

# Higher Education cooperation for sustainable development between Uganda and Flanders (Belgium)

February 2023



## Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Uganda is an important partner country of VLIR-UOS. From 2003 to 2022 VLIR-UOS spent over € 22,6 million in cooperation with Uganda, including many short and middle-long term projects (SI, TEAM), many scholarships and a long-term Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) partnership with Mountains of the Moon University (MMU). In 2021, a new IUC has started with Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

Since 2011, the cooperation between Ugandan and Flemish higher education institutions has been intensified.

VLIR-UOS revised its country approach towards an 'Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development' centered approach, where country reference frameworks (CRF) are worked out. The CRF document 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 a given country, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors, their 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 Uganda. On the other hand Belgian HE and Science actors joined in a thematic Joint Strategic Framework (JSF) on HES4SD.

VLIR-UOS cooperation in Uganda has been aligned with the Ugandan national development strategy and Vision 2040. The themes of 'Networking', 'Gender' and 'Community engagement' have been put forward as crosscutting themes that are relevant for all VLIR-UOS activities.

Furthermore, 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.

# HEIs as drivers of change

## Long-term institutional university cooperation (IUC) with Mountains of the Moon University & Mbarara University of Science and Technology

The IUC partnership with Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) started in 2013 and will last till 2023. This unique university, since recently recognized and supported by the Ugandan State, is founded by the local community, working for that community.

This IUC partnership aims to enhance the capacity of MMU to use community based training and research approaches in improving agricultural productivity, with a focus on the dairy and the aquaculture sector. It is structured around two clusters: (i) **Action research and community engagement for development**: research is carried out by faculty members and students on soil fertility, aquaculture, water supply & management and agribusiness (in the dairy sector), and on extension of outcomes to the outreach centres; (ii) **Transversal institutional strengthening** with respect to mainly ICT, library, laboratory, community education, staff development, administration.

A second long-term institutional partnership has been launched with Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in 2021 as a Facilitator for Community Based Sustainable Solutions to Demographic Challenges in South Western Uganda (UCoBS).

This partnership focuses on strengthening MUST's flagship Community Based Education, Research and Service. The goal is to **achieve improved and sustainable household livelihoods of the Most at Risk Populations** by addressing their demographic challenges through six areas: (i) improved environment conservation practices and natural resources management and governance by indigenous people; (ii) improved mechanisms for climate change adaptation for sustainable food production for small-scale farmers; (iii) improved access and utilization of affordable energy technologies among the female-headed households and the urban poor; (iv) improved sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, children and adolescents of the local population and refugees; (v) increased youth employability through skilling, innovations, experiential learning and technology transfer and; (vi) improved institutional and community ICT capacity to access and utilise information.



# Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allows Ugandan 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 a Ugandan institution and create close ties.



## Focus on sustainable development priorities

TEAM and 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.

### Biodiversity and natural resources

There are two environmental projects running in order to initiate more effective strategies for sustainable land use and environmental management: one on Digital citizen science for community-based resilient environmental management at MUST and a second one on Feasibility assessment of selected point of use water treatment systems applicable for rural households of the Rwenzori region at MMU.

### Health

Four projects are running regarding to health: (i) improving Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health through a Participatory Parent-Child Communication Intervention at MUST, (ii) reducing the mental health burden among students at Kyambogo University, (iii) Preventing mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B virus by launching an antenatal screening facility and viral load testing at Lira University College, (iv) Strengthening training and research capacity in Epidemiology and biostatistics to enhance Public Health research at MMU.

### Food security

One project has started in Up-scaling mass-rearing of edible grasshopper and edible cricket species for improved food security in northern Uganda at Gulu University.

### Good governance

In order to contribute to sustainable peace-building by the dissemination of research results to policy-actors and communities, there is an ongoing project on Making Refugee Integration Sustainable: In Search of Durable Relations with Host Populations In Uganda at MUST.

Total budget Uganda 2003-2022 (in €)	
Projects	€ 10 535 977
Individual scholars	€ 12 130 447
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 22 666 424</b>

Scholars from Uganda in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2022)	
PhD*	7
Short Term*	231
Study/Master*	278
<b>Total</b>	<b>516</b>

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

In addition to Ugandan scholars coming to Belgium, 462 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to Uganda and another 9 were granted a sandwich Ph.D. scholarship. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: [www.vliruos.be/scholarships](http://www.vliruos.be/scholarships).

## 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 Uganda. 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?**

**[www.vliruos.be/uganda](http://www.vliruos.be/uganda)**

## 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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