected. They are proposed by institutions that have been identified as playing a significant role in land restoration and sustainable land management in UNU-LRT partner countries in Africa and Central Asia. The training of the fellows is considered to be a contribution to capacity building of their institutions. The UNU-LRT employees conduct site visits to the UNU-LRT partner countries and the selected institutions. Personal interviews are conducted with each candidate who is proposed by his/her institution. Each candidate needs to have at least one university degree, one-year experience working in the field of specialization that he/she will pursue at UNU-LRT and have a permanent position at the institute, have good English skills and be under the age of 40.



The UNU-LRT Director and Deputy Director visited two partner countries in 2016.

Mongolia

In late September to early October, the UNU-LRT Director Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir visited Mongolia. This was the fourth visit of a UNU-LRT representative to the country, the last one being in April 2014. State institutions and NGOs were visited in Ulaanbaatar with the aim of strengthening collaboration and to interview potential UNU-LRT six-month training candidates proposed by the partner organizations. In total, 15 candidates were interviewed for the six-month training in Iceland.

Niger

In October, the UNU-LRT Deputy Director Berglind Orradottir visited Niger Republic. This was the third visit of a UNU-LRT representative to the country; the last visit was in March 2012. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen existing institutional collaboration in Niger and to interview potential UNU-LRT candidates proposed by partner institutions. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development assisted in organising the visit. In total, 20 candidates were interviewed, from the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and from the Niger Institute of Agricultural Research (INRAN).

UNU-LRT PRESENTATIONS

Presentations

Aegisdottir HH (2016) From Training to Action: Creating Change Agents of the Future. UN University Programmes in Iceland: Fisheries, Gender Equality, Geothermal and Land Restoration. A talk held on behalf of the UNU Programmes in Iceland for the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, 8 October 2016.

Presentation of the UNU-LRT 2016 fellows in the Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region conference in Reykjavik, Iceland: Land Tenure and Policy Implications on Grazing: Lessons from Africa and Central Asia. 12 – 16 September 2016. Malipolo Eleanor Hae presented on behalf of the group.

Posters

Diallo MB, Dan-Gomma A (2016) Multi-nutritional feed blocks: A strategy to combat fodder shortages for livestock in Niger. Poster presented at the conference Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 12-16 September 2016.

Jinbaani AN, Quansah VA, Ansah IO (2016) Improving livelihoods of smallholder livestock farmers of Northern Ghana through sustainable grassland management: The impact of innovation platform. Poster presented at the conference Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 12-16 September 2016.

Mdolo P, Kozhombardiev Z (2016) Implication of cropping systems on conditions of grazing land: A case of Kyrgyzstan and Malawi. Poster presented at the conference Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 12-16 September 2016.

Orradottir B, Aegisdottir HH (2016) UN University Land Restoration Training Programme: Capacity building in land management and restoration. Poster presented at the conference Grazing in a Changing Nordic Region, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 12-16 September 2016.

Publications

Arnalds O, Dagsson-Waldhauserova P, Olafsson H (2016) Icelandic volcanic aeolian environment: Processes and impacts — A review. *Aeolian Research* 20:176–195.



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