

External Evaluation of GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change

Land Restoration Training Programme (LRT) Case Study Report

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GRÓ TRAINING PROGRAMME CASE STUDY REPORTS

INTRODUCTION

As noted in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this evaluation, one of the core evaluation questions is as follows: **What lessons can be drawn from previous interventions by the GRÓ programmes, which can be used as a frame of reference in future endeavours?**

In addition to the overall evaluation of the GRÓ centre, and the evaluation of each of the four Training Programmes (TPs), the evaluators conducted **four evaluative case studies of specific initiatives and approaches** as applied by the individual TP, to generate lessons learned for the future. The ToR defines the specific scope of each case study for this evaluation. For each of the TPs one case study has been prepared. They address specific initiatives and approaches of the Training Programme under review.

The **case study reports provide:**

- An overview of the specific data-collection process and evaluation methodology applied,
- A brief introduction to the initiatives and approaches directly under review,
- Specific evaluation findings linked to the interventions, operational delivery and results achieved,
- Conclusions,
- Lessons learned, and
- Prospects for scaling-up or replication of the intervention in future endeavours of the GRÓ.

A summary of the **specific scope of the individual case studies** is below:

GRÓ FTP	<p>Regional collaboration in the Caribbean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnership and cooperation of the FTP with regional and country institutions to promote local capacity development of individuals and organizations - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer
GRÓ GEST	<p>Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), innovative online content to promote digital learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The potential role of MOOCs as a tool to enhance the range and quality of the overall GEST offer and to achieve outreach in the provision of transnational knowledge transmission and exchange <p>March 8 Fund (seed fund for GEST Alumni projects)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The achievements and lessons learned linked to the Fund and the projects of supported alumni - The feasibility to scale-up or replicate a seed money fund across the GRÓ for projects of alumni
GRÓ GTP	<p>Collaboration efforts in El Salvador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer - The potential role of Centres of Excellence in-country for the scaling-up the GTP offer regionally
GRÓ LRT	<p>Collaboration with universities (with a focus on Makerere University in Uganda)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnership and cooperation of the LRT with universities in-country to promote and support the integration of the LRT offer within the wider context of existing university programmes/offer - The development and delivery of in-country and regional training courses, and the promotion of local capacity to support and maintain the development and delivery of the training offer

GRÓ LRT CASE STUDY REPORT

Background and methodology

Existing GRÓ LRT interventions with/in Uganda

Envisaged interventions

Findings

Conclusions

Lessons learned and recommendations

Annexes: list of interviews and Photos taken during data collection

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the External Evaluation of the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability, and Societal Change commissioned by the Ministry of International Affairs (MFA) of Iceland in 2023, an **evaluative case study** was carried out regarding the **intended collaboration between the GRÓ Land Restoration Training (LRT) programme and universities in partner countries** to establish in-country study programmes in restoration ecology. The main objective of the case study is to generate lessons for the future which can guide such initiatives in line with the GRÓ LRT programme specifically and possibly by extension all GRÓ programmes.

The present case study considers the **envisaged collaboration between GRÓ and Makerere University in Uganda**. In 2022, the LRT partners from Makerere University expressed their interest towards GRÓ in developing a **postgraduate course in land restoration** and requested corresponding support from GRÓ. This request, together with similar requests from other partner universities elsewhere, made GRÓ consider a revised growth model of integrating capacity building within existing partner universities.

Since this initiative is still in an **early conceptual stage**, no corresponding written documentation existed at the time of the evaluation. Therefore, this case study is mainly based on insights interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders between March and May 2024, including GRÓ LRT staff, professors and lecturers from Makerere University, LRT alumni. and others. A list of relevant interviews conducted is provided in Annex **Error! Reference source not found.**

According to the ToR, the evaluation shall be conducted **in accordance with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) Quality Standards** for Development Evaluation by evaluating the intervention according to the corresponding six evaluation criteria. As the intervention under consideration, however, has not yet happened and is only in conceptual stage, the present case study cannot evaluate its past performance against the OECD DAC criteria¹. Instead, the case study i) evaluates the concept as described by the partners involved and analyses how this is **expected to perform against those criteria** and ii) where applicable, provides recommendations on how to **maximize the alignment of the intended intervention with those criteria**.

EXISTING GRÓ LRT INTERVENTIONS WITH/IN UGANDA

Existing GRÓ LRT interventions with Uganda include the 6-month postgraduate-level LRT programme (referred to as '6-month LRT programme' throughout this report) in Iceland, MSc and PhD scholarships in Iceland, in-country short courses, the support for attendance of conferences by LRT alumni, and support for alumni networking activities in Uganda.

- **6-month LRT programme:** Between 2007 and 2023, a total of 35 fellows from Uganda were trained in the programme with an average of two Ugandan participants per annual cohort. Fellows are usually

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

environmental or natural resource officers employed by one of the 135 local governments and selected with the assistance of the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA).

- **MSc / PhD scholarships in Iceland:** To date, one Ugandan alumnus received a scholarship in 2017 to do his MSc in Iceland.
- **In-country short courses:** The following three short courses on sustainable land management, land restoration and linkages to climate change were delivered in Uganda, with a total of 75 participants:
 - ◆ 2017: 9-day course in Kasese, 25 participants
 - ◆ 2018: 8-day course in Masindi, 25 participants
 - ◆ 2019: 8-day course in Soroti, 25 participants

Each course was tailored towards the land restoration issues specific to the respective region and required extensive preparation with partners from Makerere University. The participants of these courses are from the same pool of candidates as the LRT postgraduate training participants of environmental and natural resource officers of the local governments.

The annual delivery of in-country short courses was disrupted in 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic and has not resumed since. Beside the extensive preparatory efforts required, the MFA and GRÓ cite the main reason for this to be budgetary constraints and a relatively high cost-benefit ratio of the short courses.

- **Alumni networking support:** Two alumni meetings were organised in Uganda for alumni from all four postgraduate programmes with support from GRÓ management, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Icelandic Embassy in Uganda.
 - ◆ March 2023: The first meeting took place at the Embassy of Iceland. About 30 of the 109 Ugandan alumni at the time from all four training programmes were present.
 - ◆ February 2024: The second meeting was funded by GRÓ, hosted by UNESCO, and supported by the Icelandic Embassy in Uganda. Between 60-70 alumni (of a total of 117 Ugandan alumni as of end of 2023) from all four training programmes were present.

With support from the GRÓ Centre, the alumni are in the process of registering a formal entity under the indicative name "**GRÓ Centre Alumni Uganda Ltd.**", with the purpose not only of networking and knowledge exchange, but also to be able to offer expertise and technical services with the possible participation in consultancies or donor-funded projects.

In line with the delivery of the above activities, a **strong relationship between GRÓ LRT and Makerere University** has developed over time, especially with key staff from the Department of Forestry, Biodiversity and Tourism (DFBT) of the **School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences (SFECS)**, which is part of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The DFBT at Makerere University is an important partner to GRÓ LRT in the following ways:

- Several academic staff from the DFBT served as guest lecturers at the LRT postgraduate training programme
- Short courses in Uganda were designed, organized, and delivered with support from the DFBT
- DFBT maintains academic ties with LRT alumni
- The staff of DFBT who have attended the LRT postgraduate training programme are creating a multiplier effect of the knowledge and skills acquired through training Makerere University and other students.

ENVISAGED INTERVENTION

The envisaged new intervention to be developed and examined in this case study is an **MSc degree programme in Land Restoration offered by the DFBT of Makerere University in Uganda** over two years / four semesters. In 2022, the idea about the development of an in-country postgraduate programme in land restoration was raised by partners from Makerere University, with the request for corresponding support from GRÓ LRT. The rationale for such a course derived from

- the **high demand by participants of short courses** on land restoration delivered by GRÓ LRT for further in-depth training in this field;
- the **demand by Ugandan BSc graduates** from courses in Forestry, Environment, and others for a specialized postgraduate degree in land restoration;

- the recognition that the average intake of **two Ugandan fellows per year** in the LRT postgraduate training programme is **not sufficient** to meet this demand; and
- the recognition by lecturers and LRT alumni alike that **no tailored postgraduate course on land restoration** exists in Uganda.

Land restoration ecology is a **new field in the Ugandan academic landscape**, with no specialised postgraduate course for it in the country. Candidates interested in land restoration typically enrol in the existing MSc in Environment and Natural Resources at Makerere University. Although this programme covers some aspects of land restoration ecology through its scientific and theoretical content, it falls short in several key areas. Notably, it lacks essential components such as governance and planning and does not emphasize practical, field-oriented training as strongly as the LRT postgraduate training programme.

The new course is, therefore, envisaged to cater for those students who seek to i) be **trained specifically in land restoration with a strong practical focus**; ii) be trained within Uganda in a course **tailored to the Ugandan/regional land restoration context**; and iii) be able to conduct their **MSc studies in parallel to their work obligations**. The course is further intended to be open for graduates in the social sciences (BA degree holders) who are interested in land restoration.

According to the Makerere University staff leading this initiative, the envisaged course would be **strongly inspired by the curriculum of the 6-month LRT programme** by including a blend of theoretical and practical teaching methods, field visits, and an applied research project. The program is designed to be completed over two years, featuring 2-3 semesters of coursework followed by 1-2 semesters dedicated to a research project. This structure accommodates employed students to allow them to work while studying. The targeted annual intake is between 10 and 30 students. The tuition fee for the entire two-year course is anticipated to be approximately USD 3,000 per student. Including expenses for field trips and field research, the total cost per student is estimated to be up to USD 5,000.

The course would be **open to foreign students**. According to estimates by DFBT lecturers, currently about 5-10% of postgraduate students at the DFBT are foreign students, most of them from neighbouring countries such as Kenya, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The following possible activities were cited as areas of **collaboration with and support from GRÓ LRT**:

- **Initial technical support to course development**
 - ◆ Curriculum and content development
 - ◆ Proposal development
 - ◆ Development of tailored materials
- **Funding support for scholarships** (see section 0 for more detail)
- **Guest lecturers** (Icelandic GRÓ LRT lecturers + from international GRÓ LRT network)
- **Regular review** of curriculum and materials in line with formal review cycle

It is important to note that the DFBT of Makerere University is currently undergoing a restructuring process that will split it into two departments: one "Department of Forestry and Nature Conservation" and one "Department of Tourism and Parks Management" (final names to be confirmed). The envisaged MSc in Land Restoration is an important element of the restructuring process and is intended to be offered by the new Department of Forestry and Nature Conservation. If the corresponding proposal including course curriculum is submitted for Makerere University's approval process by the end of 2024, the **first intake of students would realistically be possible in August 2026**.

Importantly, the DFBT is determined to go ahead with this process irrespective of GRÓ LRT support. However, collaboration with GRÓ LRT in this process could make a valuable contribution to i) increase the chance of the course being approved by Makerere University²; ii) ensure a high quality of the course; and iii) significantly increase the chance of success of the course in terms of uptake and sustainability.

² Approval is already very likely according to all DFBT staff interviewed.

According to Makerere University staff, neither alternative course models, such as part of an Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters through Erasmus+³, nor donors/support organizations other than GRÓ LRT have been investigated so far in the context of the envisaged course.

FINDINGS

Programme goals, strategy and approach (Relevance)

Land restoration is of high relevance at both the **national and local level in the partner country of Uganda**. Virtually every district faces land degradation challenges in the form of deforestation, wetland degradation, soil erosion, or soil exhaustion. Land degradation is primarily driven by the high population growth and sprawl (on average about 3% per annum over the last 50 years⁴), a dependency on wood-based fuels, and extractive industries.

The intended intervention aims to build and strengthen regional, national, and local expertise on land restoration and **is therefore highly relevant to addressing the above challenges in Uganda** and its surrounding region. The intended intervention is of direct relevance with regards to Uganda's capacity to fulfil its role in line with the following international agreements and corresponding commitments:

- **SDGs:** Directly SDG 15 and virtually all its targets, but indirectly also various other SDGs
- **UNCCD:** Uganda ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in 1997. Uganda's national voluntary land degradation neutrality targets include land degradation neutrality in 2030 compared to the 2015 baseline.
- **CDB:** Uganda ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1993. At the 15th COP in 2022, all parties adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in which land restoration is of crucial importance.
- **UNFCCC:** Uganda ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2016. In Uganda's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) from 2022, the sectors of agriculture, water, and ecosystems are rated as the ones with the highest vulnerability and are subsequently priority sectors for climate change adaptation measures. The forestry and agriculture sectors dominate Uganda's intended mitigation contribution.

With regards to **GRÓ's strategic priorities 2022-2027** (GRÓ, a), the intended intervention would be directly aligned with the following items:

- "Priority shall be given to least developed and lower-middle income countries". Having been classified as a least developed country (LDC) for many years, Uganda has met the criteria for graduation from LDC status for the first time in 2024. Despite this progress, Uganda is still classified as a lower-middle-income country in terms of income per capita. According to the OECD DAC list of overseas development assistance recipients, Uganda remains listed as a "LDC." Consequently, Uganda is among the countries prioritized by GRÓ.
- Output 1 - Increased capability of individuals and expertise of GRÓ partner organisations to design and implement programme activities in their respective professional fields: The aim to "grant 20 new postgraduate scholarships to GRÓ fellows per year in Icelandic or partner universities" could be directly addressed through the intended intervention if GRÓ provides scholarship support.
- Output 2 - **Production and dissemination of new knowledge by GRÓ training participants, fellows, and scholarship recipients:** The aim to "engage former fellows in short courses and training in partner countries" could be directly addressed through the intended intervention as LRT postgraduate training programme alumni are now active lecturers at Makerere University and could be involved in teaching the proposed MSc course.

³ https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/opportunities-for-organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/erasmus-mundus-joint-masters?facets_field_eac_tags=186

⁴ Uganda's population has grown from roughly 10 million in 1970 to 46 million in 2021.

- As an external outcome, the strategic priorities explicitly state that “**GRÓ will continue to explore ways to strengthen cooperation with other partners** such as [...] universities and research institutions in partner countries.”

Summarizing, the intended intervention is found to be of **high relevance** both in terms of responding to needs of the partner country as well as fitting in with GRÓ’s strategic priorities. It is **directly related to GRÓ’s overall objective** to strengthen individual and institutional capacities in low and middle income countries to deliver development results in line with the SDGs.

Promotion of synergies between the programme and other local development efforts (Coherence)

The coherence of the intended intervention **with other GRÓ activities** is as follows:

- **Coherent with 6-month LRT programme:** The envisaged course shares its objective with the 6-month LRT programme by aiming to provide high-quality postgraduate training in land restoration. However, it would lack the element of exposure to and exchange with Iceland’s society and environment making it incomparable to the unique experience offered by the 6-month LRT programme. While there may be an overlap of those who wish to participate in both, the 6-month LRT programme and the envisaged course, the activities are designed to **complement each other**. Specifically, the annual intake of the 6-month LRT programme cannot meet the full demand, and not everyone interested can afford to leave the country for six months. The intended intervention could thus be an alternative offer to the 6-month LRT programme and accommodate a higher number of interested candidates. Furthermore, both activities are **not mutually exclusive**. In fact, alumni of the 6-month LRT programme could still benefit from the intended intervention (and possibly receive credits for certain modules already taught in Iceland).
- **Coherent with LRT MSc and PhD scholarships:** MSc scholarships could be given by GRÓ LRT (among other donors) for this new degree programme. This could be in addition to MSc scholarships in Iceland or serve as a less costly alternative to partially replace those. Scholarships for PhD in Iceland could be granted to students of the envisaged course upon their completion of the MSc.
- The GRÓ ToC (GRÓ, b) states that “By training professionals from the same organisations and countries over many years, the intention is to **build a critical mass within each organisation and country**”. It is evident that increased output of postgraduate land restoration experts through the intended intervention would increase the supply of capable professionals in the nation.
- **Coherent with in-country short courses:** Both lecturers and alumni interviewed reiterated that the **intended intervention shall not replace the in-country short courses**. Short courses are tailored to the needs of target groups and are of high value to build capacities in land restoration at the local level. The short courses may also serve as a basis for current local government staff to further engage in land restoration and possibly enrol in the intended MSc course.

With regards to other Icelandic bilateral aid in Uganda, the intended intervention is **coherent with Iceland’s development cooperation strategy** (MFA, 2023). Icelandic bilateral aid in Uganda currently amounts to roughly USD 8 million per year and focuses on support to a small number of selected districts at a time, with a particular focus on districts with fishing communities. Strategic priority areas include capacity building of local governments and the sustainable use of natural resources. There is potential for synergies in that local government officials are among the potential target group for the intended intervention and Iceland’s bilateral development efforts in the districts **may benefit from enhanced capacity of local counterparts**⁵. In turn, interested and qualified local government employees in target districts could be supported by Iceland’s bilateral development cooperation in form of scholarships.

No information could be found about similar initiatives in training in land restoration by other donors in Uganda. However, there are donor-funded initiatives promoting land restoration⁶ by training farmers in

⁵ This is already happening in that LRT alumni work as local government officials in one of the two current target districts of Iceland’s bilateral development cooperation.

⁶ E.g. the Restore Africa Programme, which works through local NGOs such as Ecotrust.

sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices. These initiatives could benefit from a large base of local land restoration experts to best deliver their services.

Progress towards results (Effectiveness)

The intended result of the envisaged course is an **annual output of 10-15 MSc graduates in land restoration**. Quantitatively, this constitutes at least a **5-fold output of the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland** and may contribute directly to GRÓ's overall objective.

Key conditions for the achievement of this result were identified as the **high quality** and **affordability of the course**. GRÓ LRT could play a crucial role in ensuring that those key conditions are met and draw from its experience from the development of the new MSc programme in Restoration Ecology offered by the Agricultural University of Iceland since 2023.

Before launch, the envisaged course will have to undergo Makerere University's formal approval and quality assurance process and receive corresponding national accreditation by *the National Council for Higher Education of Uganda*. This process and the overall **course quality** could be supported significantly through technical support by GRÓ LRT in terms of **joint curriculum development** and **quality control of the course materials**. GRÓ LRT can also support in the **training of Ugandan lecturers** and the provision of **Icelandic (and other foreign) guest lecturers**.

Affordability of the degree could be supported through the provision of **scholarships** to students from Uganda and other partner countries from GRÓ LRT and other donors and support organizations. Partial scholarships may be sufficient in most cases; according to Ugandan stakeholders of the envisaged course, a significant target group are students who pursue the course beside work and thus have a regular income to cover their cost of living.

A significant risk towards effectiveness is that **initial enrolment** in the envisaged degree course would be slow. A cautionary example is a 6-month certificate course in land restoration introduced by Kyambogo University in Uganda in 2022. According to LRT alumni associated with Kyambogo University, this programme has not succeeded due to lack of enrolment, possibly due to a lack of advertising for the course.

Summarizing, to enhance the chances of success and ensure both quality of the intervention and quantity in terms of uptake and output, there is a **clear need for**

- *Technical support from GRÓ LRT in terms of curriculum development, course materials, etc.;*
- *Student scholarships (from GRÓ LRT and possibly others); and*
- *Broad advertisement of the course to potential candidates, across national and international platforms.*

Programme implementation and adaptive management (Efficiency)

The envisaged course would be offered by the **School of Forestry, Environmental and Geographical Sciences of Makerere University**. Individual course modules would largely be delivered by Makerere's **current academic staff** who have a strong partnership with GRÓ LRT by training in LRT programmes, serving as guest lecturers, and developing and implementing in-county short courses. The course curriculum would be reviewed and adjusted in regular intervals **according to the course accreditation cycles**. **Technical support from GRÓ LRT could be a crucial element** to contribute to the quality of the course through curriculum development and review.

According to Makerere University academic staff, the estimated cost for the full course per student amounts to **USD 5,000**. This includes all registration and tuition fees as well as costs of field trips and a research project. This amount was assumed as the cost per trainee in the context of potential scholarships provided by GRÓ LRT in order to assess the expected cost-benefit ratio of the intended course in comparison to other GRÓ LRT activities.

The comparison between different GRÓ LRT activities is provided in Table 1 below. The estimated cost per trainee for all other GRÓ LRT activities are derived from the average figures from the GRÓ financial reports 2018-2022 (GRÓ LRT, 2018-2022). Note that, for the total cost including operational expenses,

the annual administrative costs and staff salaries were added to the direct cost of each activity as per assumed proportions⁷.

Table 1: Estimated cost per trainee for the different GRÓ LRT activities, based on GRÓ financial reports 2018-2022.

ACTIVITY	EST. DIRECT COST PER TRAINEE (USD) TOTAL (PER DAY)	EST. TOTAL COST INCL. OPERATIONAL EXPENSES PER TRAINEE (USD) TOTAL (PER DAY)	OUTCOMES (UGANDA ONLY)
6-month LRT programme in Iceland	26,791 (149)	43,846 (244)	Number of trainees: 2/year; Formal outcome: 30 ECTS credits
LRT MSc/PhD scholarship in Iceland ⁸	17,312 (47)	45,773 (125)	Number of trainees: < 1/year; Formal outcome: MSc/PhD
LRT in-country short course	1,346 (198)	2,471 (275)	Number of trainees: 25/year; Formal outcome: Certificate
<i>Envisaged MSc Land Restoration at Makerere University⁹</i>	<i>5,000 (7)</i>	<i>7,643 (10)</i>	<i>Number of trainees: 10-20 / year Formal outcome: MSc</i>

Based on the financial figures from 2018 to 2022 and the assumptions applied, the envisaged intervention would be **highly efficient in terms of monetary cost** compared to the other GRÓ LRT activities.

Prospects for the maintenance/ continuation of the programme benefits (Sustainability)

The primary requirement for sustainability—the **complete acceptance of the proposed intervention by the beneficiary or partner institution**—seems to be strongly fulfilled. This is because the intervention was suggested and is being led by the SFEGS staff at Makerere University. Furthermore, SFEGS staff have stated that the intervention will be carried out even without support from GRÓ LRT.

For the envisaged course to be sustainable, there needs to be **sustained demand**. The main target groups within Uganda are environmental and natural resource officers of the local governments seeking postgraduate training and Ugandan bachelor graduates in relevant fields. These fields offer a wide selection of potential candidates to fulfil demand in the programme. In total, there are an estimated 400 environmental and natural resource officers of local governments¹⁰. Assuming that one quarter of those would be interested in the course, this would correspond to a supply of 10 candidates per year over 10 years. In terms of interest, this appears to be a reasonable assumption based on feedback from LRT short course participants. In addition, assuming that 50 candidates earn a bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline per year and one quarter of those would be interested in the course, this would correspond to another 12 candidates, bringing the assumed total to 22 and suggesting that there is **sufficient**

⁷ 60% LRT postgraduate training programme; 15% in-country short courses; 15% MSc/PhD scholarships; 5% Makerere University MSc scholarships; 5% for other activities.

⁸ Figures refer to annual cost.

⁹ Note that this figure excludes other possible support activities by GRO LRT to the envisaged intervention, e.g. in line with course development and review.

¹⁰ There are 135 districts/local governments in Uganda, with an estimated average of three officers per district with mandates directly related to land restoration (natural resource officer, environmental officer, forest officer).

demand for a viable period. This figure can be considered conservative, as it omits possible demand from national ministry level and from neighbouring countries. However, it can be assumed that only a minority of interested candidates would be able to actually afford the cost of studying in Kampala for two years. Makerere University SFECS staff consider 10 students per year as the minimum viable intake.

Yet, as indicated in section 0, a **key factor** towards the successful establishment and sustainability is **quality and affordability of the course** for the target groups. Therefore, the following two elements are considered as key contributions by GRÓ LRT in order to maximize prospects of sustainability:

- **Long-term commitment by GRÓ LRT to provide technical support** in terms of curriculum development, course materials, etc.;
- **Funding scholarship support** from GRÓ LRT and others. For example, GRÓ LRT could commit to a certain minimum number of annual scholarships¹¹ to establish and consolidate the course for a certain period (e.g. first course accreditation period). Other potential donors/sponsors¹² could increase the number of funding origins.

Based on the necessities for sustainability, a cooperation model in which GRÓ LRT commits to provide both technical and scholarship **support over a fixed period**, preferably synchronized with the **course accreditation cycle**, would ensure sustainability in the future. Depending on experiences during the support period, the intended intervention could even serve as a scaling-down/exit strategy for sending Ugandan fellows to the 6-month LRT programme in Iceland so LRT could concentrate its focus on different countries with that intervention.

Prospects for longer-term development effects (Impact)

For the implementation of Uganda's development agenda and the commitments and goals in line with the international agreements listed in section 0, the local and international **demand for expertise in the field of land restoration will be increasing**. According to key informants consulted, there is a **job market for experts in land restoration** in Uganda with donor-funded research and development projects in relevant fields and the enforcement of national laws and regulations with regards to land restoration and rehabilitation in industrial activities. **Possible employers include local governments, central government ministries, NGOs, and academia**. Possible **career opportunities in the private sector are less clear** but may include the consulting sector and emerging sectors such as market-based carbon and biodiversity credits. If delivered effectively, the intended intervention is expected to result in an increased high-quality workforce in land restoration, both improving the careers of individuals and contributing to a healthier natural environment in Uganda.

At the institutional level, the creation of the course would be a major impact of GRÓ LRT. Based on the Ugandan key informants consulted, the interest and capacity for the development of such a course in the field of land restoration in Uganda can be directly attributed to the work of GRÓ LRT since 2007. Alumni of the 6-month LRT programme are among the academic staff at Makerere University SFECS and would be involved in the development and delivery of the course.

Impacts at the macro level are difficult to predict and attribute, but enhanced land restoration expertise in the country through the envisaged course can be expected to increase the likelihood of **positions with relevant decision-making and policy-making power being filled by individuals well-trained in land restoration**.

¹¹ Makerere University SFECS staff consider 10 students per year as the minimum viable intake.

¹² Possible other donors mentioned are

UN agencies such as UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, etc.;

IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development); and

African Union, e.g. through GMES (*Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa*)

Horizontal themes/ cross-cutting issues

Policies are in place at Makerere University regarding the cross-cutting issues of **human rights and gender equality**. According to Makerere University staff consulted, there is roughly gender parity among the students at the relevant department.

Yet, these issues need to be considered further during course development. As these issues are **highly relevant for both the planning and implementation of land restoration activities**, lectures on these issues should be included in the curriculum. The 6-month LRT programme curriculum can serve as a blueprint here and be further adjusted to the local context. Lectures on human rights and gender equality as included in the 6-month LRT programme curriculum were consistently regarded as highly interesting and valuable by both Makerere University staff and GRÓ LRT alumni.

Given the existing partnership between GRÓ GEST and Makerere University, there **is potential for synergies by involving Makerere University academic staff and/or Ugandan GRÓ GEST alumni** in the development and/or delivery of lectures related to gender equality.

The other cross-cutting issue of **environmental sustainability** is the overall aim of land restoration and sustainable land management and thus **intrinsic to the intended intervention**. No significant environmental risks could be identified in line with the intended intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

The MSc course in land restoration envisaged by Makerere University SFECS as described by the key informants appears to be **well aligned with the evaluation criteria**. This case study found it to be

- Relevant in terms of both the country context and needs and GRÓ LRT's objectives.
- Coherent with other GRÓ LRT activities in Uganda as well as Icelandic bilateral aid and activities by other donors. The envisaged course is complementary to other GRÓ LRT activities and offers potential synergies within GRÓ LRT and with other GRÓ programmes (primarily GEST).
- Effective as long as the key conditions of course quality and affordability are met. GRÓ LRT can play a crucial role in meeting those conditions.
- Highly efficient in terms of monetary cost compared to other GRÓ LRT activities. Course quality would be key for ensuring this efficiency is harnessed, in which GRÓ LRT can play a crucial role.
- Sustainable, if assumptions regarding demand are correct and if the key conditions of course quality and affordability are met. GRÓ LRT can support this through advertisement and scholarship funding.
- Impactful, very likely in the short- to mid-term at the individual and the institutional level – over a longer timeframe at the macro/policy-making level.
- Addressing cross-cutting issues of human rights and gender equality, if these issues are thoroughly integrated into the curriculum. GRÓ LRT experience and possible collaboration with GRÓ GEST offer promising opportunities in this regard.

The envisaged course is directly inspired by the GRÓ 6-month LRT programme, and its creation can itself be considered a **direct outcome of the GRÓ LRT partnership with Uganda**.

The present case study finds it **highly beneficial for GRÓ LRT to pilot the delivery of land restoration training through partnerships and collaboration with in-country academic institutions**. The following recommendations aim to maximize the success of the corresponding intervention.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Makerere University SFECS is determined to develop the envisaged course irrespective of support from GRÓ LRT. However, **GRÓ LRT support is needed** to significantly increase the chance of success of the course in terms of quality, initiation, and sustainability.
2. GRÓ LRT can **ensure effectiveness and sustainability** of the envisaged intervention through
 - 2.1 **Technical support** in the development and regular review of the course curriculum and course materials. This will be crucial particularly during the course development phase and towards the end of each course accreditation cycle. Yet, possible continued support would be valuable in

quality assurance, supervision of selected research projects, and guest lecturing by Icelandic academic staff.

- 2.2 **Scholarship support** by fully or partially funding an agreed number of students per year for a set period. This will provide stability of enrolment during the course's establishment and consolidated and allow all parties to safely plan ahead.
3. The above implies a need for a **commitment of support by GRÓ LRT over a set period** of time for all parties to have planning security during the initial implementation of the programme. A possible approach would be for GRÓ LRT to commit to support the course development and provide 10 scholarships per year during the first 5-year accreditation cycle. This means that corresponding **budget allocations need to be made in advance at least for the next 5 years** on the part of GRÓ LRT. Currently, budget allocations from GRÓ LRT are made only on a year-to-year basis.
4. In addition to GRÓ LRT funding, it is recommended that possible additional funding sources for scholarships (and/or other course elements such as materials, equipment, guest lectures, etc.) be explored. Furthermore, the model of (partially) integrating the course with offerings by other universities (e.g. through Erasmus Mundus / Erasmus+) should be explored.
5. Attention must be directed in a way that the envisaged intervention does **not come at the expense of other existing GRÓ LRT activities**.
 - 5.1 Ugandan stakeholders interviewed made clear that **the intended intervention should not replace in-country short courses** and/or other existing GRÓ LRT activities. The objectives and target groups of the in-country short courses and the intended intervention are complementary to each other. The short courses have their specific benefits and justification, and Ugandan stakeholders expressed their desire for these to be revived. In the context of limited funding, it is therefore **recommended to investigate whether the delivery of short courses could be integrated in the curriculum of the envisaged course**.
 - 5.2 As the set of GRÓ LRT partner countries is changing over time, **the envisaged intervention may constitute an exit/scaling-down strategy for other GRÓ LRT support activities in Uganda**. If and when the envisaged course has proven to result in a significant increase of land restoration expertise in Uganda, it may allow GRÓ LRT to allocate more resources to new/other partner countries.