

UNITED EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME TO COMBAT LAND DEGRADATION

October 11, 8-10 am • Conference Room MET-04



Following decision 20/COP.9 that invited agencies to contribute to the implementation of a revised Fellowship Programme, the United Nations University-Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), after contacting other interested institutions, proposes an option that is in line with Option B: A Multi-stakeholder partnership model outlined in ICCD/COP(10)/CST/8.

In brief, the proposal suggests that UNCCD fellows:

- Participate in existing short-term training courses offered by collaborating institutions in affected countries
- Undertake field visits to established research sites involving exchange visits
- Develop skills in interdisciplinary approaches to land degradation (LD)
- Begin to establish regional nodes for training including the development of distant learning courses that are adapted to the particular region of interest and that include local knowledge
- Become members of an interacting network of experts to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and dissemination of lessons learned
- Become equipped to train others in reporting progress to the COP
- Identify gaps in the convention and thereby contribute to future scientific conferences

Current models for consideration

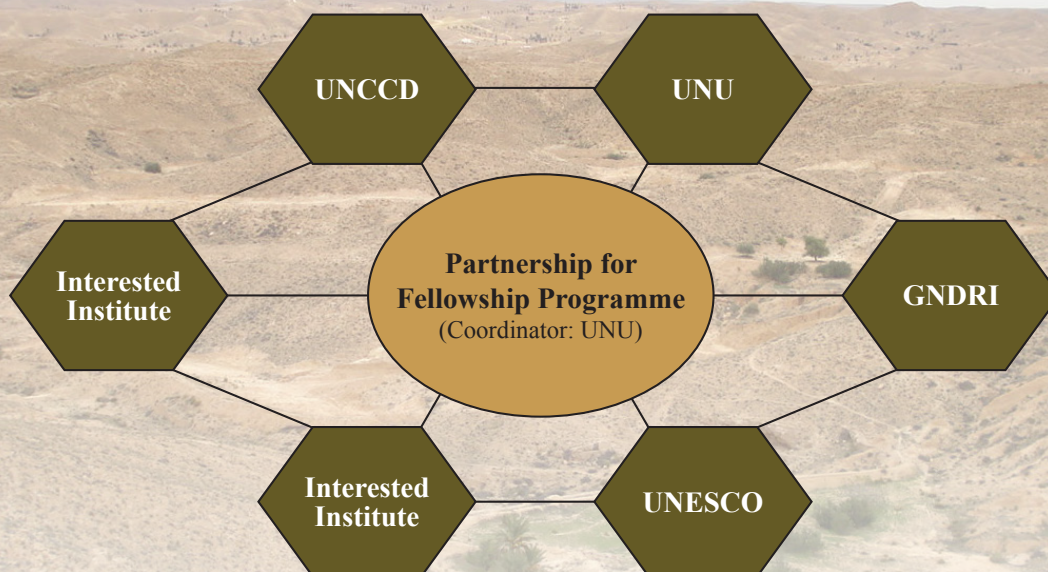
UNU institutions such as INWEH, the Institute for Sustainability and Peace (ISP) and the UNU-Land Restoration Training Programme (UNU-LRT) currently offer training in assessing LD, combating degradation and integrated drylands management for post-graduates and young scientists. The Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes (GNDRI) has also proposed training programmes that include graduates and para-ecologists at the local level.

The INWEH/ISP programme is a 4-week training course that is part of an MSc diploma. The course venue is rotated amongst collaborating partners that include the Institut des Régions Arides (IRA) and Institut National Agronomique de Tunisie (INAT) in Tunisia, the Cold and Arid Regions Environmental and Engineering Research Institute (CAREERI) in China, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Syria, Tottori University, in Japan; the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD (GM) is also a partner and contributes to the training course. This interdisciplinary course includes not only biophysical aspects of LD but also financial aspects such as the Integrated Financing Strategy of the GM. UNU-LRT also offers a 6-month interdisciplinary programme in Iceland in collaboration with the government of Iceland, the Soil Conservation Service and the Agricultural University of Iceland where young scientists from affected countries participate in the Programme to learn about land restoration techniques from the positive example of Iceland. The joint UNESCO-UNU project on the Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands (SUMAMAD) offers an example of how Fellows could undertake field work in complementary research projects in participating countries. GNDRI is currently developing a "Graduate Course" with the aim to launch its first course in Mendoza, Argentina.



Potential scope and modality of a Fellowship Programme

We envisage the Fellowship Programme to be developed as a multi-partnership approach as indicated below amongst the UNCCD, UNU (INWEH, ISP and LRTP), GNDRI, UNESCO; other interested institutions are welcome to join this partnership via an expression of interest. Potential Fellows would be recommended by country Parties through their NFP or STC and the applications would be forwarded to a joint selection committee of the Programme partners.



It is proposed that UNCCD fellows would participate in the following:

- Short training course
- Field visits including exchange visits
- Internship or practicum in their country
- Involvement in UNCCD scientific conferences
- Regional training nodes and distant-learning courses

The various aspects of the Fellowship Programme would focus on inter-disciplinary options for combating land degradation, including monitoring and assessment, knowledge brokering, needs at the policy level, etc. These would be reflected through each component of the Programme and through contribution to the implementation of the convention in affected countries.

The Fellowship Programme would target the next generation of decision-makers and practitioners and can also help mid-career individuals with a specific aim of improving the implementation of the convention via improving their knowledge and capacity for reporting, identifying gaps in research and the implementation of NAPs. Rotation of the courses and instructors would take advantage of the vast experiences that exists in LD and ensure the input of latest findings and developments. A 'core course' program could be supplemented by a particular aspect pertinent to the hosting institution and country that would change by rotation.

In addition to the training courses, the Fellowship Programme could begin to establish regional training nodes led by or involving the fellows through the development of local, national and regionally-relevant distant learning courses that can reach far greater numbers than training courses and workshops. This suggestion supports decision 1/COP.6 in that the proposed Fellowship Programme would strengthen the networking of institutions, technology transfer and training. The training course could in the future be followed by practicums or internships with a relevant focus. Thus, the Fellowship Programme can be used as a platform for much broader information exchange and capacity building.

It is envisaged that within 1 year, the fellows will have graduated from the Programme and will have contributed to a country's implementation of the convention through one or more areas (e.g. NAPs, SRAPs, reporting on indicators, etc.), increased their own capacity, and contributed to the capacity-building needs of their affected country.

Next steps

The operational modalities of the suggested programme will need further discussion amongst interested parties including STCs and NFPs in terms of the number of participating institutions, harmonization of course work, plans for a start-up programme using ongoing training courses, a joint fundraising strategy and the criteria for selection of fellows. In light of its mission to function *inter alia* as a builder of capacities in developing countries and in light of its experience in the development of existing programmes on integrated drylands management and land restoration training, UNU offers to undertake the role of coordinator of the UNCCD Fellowship Programme, building on its current existing programmes.

