Higher education as a driving force for sustainable development

Through more than 15 years of successful cooperation, Ethiopia assured itself a special place in the VLIR-UOS portfolio as one of its main partner countries. Since 2013 VLIR-UOS has a Country Strategy for Ethiopia, based on the needs of the country, particularly the national priorities with regard to higher education and development.

The VLIR-UOS Country Strategy for Ethiopia fits in with the Ethiopian national strategy to give priority to strengthening of higher education and improving food security (agriculture, livestock production etc.) with attention for sustainability (water, soil, climate change impact) and (human and animal) health. Another important subject is economic and social development (community based education and research) and the link with governance (land issues, gender and diversity).

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

Results of long-term cooperation with Mekelle University

Between 2002 and 2013 Mekelle University was an Institutional University Cooperation (IUC) partner university of VLIR-UOS. It was Mekelle University that defined priorities for cooperation. The central objective of the programme was improving living conditions of the mainly farmers population through intelligent use of land and water resources. As stated by the final evaluation, the programme has enabled communities to better use and manage ground and surface water resources and micro dams, to better manage land, to apply conservation agriculture, to cultivate apples and to catch fish and commercialize it, thus providing opportunities to improve their livelihood and to increase their income.

IUC with Jimma University

Jimma University is a national pioneer in terms of Community Based Education benefits and it plays an important role in the Southern part of Ethiopia. The IUC partnership with Jimma University focused on issues related to the livelihood of local rural and urban communities, for example through projects on child health and nutrition, zoonotic and animal diseases, environmental health and ecology, infectious diseases and soil fertility. Also matters of institutional importance as ICT & library, research coordination and statistical modelling are being supported. More than 30 Ethiopian scholars, who are staff of Jimma University, have obtained their PhD. They focused on urgent societal issues like malaria, malnutrition, soil erosion, water purification...

IUC with Arba Minch and Bahir Dar University

In 2016, two new IUC programmes have been elaborated, one in cooperation with Arba Minch University (AMU), another with Bahir Dar University (BDU).

The IUC programme with BDU aims to contribute to the Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy in northwest Ethiopia through research geared towards the solution of bottlenecks related to environment, water, food security, health and economical and social development.

The IUC programme with AMU targets capacity development in teaching and research to empower AMU and its graduates as development actors able to successfully answering the considerable challenges of the region. For example, the programme will contribute to an improvement of agricultural productivity, socio-economic and health status and reversing land degradation which are key to sustain local livelihoods.
National Network on Health: Universities unite

The Network University Cooperation programme in Ethiopia is a national-level programme, coordinated by Jimma University and involving Ambo University, Hawassa University and Debre Zeit campus of Addis Abeba University. The aim is to bring together expertise in order to strengthen human capacity in health and leading to tangible intervention packages which will improve the health situation in local communities.

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.

Food security, agriculture, environment & water

Several projects deal with the link between food security and the sustainable management of natural resources (soil, water,…). The project on land and water research for sustainable livelihood, for example, is a four-year partnership between Arba Minch University and KU Leuven that started in 2010. The project seeks sustainable solutions to the conflict on the use and management of the natural resources in the Rift Valley. Local project supervisor prof. Simon Shibru emphasises the potential impact: ‘The project provides land management tools, not just for the university and the region, but the whole country.’

Human and Animal health

In the cooperation with the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences of Debre Zeit Campus of Addis Abeba University, there are several projects dealing with the effects of tripanozoma on animal health and food production. Currently the cooperation was taken to another level and focuses on setting up a natural doctoral school. There is also a link with the IUC programme at JU. Also malaria research is being developed (in collaboration with Jimma University and other Ethiopian partners) which could lead to interesting new insights.

Scholarships

Scholarships are powerful tools. It allows Ethiopian students to broaden their horizon, learn to look at problems from the perspective of multiple disciplines and to grow into a skilful researcher. Also Flemish students spend time in an Ethiopian institution and create close ties.
Main elements of the country strategy for Ethiopia

**Food security & agriculture:** soil & water, land degradation, farm technology, food production, ...

**Environment & water:** biodiversity, forestry, alternative energies, land use cover & change; water management, pollution & sanitation; environmental impact of dams, aquatic ecology, ...

**Economic & social development:** marketing and extension, cultural issues, socio-economy, engineering for civil construction, ...

**Health:** zoonotic & animal disease, child health & nutrition, trypanosomiasis; evidence based nursing; epidemiology, modelling, malaria; dissemination, education & communication; ...

**Transversal support themes:** Governance, institutional strengthening and management (institutional governance, research policy, (bio)statistics for research, capacity building); Information management and ICT (library, ICT skills, software migration strategy and data center); Gender and diversity (gender equity).

### 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)

**Contact:** Wannes Verbeeck, ☎️ +32 2 550 19 68, 🌐 wannes.verbeeck@vliruos.be

### 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 Ethiopia 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/ethiopia](http://vliruos.be/ethiopia)

### Total budget Ethiopia 2003-2020 (in €)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>€ 26,356,647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual scholars</td>
<td>€ 18,103,287</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>€ 44,459,934</strong></td>
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### Scholars from Ethiopia in the context of VLIR-UOS cooperation (2003-2020)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term*</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/Master*</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>797</strong></td>
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*Only individual scholarships outside project context are shown; a lot of scholarships are embedded in a project context.

In addition to Ethiopian scholars coming to Belgium, 265 Belgian scholars were granted a travel grant (short term) to Ethiopia and another 8 were granted a sandwich Ph.D. scholarship. More information on the scholarships of VLIR-UOS: [www.vliruos.be/scholarships](http://www.vliruos.be/scholarships).