



ANNUAL REPORT 2011

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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Sharing minds, changing lives. Those four words sum up the essence of what we at VLIR-UOS stand for: the quest for responses to global and local challenges in Flanders and the South through partnerships between universities and university colleges. The slogan is not new, but it has now been given a more prominent position in our logo. Sometimes you need to put your own house in order and give the front door a new lick of paint. After 15 years we continue to believe strongly in what we're doing. However, we have come to realise that we need to tell people about it more than we have been doing. We talk a lot about structures and rules, but too little about the people behind the figures and the changes we are driving. With our new house style, website and mission statement we can face the future with great ambition.

Publicising the added value we create for society through our activities is not a vanity project, but an absolute necessity. We raised the alarm at the beginning of 2011, because the then provisional government was unable to approve our budget. In 2012 we learned that university development cooperation could be transferred from the federal level to the federal states. Again, approval for our budget was a long time coming. It's impossible to say what the future will bring, but one thing that is clear is that we have to show that we are making a difference. If we learned anything last year it's that we need allies not only in higher education but in the political sphere too.

Universities and university colleges are change makers. They can utilise knowledge to provide the solution to the challenges that our societies face. In 2011 we launched a process to establish country strategies for our main partner countries. A country strategy provides a strategic framework for cooperation. It identifies which challenges have priority and which partners qualify for cooperation. After a detailed analysis of policy documents and consultations in the countries in question and in Flanders, we now have country strategy papers for Cuba, Ecuador, Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam. Academics from Flanders and the five countries are now putting together teams to ensure that together we are in a position to provide long-term responses to the principle challenges.

This annual report looks back over the past year and gives a voice to the people who make a difference each and every day: professors, teachers, staff members of universities and university colleges in Flanders and the South, students and policymakers. It's thanks to them that we are able to put 'Sharing minds, changing lives' into practice.

We hope you enjoy your read.

Professor Patrick Sorgeloos
Chairman VLIR-UOS (in 2011)

Kristien Verbruggen
Director VLIR-UOS

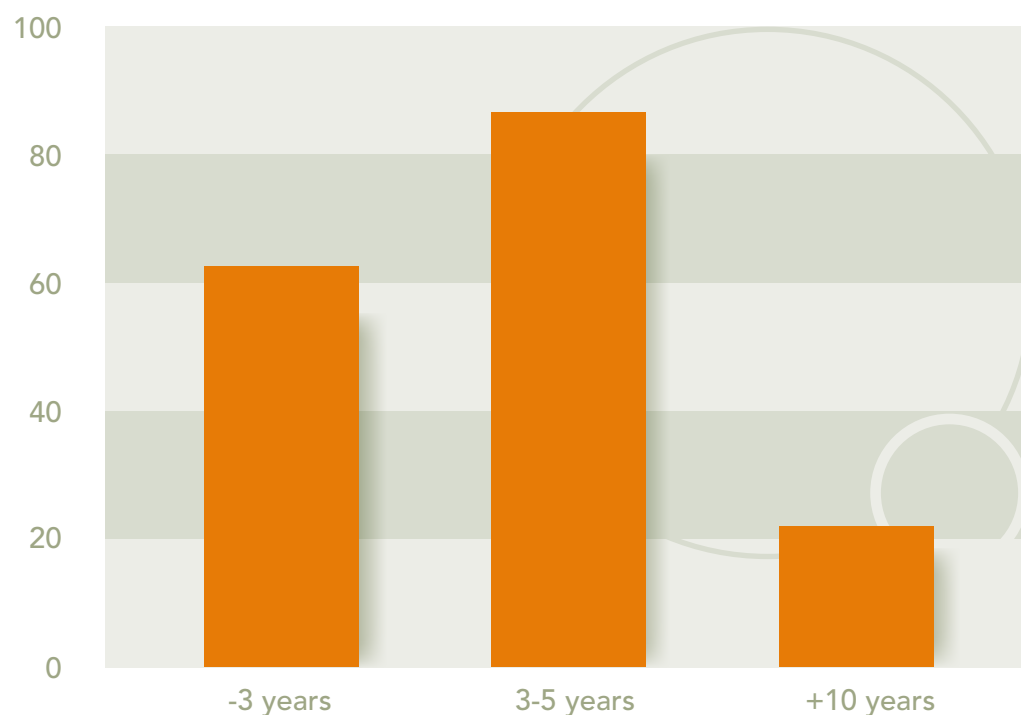


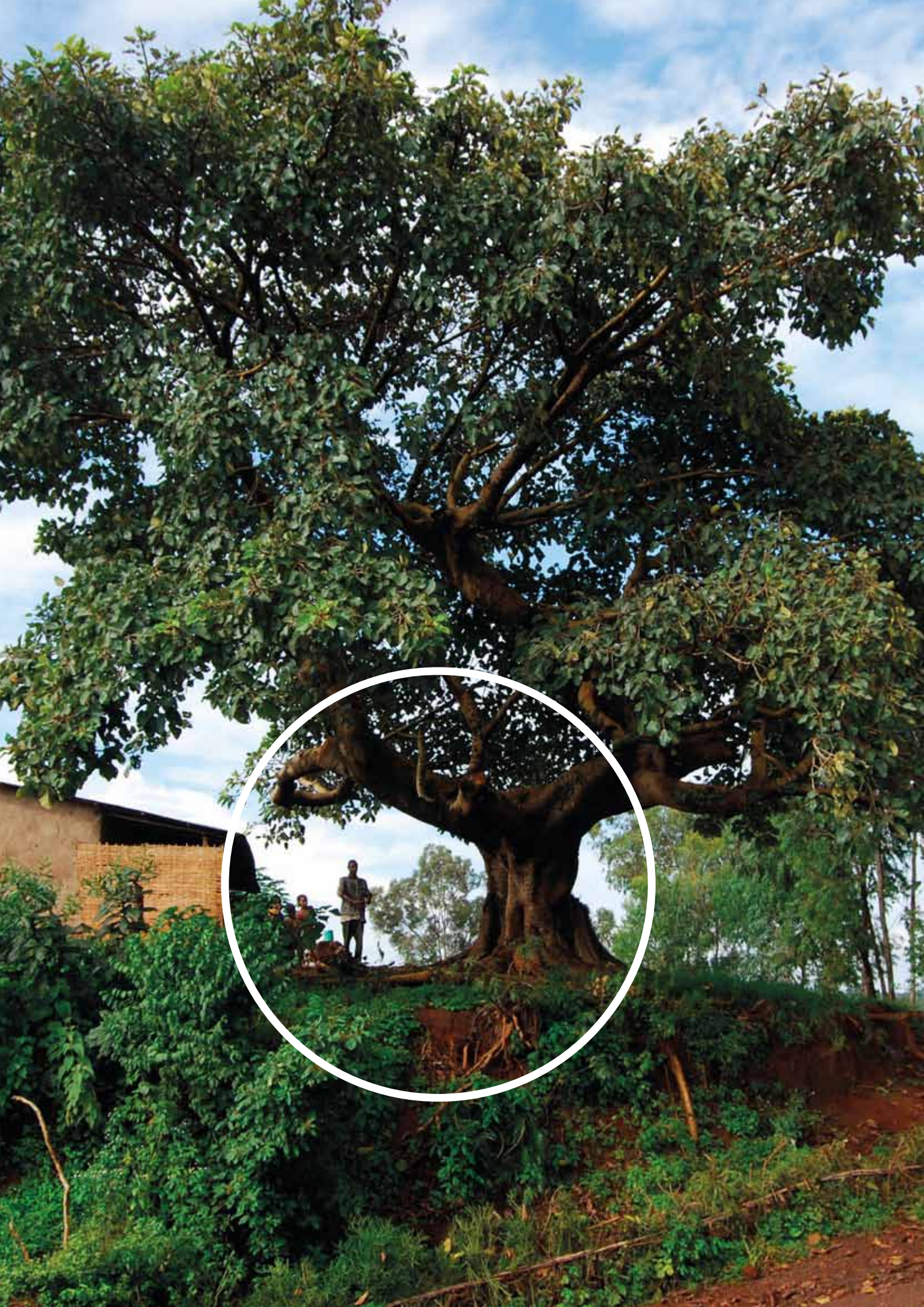
COOPERATION PROJECTS

VLIR-UOS supports short-term projects between individual professors and teachers, 3-6-year partnerships between departments and comprehensive 12-year partnerships between institutions. Capacity building and scientific research are the main activity in most projects. Other activities are education renewal and improvement, policy support, service provision and organisation of trainings and conferences. In terms of theme the projects are in keeping with the country strategy of the respective partner country. VLIR-UOS supported 173 projects in 2011.

Below, we examine a few cases of cooperation projects launched or continued in 2011. In the second part of the annual report we take a closer look at the scholarships and support for higher education.

Number of projects in 2011 by term





THE INGREDIENTS FOR CHANGING THE WORLD ARE IN ETHIOPIA'S RIFT VALLEY

Land and Water Research for Sustainable Livelihood in the South Ethiopian Rift Valley is a project launched in October 2011. It is a four-year partnership between Arba Minch University in Ethiopia and KU Leuven, University of Antwerp and KHKempen in Flanders. The project seeks sustainable solutions to the conflict about the use and management of the Rift Valley's natural resources. Can the interests of agriculture, fishing, cattle breeding and nature conservation be reconciled? The project leaders think they can.

An important test case for Ethiopia

Seppe Deckers (KU Leuven), the Flemish project supervisor, is enthusiastic about the partnership. 'The project is utterly innovative. It brings together four major disciplines: land evaluation, aquatic ecology, terrestrial ecology and anthropology. In Ethiopia, there is great interest in the project, which is a major test case for the combination of a strong development agenda and the preservation of biodiversity. The two planned doctoral students have made a good start. After a first stay in Belgium, both students have returned to Ethiopia to begin the measurement campaign.'



The supervisors of the project: Simon Shibru (Arba Minch University) and Seppe Deckers (KU Leuven) (Photo: Hans Bauer)

... and for the world

Local project supervisor Simon Shibru (Arba Minch University) emphasises the potential impact: 'The project provides land management tools, not just for the university and the region, but the whole country.'

Seppe Deckers feels the impact is even greater: 'When you bring those people together in a conflict situation like this one you develop very interesting and original ingredients that are not only applicable in the region but that will perhaps change the world. Biodiversity and the conservation of ecological diversity is a world issue. It relates to so many things, including global change. We are just a stone's throw from a very interesting future here, probably for many areas of the world.'

The first results

Professor Deckers feels that barely eight months on it's still too early for academic results. He did note that the social network around the project functions very well. For instance, two Flemish anthropologists are leaving for Arba Minch to take part in the project. In July two Flemish soil science and anthropology students will be down there for three months doing research for their Master's thesis. A third Ethiopian student has started a PhD with funding from NUFFIC and a fourth is currently in the selection phase at NUFFIC, assisted by UGent. A fifth recently applied to VLIR-UOS for a PhD scholarship.

Watch the video about the project at <http://vimeo.com/45827109>



Preparatory research in
Sigsig (Photo: Migration
project)

THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION ON THE LIFE OF A COMMUNITY: THE LABORATORY KNOWN AS ECUADOR

Migration has profoundly changed Ecuadorian society over the past sixty years. The geographical distribution of the population has changed, as has the family structures and working conditions. German Calfat at University of Antwerp's Institute for Development Policy and Management (IOB) is project leader at the Flemish end of the International Migration and Local Development project. The project is part of the institutional university cooperation with University of Cuenca (UCuenca). He tells us about the project's challenges and initial results.

Migration laboratory

The south of Ecuador, where UCuenca is located, resembles a laboratory for research into migration for researchers from the United States and Europe. The local universities do not usually have the capacity to conduct such studies. The purpose of the International Migration project is to support training in scientific research into migration at local universities and form a research team of Flemish and Ecuadorian researchers.

Politically sensitive

Economists, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, geographers and sociologists are taking part in the project. Putting together a research team is no easy task, says German Calfat: 'The universities in Ecuador are primarily focused on education and do not have a tradition of research. The multidisciplinary nature of the project means it cannot be assigned to a single faculty, so participants have to find creative solutions within the university. The researchers also have to bear in mind that migration is a politically sensitive issue with a major social impact.'

Results

Despite the difficulties, the project has already produced some great results, including various publications, international conferences and researcher exchanges, the training of four future academic doctors and the establishment of a research network with ties in Spain, the Netherlands and Mexico. German Calfat: 'The most important result is the development of scientific research as central element in the project.'

The project is part of the institutional university cooperation with UCuenca. The cooperation started in 2007. In addition to the migration project, the programme includes projects on food and health, education on sexuality and reproductive health, water management, medicinal plants, managing global heritage and the impact of mining on biodiversity.

Impact on the community

During the second phase of the project the researchers will primarily focus on the application of the Migration Impact Monitoring Mechanism. This was developed during the first phase as a way to systematically identify and register the impacts of migration processes. The researchers want to develop a better understanding of how migration affects the life of the community, based on an extensive survey of two thousand households in Sigsig, a town in the province of Azuay.

For more information about the migration project, read the article in the magazine Exchange to Change of September 2010 on www.ua.ac.be/iob.

For more information about the partnership with UCuenca see <http://vlir-iuc.ucuenca.edu.ec/>.

INGESTING WORM EGGS: AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT OR A HEALTH RISK?

Zelege Mekonnen is project leader of 'Infectious diseases', a project that is part of the Institutional University Cooperation with Jimma University in Ethiopia. When he visited a school to collect stool samples for a study into worms, a teacher asked him a very unexpected question.

As usual my colleagues and I were in a hurry to arrive at one of the schools selected as research site for our on-going project of control of soil transmitted helminthiasis. School-aged children were in a queue to provide stool samples.


Ascarislumbricoides or commonly called "round worm" is a giant intestinal parasitic worm that could grow up to 15 to 35 inches long and could produce more than 200,000 eggs per day inside the body. I explained the children and the teachers that these worms could cause diarrhoea, stomach pain, distension, and malnutrition because they eat up most of the nutrients from the human body. These worms could roll up in a ball that could cause an obstruction on the intestinal, biliary, and pancreatic ducts. Obstructions on these pathways cause serious complications which can be fatal. Moreover, these worms could migrate to other parts of the body like the lungs, causing respiratory problems.

Students had provided us the stool samples and went back to their class. It was time for me and the research team to leave the school compound and to go back to Jimma University to analyse the sample of the day in the laboratory. Yet, suddenly a challenging question was forwarded to me from one of the school teachers. She is in her early twenty, somehow over-weight but having attractive appearance. She started her question like this:

'Ingestion of worm eggs, particularly ingestion of Ascarislumbricoides eggs is considered as one of the methods for weight loss. Many girls are trying this method around the different parts of the world to become slim and keep their body shape. It is thought to be cheap and easy. Is this method widely used? Is it effective and safe? What is the reaction of the fitness industry toward this new method?'

She smiled, waiting for an answer. Although I am not an expert of weight loss method programmes, I felt suggesting that, consuming balanced diet,





eating less and exercising more is still the healthiest and most effective means of losing weight. I continued telling that it is advisable to consult health professionals before starting on any special diet or any other advertised new method of weight loss. So people will know the pros, cons and risks of that particular weight loss program. Whenever people are infected by a parasitic worm, they are advised to consult a health professional and get appropriate treatment to avoid further complications.

Dear readers, what would be your reaction if you would be asked such questions? At the end of that particular day, the teacher had concluded our discussion saying 'Better I remain as I am than trying to be slim and beautiful by purposely exposing myself to deadly worm infections!'

For more information about the cooperation with Jimma University: <http://iucju.ugent.be/>

Suddenly a school teacher asked me: 'Ingestion of worm eggs is considered as one of the methods for weight loss. Is it effective and safe? She smiled, waiting for an answer.

Larvae monitoring around
Gilgel Gibe reservoir shore
(Photo: IUC JU)



ZEBRA FISH HELP RESEARCH INTO CANCER AND EPILEPSY

Zebra fish are used for medical research at both the Anton de Kom University (AdeKUS) in Suriname and the University of Cuenca in Ecuador. They are helping research into the treatment of cancer in Suriname and epilepsy in Ecuador. The method is cheap and easy to apply. Both research projects have come about in association with KU Leuven, as part of the Institutional University Cooperation with AdeKUS and the University of Cuenca.

Cancer research

The medicinal plant research group at AdeKUS is doing research into malignant tumours. According to figures published by the Suriname authorities, cancer is the third biggest cause of death in the country. In the traditional treatment, the tumour cells are attacked directly. The research group is experimenting with an alternative treatment, which entails trying to eliminate the tumour by inhibiting the growth of blood vessels.

The zebra fish are used to test the capacity of plant extracts for inhibiting the growth of blood vessels. These are genetically modified zebra fish with fluorescent blood vessel cells. If certain plant extracts do prove to inhibit the growth of blood vessels, the researchers will identify the active components and conduct further tests.

A study into eye conditions in diabetes patients is an example of innovative application of the zebra fish test setup. Certain types of diabetes are characterised by the growth of blood vessels, which can lead to impaired vision.

Research into epilepsy

The medicinal plant research group at the University of Cuenca is doing research into epilepsy. The researchers are looking for plants that have a positive impact on the treatment of epilepsy. They make use of local population groups by asking them about their knowledge of plants.

Zebra fish (photo:
Peter de Witte)

The zebra fish are used to test the activity of plant extracts. The researchers collect the fertilised eggs every day. After a few days they treat the fish larva with compounds that induce epilepsy-like attacks. The behaviour of the larva is easy to follow under the microscope. The researchers check to see whether adding the plant extracts to the water stops the convulsions.

For more information about the partnership with UCuenca see <http://vlir-iuc.ucuenca.edu.ec/>.

For more information about the partnership with AdeKUS see <http://vlir-iuc.uvs.edu/>.



Project UCuenca
(photo: Piet Wostyn)

TURNING NATURAL RESOURCES INTO PEACE AND PROSPERITY: 'THIS PROGRAMME IS HIGHLY INNOVATIVE!'

The partnership with Université Catholique de Bukavu (UCB) in DR Congo was formally launched on 1 September 2011. KU Leuven is coordinating the programme, in association with UGent and University of Antwerp. The goal is to improve the well-being of the population in the South Kivu conflict zone. Research is planned into improvements to farming, the development of the mining industry and solutions for local health problems.

Reconstruction of Kivu

The central theme of the cooperation project with UCB is 'resource management in Kivu as part of post-conflict reconstruction'. The three sub-projects examine soil fertility and plant diseases; better management of mining activities; and health, with the focus on women and chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. A team of academics and scientists from Flanders and DR Congo has been put together for each project.

Results

One year down the line the project teams are fully operational. They conduct research in various areas of South Kivu province, especially into farming and mining. A research protocol has been developed for health surveys for women. Research into diabetes and hypertension has already produced promising results.

An important part of the programme is training researchers and technicians. A number of lab technicians have received training on new analytical methods at UGent and in Kenya. Various students have followed a master's course at University of Antwerp. The preparatory steps have been taken to launch two PhD courses in September 2012.

There will be an impact to the extent that natural resources, often being subject to war, will be transformed into peace and wealth. Professor J. Gwamuhanya, vice-chancellor emeritus (UCB)

The preparation required by VLIR-UOS was a fascinating exercise. We had to meet certain conditions. The increased effort and discipline in the academic and administrative management in itself was already a beginning of change. Professor J. B. Ntagoma, then local coordinator (UCB)

By joining forces we can create an impact for the society. Professor M. Vervenne, vice-chancellor emeritus (KU Leuven)

There will be an impact on the communities. This programme enables us, together with the government, to implement tools and find possible solutions. Professor D. Mubagwa, Flemish coordinator (KU Leuven)



Photo: Martine Dekoninck



COOPERATION PROJECTS: CASES

Prestigious award for Improving Statistical Literacy

In 2011 the Improving Statistical Literacy project was selected as the Best Cooperative Project in Statistical Literacy of the year 2010 by the International Statistical Institute (ISI). The goal of the project is developing statistical teaching material and training teachers in Ethiopia. Fifteen statisticians from five Ethiopian universities followed courses in Belgium. Among the project's most important achievements are the launch of an MSc in Biostatistics at Jimma University and the development of specific teaching material. The project is linked to the Institutional University Cooperation with Jimma University (Ethiopia) and the Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique).

The coordinators at the Ethiopian end are Yehenew Getachew (Jimma University), Befekadu Gashaw (Hawassa University) and Fentaw Abegaz (Addis Ababa University). The Flemish coordinators are Luc Duchateau (UGent, in the partnership with IUC-JU) and Marc Aerts (UHasselt, in the partnership with IUC-EM). For more information see the project website at www.nssbiostat.ugent.be.



Flemish open source software finds its way to libraries and museums in Cuba

ABCD sounds like an infant school lesson on the alphabet, but actually it is a library computerisation system based on free open source software. The DOCBIBLAS project promotes the application of ABCD in various VLIR-UOS partner countries. Egbert De Smet (UA) is the driving force behind DODBIBLAS. In consultation with UNESCO among other parties, he infused open source library computerisation with international dynamism.

Cuba was one of the countries where universities started to use ABCD. At least five Cuban universities now use the system. ABCD has even been adopted by provincial libraries and museums in Vila Clara province among other places. The system's wide application beyond the campus is part of the Cuban policy of bringing education closer to the people. The universities work closely with provincial authorities, cultural centres, museums and libraries. There is a great need for them to develop their own software, because the US embargo on Cuba obstructs the use of software from that country. Flemish universities make a major contribution to ICT use and management in Cuba through the various VLIR-UOS programmes.



SCHOLARSHIPS

VLIR-UOS offers scholarships to students and professionals from the South for courses in Flanders and PhDs. The courses in Flanders include both short trainings and master's degrees. The PhD scholarships cover a stay in Flanders and the home country. There is a possibility to award scholarships to those involved in the cooperation projects for trainings, master's degrees and PhDs.

Students enrolled at a Flemish university or university college can apply for a scholarship for a recognised training component, such as a training placement or a stay in the South in connection with a master's thesis. They are also eligible for a PhD scholarship if the subject is related to the cooperation with the South.

In 2011 VLIR-UOS awarded 1174 scholarships.

Flemish students

Placement or thesis scholarships	500
PhD scholarships	34

Students from the South

Scholarships for training or an MSc in Flanders	400
PhD scholarships	240



EFFICIENT WATER PURIFICATION SAVES STATISTICIAN FROM DROWNING

Have you heard the one about the statistician who was drowning in a lake that was one and a half metres deep on average? In his PhD research project Arnoud Cuppens states that many water purification systems function poorly because the designers base their calculations on an average inflow of waste water. The problem is that the systems are not able to cope with heavy rainfall. We managed to catch Arnoud before he jetted off to Paraguay to publicise his findings. We asked him some questions to satisfy our own curiosity about the findings and impressions of his research.

Why did you become interested in the project?

Arnoud Cuppens: During volunteer work in Paraguay I realised that just a small percentage of the waste water was purified and that the watercourses in urban areas are actually open sewers. It was especially the fact that a lot of people in developing countries are forced out of sheer necessity to live close to contaminated watercourses that stimulated me to orient my research to waste water purification in developing countries.

What do you feel is the study's most important discovery?

The current guidelines for building natural waste water purification systems give inadequate consideration to the local challenges in developing countries. The focus is on the highest possible average purification efficiency. The assumption is that there is a constant inflow of waste water with the same organic load. In practice, however, there are very large fluctuations in inflow



water quantity and quality. The biggest cause of fluctuations is the inflow of lots of rainwater during storms. This can lead to reduced water purification efficiency or in the worst case scenario a defective purification system.

What other applications do you feel the research results have?

I have developed a methodology for identifying and modelling disruptions to natural waste water systems. This will enable us to improve the functioning of waste water systems in developing countries.

The knowledge we acquire and data about sewerage systems we collect can help researchers and donors to analyse the local water purification factors in developing countries. As part of the millennium development goals donors are investing en masse in the construction of sanitary facilities. However, there is little research data on how efficiently water purification systems function.

What experience had the biggest impact on you?

The day I will remember most vividly is 24 May 2009. I was in the town of Coronel Oviedo. There was a huge storm that day. More than 205 mm fell from the skies in less than 24 hours. The local record of 150 mm precipitation was smashed by quite some distance. By way of comparison, annual precipitation in Flanders is around 800 mm. During a severe storm we register 50-60 mm precipitation. Being a hydrologist it was a chance of a lifetime experience to be on the ground to observe the drainage of the rainwater from the urban area.

Photos: Arnoud Cuppens

Arnoud Cuppens received a doctorate from the Soil and Water Management department of KU Leuven, in 2011. He was awarded a Flemish PhD scholarship by VLIR-UOS for his research into efficient water purification in Paraguay.





The participants of the course,
together with promoter Wim Van
Petegem (Photo: Anne-Leen Maes)



MEDIA AND LEARNING: AN EXCITING MIX

A retired staff member of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation, Edwin Bourgeois, met Prohlad Karmaker in Bangladesh. The former VLIR-UOS scholar followed the 'Audio Visual Learning Materials – Management, Production and Activities' (AVLM) course at KU Leuven. As Edwin Bourgeois writes about the meeting:

Prohlad Karmaker works at BRAC, an NGO in Bangladesh making illustrations for textbooks and teaching materials for primary education: beautiful and very useful. To my mind this is one of the best scholarship investments ever made. He returned to his job in Bangladesh and his work is very much appreciated. What he produces is tremendous, compared with the boring ministry of education schoolbooks in Bangladesh and in many other countries where I have seen dismal textbooks.

The AVLM course lasts eight weeks and targets education supports in the South. The participants begin with a crash course in education technology and multimedia production before going on to produce their own multimedia learning materials for their home situation. Some thoughts from former scholarship recipients:

It was an interesting, stimulating experience. We tried one technology after the other, we made mistakes, but above all we gained a lot of experience. Media and learning is a very intriguing combination.

Carol Chi Ngang, South Africa Social Development Agency, South Africa

The course was very comprehensive. It broadened my knowledge of audio-visual technologies, taught me to find things out for myself and provided me with an international network.

Mai Shanti, Birzeit University, Birzeit, Palestine

I've just heard some great news. The World Bank approved our Vietnam Blended Learning Project! Without your ideas and encouragement I would not have been able to complete the application form. It's a huge thrill for us to give shape to this project together with you.

Nguyen Thi Van Su, Can Tho University, Hanoi, Vietnam

The AVLM course is supported by VLIR-UOS within the International Training Programme. The participants are eligible for a VLIR-UOS scholarship.

WORK PLACEMENT AND THESIS RESEARCH STAYS IN HET SOUTH HAVE A HIGH ADDED VALUE

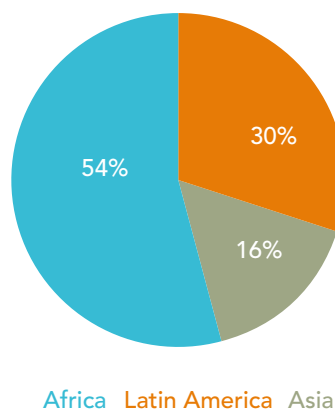
VLIR-UOS awarded travel grants to 500 students from Flemish universities and university colleges in 2011. They conducted thesis research or took up a work placement in the South. Who are they? Where did they go to? What is the added value of the stay?

Suriname and South Africa are the most popular destinations

Approximately three quarters of those scholarships were awarded to women. In terms of destination, a little over half of all students went to Africa, whereas one in three opted for Latin America. At 16%, Asia was the least common destination.

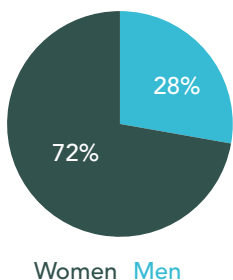
Suriname and South Africa have been the most popular travel grant destinations for many years and that did not change in 2011. Other fashionable destinations were Kenya, Ecuador, Uganda, Tanzania, India, Ethiopia, Ghana and Peru.

Ranking	Country	% of students
1	Suriname	14%
2	South Africa	11%
3	Kenya	6%
4	Ecuador	6%
5	Uganda	5%
6	Tanzania	5%
7	India	5%
8	Ethiopia	4%
9	Ghana	4%
10	Peru	4%



Strong source of added value for the training or career for 94% of the students

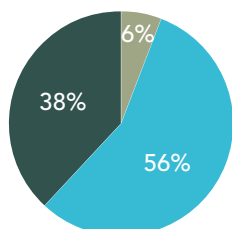
94% of the students feel that the trip to the South was a strong or very strong source of added value for their training or career. Just 6% feel that it added little value.



Some of the positive comments from the students:

- I have learned to adopt a problem-solving mindset in various situations.
- I have learned specific personal skills that are important for a special needs educationalist, such as patience, tolerance and flexibility.
- Trying to find solutions to all problems myself was an instructive experience.

Added value for career/training:



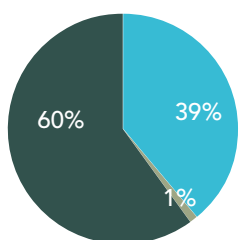
Very high High Little

Another student was less positive. He feels that employers don't see any surplus value in a foreign placement. They prefer a work placement at a domestic employer.

Great added value for the personal development for 99% of the students

The students were virtually unanimous in their agreement that their stay in the South had added value for their personal development. It was a source of very great added value for 60% of the students. Just 1% felt that it added little value.

Added value for personal development:



Very high High Little

A few positive responses:

- I am more self-assured and I have learned to put a lot of things into perspective.
- I have gained a broader understanding of the problems that exist in the world.
- I have become a lot more independent.
- Taking initiatives, being independent, flexible, tenacious, patient, empathetic and so on are all traits I worked on in Peru.

Another student puts that added value into context:

- The two months in Paramaribo were brilliant but they did not drastically change my life.



SCHOLARSHIPS: CASES

Former Kenyan scholar wins EMRC-Rabobank Project Incubator Award 2011

Everlyne Cherobon received a cash prize of US\$ 15,000 for her small holder farmer project in Kenya. The EMRC-Rabobank Project Incubator Award encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. Everlyne Cherobon is founder and coordinator of EMEDEN Kenya, a beekeeping and sunflower producing farmer association in the dry lands of Kenya. It recently expanded in the production of ground nuts, beans, millet and sorghum, and is seeking to further increase production by providing member farmers with access to micro-loans. Everlyne followed the training programme Beekeeping for Poverty Alleviation at Ghent University with a scholarship of VLIR-UOS. Everlyne Cherobon: 'The award was a great breakthrough and I thank God for it. I will use the funds to scale up on all activities including provision of micro loans to the farmers.'

'I have got to know myself better as a person and as a future doctor'

Marieke Huys travelled to India in 2011. 'This trip was a revelation for me in so many ways. I do not see it as a technical medical placement, like a regular clinical placement. For me it's more like a social placement in which you learn more about yourself as a person and a future doctor. This foreign trip has reminded me of the ideals I had when I began studying medicine. That fanned the flames. I don't know whether they are new flames or old flames. The most important thing is that the flames are there and I won't let them go out.'

[From Universiteit Hasselt Magazine, No. 4, October 2011.](#)

Minister-president Peeters visits Flemish travel grant students in South Africa

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters dropped by Flemish students in South Africa in August 2011. The students were in the country to conduct research or take up a work placement, funded by a VLIR-UOS travel grant.



Get Together Day 2011

Every two years VLIR-UOS holds a networking event for all scholarship recipients from the South staying in Flanders at that time. In 2011 the Get Together Day was hosted by UGent. 400 scholars were invited.



SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

In addition to supporting cooperation projects and awarding scholarships VLIR-UOS also works to strengthen higher education in the partner countries. This is approached in different ways depending on the country. It may be based on the organisation of workshops or the creation of networks. VLIR-UOS also encourages South-South partnerships in which universities in the South share knowledge and expertise and set up projects.

Photo: Philippe Reynaers





Photo: Christophe Goossens

FLEMISH AND FRENCH-SPEAKING RECTORS SIGN UP TO FURTHER COOPERATION WITH VIETNAM

A delegation of rectors and representatives of Flemish and French-speaking universities visited Vietnam from 10 to 16 April 2011. The main purpose of the trip was to explore new forms of cooperation between higher education institutions in Belgium and Vietnam. The highpoint was the joint signing of a memorandum of understanding on further cooperation between Belgian and Vietnamese universities.

The Vietnam trip was an initiative of the Belgian ambassador to Vietnam, Hubert Cooreman, and rector Paul Van Cauwenberge (UGent). VLIR-UOS coordinated the trip at the Flemish end. UGent, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KU Leuven, UHasselt, UA and VLIR-UOS were the Flemish representatives.

Memorandum of understanding on new cooperation

The delegation visited universities in Hue, Hanoi, Can Tho, and Ho Chi Minh City. Hanoi hosted a joint seminar where all Belgian and the main Vietnamese universities signed a memorandum of understanding in the presence of the Belgian ambassador and a representative of Vietnam's ministry for education. Among other things, the various parties undertook to set up a new partnership in the form of credit exchange, joint and double degree curricula, joint research, doctoral schools and technology transfer.

Sustainable partnerships

Vietnam is a Belgian development cooperation partner country and an important country for the Belgian universities. The cooperation between Flemish and Vietnamese universities has essentially been shaped since 1998 as part of the VLIR-UOS Institutional University Cooperation with Hanoi University of Science and Technology and Can Tho University. This partnership has helped transform the two Vietnamese universities. International relations were in their infancy back in 1998,



Photo: Signing of the MoU
by Belgian and Vietnamese
representatives

but the universities have since grown into strong, dynamic education and research institutions with worldwide cooperation links.

Former scholars hold senior positions in Vietnam

The scholarships are another spearhead in the cooperation with Vietnam. Over the past decade VLIR-UOS has invested heavily in scholarships for PhDs, MScs and professional trainings. Between 2004 and 2010 VLIR-UOS awarded 85 scholarships to Vietnamese students to follow a Master's degree course at a Flemish university, with a further 59 scholarships for training and 26 scholarships for PhDs. A huge number of former scholars at Flemish universities now hold senior positions in Vietnam's political, business and academic world. During the seminar in Hanoi a new website was unveiled for Vietnamese alumni (www.vietbelalumni.org), developed by the section of the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation in Hanoi.

International and development cooperation

Vietnam continues to be an important partner country for the Flemish universities. Given that great differences still exist among the various Vietnamese universities, Flanders will make a distinction between more advanced institutions and developing institutions. The cooperation with more advanced institutions will take on the form of regular scientific cooperation. The FWO programme for cooperation between Flanders and Vietnam is part of this. The developing institutions are eligible for university development cooperation. It is important that a link remains between the two forms of cooperation, to ensure that they can strengthen each other.

The new VLIR-UOS country strategy for Vietnam focuses on the country's regional role as a hub for further cooperation in Southeast Asia.

CONGOLESE HIGHER EDUCATION MINISTER PRAISES VLIR-UOS DURING CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A conference was held in Kinshasa from 6 to 10 June 2011 on the quality of higher education in DR Congo. Central themes were globalisation and reformation of higher education. VLIR-UOS was conference co-organiser. Quality assurance in higher education is an important part of the institutional cooperation of VLIR-UOS in DR Congo. Kathleen Wuytack, VLIR-UOS representative in DR Congo, is delighted to see the minister making concrete steps in the reformation of higher education and the links with the VLIR-UOS programme.

International links

A large number of rectors and directors of public and private organisations took part in the conference alongside then minister for higher education, Léonard Mashako Mamba. The minister stressed the importance of high-quality education. The minister's goal for the conference was to examine how higher education in DR Congo can establish international links and make progress towards achieving international quality standards. Special attention was given to the application of the system of licentiates, masters and doctors, the use of communication technology in higher education and the fit between education and the job market. The minister thanked such partners as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as VLIR-UOS, CUD and the Belgian development cooperation for their contributions to the conference.

A step forward

Kathleen Wuytack, who took part in the conference as VLIR-UOS representative in DR Congo, was elated that the recommendations were formalised in two ministerial decisions shortly afterwards. The first one concerns the creation of an administrative body to bring higher education in DR Congo into the global education and research space. The appointment of the members of the administrative body was included in the second ministerial decision. Kathleen Wuytack: 'These ministerial decisions really are a step forward. This is the first initiative aimed at evolving an improved education system at national level that will allow DR Congo to join the rest of the academic world and gradually catch up. Adopting the system of





The Congolese vice-chancellors and Kathleen Wuytack, VLIR-UOS country representative (right-hand) (Photo: Wannes Verbeeck)

licentiates, masters and doctorates necessarily entails the application of quality assurance. So there are many opportunities for cooperation between the VLIR-UOS programme for quality assurance in DR Congo and the reformation planned by the minister.'

Interest of the World Bank and the African Development Bank

Quality assurance has the interest of not only the universities and the authorities in DR Congo, but also donors like the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The World Bank makes funds available to expand quality care in DR Congo, based on the VLIR-UOS way of working. Four additional universities took part in the first quality assurance course alongside the VLIR-UOS partners. That is because the Congolese Ministry for Higher and University Education and Research wants to see the spread of quality assurance throughout the country. The African Development Bank funds the application of quality assurance in other provinces.

The Quality Assurance project was created with the assistance of emeritus professor Oswald Van Cleemput (UGent), VLIR's quality assurance unit and Flemish experts.



VLIR-UOS AS FORUM

VLIR-UOS is a forum in which representatives of higher education work together for development and share information and best practices. We see it as our duty to inspire professors, teachers, students and policymakers and provide information on international cooperation. We know that university cooperation is not easy. That notwithstanding, a large number of new enthusiasts take the plunge every year.



COUNTRY STRATEGIES AS ROADMAP FOR COOPERATION GOING FORWARD

In 2010 VLIR-UOS promised the then minister for development cooperation to limit the number of partner countries to 20 from 2013. VLIR-UOS undertook to work out a distinct strategy for each partner country, to serve as a road map for cooperation going forward. Together with the Flemish universities and university colleges, VLIR-UOS took the decision to work out country strategies for Cuba, Ecuador, Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam by the end of 2011.

Opportunities for cooperation

A country strategy reflects the opportunities for university cooperation for development between the country in question and Flanders. A country strategy constitutes the frame of reference for VLIR-UOS when drawing up calls and selecting proposals. A strategy is based on the needs and wants of the country in question and takes account of what other actors in the country are doing. It also has to be supported by the partners in the country and the potential partners in Flanders. A country strategy may have a geographical or thematic focus. It can identify the most suitable types of intervention.

Preparation

We appointed external experts and organised information and consultation meetings in Flanders and the country in question to arrive at a distinct strategy for each country. The basis of the country strategy paper was a desk study comprising a context analysis of higher education and the fight against poverty in the country. We also organised a broad-based enquiry into the priorities of future cooperation with and in the countries, as well as consulting the Flemish stakeholders. Visits were made to Cuba, Ecuador, Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam in the autumn of 2011, while potential long-term cooperation partners were also identified.

Institutional cooperation and national networks

As well as institutional cooperation with one university in a given country, we also provide for national networks of universities working together on a specific theme. In April and May 2012 delegations from Cuba, Ecuador,

Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam visited Belgium to find partners for institutional cooperation and networks. Academics from Flanders and the five countries are now putting together teams to ensure that together we are in a position to provide long-term responses to the main challenges.

A different process is in place for DR Congo. VLIR-UOS has worked on the basis of a country policy for some time there already. In 2011 we identified the strategic lines of the current Congo programme to see what additions and amendments were needed. We arranged various consultations in Flanders and DR Congo to discuss the draft country strategy paper. That work will continue in 2012.

Tanzania country strategy identification workshop (Photo: Luc Janssens de Bisthoven)



SHOULD HIGHER EDUCATION GET INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION?

At the 2011 new year event we debated with policymakers on development cooperation's place within Flemish higher education. Panel members were Raf Devos (deputy private secretary Higher Education), Johan Meeusen (vice-rector of University of Antwerp), Guy Aelterman (then vice-chancellor of Artesis Hogeschool Antwerpen), Bart De Moor (vice-rector Globalisation of KU Leuven), Jean-François Deneef (then president of CUD) and Roel Merckx (deputy chair of VLIR-UOS).

Is development cooperation a core duty of higher education?

'I feel development cooperation can be used to attract young people'

(Bart De Moor, KU Leuven)

Bart De Moor: A number of high-profile Flemish CEOs recently said 'Development cooperation is an essential activity but it is not really a spearhead on which basis you can attract more students.' We are now working on an initiative to reply to those CEOs. I feel development cooperation can be used to attract young people.

Johan Meeusen: Our university policy mission is to ensure that the enthusiasm of the individual professors or researchers involved in development cooperation is maintained, that it is not destroyed. We are forced to take part in the rat race in which education and especially research is evaluated in terms of money. I feel that as universities we always have to bring to the fore that it's not just about research and education, but that providing a service is also a core duty of the university.

'Education and research also have to give attention to the big problems on this planet'

(Roel Merckx, KU Leuven)

Roel Merckx: We will continue to have a problem as long as this type of activity for universities is seen as a service, because then it becomes something secondary that is provided or not provided. The main thing is providing education at the

highest level. As long as you do not involve the whole development context in your education, I don't feel you are doing it properly. A country or region has everything to gain from bringing its educators into contact or giving them the opportunity to develop a wider view of the world.

'We can only solve a number of problems in the North by working together with the South'
(Jean-François Deneff, UCL)

Jean-François Deneff: The universities have to work on their credibility, in both North and South, by tackling social problems linked to the global village we live in. We can only solve a number of problems in the North by working together with the South.

Raf Devos: At no time during the two months I've worked for minister Smet have I seen the words development cooperation in the documents that have crossed my desk. I think that says something. I have asked the administration what we are all doing in the Flemish Community. I was met with silence.



Debate with from left to right moderator Marc Van de Looverbosch and panel members Jean-François Deneff, Roel Merckx, Bart De Moor, Guy Aelterman, Johan Meeusen and Raf Devos (Photo: Philippe Reynaers)

PECHA KUCHA: THE ESSENCE IN 6 MINUTES 40 SECONDS

Do your toes curl at the thought of sitting through endless presentations in which the key message is drowned in a flood of unreadable figures? We went looking for a methodology that guaranteed short inspiring presentations that convey a clear message. Pecha Kucha was where we found it. The formula: 20 slides, each shown for 20 seconds, producing a presentation lasting a total of 6 minutes 40 seconds. The strict rules force speakers to be creative and develop a clear narrative, which demands a lot of practice.

At the 2011 new year event we asked five speakers to respond to the question 'Cooperation with the South: what does it do for you?' using the Pecha Kucha methodology. What we got were five inspirational interpretations and a very enthusiastic audience. The speakers were Nico Koedam (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Karen Vancampenhout (K.H.Kempen and KU Leuven), Luc Duchateau (UGent), Anne Becker (UGent) and Jan De Maeseneer (UGent). Watch the video at <http://vimeo.com/19285196>.

VLIR-UOS presented Pecha Kucha Night Brussels Vol. 18 at Beursschouwburg on 26 May 2011, together with Architempo, VUB CROSSTALKS, VAIS and WOB. The speakers included VLIR-UOS PhD scholarship recipient Teodora Cabasan, who talked about how students themselves pass on their knowledge and experience, and professor Balu (UGent), who talked about what we can learn from Indian culture. Watch the video at www.vimeo.com/album/1671135.

'These people who have studied and learned in Belgium went back to their countries, they use what they have learned and they are working towards their development. It is a rewarding experience that these students we once trained are now researchers and some become teachers training the other students too.'
(Teodora Cabasan, PhD at KU Leuven)

'Whenever I draw a circle, I want to step out of it. You learn to think outside your box. You have to dare to think beyond. This is something you certainly learn from the cooperation with the South.'

(Anne Becker, UGent)



VLIR-UOS DEFENDING INTERESTS

VLIR-UOS defends the interests of Flemish higher education in development cooperation vis-à-vis the authorities and third parties. Defending those interests has become an increasingly important task at VLIR-UOS, especially against the backdrop of austerity.

IT'S ALL ABOUT POLITICS: THE IMPACT OF BELGIAN POLITICS ON UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Both 2011 and 2012 will go down as tough years in the history of VLIR-UOS. In 2011 approval for the VLIR-UOS budget was late in coming due to the failure to form a new government. In 2012 university development cooperation was on the agenda of the intergovernmental negotiations as a power to be transferred from the federal government to the communities and regions. VLIR-UOS had to wait until April 2012 for official approval of the budget. Clearly, long-term partnerships are not always compatible with uncertainty in national politics.



Postponing courses

The approval of the 2011 VLIR-UOS budget was a long time coming due to the laborious process of forming a government after the federal elections in 2010. A lot of VLIR-UOS projects found themselves in financial peril. VLIR-UOS took the decision not to start any new projects and to put a number of planned programmes on hold. The Flemish media published various reports about the adverse consequences of budgetary uncertainty for university development cooperation.

In spite of the late receipt of state funds, most of the projects planned for 2011 went ahead. However, the financial insecurity was a problem for the short training initiatives. Eight courses were postponed until 2012, together with one international training programme and one international congress. The funds that were saved were used to launch an extra call for short research stays in 2011. These are grants to foreign students wishing to come to Flanders.

The financial situation will continue to have an impact going forward. The country strategies and programmes are based on a long-term budgetary framework. The political uncertainty threatens long-term commitments, however.

The importance of having political support

If we have learned one lesson from this experience it is the importance of having political support in Belgium. We have to show that university cooperation for development makes a difference not only in the academic world, but elsewhere, too. Why should the authorities continue to invest in that cooperation? What is the added value for Flemish universities and university colleges? In recent months we have spoken with many ministers, party chairs and members of staff of political parties to explain 'sharing minds, changing lives'. Only by joining forces and highlighting the impact of what we do to an even greater degree will we be able to protect the future of university cooperation for development.



ABOUT VLIR-UOS

VLIR-UOS supports partnerships between universities and university colleges in Flanders 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.

Global and local challenges

We are faced with global challenges such as poverty, migration and climate change. The effects are felt locally, but the causes and solutions are global. These are challenges that concern us all and we can only solve them together.

Innovative responses

We need knowledge to find a response to the challenges. Social innovation forms a bridge between knowledge and social challenges. By applying knowledge in an innovative way we can develop solutions that were previously inconceivable.

Universities and university colleges

Universities and university colleges are pre-eminent knowledge centres. They create, spread and apply knowledge. Universities and university colleges can play a key role in social innovation by harnessing their research and education to find responses to the challenges facing our societies. That is how universities and university colleges are a source of added value to society.

Flanders and the South

We need universities and university colleges around the world to join together to respond to global and local challenges. For Flanders and Belgium the cooperation with universities in the South is a particular source of added value. The global challenges are mainly observable in the South, so it is important to look for solutions there. The cooperation also encourages outside-the-box thinking and innovation from various cultural backgrounds.

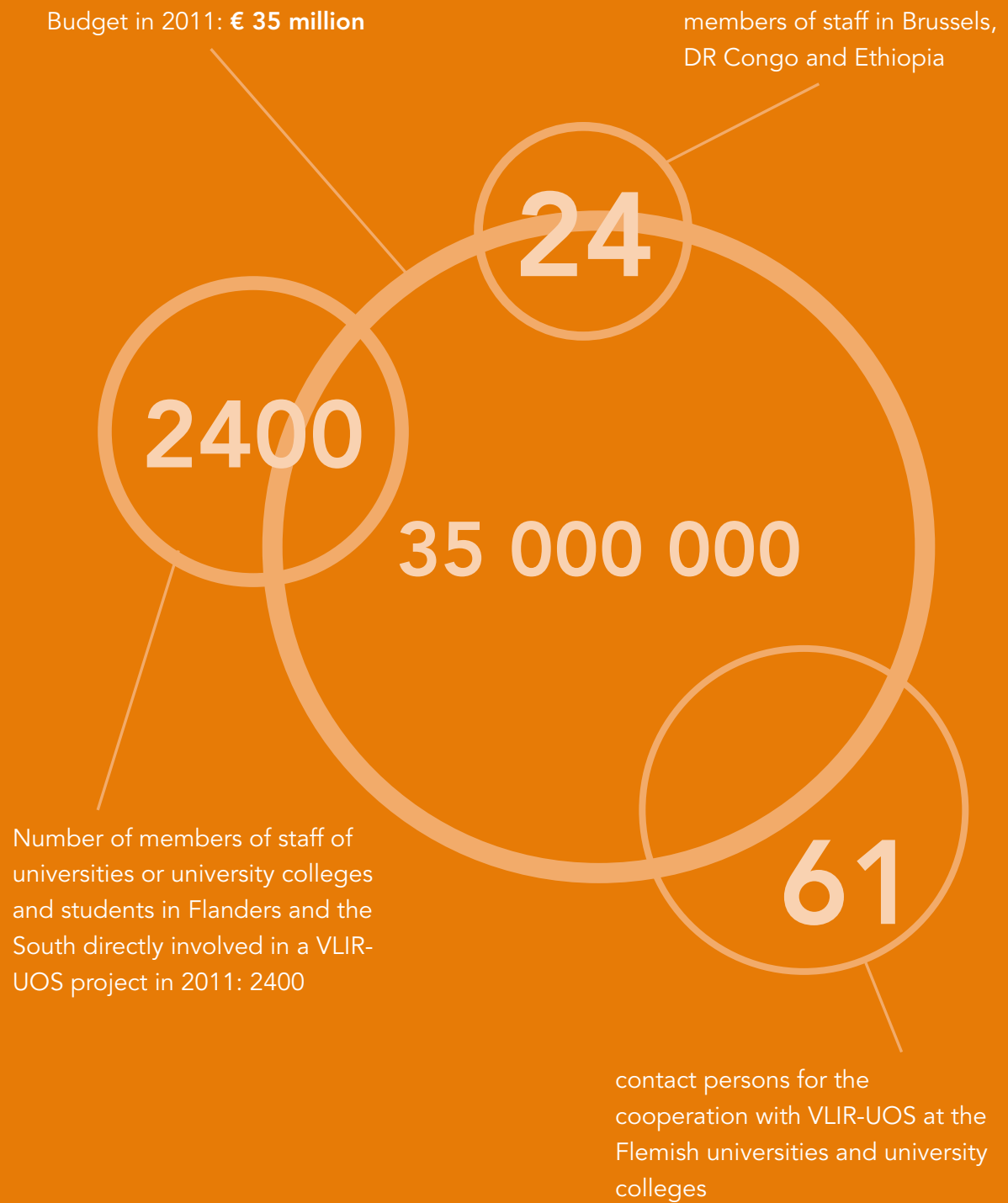
Partnerships

Sustainable partnerships across countries, institutions, disciplines and sectors are a springboard to finding responses to social challenges. First and foremost, VLIR-UOS supports partnerships between universities and university colleges. The working relationships with authorities, social organisations and business remain essential, too. Because if social innovation is to have an impact, we must cover the whole chain from knowledge acquisition to application.

Forum, funder and defender of interests

VLIR-UOS has a unique position in Flemish society. VLIR-UOS is a forum in which representatives of higher education work together for development and share information and best practices. VLIR-UOS is also a provider of funds for development cooperation projects in Flemish higher education. Lastly, VLIR-UOS defends the interests of Flemish higher education in development cooperation with regard to the authorities and third parties. VLIR-UOS is part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council and receives funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation.

VLIR-UOS in figures





Employees of VLIR-UOS and contact persons during the planning day 2012

The cases in the 2011 annual report refer to projects and scholarships launched or continued in 2011. We also survey the main developments at VLIR-UOS in 2011. In compiling this annual report we tried to find a balance between the various higher education institutions and the partner countries. That being said, it is not possible to give space to all institutions and countries. If you have an interesting case you feel deserves a place in the 2012 annual report, email hans.vandewater@vliruos.be to tell us about it.

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This annual report is also published in Dutch. Digital versions are available at www.vliruos.be.

D/2012/10.960/1.

About the cover photo:

VLIR-UOS held a photo contest under the title 'Sharing minds, changing lives'. From 114 entries the jury selected this photo showing the two coordinators of the cooperation programme with Jimma University in Ethiopia (IUC-JU) getting out of a car. Professor Luc Duchateau (UGent) and professor Kora Tushune (Jimma University) are depicted on the photo.

Luc Duchateau explains that the car was bought for the IUC-JU cooperation programme. It is a Babaj made in India. The photo was taken by Jimma University's photographer Wasihun Abera Teferi on the university campus.