

University cooperation for development between the Philippines and Flanders (Belgium)

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Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Cooperation of Flemish universities with the Philippines **goes far back**. Already in the early nineties departmental projects were executed and in 1999 the cooperation matured into an institutional university cooperation programme. After a few years without project opportunities, the Philippines returned in 2016 to the VLIR-UOS list of partner countries because of the **growing interest** of Flemish and Philippine institutions to work together again.

The Philippines **Country Strategy** fits with the national long-term vision 2040 and its aspiration for the country that Filipinos are smart and innovative. This is translated in the country strategy by means of 4 central themes: **'health'**, **'social development'**, **'food security'** and **'environment'**. **'Research support'** and **'improving educational quality'** have been identified as crosscutting themes.

VLIR-UOS supports interventions that **strengthen higher education institutions** in their role as actor of change by improving education, research and extension of new knowledge, applications and services in various domains. This is in line with the **Joint Strategic Framework for the Philippines**, which was developed in 2016 by the Belgian Non-Governmental Actors active in the Philippines. More synergy and complementarity with other Belgian actors in the Philippines will be sought for.

Institutional Capacity Building

Results of long-term cooperation with Benguet State and Saint Louis University

In 1999 cooperation with Benguet State University (BSU) and Saint Louis University (SLU) matured into an institutional university cooperation (IUC) programme covering various fields going from **social research, agriculture, value chains, health and environment** to typical **institutional strengthening** and a support project dealing with institutional policy and management and ICT and library development.

As stated by the final evaluation, the most important achievement of the programme was without any doubt the contribution to the **improvement of the teaching and research capacity** of SLU and BSU in general and to those departments and faculties that were directly involved in the programme. The programme has contributed significantly in **enabling the two institutions to perform their roles in national and regional development**. The two institutions were strengthened to engage in initiatives and projects that made a difference on the lives of people within the university and the larger community.

Focus on a country strategic theme

TEAM and South Initiative (SI) projects are mutually reinforcing projects that aim to strengthen the research and education capacity and to bring into service this capacity to find sustainable solutions to local and global development challenges.

Food security

Two projects in the Philippines with the previous IUC-partners work on improving food security through strengthening the **vegetable industry** are in finalisation stage. The vegetable industry is the **major source of income** of highland farmers. Nonetheless, efforts are needed to minimize the technological gaps on vegetable variety, nutrient management, and pest management and overcome certain limitations in order to reduce the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and **increase production of safe and nutritious vegetables**. Both projects try to respond to this challenge through **research and development initiatives**. Participatory trials with farmer partners are being conducted and trainings are implemented to equip farmers with new skills and technologies.





VLIR-UOS partnerships

VLIR-UOS projects are based on a partnership between a Flemish and Philippine higher education institution. The goal of these partnerships is **capacity building** based on long term investments in human capital and building up networks.

Capacity building for VLIR-UOS is more than just giving a training. It is about **long term investments** in human capacities in a spirit of true partnership. By focusing on human capital, and especially by focusing on international networks of academics, VLIR-UOS interventions are by nature relatively **sustainable**. Focusing on capacity building and the building of (inter)national networks allows our partners to use expanding networks to sustainably acquire new skills and new sources of funding. This leads to both **academic** and **financial self-reliance**. Philippine institutions learn how to find international partners, look for international funding opportunities, develop successful project proposals, implement projects, report on them, etc.



Uptake by stakeholders

Particular attention was given to the uptake of the research results by stakeholders in the IUC with SLU and BSU. The project working on vegetable production conducted trainings, **organised harvest festivals** and established **demo farms** to showcase the new technologies developed. Dissemination of new information and technologies was also done through the **radio programme** "BSU on the Air". The laboratory served the community through different plant pest and disease analyses and diagnosis with proper management recommendations. The project on business research resulted in creating a **bee keeping federation** in the region, which even got national recognition by the former President of the Philippines.



Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allows Filipino students to broaden their horizon, learn to look at problems from the perspective of multiple disciplines and to grow into a skilful researcher. These students become **agents of change** by implementing the newly acquired knowledge and skills in a sustainable and development relevant way in the professional context of their country of origin. Also Flemish students spend time in an institution in the Philippines and **create close ties**.



Main elements of the country strategy for the Philippines

Health: infectious diseases, drug rehabilitation, community health (incl. remote areas), ...

Social development: human trafficking, good governance & decentralisation, anthropology, ethics, social development & justice, interreligious dialogue & religion-based conflicts, migration, human rights, conflict dynamics, urban planning, entrepreneurship/small businesses, ...

Food security: food safety, agri- & aquaculture, bee-keeping, link with water resources management & environment, smallholders farmers, link with rural & inclusive economies, ...

Environment: sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, disaster prevention & management, marine ecosystem, biodiversity, ...

Transversal support themes: research strengthening and methodology, improving educational quality...

About the country strategy

During the reform of non-governmental development cooperation in 2016, VLIR-UOS updated its list of 20 partner countries, hereby including the Philippines as a partner country. For each partner country VLIR-UOS elaborated a country strategy, to serve as a road map for cooperation going forward.

A country strategy reflects the opportunities for university cooperation for development between the country in question and Belgium/Flanders. A country strategy serves as a reference framework for programming, leading to strategy based calls for proposals.

More information:

vliruos.be/philippines

Total budget the Philippines 2003-2020 (in €)	
Projects	€ 5.087.039
Individual scholars	€ 8.839.313
Total	€ 13.926.352

Scholars from the Philippines in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)	
PhD*	8
Short Term*	119
Study/Master*	245
Total	372

* Only scholarships outside projects and programmes are shown; a lot of scholarships are included in projects or programmes.

In addition to Indonesian scholars coming to Belgium, 137 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to the Philippines and another 1 was granted a sandwich Ph.D. scholarship. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: www.vliruos.be/scholarships.

About VLIR-UOS

VLIR-UOS supports partnerships between universities and university colleges in Flanders (Belgium) and the South looking for innovative responses to global and local challenges.

VLIR-UOS funds cooperation projects between professors, researchers and teachers. VLIR-UOS also awards scholarships to students and professionals in Flanders and the South. Lastly, VLIR-UOS helps to strengthen higher education in the South and the globalisation of higher education in Flanders.

VLIR-UOS is part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council and receives funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation. www.vliruos.be

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