

# University cooperation for development between Vietnam and Flanders (Belgium)

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Vietnam is a crucial partner country of VLIR-UOS. From 2003 to 2020 VLIR-UOS spent over € 28 million in cooperation with Vietnam, including three long-term Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) programmes with Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST), Can Tho University (CTU) and Hue University (HU).

The ongoing IUC programme with HU and a national Network in Biosciences for food together with 5 Vietnamese universities are the cornerstones of the Vietnam country programme.

## Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

There is a longstanding history of cooperation between Vietnam and Flemish higher education institutions. After **nearly 20 years of successful cooperation**, Vietnam continues to be a key partner country in the VLIR-UOS portfolio.

The Vietnam **Country Strategy** follows the Vietnamese development plans through stimulating science innovation and high technology in products; improving and enhancing the quality of education, training and human resources development. This is translated in the country strategy by means of following central themes: **'biosciences for food'**, **'environment and natural resources'**, **'public and rural health'**, **'technology development'** and **'institutional strengthening and reform'**.

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

## Biosciences for food Network

In 2013, VLIR-UOS started a Network University Cooperation programme with **5 Vietnamese institutes of higher education**. The network builds upon the institutional and human capacity strengthened during 12 years of institutional cooperation with Can Tho University (CTU).

The pole of the activities lies in the **Mekong Delta**, a region which contributes to more than 50% of the total national agriculture production. Together with universities in the North (Vietnam National University of Agriculture) and in the Centre (Hue University, Nha Trang University and Research Institute for Aquaculture N°2) they will build upon existing Network activities in the Mekong and ASEAN region. The programme will focus on **development of the curricula for joint international PhD and MSc training programs in Aquaculture and Food Technology**.

## Institutional Capacity Building

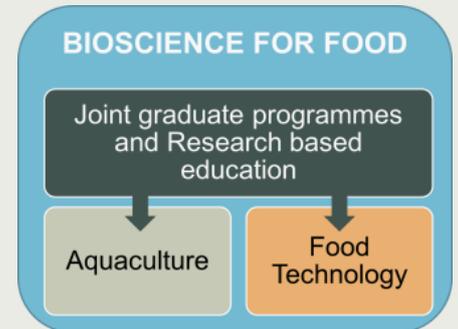
**Results of long-term cooperation with Can Tho University (CTU) and Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST)**

Between 1998 and 2010 2 IUC programmes were developed in Vietnam with **clear regional impact**. The programme with CTU was set up around goals in the areas of aquaculture, soil science, biotechnology and technology for education. As stated by the final evaluation, the programme proved a success story as it combined successes in the academic and regional socio-economic development fields, and CTU became an **important driver of change in the Mekong Region**.

The programme with HUST included electronics and telecommunications, chemistry, physics, biomedical engineering and mechatronics. It focused very strongly on the **development of research capacity in link with the industries in the surroundings of Hanoi**.

### IUC with Hue University (HU)

The IUC with Hue University (HU) started in 2013, and was identified as a crucial partnership in the central region in Vietnam. The programme touches upon research in **aquaculture and crop production, ecosystems, rural health development** as well as on **capacity building**. The programme is based on a partnership with 3 Flemish universities. The goal of this partnership is capacity building based on long term investments in human capital and building up networks.



### The water quality of Tam Giang Lagoon affects 300.000 people

One part of the IUC with HU studies the **preservation of the coastal ecosystems** and **natural resources** under the effects of development activities and climate change. The project aims to **increase the number of protected areas** and look for **sustainable aquaculture**. Amongst the various project sites there is Tam Giang Lagoon. People depend on the lagoon for their household activities and fishing. The lagoon is used for aquaculture too, at the cost of biodiversity.



### Uptake by stakeholders

VLIR-UOS cooperation with Vietnam resulted in the establishment of an **international aquaculture company**, INVE, which was developed by **former VLIR-UOS alumni**. The company wants to stimulate healthy growth and performance in aquaculture.

## 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.

### Where aquaculture came to new heights

Agricultural production plays an important role in Vietnamese livelihoods. It contributes about 35% of the total GDP and about 60% of Vietnamese inhabitants are involved in agricultural activities. Vietnam is a famous shrimp and catfish exporter. Through **various cooperation projects** between Flemish universities and Vietnamese aquaculture institutes the research in this area climbed to new heights wherein Vietnamese alumni and Flemish academics play key-roles in cooperation with the Vietnamese authorities resulting in **successful research and education** and **improved production and development**.

### Wastewater treatment

Several Belgian-Vietnamese projects deal with wastewater treatment systems in Vietnam. University cooperation also contributed by developing **on-site wastewater treatment systems** by using a combination of an advanced technology of membrane bioreactor and septic tanks in urban and rural areas. A TEAM-project that starts in 2017 is developing **decentralized** water treatment systems using **low cost and high performance technology**.

### Food and Health

Food science is a focus of the country strategy but also the **relation between food and health** is not neglected. One project looks at the alarming rise of multiple resistant organisms by analysing simultaneously different reservoirs of **antibiotic resistant bacteria**.

## Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allowed many Vietnamese 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 Vietnamese institution and close ties are created. One of the elements of the future cooperation opportunities with Vietnam are joint degree programmes, aimed at increasing the exchanges of researchers and students.

## Main elements of the country strategy for Vietnam

**Biosciences for food** including food security

**Environment and natural resources** with Climate Change

**Health** with specific focus on rural health

**Technology development** focusing on infrastructure, research and technology transfers

The following cross-cutting and transversal themes were identified. :

**Institutional Capacity Development** with emphasis on university management

**Research Strengthening** including statistics and S&T

**Research Based Education** and ICT in education.

## 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 Vietnam 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.

More information:

[vliruos.be/vietnam](http://vliruos.be/vietnam)

Total budget Vietnam 2003-2020 (in €)	
Projects	€ 18.420.711
Individual scholars	€ 9.731.632
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 28.152.343</b>

Scholars from Vietnam in the context of VLIR-UOS projects (2003-2020)	
PhD*	17
Short Term*	202
Study/Master*	202
<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>

\* Including scholarships outside projects and programmes

In addition to Vietnamese scholars coming to Belgium, 167 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to Vietnam and 1 student was granted a Flemish doctoral scholarship to Vietnam. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: [www.vliruos.be/scholarships](http://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](http://www.vliruos.be)

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