

Higher  
education  
cooperation  
for  
sustainable  
development  
between

Vietnam

and Flanders  
(Belgium)

September 2024

Vietnam is a long-standing partner of Flemish HEIs. From 2003 to 2023 VLIR-UOS spent over € 34,2 million in cooperation with Vietnam, including 4 long-term institutional partnerships, the Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) projects with Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), Can Tho University (CTU) and Hue University (HU) and the interinstitutional NETWORK in Biosciences for food, coordinated by CTU in collaboration with 4 Vietnamese universities and research institutions.

Since September 2022, a new long-term IUC partnership with Quy Nhon University (QNU) started.



## Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

There is a **longstanding history of cooperation** between Vietnam and Flemish higher education institutions.

VLIR-UOS revised its country approach towards an 'Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development' centred approach. Moreover, VLIR-UOS wants to facilitate connections between different actors and projects present in a given country. With these objectives in mind, the Country Reference Framework (CRF) for Vietnam supports teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector in Vietnam, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors active in Vietnam, their ongoing projects and partners, in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

VLIR-UOS cooperation in Vietnam has always been strongly aligned with the Vietnamese development plans through stimulating science innovation and high technology in products as well as improving and enhancing the quality of education, training and human resources development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been mainstreamed into Vietnam's National action Plan for Implementation of Agenda 2030. This is in line with the objectives of VLIR-UOS on working towards Agenda 2030.

# HEIs as driver of change

## Biosciences for food Network

In 2013, a national inter-institutional NETWORK with **5 Vietnamese institutes of higher education** -in the North (Vietnam National University of Agriculture) and in the Centre (Hue University, Nha Trang University and Research Institute for Aquaculture N°2)- was installed continuing and upscaling the results from the IUC cooperation with CTU. The network was focused on the development of joint graduate programmes in Aquaculture and Food Technology, part of an exchange with Flemish international master programmes supported via VLIR-UOS ICP Connect funding, and linking up with other initiatives in the Mekong and ASEAN region. The Network is currently phasing out and a Closing Event was organised on 27 October 2023.

## Institutional Partnerships

### Results of long-term cooperation with Can Tho University (CTU) and Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST)

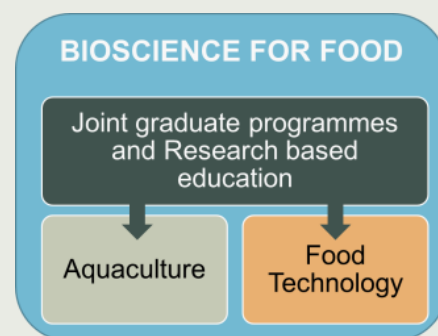
Between 1998 and 2010 2 IUC partnerships were developed in Vietnam with clear regional impact. The IUC CTU was set up around goals in the areas of aquaculture, soil science, biotechnology and technology for education. CTU became an important driver of change in the Mekong Region. The IUC with HUST focused very strongly on the development of research capacity in link with the industries in the surroundings of Hanoi.

### IUC with Hue University (HU)

The IUC with HU is started in 2013, and will organise its closing activities in the course of 2024. Based on the end evaluation this project had significant impact along different research lines (**aquaculture and crop production, ecosystems, primary and rural health care**) as well as on Hue University as an institution (capacity strengthening at level of research & educational policies and practices, ICT, etc.).

### IUC with Quy Nhon University (QNU)

This new partnership focusses on improving livelihoods and living conditions through the sustainable development of the South Central Coast and Central Highlands of Vietnam by enhancing education and research capacities in agricultural/food/environmental sciences and renewable energy and strengthening the capacity of the institution in different domains related to ICT/e-learning and institutional waste management.



### The water quality of Tam Giang Lagoon affects 300.000 people

One part of the IUC with HU studies the **preservation of the coastal ecosystems** and **natural resources** under the effects of development activities and climate change. The project aims to **increase the number of protected areas** and look for **sustainable aquaculture**. Amongst the various project sites there is Tam Giang Lagoon. People depend on the lagoon for their household activities and fishing. The lagoon is used for aquaculture too, at the cost of biodiversity.





## Focus on sustainable development priorities

TEAM projects and Short Initiatives (SI) projects aim to strengthen the research and education capacity, exploring and building capacity in view of creating sustainable solutions to local and global development challenges.

### Where aquaculture came to new heights

Agricultural production plays an important role in Vietnamese livelihoods. It contributes about 35% of the total GDP and about 60% of Vietnamese inhabitants are involved in agricultural activities. Vietnam is a famous shrimp and catfish exporter. Through **various cooperation projects** between Flemish universities and Vietnamese aquaculture institutes the research in this area climbed to new heights wherein Vietnamese alumni and Flemish academics play key-roles in cooperation with the Vietnamese authorities resulting in **successful research and education** and **improved production and development**.



### Wastewater treatment

Several Belgian-Vietnamese projects deal with wastewater treatment systems in Vietnam. University cooperation also contributed by developing **on-site wastewater treatment systems** by using a combination of an advanced technology of membrane bioreactor and septic tanks in urban and rural areas. A TEAM-project that starts in 2017 is developing **decentralized** water treatment systems using **low cost and high performance technology**.



### Food and Health

Food science as well as the **relation between food and health are important topics for the projects in Vietnam**. One project looks at the alarming rise of multiple resistant organisms by analysing simultaneously different reservoirs of **antibiotic resistant bacteria**.

## Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allowed many Vietnamese students to broaden their horizon, learn to look at problems from the perspective of multiple disciplines and to grow into a skilful researcher. On the other hand, Flemish students spent time in a Vietnamese institution and close ties are created. One of the elements of the future cooperation opportunities with Vietnam are joint degree programmes, aimed at increasing the exchanges of researchers and students.

### Uptake by stakeholders

VLIR-UOS cooperation with Vietnam resulted in the establishment of an **international aquaculture company**, INVE, which was developed by **former VLIR-UOS alumni**. The company wants to stimulate healthy growth and performance in aquaculture.

## About the Country Reference Frameworks

VLIR-UOS **Country Reference Frameworks** (CRF) support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector in a given country, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors, their ongoing projects and partners in that country in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity within the Joint Strategic Framework of Belgian Non-Governmental Actors active in Vietnam. On the other hand Belgian HE and Science actors joined in a thematic Joint Strategic Framework (JSF) on HES4SD.

The country reference frameworks consist of three components: (i) overview of VLIR-UOS projects in the country; (ii) context analysis focused on the Agenda 2030 framework and the higher education sector; (iii) overview of Belgian development actors (ANGCs involved in thematic or geographic JSFs & Enabel), their local partners and their regional/thematic focus.

More information:

[vliruos.be/vietnam](http://vliruos.be/vietnam)

Total budget Vietnam 2003-2024 (in €)	
Projects	€ 23,314,136
Individual scholars	€ 10,890,054
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 34.204.190</b>

Scholars from Vietnam in the context of VLIR-UOS projects (2003-20223)	
PhD*	17 (individual) + 53 (estimate nr projects)= 70
Short Term*	203
Study/Master*	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>



\* Only scholarships outside projects and programmes are shown; a lot of scholarships are included in projects or programmes, for the PhDs an estimate was included.

In addition to Vietnamese scholars coming to Belgium, 214 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to Vietnam and 1 student was granted a Flemish doctoral scholarship to Vietnam. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: [www.vliruos.be/scholarships](http://www.vliruos.be/scholarships).

## About VLIR-UOS

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

VLIR-UOS is part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council and receives funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation. [www.vliruos.be](http://www.vliruos.be)

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