

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

October 2021



Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

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 always been strongly aligned with the Ugandan national development strategy and Vision 2040 with attention for 'Health', 'Environment', 'Food security' and 'Good governance'. 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.

Uganda is an important partner country of VLIR-UOS. From 2003 to 2021 VLIR-UOS spent over € 20,7 million in cooperation with Uganda, including many scholarships and a long-term Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) partnership with **Mountains of the Moon University (MMU)**.

The ongoing IUC partnership with MMU is the cornerstone of the Uganda country programme, next to numerous SI and TEAM projects.

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.

The 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.

The IUC is structured around two clusters:

- 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;
- Transversal institutional strengthening with respect to ICT, library, laboratory, community education, staff development, administration etc.

One aspect of institutional strengthening is the Mountains of the Moon university radio project, which plays a crucial role in community education. By doing research on cultivation, milk production and fish farming, new knowledge becomes available. The radio is used to pass that knowledge on to the people in the region. The university also wants to distribute teaching packages and provide dial-up interactive classes. There is no better way to do that than through the radio, with programmes made by the people at the university.

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 will focus on strengthening Mbarara University of Science and Technology's flagship, the 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.



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 and a second one on Analysis of past and projected future land use change and its impact on sediment fluxes in the Rwizi catchment, both at Mbarara University of Sciences and Technology.

Health

Two projects are running regarding to health: Improving Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health through a Participatory Parent-Child Communication Intervention in Uganda at Mbarara University of Sciences and Technology and one on the Development of holistic mental health care in Uganda at Kyambogo University.

Food security

One project is still ongoing involving a Holistic approach to combat mycotoxin contamination 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 Mbarara University of Sciences and Technology.

Total budget Uganda 2003-2021 (in €)	
Projects	€ 9 117 432
Individual scholars	€ 11 673 504
Total	€ 20 790 936

Scholars from Uganda in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)	
PhD*	7
Short Term*	223
Study/Master*	245
Total	475

*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.

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

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

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