

University cooperation for development between South-Africa and Flanders (Belgium)

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South Africa is a crucial partner country to VLIR-UOS. Cooperation of Flemish and South African higher education goes back to the mid-1990s.

From 2003 to 2020 VLIR-UOS spent over € 22 million in cooperation with South Africa, including 2 long-term Institutional University Co-operation (IUC) programmes with the University of Western Cape (UWC) and the University of Limpopo (UL).

The finalising IUC programme with UL and 15 ongoing projects are at the center of the South-Africa country programme.

Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Within the South-African National Development Plan, **Vision 2030**, education in general and higher **education** in particular was highlighted as a **main driver of change**. Quality education is an important right, which plays a vital role in relation to a person's health, quality of life, self-esteem, and the ability of citizens to be actively engaged and empowered.

Within its **Country Strategy** with South Africa, VLIR-UOS acknowledges this role of driver of change and wishes to contribute to the improvement of the higher education. VLIR-UOS will concentrate its activities in South Africa in the following areas of intervention: **'food security'**, **'environment'**, **'health'** and **'social sciences'**. Transversally, **'ICT'** and **'institutional strengthening'** will be supported.

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 South-Africa**, which was developed in 2016 by the Belgian Non-Governmental Actors active in South-Africa. More synergy and complementarity with other Belgian actors in South-Africa will be sought for.

Institutional Capacity Building

Results of long-term cooperation with University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Between 2003 and 2013 the University of the Western Cape (UWC) was the main partner university to VLIR-UOS in South Africa. The IUC programme assisted UWC in transforming from a mainly teaching university to a **research based university**.

“The single most important achievement of the programme is that it sharpened the faculties' focus, restored their academic self-confidence, and expedited the rebuilding of capacity in selected areas aligned to the institutional mission”. (Larry Pokpas, UWC)

The partnership translated its overall ambition in the programme title '**Dynamics for Building a Better Society**'. It aimed at contributing with the training of a **new and dynamic generation** for the new South Africa, a society in the midst of complex processes of nation-building. The domains covered were citizenship and democracy, development through sports, HIV prevention and care, water for ecological sustainability, multilingualism and cities in transition and student leadership development. Five **centres of excellence** were established with support of the programme. The one on sports and development is unique in South Africa.

IUC with University of Limpopo (UL)

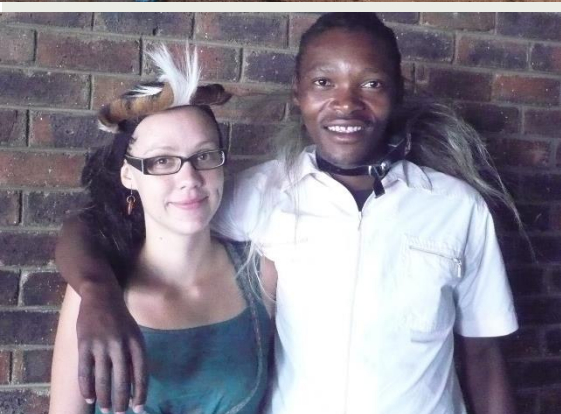
In 2010 VLIR-UOS started an IUC-programme with the University of Limpopo (UL) around **human wellness** in a context of global change in rural Africa. The programme is currently phasing out.

The main objectives of the programme are **capacity building**, **research** and **community engagement** across the now separated campuses of Turfloop (UL) and Pretoria (SMU). This IUC programme is based on a **partnership** between UL/SMU and four Flemish universities. The goal of these partnerships is capacity building based on long term investments in human capital and building up networks.

The programme consists of **6 specified projects** around data management and ICT; multiple literacies; management of chronic diseases; food security; water quality; public health and infectious diseases.

The 2014 mid-term evaluation stated that a **solid research platform** has been established and that, in broad terms, implementation has been effective.





Focus on country-strategic themes

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.

Health

Primary health care and family medicine is to improve the health of communities through accessible, responsive and **quality health care systems**. Through various VLR-UOS projects addressing this matter, family physicians were trained which contributed to **interdisciplinary primary health care** services, oriented towards the needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live. At the **academic level** there is also a growing need to train epidemiologists and statisticians and to set up interdisciplinary collaborations to address the scientific challenges that the **HIV/AIDS** epidemic poses. Two new projects focus on improving **communication** in health care and on strengthening capacities of **community health care workers**.

Environment

One of the greatest conservation challenges facing us today is the preservation and protection of the **freshwater biodiversity**, both locally and internationally. Owing to the complexity of the biodiversity, any negative influence, such as pollution and uncontrolled abstraction of freshwater from rivers and from aquifers, will have a greater negative influence on these **fragile ecosystems**. These items are addressed in various projects in South Africa and the region. **Long term collaboration** was achieved through joint field expeditions and training programmes that built very strong links between hydrology and ecology.

Social sciences

Despite the truly **multicultural nature** of South-Africa, there is still a lack of expertise in cross-cultural psychology, multiliteracy and the psycho-social burden due to unemployment and disabilities. These and other **socio-economic** issues are being addressed in various projects financed by VLR-UOS. It is expected that they will play a growing role in the future cooperation with Flemish academics.

Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allowed many South-African 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 South-African institution and close ties are created.

Main elements of the country strategy for South-Africa

Health: public & primary health care, HIV/AIDS...

Environment: water resource management, climate change...

Food security: biotechnology, animal sciences & production, aquaculture, food production & value chain...

Social Sciences: good governance, urban & local community development, language development, communication...

The following cross-cutting and transversal themes were identified :

Institutional Strengthening with institutional policy, academic learning, research policy...

ICT: distance & E-learning, network development...

More information:

vliuos.be/southafrica

About the country strategy

During the reform of non-governmental development cooperation in 2016, VLIR-UOS updated its list of 20 partner countries, hereby reconfirming South-Africa 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.



Total budget South-Africa 2003-2020 (in €)	
Projects	€ 20.242.531
Individual scholars	€ 2.640.687
Total	€ 22.883.218

Scholars from South-Africa in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)	
PhD*	/
Short Term*	37
Study/Master*	28
Total	65

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

In addition to South-African scholars coming to Belgium, 934 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to South-Africa and another 5 students were granted a sandwich Ph.D. scholarship. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: www.vliuos.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.vliuos.be

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