

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

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Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Cooperation with the Philippines **goes far back**. Already in the early nineties academic projects were executed.

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 the Philippines 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 the Philippines, 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 the Philippines has mainly focused on the following themes **health**, **'social development'**, **'food security'**, **'improving educational and research quality'** and **'environment'**. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been mainstreamed into 'Vision 2040', the Philippines long term vision and its aspiration for the country that Filipinos are smart and innovative plan. This is in line with the objectives of VLIR-UOS on working towards Agenda 2030.

Institutional partnerships

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) partnership 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 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

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**.



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/philippines

Total budget the Philippines 2003-2021 (in €)	
Projects	€ 5.382.192
Individual scholars	€ 9.994.767
Total	€ 15.376.959

Scholars from the Philippines in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)	
PhD*	8
Short Term*	120
Study/Master*	268
Total	396

* 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, 150 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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