



Disaster Resilience Leadership Program



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation



GFDRR
Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

Leadership Matters

The past few decades have seen an exponential escalation in the frequency, intensity and impact of disasters. The United Nations reports that five times more people are affected by disasters now than a generation ago. Leadership makes a tremendous difference in disaster preparation, response and recovery. In times of extreme adversity, strong and effective leadership can prevent a disaster altogether or mitigate its impact, whereas weak and ineffective leadership can exacerbate the situation, with devastating life or death consequences. Despite this importance, investments to build human capacity and sustain a systematic approach to strengthening leadership capacity that promotes resilient outcomes have not kept pace with increasing global disaster risks, and in many of the most vulnerable communities, these efforts have been missing altogether.

Tulane University’s Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (TU/DRLA), in partnership with local universities and disaster risk management stakeholders in countries across Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean, have developed the Disaster Resilience Leadership (DRL) Program to address these leadership gaps. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the Royal Norwegian Government, the DRL Program operates on four levels to 1) strengthen existing disaster leadership capacity through executive short courses, 2) enhance organizational resilience and skills through accurate needs assessments, targeted training, online tools and knowledge sharing, 3) create a long-term pipeline of future leaders and enhanced institutional expertise through faculty development workshops and graduate and certificates programs in pre- and in-service formats and 4) develop a global network of practitioners, faculty and facilitators to foster knowledge creation, exchange, collaboration and resource sharing.

- Level I**
Strengthening Existing Leadership Capacity | [see page 6 for more information.](#)
- Level II**
Building Organizational Efficacy | [see page 10 for more information.](#)
- Level III**
Creating Future DRL Leaders | [see page 10 for more information.](#)
- Level IV**
Enhancing the Global DRL Network | [see page 14 for more information.](#)



The Disaster Resilience Leadership Program

BUILDS HUMAN CAPACITY
in disaster vulnerable communities

**TO MORE EFFECTIVELY SAVE LIVES
AND ALLEVIATE SUFFERING BY**
systematically

STRENGTHENING EXISTING CAPACITY,
supporting

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE LEADERS, AND
WORKING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY**
through a global network of
academic, public and private stakeholders.

**WE HAVE A
GLOBAL NETWORK OF 39 COUNTRIES.**

THE IMPACT:

DRL FELLOWS IN 25 COUNTRIES

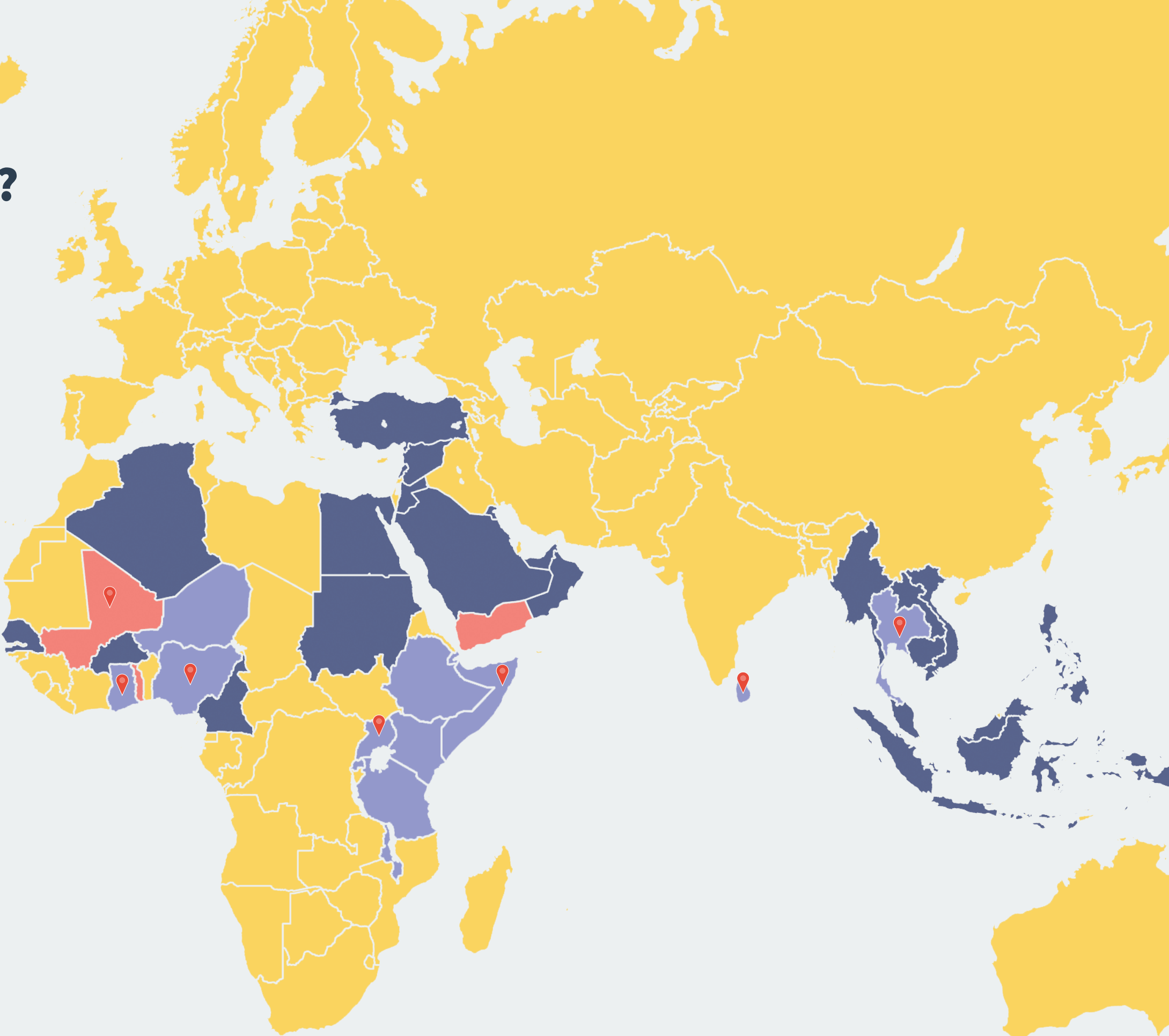
**ESTABLISHED DISASTER RESILIENCE LEADERSHIP
GRADUATE-LEVEL PROGRAMMING IN 5 COUNTRIES**

**OVER 500 INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS FROM
DIVERSE FIELDS AND GROWING**

WHERE IS THE DISASTER RESILIENCE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM?

Legend*

- Levels I & IV
- Levels III & IV
- Levels I, III, & IV
- DRL Regional Platform



*As DRL Phase II is implemented, more countries will be added.

Level I: Strengthening Existing Leadership Capacity

The DRL Executive Short Courses aim to strengthen the leadership and decision-making ability of the practicing workforce in the most vulnerable communities. To date, DRL Fellows from 25 countries have completed a year-long executive training program. The courses provide practitioners with training that is established and institutionalized at TU/DRLA and adapted to local contexts by university partners to reflect their disaster risks and leadership competencies.

Who are the DRL Fellows?

DRL Fellows come from organizations and sectors that play a critical role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery across a broad spectrum of communities with escalating disaster risks but finite resources. Identification and selection of DRL Fellows requires local expertise and participation. Each DRL country and regional partner establishes an Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) that includes leaders from relevant line ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and academia. Based on their collective expertise, EACs source candidates for the DRL executive short courses by obtaining nominations from alumni networks, key stakeholders and national and local disaster risk management agencies. Of the DRL Fellows who have completed the year-long fellowship, 48 percent are affiliated with government agencies, 28 percent with academic institutions and 21 percent with local or international NGOs. The EACs also ensure that DRL Fellow selection and course content reflect the needs of the country and region.

How are the DRL Executive Short Courses developed?

The DRL Executive Short Courses are based on TU/DRLA’s Master of Science program in Disaster Resilience Leadership and organized around four academic pillars—human factors, environmental factors, disaster operations and leadership analytics. All courses are constructed around a set of core DRL competencies prioritized by local implementing partners under the guidance of the EACs. Curricula are also informed by key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted by local university faculty with practitioners working in the community. When developing the course curricula, partners are given access to an accumulated database of DRL competencies and modules. Each course benefits from the accumulated knowledge and lessons learned of DRL network partners. The Executive Short Course curricula are dynamic and continue to be updated and revised as appropriate.

Illustrative Topics & Themes of the DRL Executive Short Course Modules

Leadership Operations in DRL

- › Organizational Structures and Management Systems
- › Improved Programming Approaches
- › Partnerships and Coordination
- › Human Resources
- › Disaster Risk Reduction
- › Adherence to Humanitarian Standards and Principles
- › Evidence Measurement and Learning
- › Leadership Functions for Disaster Resilience

Human Factors and Communications in DRL

- › Planning for the Unthinkable and Promoting Disaster Resilience
- › Working in Multi-team Settings: Leadership and Teambuilding
- › Motivation and People Management
- › Communication and Advocacy
- › Principles of Negotiation and Conflict Mitigation
- › Organizational Change

Environmental Factors in DRL

- › Climate Variability and Disaster Risk
- › Hazard Assessment and Hazard Mapping
- › Adaptation to Climate Change and the Role of Leadership for Resilient Societies
- › Urban Environments and Disaster Risk Reduction
- › Leadership, Governance and Reducing Risk

Leadership Analytics in DRL

- › Overview of Analytics in DRL
- › Application of Disaster Risk Identification and Assessment Tools for Disaster Risk Reduction
- › Forecasting and Early Warning
- › Use of ICT Tools in Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery
- › Championing Change



How are the DRL Executive Short Courses Delivered?


Each DRL Executive Short Course cohort is composed of participants from government agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society. This blend of participants allows a multi-professional and inter-professional approach that fosters teamwork, collaboration, resource sharing and collective learning. It also supports professional networking and communities of practice in the expanding field of disaster risk management (DRM). Hammick et al. (2007) note that inter-professional education is a subset of multi-professional education and involves different professionals learning “with, from and about one another to improve collaboration.” Such learning and sharing of resources are also important in program design, as leadership is closely linked with knowledge management and education.


A key element of the DRL Executive Short Courses is interactive dialogue. Fellows explore contextualized case studies and team-based simulations in the DRL context. Based on a set of identified competencies, the activities are designed to explore a set of unconventional questions in the field of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and DRM, rather than imposing a static corpus of answers. The DRL curriculum thus aims to create learning activities that tangibly modify the leadership behaviors of individual practitioners and help DRL Fellows successfully implement resilience-building agendas at the institutional level.


The DRL Executive Short Courses are built around a year-long fellowship program that includes two in-person, week-long residential workshops (DRL-1 and DRL-2) that promote peer-to-peer learning. In addition, each DRL Fellow is responsible for creating an Action Plan to reduce local vulnerability in an ongoing DRL issue of concern. Based on the Action Plan, the Fellows then implement specific actions targeting local hazards during the period between the two workshops. The Action Plan development process is a key element of evaluating the acquired learning of each DRL Fellow.

The Action Plan process builds on Pontefract’s (2012) view that learning is a connected, collaborative and continuous process and acknowledges that there are formal, informal and social ways of learning. DRL Fellows are allocated significant time during the workshop to obtain feedback from peers and facilitators and to modify their Action Plans for presentation to the global network of practitioners through an online forum. They are also paired with other DRL Fellows working on similar projects for peer-to-peer mentoring and support between the two executive workshops. DRL Fellows are asked to identify peers and/or mentors that can provide assistance during implementation of the Action Plan, thus leveraging social and technical infrastructures within and outside their organizations.

The Action Plan process is an essential component of the DRL model of competency-based training and emphasizes the skills, mindsets and dispositions of the DRL Fellows. The process encourages self-directed and lifelong learning, including provisions for an ever-evolving set of skills. It has also proven to be a successful mechanism to create awareness, implement tangible activities and target relevant areas of vulnerability in local communities, as shown in the following examples:

 In **Sri Lanka**, Army Brigadier General K. M. Udayanta Wijeratne created an Action Plan to train 434 soldiers in basic search and rescue operations, including skilled interventions for emergency response and DRM, specialized training in swimming, and a medic course for those who qualified.

 In **Thailand**, Professor Sarintip Tantane, Dean of Engineering of Naresuan University, developed an Action Plan to mainstream DRM and emergency response into higher education. To strengthen disaster resilience leadership for Thai society and create an innovative early warning system (EWS), Professor Sarintip liaised with the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Department of Local Administration, Thai Meteorological Department and Royal Irrigation Department, developing targeted graduate and training programs in DRL/DRM with specific thesis topics to improve EWS.

 In **Cambodia**, Kep Kannaro, Director of the Partnership for Development in Kampuchea (PADEK), developed an Action Plan to equip 25 communes in PADEK’s target areas with DRM contingency plans and improve the operational capacity for plan implementation. PADEK serves as the lead member of the Cambodian Humanitarian Forum, a network of over 90 local NGOs working in DRM. Through this plan, PADEK was able to mobilize NGO members to advocate with national and sub-national government, emphasizing DRM and investment in disaster risk reduction to build a culture of safety in disaster-prone communities.



“ Each citizen in his or her own way should contribute towards building disaster resilience, among themselves and in their community... [Leadership means] challenging the status quo and searching for opportunities to build a better tomorrow for you and the community you serve.”

Lakshaman Bandaranayake
Founder and Chairman
Vanguard Media Holdings
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Level II: Building Organizational Efficacy

Level II of the DRL Program seeks to build a critical mass of disaster resilience leadership by scaling up its capacity building efforts through member organizations to systematically increase impact and learning at both organizational (internal capacity) and community (external capacity) levels. DRL Fellows and partner institutions, drawn from public, private, non-governmental and academic sectors, will be instrumental in this effort, conducting in-depth needs assessments at their respective organizations to identify skills gaps across the more technical areas of disaster response, which align with the governmental and established Human Resources approaches.

The results of these assessments will be linked to a training Organizational Leadership Roadmap (OLR) to be developed by the DRL Program that will serve to match training modules to staff levels and competency gaps. The DRL Program will leverage a virtual web-based platform and create an online library repository, amongst other ER/DRM online tools, of existing curricula already validated by the humanitarian assistance community to ensure ongoing learning and knowledge sharing. This effort will be combined with more contextualized curricula to be identified and supported by the DRL Fellows across the globe. The training roadmap will assist organizations in rapidly matching appropriate and context-relevant training modules to targeted staff needs. In addition, these efforts will provide higher education institutions the opportunity to identify pre-service and in-service training needs, thereby strengthening the network at a systems level, and building internal capacity that will ultimately benefit community response and recovery efforts.

Level II of the DRL Program is a new addition and is expected to evolve based on further input and interaction from the Global DRL Network and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



Level III: Creating Future DRL Leaders

Who are the global DRL faculty and students?

The DRL Program brings together a diverse faculty from multiple disciplines, backgrounds, countries and regions.

Creating an enabling environment for meaningful faculty participation is a priority for the DRL Program. Strong faculty technical expertise is essential to the successful launch of any graduate program and is especially critical in an emerging field such as DRL. In countries more vulnerable to disasters, this faculty expertise is often lacking or minimally available. Faculty members targeted for participation in the Faculty Development Workshops (FDWs) must teach at the tertiary level, be affiliated with a department related to DRL and be able to apply DRL knowledge to program development and future research.

In order to be admitted into a DRL-associated graduate program, applicants must possess a bachelor's degree in a field related to DRL and, on average, two years of field experience. Accordingly, students tend to come from a variety of disciplines and professions. DRL and its partners make a concerted effort to have balanced gender representation.

SAMPLE FACULTY BACKGROUNDS

Agriculture/Agronomy

Architecture

Chemistry

Economics & Entrepreneurship

Engineering

Geography

Geology

Information/Communication Science

Law

Mathematics


Meteorology

Physics

Public Health

Social Work

Urban & Regional Planning

 **Students in Nigeria's 2015 program ranged 31 to 50 years of age and were drawn from the fields of medicine/public health, social sciences, environmental sciences, engineering and education.** These students have prior work experience in government ministries (both national and federal), military/paramilitary services (customs, police, the Civil Defense Corps, the Road Safety Corps), local and state emergency management agencies and the business and trading sector (banks, insurance companies, commerce and sole distributors). **In Uganda, the 11 students enrolled in the 2015/2016 Makerere University School of Public Health Master's in Disaster Management (MDM) program have an average age of 32 years, multiple years of work experience and an educational background in health sciences, social sciences, population studies, food science or nutrition.** These MDM candidates have previously worked in the security forces, emergency response agencies, a university, the manufacturing/private sector, the ministry of health or health facilities/clinical institutions.

What form do DRL graduate programs take?

DRL graduate programs may take the form of credit-bearing certificate programs or master's level programs. The DRL Program provides survey tools and guides to partner universities to assess the demand for certificate or master's degree programs based on human resource needs in disaster leadership. Each partner university aims to establish an interdisciplinary program that addresses both the immediate and long-term needs for a robust DRR/DRM workforce. Certificate programs are less burdensome to establish in the university environment and address immediate human resource gaps while providing greater flexibility and ease of student participation. Degree programs require a greater investment of faculty time to navigate the university approval process and greater student commitment in terms of time and finances.

 In 2013, the Higher Education Alliance for Leadership through Health (HEALTH Alliance), a regional network of seven academic institutions of public health in six countries in East and Central Africa, secured approval for the first Master's in Disaster Management (MDM) program at Makerere University in **Uganda**. Throughout the accreditation process, HEALTH Alliance held a series of workshops with DRL Program support to review existing curricula and organize FDWs with 81 faculty members from seven partner universities throughout the region to discuss, identify and prioritize relevant competencies in DRL across disciplines.

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH



MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH


DISASTER MANAGEMENT

How are DRL graduate programs established?


The DRL Program uses a needs-based, contextualized model in which TU/DRLA works closely with university partners to strengthen faculty capacity. FDWs are critical to this institutional capacity building effort. Through a systematic, ongoing curriculum design process, the FDWs assess curriculum needs and linkages relevant to disaster resilience leadership, assess student interest, identify faculty that could contribute to certificate or master's programming and develop and revise curricula based on local contexts. With TU/DRLA support, Curriculum Advisory Committees (CACs) are created in each institution to facilitate this process by mapping existing curricula, targeting technical subject matter gaps and integrating DRL leadership and other core competencies into revised curricula. To encourage knowledge and learning exchange, expert faculty from networked universities and neighboring countries participate in the process.

As a result of this work, DRL networks in Southeast Asia and East Africa, West Africa and the Horn of Africa have produced sets of core competencies for graduate programs in DRL and shared faculty-vetted methods for assessing student learning and competency acquisition. In East and West Africa, faculty developed a menu of methods for measuring students' attainment of competencies and a methodology and matrix to validate core competencies that are suitable for a broader stakeholder group.



 Through their Faculty Development Workshop in August 2014, Benadir University is now offering an online certificate training course, which intends to reach practitioners in remote locations, and an on-campus post graduate program in DRR/DRM.

BENADIR UNIVERSITY



ONLINE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

LEVEL III CASE STUDIES



Peradeniya University Kandy, Sri Lanka

In the aftermath of the war in Sri Lanka, leadership—especially in the field of DRR/DRM—has been a crucial factor in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations in the country. The government selected the University of Peradeniya's Postgraduate Institute of Science (PGIS) to implement project activities to strengthen capacity, support the development of future leaders and work toward sustainability in the country.

The university's original DRM graduate-level program was a response to the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. Through the Disaster Resilience Leadership (DRL) Program, the University of Peradeniya recognized that its graduate curriculum and offerings were outdated, driven by experience with the tsunami, and did not address many current and future disaster risks. With guidance from the TU/DRLA and Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), the University of Peradeniya institutionalized revised disaster resilience leadership courses in its graduate curriculum to prepare a new generation of DRL leaders.

The university used experience from DRL's Level I and tapped into its network of practitioners to capture the views of various DRR/DRM leaders. Feedback from a baseline survey implemented by Peradeniya University in partnership with ADPC and TU/DRLA, as well as input from former students, graduates and faculty members, identified gaps where the DRL curriculum could be embedded into the existing program.

Over 30 faculty members from Sri Lanka and the region gathered in a series of Faculty Development Workshops to address areas identified in the survey as critical to strengthening and updating the graduate program. The faculty members identified multiple challenges to establishing relevant graduate and certificate programs, including competition from other universities vying to establish programs in the same subject, a paucity of technical expertise and a brain drain from the country, limited infrastructure and less demand than for other disciplines. In addition, stringent university administrative procedures had to be followed to institutionalize a program. Approval was needed from the Board of Study, Coordinating Committee and Board of Management of the PGIS, Academic Development and Planning Committee, Senate and Council of the University of Peradeniya and University Grants Commission.

The Process of Institutionalizing Programs within the University Structure

1. Board of Study
2. Coordinating Committee and the Board of Management of the PGIS
3. The Academic Development and Planning Committee
4. The Senate and the Council of the University of Peradeniya
5. University Grants Commission

Challenges to Bringing Graduate and Certificate Programs into Existence

- › Lengthy Administrative Procedures
- › Lack of human resources / Brain Drain from regional countries
- › Competition from many Universities on the same subjects
- › Limited physical and infrastructure facilities
- › Limited job market /demand compared to other disciplines
- › Sustainability



University for Development Studies

Tamale, Ghana

The Community Disaster Resilience Studies Programme

The University for Development Studies (UDS) is located in northern Ghana, which comprises the Upper East, Western and Northern regions and is the area most vulnerable to disasters in the country. Over the past three decades, the north has witnessed perennial droughts, disease outbreaks, conflict and floods, with devastating consequences for human life, property and infrastructure. Despite its location and mandate to provide training to solve development problems, UDS did not have DRM or DRR offerings until 2015. The steps to establish the university's Community Disaster Resilience Studies Programme are described below.

UDS emphasizes practical research and field-based training aimed at reducing poverty to accelerate the national development effort. Its community-technical interface Third Trimester Field Practical Programme (TTFP), combines academic and community-based field practical work. The university also established a field laboratory in Northern Ghana.

Launching any new graduate program presents challenges, but as UDS discovered, launching one in an emerging field can be particularly challenging. While disaster resilience studies build on DRM and DRR, these are emerging academic disciplines in which UDS did not have faculty capacity or learning resources available. To address these challenges and create a sustainable program, UDS first advocated for the program with the university administration. Creating a new graduate program requires strong, sustained leadership. After participating in a DRL Level I workshop led by the University of Ghana and TU/DRLA in 2013, UDS initiated discussions with key faculty members that led to the formation of a DRM interest group.

At a DRL Faculty Development Workshop in February of the same year, faculty and key stakeholders used the results of a baseline survey undertaken in partnership with TU/DRLA to map UDS courses in the areas of disaster operations, environment, analytics and human factors. In an intensive design workshop, the group then planned a complete DRL curriculum that focused on Community Disaster Resilience Studies, developed consensus on core competencies for the graduate program and determined appropriate learning activities for teaching the competencies.

To create a sustainable program, the interest group identified a series of steps including: consulting selected faculty; identifying core champions; forming a core working group; hosting a faculty capacity building workshop and curriculum design workshops; developing a concept paper to submit for departmental approval; conducting formative research; engaging the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO); developing a detailed proposal for academic board approval; selecting and training course facilitators; soliciting sustainable program funding and recruiting students. These steps required intra-university collaboration and leadership. The program leaders felt strongly that an interdisciplinary focus should be a key element of the program. UDS adopted a methodology for validating its curriculum design that included hosting a multi-stakeholder forum to review the curriculum in depth and solicit feedback for improvement prior to launching the program. One of the challenges that UDS faced was accreditation, which it eventually overcame. The University also needed to acquire a robust DRL library, which was made possible with the assistance of TU/DRLA.

Having reached all of these milestones, UDS is ready to launch the new DRL program in late 2015.

Establishing a New Academic Standard

1. Challenges

- › Teaching and Learning Resource Inadequacies
- › Faculty Capacity Inadequacies

2. Institutionalization Process

- › Preparatory Phase
- › Program Design Phase
- › Mobilization & Accreditation Phase
- › Launching Phase

3. Student Recruitment

- › Adverts
- › Application Solicitation
- › Interviews
- › Means of Funding

4. Program Marketing

- › Stakeholder Forum
- › Student Field Practicum
- › Practice Feedbacks

5. Intra-University Collaboration

- › Leadership
- › Program Design
- › Resource Sharing
- › Collaborative Research

6. Measuring Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- › Interdisciplinary Faculty Involved in Teaching and Research
- › Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminars
- › Interdisciplinary Faculty Capacity Refreshers

Level IV: Global DRL Network

Throughout the course of the program, the TU/DRLA team and the Regional DRL Platforms are creating collaborative networks between all the members included in the DRL program. By enhancing local and global networks, the DRL team aims to strengthen synergies at the systems level.

What is the Global DRL Network and Who Comprises it?

The Global DRL Network is a resilience leadership resource that enables an evolving community of stakeholders to engage, learn and share best practices. This approach builds on preventive development of networked leadership capacity and empowers disaster resilience leaders to make better decisions based on improved capacity to learn and adapt.

The Global DRL Network is composed of a broad range of actors from government, civil society, NGOs, non-profit organizations, academia and the private sector. The network also includes local institutions and regional networks, including our Regional DRL Platforms such as the HEALTH Alliance and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC). The Global DRL Network continues to expand and in 2016 will include entities, partners, and stakeholders in India and Central America (Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala).

How does the Global DRL Network Serve its Members?

DRL Fellow Mohamed Osman was only five-years old when the Somali State collapsed in 1991. Yet he can still remember how it felt to live in peace. He remembers watching cartoons and taking family picnics and safe drives on a beautiful road to visit his grandfather in the remote Gedo Region on the Kenyan border – an area he cannot access today.

But as a life-long resident of conflict-ridden Mogadishu, many of Mohamed’s youthful memories reflect the challenges of living in a war-torn society with dysfunctional state institutions.

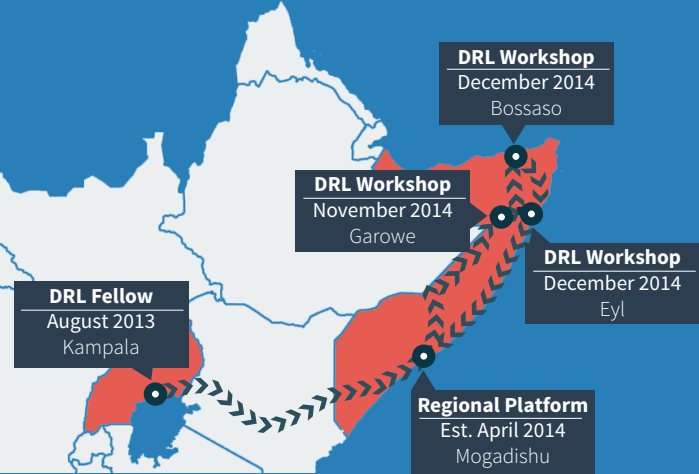
“Everything that happened in Mogadishu during this time,” he says, “we were witness to.”

Mohamed prefers to remember another time in Somalia – a time hardly covered by the mainstream media – an enlightened time in the early 2000s when society seemed to absorb the disruption of the state collapse and bounce back to provide critical services typically offered by government. Universities and the business sector once again thrived, and Somalis enjoyed access to education, commerce, landlines, electricity, water and cheap Internet.

“I remember the night of the Millennium,” he says. “I was 14. I was sitting outside with a group of about 30 friends. We decided that the only way to better our country was to increase our education, bring back what we learned and use our skills to support our people.”

After earning his first degree in Economics from Mogadishu in Somalia, Mohamed sought graduate studies from Uganda at Makerere University and Kampala International University where he graduated with dual MA degrees in Economic Policy & Planning and Conflict Resolution & Peace Building respectively.

Today Mohamed works as the Program Coordinator for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-funded Disaster Resilient Leadership (DRL) program in Somalia and as the Focal Person of the Somalia ResilientAfrica Network (RAN)¹, one of eight global development innovation labs funded by USAID’s Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN). In addition, Mohamed works as Director of Grants and Projects and Director of the Academy for Institutional Development at Benadir University (BU) in Mogadishu, where he oversees the operation of all areas of the academy and university fundraising efforts. He is the Executive Director of the Somali Disaster Resilience Institute at BU where he serves on the University’s senior administration team and as a liaison with the Board of Trustees and Academic Council, among additional roles.



To understand Mohamed’s journey and how it illustrates the DRL platform, it is important to understand how the DRL program functions. Through the DRL network, fellows have extended their reach from the local to regional to global level, while partner organizations have moved from global to regional to local level. Mohamed first became involved with the DRLA through the RAN. As Focal Person for Somalia, he became a DRL Fellow through Makerere University’s DRL Level I platform in Kampala, Uganda, in 2013.

As a DRL Fellow, his action plan focused on leveraging the resources and capacity of Benadir University to build local disaster resilience leadership capacity to recurrent natural and manmade disasters. With his training and connections through the DRL platform, Mohamed returned to Mogadishu to introduce and mainstream disaster risk reduction (DRR) in BU’s core programs and activities, as well as to establish a “Somali Disaster Resilience Society.” In Mogadishu, he had access to the DRL global network of fellows through tools such as the DRL Academic Commons, Facebook, DRL Contact Database, DRL Intelligent Directory and Global DRL Listserv. By utilizing these tools along with the DRL curriculum, Mohamed was able to use his own resources to organize and implement six DRL Level I workshops throughout Somalia.

“I know Somalia faces a lot of problems,” Mohamed says. “We need help from a lot of people, so I am always engaged. I believe in the power of the [DRL] Network.”



In 2014, through Mohamed’s leadership, BU was designated as a DRL Regional Platform. Today, BU’s DRL network includes local and regional universities from Somalia (Amoud University, Benadir University, East Africa University, Galkayo University, Horizon International University, Mogadishu University, and Puntland State University), Sudan (Sudan University of Science and Technology and Imam Mahdi University), Kenya (Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology) and Ethiopia (JigJiga University). In March 2015, BU launched a DRL online certificate program and in 2016 will accept the first cohort in a new master’s program in disaster resilience leadership.

More than a decade after entering university to help rebuild his beloved Somalia, Mohamed continues to be inspired by his fellow Somali’s resilience. He shows great pride when he talks of the resurgent strength of the Somali academic and private sectors, boasting more than 40 universities, no less than five electric and seven telecommunications companies, and several local airlines connecting all regions of the country.

“Somalis have very strong social and business networks,” he says, “and they have become very self reliant because they had to survive and thrive as a society. They had to always ask, ‘What if? What if aid doesn’t come? What will we do?’ But we know there is always a way.”

¹The ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) is one of eight university-based Development Labs that make up the Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) established by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In Africa, RAN brings together 20 universities in 16 countries, with a secretariat at Makerere University in Uganda. RAN is structured around four Resilience Innovation Labs (RILabs). By applying science, technology, innovation and partnerships and using evidence-based approaches, RAN seeks to identify, develop and scale up innovative solutions to strengthen the resilience of African communities afflicted by natural and human-made shocks and stresses.



The Way Forward

“In 2005 the United Nations (UN) launched a process to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action. As a result, in 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed on a set of actions focusing on stronger leadership, more effective coordination and improved accountability. Moreover, the next generation of Millennium Development Goals, and a post-2015 development agenda prioritizes sustainable development, inclusive economic transformation, peace and governance and global partnerships (United Nations 2013). To support the achievement of these goals, the DRL Program will continue to strengthen existing leadership capacity in the most vulnerable communities and work with local university partners to develop new competencies and approaches to building future leadership capacity to promote disaster resilience.”

Ky Luu, J.D.

Executive Director and Clinical Associate Professor

Tulane University's Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy



Tulane University's Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy

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