

Higher education cooperation for sustainable development between Indonesia and Flanders (Belgium)

May 2022

Indonesia is a young partner country with an enormous potential for VLIR-UOS. From 2003 to 2021 VLIR-UOS spent over € 5.8 million in cooperation with Indonesia, including 10 short and medium-term projects.

There are 5 finalising projects (2021) in Indonesia and others are expected to be selected during the coming years.



Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Indonesia returned in 2016 to the VLIR-UOS list of partner countries -after a few years without project opportunities- because of its **enormous potential for higher education cooperation** and the **growing interest** of Flemish and Indonesian institutions to work together.

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 Indonesia supports teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the HE sector in Indonesia, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors active in the country, their ongoing projects and partners, in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

VLIR-UOS cooperation in Indonesia has mainly focused on the following themes 'environment', 'government & civil society' and 'food security & agriculture'. 'Gender'.

Focus on sustainable development challenges

TEAM and Short 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 & agriculture

Two finalized TEAM-projects in Indonesia worked on **organic agriculture** as to improve sustainability of food production and increase food security. The research capacities of leading Indonesian research institutes were strengthened.

One project resulted in the development of **novel course material** for the Soil Science programme at the partner university. A textbook “Pertanian Organik” (Organic Farming) was produced that is used as student textbook during the lectures on organic farming. **New methods** for organic farming were developed as a result of the executed research. Farmers that were involved in a project on fertilisers, were promoting these new methods on TV. The created conditions for uptake of research results provoked a multiplier effect outside with potential impact on the lives of thousands of farmers.

Environment

A finalized SI-project researched the impact of **deforestation** on the deterioration of **water quality** by measuring sediment loads in rivers. Deforestation has been claimed to negatively impact watershed services, which led to problems with hydropower storage lakes. This even led to violent evictions of thousands of farmers. The project with Brawijaya University developed **training materials** for members of the local water forum: farmers, civil servants and university lecturers. They were trained in assessing sediment load in water, diagnosing possible causes and discussing measures for reduction. Research results gave insight in the effect of land use on water and altered the claim that past land use negatively affected the river discharge.

Government and civil society

A project started in 2018 focuses on education, democracy and the legacy of conflict but is still in a starting phase.



Improved research practices

A VLIR-UOS project with the **Indonesian Soil Research Institute** focused on investing in the research capacity of the staff and developing a strategic plan on how to obtain sustainable funding. The institute had the honour to organize the **international Symposium** of the East-Southeast Asia Federation of Soil Science. The fact that the institution organised this important regional event is a proof of their **increasing international visibility** as a high quality research institute. The project played a crucial role in this.





VLIR-UOS partnerships

VLIR-UOS projects are based on a partnership between a Flemish and Indonesian 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**. Indonesian 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

A VLIR-UOS SI-project on water quality wanted to facilitate the uptake of the research results by farmers. **Dissemination** in general used to be done in a way communication: researchers present their research results and farmers just listen. The project used insights from adult learning and made the dissemination **participatory**, for example through an interactive quiz or a guided exhibition, which was **highly appreciated** by the farmers. Researchers facilitated farmers to express and share their experiences with others and provided scientific explanation to improve farmers understanding about agriculture activity and its impact to environment. The exhibition also attracted curious schoolchildren, to whom the researcher also explained the results.

Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allows Indonesian 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 Indonesian institution and **create close ties**.

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 Indonesia. 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/indonesia

Total budget Indonesia 2003-2021 (in €)	
Projects	€ 1.278.128
Individual scholars	€ 4.614.528
Total	€ 5.892.656

Scholars from Indonesia in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)	
PhD*	2
Short Term*	113
Study/Master*	124
Total	239

* 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, 78 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to Indonesia. 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

Contact: Peter De Lannoy  +32 2 550 19 64,  peter.delannoy@vliruos.be