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**UNU-LRT**

Land Restoration Training Programme



UNU Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT)

**Annual Report 2013**

United Nations University Land Restoration  
Training Programme

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## DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY FOR 2013

Dear friends of UNU-LRT,

Another good year for UNU-LRT has passed. As in previous years, the six-month training programme was successful with 10 fellows from seven countries in Africa and Central Asia graduating on 19 September. A revised training curriculum that was run this year was well received by the fellows, as well as the teaching by this year's international guest lecturers. The main international guest lecturer was Dr Jeffrey Herrick, who is a soil scientist at the Jornada Research Unit, USDA-ARS, New Mexico, USA. The other two international lecturers were Dr Richard Thomas, Assistant Director (dryland ecosystems) at UNU-INWEH, and Dr Anne Glover, the European Commission's Chief Scientific Adviser.

The UNU-LRT team participated in several conferences and meetings in 2013. The UNU-LRT Director was a keynote speaker at the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly at the FAO Headquarters in Rome and the UNU-LRT staff and lecturers, as well as a former fellow, presented their work at the Fifth World Conference on Ecological Restoration, which was held in Madison, Wisconsin (USA), in October. Furthermore, the UNU-LRT team participated in the Global Soil Week in Berlin and in the international conference entitled Soil carbon sequestration for climate, food security and ecosystem services, held in Iceland in late May. At that conference the UNU-LRT fellows gave a very well received presentation on their experiences in Africa and Asia on soil carbon and the quest for land quality.

We at UNU-LRT were honoured to welcome Mr Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to our Programme in 2013. The Secretary-General paid us a visit in early June and learnt about the four UNU Programmes located in Iceland. He met with the UNU-LRT Director and fellows from Uganda and Kyrgyzstan, who shared their experiences of the training and how it would help them to meet their challenges at home.

In February, we launched a new webpage, which we encourage you to visit under the URL [www.unulrt.is](http://www.unulrt.is). The webpage provides information about the programme, a Google map featuring the fellows' countries, and videos with interviews with fellows, as well as the latest news.

We warmly welcome a new member to the UNU-LRT team. Our new Office Manager, Ms Halldora Traustadottir has a background in anthropology and gender studies as well as development and educational studies. She has varied work experience, including work for a women's association NGO, in a ministry and a development agency, both in Iceland and Namibia.

*Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir*



## 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 in 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 and the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland. 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, 51 fellows have graduated from the programme, 25 women and 26 men. The fellows have come from the following countries in Africa and Central Asia: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Namibia, Niger, Tunisia, Uganda, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

UNU-LRT is governed by a Board of members that are representatives of the Agricultural University of Iceland, the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, the Icelandic Forest Service, United Nations University 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 six-month training programme in Iceland on land restoration and sustainable land management. The first 12 weeks of the training focus on course work, practical training and field trips. In the latter

12 weeks of the programme each fellow works on an individual research project, which provides specialization with reference to the academic and practical background and needs of the individual fellow and his/her own workplace.

UNU-LRT has a webpage ([www.unulrt.is](http://www.unulrt.is)) where information about the programme, the latest news and the individual projects of former fellows are accessible. In addition, UNU-LRT has a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/unulrt](http://www.facebook.com/unulrt)).

## PROGRESS REPORT



### SIX-MONTH TRAINING PROGRAMME 2013

The six-month training programme started on 12 March. Ten specialists (five women and five men) participated in the programme and finished successfully on graduation day, 19 September. The fellows came from Ghana (1 fellow), Niger (2 fellows), Ethiopia (1 fellow), Uganda (2 fellows), Namibia (1 fellow), Kyrgyzstan (2 fellows) and Mongolia (1 fellow).

The curriculum of the six-month training programme was revised at the end of 2012 and the revised curriculum was run for the first time in 2013. The curriculum was finalized by the UNU-LRT employees, Studies Committee and a few specialists that were involved in the programme in 2012, including Dr Jeffrey Herrick, the UNU-LRT main international guest lecturer in 2012. In the new curriculum the topics and modules taught are organized according to the UNU-LRT project cycle framework. The project cycle is used as a framework for process management throughout the training sessions and the modules are strategically placed within the cycle. The first module covers orientation and introduction to Icelandic society and is not placed within the project cycle. The other modules are: Module 2 - course principles and frameworks; Module 3 - fundamentals of land management; Module 4 - land management planning; Module 5 - implementation; Module 6 - evaluation. Two other modules are included in the six-month training programme: Module 7 - special topics, that vary from one year to another; and Module 8 - individual research project, which the fellows work on throughout the major part of the training under the supervision of expert(s).

Dr Jeffrey Herrick, who is a soil scientist from the Jornada Research Unit, USDA-ARS, New Mexico, USA, was one of three international guest lecturers in 2013. He gave lectures in the module that focuses on monitoring and evaluation. The other two international lecturers were Dr Richard Thomas, Assistant Director



(dryland ecosystems) at UNU-INWEH, who visited the programme for the second time and taught about management of dryland resources, and Dr Anne Glover, the European Commission's Chief Scientific Adviser. She met with the fellows and shared her experiences with them through presentation and discussion during her – and the fellows' – participation in the *Soil Carbon Sequestration* conference in Reykjavik in May. Dr Glover was a keynote speaker at the conference.

#### OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

**The Secretary-General of the United Nations visits UNU-LRT**

Mr Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, visited Iceland on 2–3 July.





During his visit, he learned about the activities of the UNU programmes in Iceland, including UNU-LRT. Mr Ban Ki-moon met with the UNU-LRT Director and two UNU-LRT fellows, Ms Olive Chemutai from Uganda and Mr Azamat Isakov from Kyrgyzstan. Ms Chemutai addressed the Secretary-General on behalf of the UNU-LRT fellows and shared her experience of the UNU-LRT training and how it would help her meet the challenges at home. Her address was very well received.

#### New webpage

A new webpage was launched in February 2013. The website has general information about the UNU-LRT programme, its Mission, Strategic Plan and Annual Reports, a list of all countries and fellows that have participated in the programme, a Google map featuring the countries the fellows come from, fellows' project reports, statements from former fellows about their experiences of the programme, the programme's latest news, and more. There is a direct link to the programme's Facebook page and additionally there are four videos with interviews with fellows from the 2013 training programme.

#### UNU-LRT hires an Office Manager

Ms Halldora Traustadottir has been hired as the Office Manager for the UNU-LRT programme. She has a BA degree in Anthropology from the University of Iceland and an MSc in Development Studies and Educational Studies from Roskilde University in Denmark. She also holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Gender Studies from the University of Iceland. Ms Traustadottir worked for the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) in Namibia in 2005-2006. From 2007-2011 she was the Executive Managing Director for the Icelandic Women's Rights Association (NGO). In 2012 Halldóra was employed as a specialist in gender budgeting at the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources until she joined UNU-LRT as Office Manager in March 2013.

## EVALUATION OF UNU-LRT

### EVALUATION OF SIX-MONTH TRAINING PROGRAMME 2013

The UNU-LRT six-month training programme 2013 was evaluated thoroughly by the fellows on 18 September. The evaluation included both written anonymous evaluations and discussions by the fellows with the UNU-LRT employees. During the course work the fellows also filled in written anonymous evaluation sheets



after each week of the programme. The result from the evaluation was general satisfaction with the programme. The new curriculum that was launched in 2013 received a positive evaluation. There was a consensus among the fellows that the order of topics was logical and using the project cycle helped with understanding the link between science and the practical aspects of land issues and project management.

#### FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF FORMER FELLOWS

In the first quarter of 2013, a survey was sent to all former fellows that have graduated from the Land Restoration Training Programme. A total of 41 fellows graduated from 2007 to 2012, 20 women and 21 men. In total, 36 former fellows responded to the questionnaire sent to them by e-mail, or 88%, 53% men and 47% women. The aim of the survey was to explore UNU-LRT fellows' work and education experiences since graduating. The results showed that 69% of the former fellows were still working at the same workplace as when they came to Iceland and that almost everyone agreed that participation in the UNU-LRT training programme had influenced their work, e.g. they had been given more responsibilities in their job positions than before and 26% had been promoted or had new jobs since finishing the training.

## GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

In June, the UNU-LRT Gender Equality Policy was adopted by the Board. The Gender Equality Policy builds on the UNU-LRT Mission which states that the mission is "... to assist in strengthening institutional capacity and gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management in developing countries". The commitment of UNU-LRT to gender equality is furthermore based on the principle that gender equality is a human rights issue as well as a means



to achieve sustainable development. The Gender Equality Policy is grounded on the existing international conventions on gender equality and on sustainable development where it is asserted that gender equality is not only a human rights issue but also a precondition for, and an indicator of, sustainable development. The overall aim is to promote gender equality in the field of land restoration and sustainable land management through gender sensitive capacity building. This is done by intergrading gender equality perspectives into the programme's organization and training activities; sessions and lectures should include key issues on gender and development, land use and land management and UNU-LRT also requests fellows to consider gender aspects in their individual projects. Moreover, fellows should be treated without gender bias in all processes involving teaching, support and guidance, and all UNU-LRT material should present diverse non-stereotypical images of women and men. Equal numbers of women and men should be invited to join the six-month programme each year and the partner institutions are informed about the Gender Equality Policy of UNU-LRT and its strong emphasis on gender equality. The Gender Equality Policy can be read on the UNU-LRT website.

## CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

### SOIL CARBON SEQUESTRATION FOR CLIMATE, FOOD SECURITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, IN REYKJAVIK

UNU-LRT employees and fellows participated in the international conference on Soil Carbon Sequestration for climate, food security and ecosystem services, which was held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 26-29 May. The conference was held in partnership with the UNU-LRT programme and the UNU-LRT Director was a member of the conference's scientific committee. The UNU-LRT fellows were responsible for a talk during the conference's plenary session on the first day of the conference entitled: Soil carbon and the quest for land quality – Experiences from Africa and Asia, presented by Ms Wellencia Clara Mukaru from Namibia, on behalf of the fellows. In the plenary session of the conference's last day, the UNU-LRT Director gave a presentation on the UNU-LRT programme and how it links science, policy and action for restoration of degraded land.

A former fellow from 2009, Ms Tigist Araya Gessesse from Ethiopia, gave a

presentation in one of the four parallel sessions of the conference. She presented results from her studies on soil organic carbon accumulation under different land-uses in the Gergera watershed, Tigray. Her studies on the subject are a part of her PhD studies at Bonn University in Germany.

## FAO – GLOBAL SOIL PARTNERSHIP

The UNU-LRT Director was invited as a keynote speaker at the opening of the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly, held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy 10-11 June. The keynote talk was entitled “Land degradation – is there a hope?” and in addition to attending the Plenary Assembly, Dr Aegisdottir met representatives from several countries in Africa and Asia and discussed with them the possibilities for cooperation.



## FIFTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION, IN MADISON, WISCONSIN

The Society of Ecological Restoration held its fifth world conference on ecological restoration in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, from 6 to 11 October 2013. UNU-LRT was represented at the conference with an oral presentation and a poster. The UNU-LRT Director gave a talk entitled “Education for sustainable development with a focus on land restoration - what is its impact?” The poster focused on UNU-LRT training and capacity building as an essential part of reaching a sustainable future. One former UNU-LRT fellow from 2011, Ms Altantsetseg Balt from Mongolia, attended the conference. She works for the Mongolian mining company Oyu Tolgoi LLC as a Flora Research and Rehabilitation Supervisor in their Environmental Department.

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

## THE GLOBAL SOIL WEEK 2013, BERLIN

The Global Soil Week 2013 was held in Berlin, Germany, from 27-31 October. Over 450 participants attended this multi-stakeholder event, which was held there for the second consecutive year. The Global Soil Week 2013 was dedicated to sustainable management of soils and concerns over its degradation, unequal distribution and lack of people’s access to soil. UNU-LRT had two representatives at the conference, the 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 was also a group leader in discussions on soil engineering on the second day of the four-day conference.

## 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 a contribution to capacity building of their own 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's 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 2013: Ghana and Namibia.



### GHANA

The UNU-LRT Deputy Director, Ms Berglind Orradottir, visited Ghana in late October. During her stay, she visited several local institutions and universities which UNU-LRT cooperates with. Several staff members at these institutions and universities were interviewed as potential candidates for the six-month training programme in the coming years. Furthermore, Ms Orradottir visited UNU-INRA in the capital city, Accra, and had a meeting with the Director, Dr Elias Ayuk.

### NAMIBIA

Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir visited Namibia in late October and early November. During her stay, she strengthened cooperation with the already established partners and held interviews with potential candidates for the six-month training programme.



## UNU-LRT PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-reviewed article

Arnalds O., B. Orradottir & A.L. Aradottir 2013. Carbon accumulation in Icelandic desert Andosols during early stages of restoration. *Geoderma* 193-194: 172-179. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016706112003710>.

### Presentations

Aegisdottir H.H. & B. Orradottir. 2013. *UNU-LRT links science, policy and action for restoration of degraded land to secure livelihood, improve ecosystem services and fight climate change*. Presented at the international conference: Soil Carbon Sequestration for Climate, Food Security and Ecosystem Services, in Reykjavik, Iceland, 27-29 May 2013. Presented by Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir.

Aegisdottir H.H. 2013. *Soil Degradation – Is there a hope?* Invitational keynote talk at the Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly, FAO, 11-12 June 2013.

Aegisdottir H.H. 2013. Presentation in English about UNU-LRT entitled: *United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme: Past, present, future*. Delivered at the Institute of Biology at the University of Iceland, 8 February 2013.

Aegisdottir H.H. & B. Orradottir. 2013. *Education for sustainable development with a focus on land restoration - What is its impact*. SER 2013 Fifth World Conference on Ecological Restoration - Reflections on the past, directions for the future. Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 6-11 October 2013. Presented by Dr Hafdis Hanna Aegisdottir.

Arnalds O., B. Orradottir & A. L. Aradottir. 2013. *Carbon accumulation in Icelandic desert Andosols during early stages of restoration*. Presentation at the international conference: Soil Carbon Sequestration for Climate, Food Security and Ecosystem Services, in Reykjavik, Iceland, 27-29 May. Presented by Professor Olafur Arnalds.

Orradottir, B. & H.H. Aegisdottir. 2013. *UNU-Land Restoration Training Programme: Training for a sustainable future*. Poster presented at the SER 2013 Fifth World Conference on Ecological Restoration - Reflections on the past, directions for the future. Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 6-11 October, 2013.

Gabou, M.H. 2013. *Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands: Sustainable Land Management practices commonly used in Niger Republic, West Africa*. Presented at the Conference on Climate Change, Sustainable Intensification and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Morogoro, Tanzania, 13-15 November 2013. Mr Mohamadou Habibou Gabou was a UNU-LRT fellow in 2013 from Niger.

Gessesse T.A. 2013. *Soil organic carbon stock in different land use systems in Gegera watershed, Tigray, Ethiopia*. Presented at the international conference: Soil Carbon Sequestration for Climate, Food Security and Ecosystem Services Conference, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, 27-29 May 2013. Ms Tigist Araya Gessesse was a LRT fellow in 2009 from Ethiopia.

### **Policy papers**

UNU-LRT 2013. *United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme Gender Equality Policy*. URL: [http://www.unulrt.is/static/files/Publications/Gender\\_equality\\_policy/unu\\_lrt\\_gender-eq.policy\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://www.unulrt.is/static/files/Publications/Gender_equality_policy/unu_lrt_gender-eq.policy_final_2.pdf).

### **Media appearance**

The UNU-LRT Director appeared three times on public radio, once in March with the Deputy Director on a talk-radio programme where they introduced the UNU-LRT training programme and twice around the graduation of the UNU-LRT six-month training programme in September. These were good opportunities to introduce the objectives and activities of UNU-LRT to the Icelandic public.

The activities of the UNU-LRT programme were also presented in the Icelandic TV programme *Landinn* in late October. In the programme, interviews were taken with Ms Zhyldyz Shigaeva from Kyrgyzstan and Ms Wellencia Clara Mukaru from Namibia, about their participation in the UNU-LRT six-month training programme and the theme of their individual projects. Moreover, the UNU-LRT Director was interviewed about the aims and activities of UNU-LRT.

An interview with one 2013 fellow, Ms Olive Chemutai from Uganda, was published in the Icelandic newspaper *Morgunblaðið*, 28 July 2013.

UNU-LRT was introduced in the newspaper *Vesturland*, 26 September 2013.

## **PHOTO CREDITS**

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