

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



**"It is difficult, but if you are
convinced, you can do it!"**

Ethiopian researcher Alemtsehay Tsegay

INSIDE THIS ANNUAL REPORT:

'We want to be heard!'

Giving a voice to Bolivian street children and their mothers

6



18

The impact of over a decade of university cooperation between Flanders and Ethiopia

'The change has come from the inside.'

2

ALEMTSEHAY TSEGAY
Ethiopian researcher leads project on crop productivity

10

MARTIN VALCKE
Universities in Ecuador and Flanders unite on biodiversity

14

BRAM GOVAERTS
Billionaires seek out Flemish agricultural engineer

22

RUDY GEVAERT
ICT projects in Cuba and Ethiopia: When Google cannot provide the answer

24

UNIVERSITIC
Minister Labille presents ICT prize in DR Congo

25

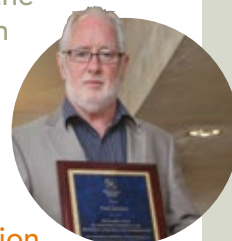
SEP VERBOOM
Ecodesign award for travel grant recipient

26

BRUNO NEUVILLE
The oral history of Batho township in the National Museum in Bloemfontein

28

PAUL JANSSEN
International recognition for university cooperation for development trailblazer



30

KOEN DE FEYTER
A new future for VLIR-UOS

34

KOEN DE FEYTER
VLIR-UOS chair in turbulent times

36

BUDGET
VLIR-UOS 2012 and top 10 countries

THIS IS NOT AID, IT'S GLOBAL INNOVATION!

Development cooperation is coming under fire. Politicians are increasingly pointing up the adverse effects it can have. It's said that development cooperation removes any incentive to work together in the South, and first and foremost eases our own consciences. Someone recently called it 'an aid drip'.

Time to shut it down? No way. Most critics don't go that far. They look at other forms of cooperation. 'Perhaps we should invest in people more,' they say.

We live in a world of urgent global challenges. You cannot find nation-based solutions to climate change, poverty and migration. We have to invest in shared solutions. This type of cooperation has nothing in common with an 'aid drip', it's about safeguarding our future at the international level.

Cooperation with Africa, Asia and Latin America is sorely needed. Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, recognizes this as much as anyone:

For me it's very simple: it's impossible to find answers to the great global challenges in Flanders or Belgium alone. Today, we have innovation not only in the rich West, but just about everywhere. So it's in everyone's interests to do that.

Development cooperation at VLIR-UOS invests in people who create, share and apply knowledge. They look for answers to social challenges together. We invest in strong partners to find strong solutions.

Is that perhaps the other form of cooperation our politicians are looking for? The good news is that it already exists. The bad news is that we are making deep cuts into it as a society. At the last minute we were able to save the VLIR-UOS projects and scholarships the federal government wanted to cancel. But it's uncertain what the future will bring after 2013.

The US cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead hit the nail on the head a long time ago: 'Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.'

In the 2012 annual report we give these committed people the chance to speak. They are the ones who change the world. Everyone in their own way, from Ethiopia, Ecuador, Belgium or elsewhere. But most important of all: they reinforce each other.

This is not aid, it's global innovation!



Koen De Feyter, chair VLIR-UOS
Kristien Verbrugghen, director VLIR-UOS

'IT IS DIFFICULT, BUT IF YOU ARE CONVINCED, YOU CAN DO IT!'

Alemtsehay Tsegay is researcher at Mekelle University in Ethiopia. She has been the rising star of the Institutional University Cooperation programme. Starting as a young team member, she became local project leader of the 'More crop per drop' project.

We were given the opportunity to interview her a few days after she defended her PhD at KU Leuven. We wanted to know why her research makes a difference, how she became a researcher and what her expectations are for the future of Ethiopia?



"I grew up in a very remote village. My grandparents are farmers. I used to stay with them during holidays, where I worked with my grandmother. So from the beginning I had an interest in agriculture. But it was by chance that the Ethiopian Ministry of Higher Education assigned me to the agricultural university.

I am the oldest of a family of eight children. All my brothers and sisters joined the university. In most cases, if the oldest has a good study attitude the youngsters follow. My parents did not go at all to school. They are illiterate.

What is your research about?

I study the effect of water and soil fertility stress on crop production, particularly in my region Tigray. The research combines both field experiments and modeling. With the field experiments we illustrate the increase in yield that can be created by applying supplementary irrigation and fertilizers. The modeling gives us scenarios on how to minimize the yield gap due to water and soil fertility stresses.

The research involves young researchers, like the Flemish MSc grant students, under the supervision of the professors from KU Leuven. It was good experience, not only for me but also for them. It also included the extension agents who work closely with the farmers, and last but not least the farmers themselves were also involved.

You involve farmers and extension workers in the research. What do they gain from that?

The research was based on the farmers' root problems. The results can be easily applied in

the field with the resources that are at hand. For example, the application of supplementary irrigation from micro dams, river diversions or hand-dug wells was effective in our experiment to minimize the yield loss due to water limitation.

But as irrigating field crops is not common practice in the region, it is not easy to convince farmers to adopt this technology. As seeing is believing, we showed the results in practice to the farmers and the extension agents who work with them. Thus I think they can learn a lot

from what they have seen from our experiment by comparing with their own practice.

Has the research changed you?

Yes, I have developed the confidence that I can conduct research independently, interpret the results and publish the research results in peer-reviewed international journals. I think this is good, because it is one of the most important things that has to be done in higher education institutions.

What has been the added value of working with Flemish researchers?

I learned a lot on how a problem can be addressed in different ways, by getting into contact with people from different backgrounds. They were pushing me to take a lead to publish the research results, of course, with lots of input on how to improve and edit the document. We all just work together, professors and young researchers, towards the same objectives, which is to minimize the problems related to crop production in dry land areas. Another important thing

“My parents did not go at all to school. They are illiterate”

that I learned is their patience in guiding people and conducting intensive research at the grassroots level.

Besides being researcher, you are mother too. How do you combine the two roles?

It is very difficult, because the children miss you and you miss them. But if you convince yourself you can also convince your children and your family to support you. You are doing research not only for your own satisfaction but it is also your responsibility to do so as an academician in higher education. You need to develop your knowledge in order to conduct good quality research and teach effectively. So it is difficult to manage being a mother and a researcher, but if you are convinced, you can do it.

Ethiopia has a great potential to become an economically competitive country.

How do you see the future of Ethiopia?

The image the world has of Ethiopia is one of famine and malnutrition. But today

Ethiopia is changing and developing fast. The country is working hard to meet the Millennium Development Goals. In the last few years the economy of the country has grown by 11% according to government officials. The people are working hard to become a member of the economic middle classes in the future. If this development continues at the same pace there is a great potential to be self-sufficient in food and to be one of the world's economically competitive countries.

PhD research as part of the VLIR-UOS Institutional University Cooperation programme with Mekelle University

Alemtsehay Tsegay finalized her PhD on the improvement of crop production by field management strategies, using crop water productivity modeling, under the supervision of Dirk Raes (KU Leuven) in 2012. She carried out a case study on the production of tef, an important cereal in Ethiopia.

The research is part of the Institutional University Cooperation with Mekelle University, KU Leuven, University of Antwerp and Ghent University.



Picture: Luc Janssens de Bisthoven

RESEARCH PROJECT BRINGS TOGETHER
POLICY MAKERS AND NGOS TO TACKLE THE SOCIAL
EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND MIGRANT FAMILIES IN BOLIVIA

GIVING A VOICE TO BOLIVIAN STREET CHILDREN AND THEIR MOTHERS: 'WE WANT TO BE HEARD!'



Coordinators
Gerrit Loots (left) and
Erick Roth Unzueta
(Picture: Hans Van de Water)

The Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo and Vrije Universiteit Brussel started a five-year project in 2010 to provide local organizations and policy makers a greater understanding of the impact of socio-economical risk factors for children, adolescents and their families in urbanized Bolivian communities.

We witnessed the enthusiasm of the international team of professors, PhD students and project assistants during the visit to Belgium of the Bolivian researchers involved in the project. They were accompanied by the Bolivian ambassador to Belgium. *'This project is ground-breaking,'* he assured us.

Coordinators Gerrit Loots of Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) and vice-chancellor Erick Roth Unzueta of the Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo (Bolivia) share the secrets of their success with us.

How did you meet?

Erick Roth: *We came into contact through a student from Belgium who was working in La Paz. We have been good friends since then. Thanks to the support of VLIR-UOS we organized an international conference in 2007, as part of the South Initiatives programme. That was the starting point for the ongoing TEAM project.*

What is the project about?

Gerrit Loots: *We are developing research strategies and methodologies to support the psycho-social wellbeing of children, adolescents and families in very poor urban communities in Bolivian cities such as La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.*

In our research we are trying to offer knowledge and insights to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and policymakers so they can become more focused, more alert and more involved in the problems of the communities, such as parental migration, extreme poverty and social exclusion.

It is not just research. We start from practice and do participatory action research, involving all stakeholders.

Can you give an example of how you are collaborating with the communities?

Gerrit Loots: *One of the PhD students, Mariana, is involved in the city of Santa Cruz. In only a few years hundreds of thousands of immigrants from other parts of Bolivia have settled there.*

The mostly one-parent-families, women with children, try to survive in difficult circumstances with hardly any electricity or water. There is a lot of insecurity, violence and poverty.

Mariana is part of an NGO. She is working in a kitchen where women cook for the neighborhood

BOLIVIAN AMBASSADOR:

'This project is groundbreaking in Bolivia'

René Fernández, Bolivian ambassador to Belgium, is a big fan of the project:

'It has been able to link civil society with academia, academia with local government, local government with NGOs and NGOs with civil society.

The project provides us with a new model, not only for Bolivia, but also for other areas. It has been able to incorporate new research approaches and create synergies among all actors.'



'Now we are on the sidelines. We have to collaborate'

Isabel Berckmans is involved in the project as a PhD student at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, with the support of VLIR-UOS (VLADOC):

'I am working with the mothers in the poor communities. When we asked them what they would like to get out of the project, they answered: "We want to be heard!"

It was the first time the NGOs had listened to the mothers. We bring those women, the policymakers and NGOs together and look for ways to include the mothers in the social services. "Now we are on the sidelines. We have to collaborate", they say.'

and for the children. Together with the women Mariana is learning about how they try to survive in these communities. She is using that knowledge to find out what resources could help them build up a social network, a community that is safer and more capable to survive.

Erick Roth: *Our students are working in El Alto, near La Paz. It is a very rapidly growing city. Street children constitute one of the major problems. They have no parents, no services, no education, no healthcare. Another difficult group are the youngsters who take drugs and who have problems with the police.*

We are now approaching these kinds of problems through systematic study by our PhD students, in order to show the NGOs how to gather information and to interpret the reality, so that they can find solutions for these people, together with them.

Do you already see any changes in the NGOs you are working with?

Erick Roth: *Before the start of the project, we could barely find institutions that were working efficiently. Now the partner NGOs have improved their methodologies and interest in research.*

Gerrit Loots: *Another example is the parents of the children who are living in the streets. One of our PhD students started to interview these parents. She found out that they are suffering so much and that they are desperate to change the situation.*

A parent group is now making a video to show how they are experiencing their children living in the streets. One of the NGOs realized that



Group activity game with Bolivian mothers
(Picture: Jose De Jong)

they had been working with the children in the streets, but that they had never thought about the parents.

What has been the impact of the project on the university?

Erick Roth: *It has been a great step forward for us to change from a university that only teaches to a university that also does research. Another*

impact of the project has been the possibility to enroll our PhD students in the programme for research activities.

One of the main goals was to deal with other community institutions, policymakers and NGOs. Now we are working together with them, searching for the best way to deal with the mayor social problems in Bolivia.

Read more about Strengthening (PhD) training and research in the field of families, children and adolescents at risk in La Paz at our website.

Watch the video 'Participatory Action Research with mothers of children in street situation' on YouTube.



COUNTRY STRATEGY IMPROVES COOPERATION
BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND GOVERNMENTS

UNIVERSITIES IN ECUADOR AND FLANDERS UNITE ON BIODIVERSITY

Ecador is one of the first countries for which VLIR-UOS has developed a country strategy. In coming years, among other things the university cooperation with Ecuador will focus on biodiversity and natural resources, education, health and migration. The country strategy has already led to structural cooperation between the Ecuadorian universities, which is a first.

A country strategy is a roadmap for future university cooperation. In 2010 VLIR-UOS undertook to limit the number of partner countries to 20 from 2013. VLIR-UOS develops a country strategy for each partner country. Each one

reflects the opportunities for cooperation between the country in question and Flanders and forms the frame of reference for drawing up calls and selecting project proposals.



Local coordinator Fabián León talks at the Cajas nature reserve. The watercourses of Cajas are critical for the water supply in the region and in the city of Cuenca in particular. (Picture: Peter De Lannoy)

The first country strategies in operation

Following a two-year process of consultation and analysis, VLIR-UOS launched the first country strategies in 2012. Besides Ecuador, they concerned DR Congo, Cuba, Uganda, Tanzania and Vietnam. It was the turn of Ethiopia, South Africa, Burundi and Suriname in 2013.

Ecuador: universities and government build a new society together

A country strategy is based on the needs of the country, particularly national priorities with

regard to higher education and combating poverty. It also examines the available expertise and interest for cooperation in Flanders. For Ecuador there is a direct link between the country strategy and the national strategy for improving quality of life.

The Ecuadorian government wants to build a new society without poverty through the 'Buen Vivir' plan. Knowledge is an important driver. There are great ambitions, which higher education can help achieve.

Focus on biodiversity and education

In the university cooperation with Ecuador VLIR-UOS wishes to prioritize biodiversity and natural resources, education, health and socio-cultural processes like migration, cultural heritage and diversity in the coming years.

A number of topics are chosen in each field, such as biotechnology, water treatment, food and research-based education, to name just some.

Short and long projects are mutually reinforcing

The institutional cooperation with Cuenca University has an important place in the country strategy for Ecuador. It started in 2007 and is projected to run until 2019. The aim of the programme is to improve quality of life in the southern highlands of Ecuador.

There are also five-year research projects, such as the TEAM project, which is about basic preventive health care in remote Loja.

Biodiversity Network

The theme-based Networks are new at VLIR-UOS. A Biodiversity Network has been set up for Ecuador. The goal is to bring together expertise about biodiversity and to set up an interuniversity master's programme in Ecuador about biodiversity and natural resources. The stress is on water management. It will be the first interuniversity master's programme in Ecuador.

Within just a few short months the network led to the establishment of REDU, a research network of Ecuadorian universities. In addition to the biodiversity master's programme, REDU will also launch two other pilot interuniversity master's programmes. The intention is to link up with the international master's programme in Water Resources Engineering (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KU Leuven)



Preparation of the
Biodiversity Network
(Picture: Wannes Verbeeck)

Small project with national impact

The two-year 'Optimizing Educational Research in Higher Education' pilot is expected to drive advances in this field in Ecuador. It is a cooperation between Ghent University, Universidad San Francisco de Quito, UCuenca and VVOB. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and the network of universities are also involved.

Flemish supervisor Martin Valcke (Ghent University): *'Without reservation, I can say this project has a national impact. Representatives from sixteen different universities took part in the first workshop. Sessions with hands-on research tools were on the programme. We will be holding a second workshop soon.'*



BILLIONAIRES GATES AND SLIM SEEK OUT FLEMISH AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER

During the visit of Bill Gates and Carlos Slim to the CIMMYT agricultural institute in Mexico (February 2013), Bram Govaerts from Flanders made a presentation on research into maize and wheat. Gates and Slim want to invest to improve maize and wheat varieties. They are interested in the techniques Bram Govaerts has developed for conservation agriculture.



Bram Govaerts makes a presentation to Bill Gates.
(Picture: CIMMYT)

Bram Govaerts (32) graduated from KU Leuven as an agricultural engineer. For his PhD thesis he examined the importance of soil quality. Bram Govaerts: 'Introducing better agricultural crops in soil that is increasingly impoverished is unsustainable.'

Bram Govaerts now works at CIMMYT, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center. He heads up the Mexican conservation agriculture unit.

There are major challenges. By 2050 the demand for wheat will be 60% higher than it is today, and for maize 50% higher. CIMMYT looks for ways to increase wheat and maize production and so end food insecurity and poverty.

The new green revolution?

CIMMYT was behind the green revolution in the 1960s, which led to an impressive increase in agricultural production. Founder Norman Borlaug was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1970.

The researchers look for wheat and maize varieties that are best able to withstand infestations and fluctuations in temperature. The strongest varieties are then adopted globally.

CIMMYT also identifies the most sustainable agricultural practices for cultivating the seeds.

What the richest people on earth bring to CIMMYT

Slim and Gates point to CIMMYT's trail-blazing research. Slim is investing in a new laboratory to analyze the wheat and maize varieties. Bill Gates wants to apply the conservation agriculture model in Africa and Asia through the Bill & Belinda Gates Foundation.

Carlos Slim made a fortune by building a telecom empire in Latin America. Bill Gates earned his spurs by founding Microsoft.

Improving yields without depleting the soil

While doing his PhD Bram Govaerts developed a conservation agriculture model in which bigger yields go hand in hand with fertile ground. To summarize, it comes down to the following principles:

- 1: *Don't plough*
- 2: *Rotate crops*
- 3: *Leave crop residue in the field, because it is a source of nutrients for the soil.*

CIMMYT spreads the lessons about conservation agriculture in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, India, Pakistan and more than a hundred other countries.

Farmers have a great deal of knowhow. We want to gather it together and share it around.

On tour with the knowledge

For CIMMYT research is not the only important thing – application is too. To that end, the center works intensively with farmers, governments and businesses.

Bram Govaerts: *'Farmers have a great deal of knowhow. We want to gather it together and share it around.'*

Persuading farmers to use the improved crops and innovative agricultural practices is an important task of CIMMYT, says Bram Govaerts. It often demands a great deal of creativity. He even came up with a comic book for local farmers on the advantages of conservation agriculture.

The new scientist

Thomas Lumpkin, director of CIMMYT, is thinking of ways to attract more researchers like Bram. He says it's no longer enough for a university to train specialists:

'Researchers have to be able to communicate well. They have to be passionate and have a practical mindset. And they have to have entrepreneurial spirit.'

Thomas Lumpkin also stresses the importance of intercultural skills and a down-to-earth view of international cooperation.

How it all began

Bram Govaerts first arrived at CIMMYT in 2002. For his MSc thesis he studied the soil quality, for which he received a VLIR-UOS travel grant.

A year later, in 2003, VLIR-UOS gave him a VLADOC scholarship for his PhD research into sustainable maize and wheat production in

East Africa (under the supervision of Seppe Deckers of KU Leuven). For his research Bram worked closely with CIMMYT.

CIMMYT and Belgium: close ties

In recent decades Belgium has made an important contribution to CIMMYT's development into one of the most important international centers for agricultural research.

Between 1987 and 2004 CIMMYT received funding from the Belgian development cooperation. VLIR-UOS has supported various Flemish researchers who have worked with CIMMYT.

CIMMYT is occasionally described as 'the Belgian colony'. Besides Bram Govaerts, three other Belgians work there. Every year the institute welcomes students and researchers from KU Leuven and Ghent University.

For more information about CIMMYT, see www.cimmyt.org.



A CIMMYT staff member shows off the world's biggest maize and wheat seedbank (Picture: Hans Van de Water)



Why VLIR-UOS invests in international cooperation

SPOTLIGHT ON THE BRAM GOVAERTS CASE

Bram Govaerts is a model for how VLIR-UOS invests in people and partnerships. It's not about one-offs, but sustainable interventions.

Bram Govaerts was given a travel grant for his thesis research. Later as a PhD student he received a VLIR-UOS VLADOC scholarship. During his research he was closely involved in the institutional university cooperation with Mekelle University in Ethiopia.

VLIR-UOS offers a wide range of cooperation forms. Some programmes are primarily about getting acquainted. Others target an intensive long-term cooperation with partners that have known each other for a long time.

The programmes are complementary and ensure cross-fertilization between institutions, disciplines and countries. There has been a long history of cooperation with CIMMYT. It builds on an investment by the Belgian development cooperation.

The case of Bram Govaerts shows not only how university cooperation for development puts top Flemish expertise on the map, but also how it trains strong researchers in both Flanders and the South. The development relevance of the research at CIMMYT is so great that it influences the future of agriculture across the globe.

Why does this type of investment pay? Because it delivers lasting results later on. The research goes further. Every year Flemish students from KU Leuven and Ghent University work at CIMMYT and a broad international network ensures that the knowledge reaches the farthest corners of the world.



THE IMPACT OF OVER A DECADE OF UNIVERSITY COOPERATION BETWEEN FLANDERS AND ETHIOPIA

'WE USED AMERICAN EXAMPLES IN OUR TEACHING, BUT NOW WE USE OUR OWN RESEARCH OUTPUTS'

Ethiopia is one of the most important VLIR-UOS partner countries, receiving a total investment of around EUR 16 million in the last decade. In order to bring the cooperation between Flemish and Ethiopian universities into line with the priorities of the country, VLIR-UOS is working out a country strategy for Ethiopia.

We asked some Ethiopian and Belgian stakeholders about the results of the university cooperation until now. What has been the impact so far?

To date, what are the most important results of the cooperation between Flemish and Ethiopian universities?

Kaba Urgessa, Ethiopian State Minister for Education: *The major output is human capacity at the master's and PhD level. Secondly there is the research output, which can help policy formulation and improve the lives of urban and rural people.*

Amanuel Zenebe, project leader of the Institutional cooperation with Mekelle University (MU):

Thanks to the cooperation with Flanders now we have many staff at PhD level. They have a great



In the margin of phase II of the institutional cooperation with Jimma University (JU) the president of JU, the State Minister for Education and academics ran 6 km to support a local school project. (Picture: Luc Janssens de Bisthoven)

role in the research, the teaching activity as well as the community services. The trained staff are in a position to open PhD programmes in Ethiopia.

Patrick Sorgeloos, professor at Ghent University and former member of the VLIR-UOS board:

More or less 80 Ethiopian PhDs have graduated from a Flemish university and are now back in Ethiopia. These people really are the future.

Solomon Mogus, director general of the Higher Education Strategy Centre: *The co-operation has had an impact on the research culture at Ethiopian institutions. The change has*

come from the inside, to do things in a better way. People really own it.

Hagos Ashenafi, coordinator of the Establishment of a national doctoral school at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Addis Ababa University TEAM project: *Our academic staff learned to be independent and to work on national problems. We have developed confidence and skills.*

Amanuel Zenebe: *The cooperation helped us work with farmers in the rural areas, for the better livelihood of those people.*

Can you give a concrete example of the results of projects you are involved in?

Amanuel Zenebe: Apart from the articles in international journals, we have also worked out guidelines for extension work in the rural communities. The scientific output has been translated into different languages to be used in rural communities. We integrate the research in our teaching packages too. Some years ago we used examples from America and Europe in our teaching, but nowadays we are able to use our own research outputs, so that students will understand about a given topic in an easy way.

Hagos Ashenafi: We have gained a hi-tech molecular lab in order to investigate animal diseases. We did research on a disease called Dorine, which affects horses, donkeys and mules. Those animals are very important in terms of agricultural transport in the highlands of the Arsi Bale region of Ethiopia. We set up an experimental study to investigate which drugs are most effective for the treatment of these animals and to kill the parasite of the infection.

Kora Tushune, coordinator of the Institutional University Cooperation with Jimma University (JU):

We were able to develop a drug quality lab for research on malaria drugs, among other things. We looked at the resistance of the vector to insecticides. We discovered that fighting the diseases by spraying insecticides was not effective, because of a high resistance to the spray. We submitted the results to the ministry and all the relevant stakeholders, which has changed the vector management structure of Ethiopia.

And another example is the watershed management study of siltation and sediment transports around Gilgel Gibe Dam. It showed that we could affect the life of the dam and also economically affect the country. We involved all stakeholders and as a result a national taskforce has been created to conserve the Gilgel Gibe catchment area. And most importantly: more attention is now given to dams throughout our country.

The change has come from the inside.



Former VLIR-UOS scholars from Ethiopia talk about the impact of the international master's programme they followed in Belgium:

'I am sharing my experience with other Ethiopians'

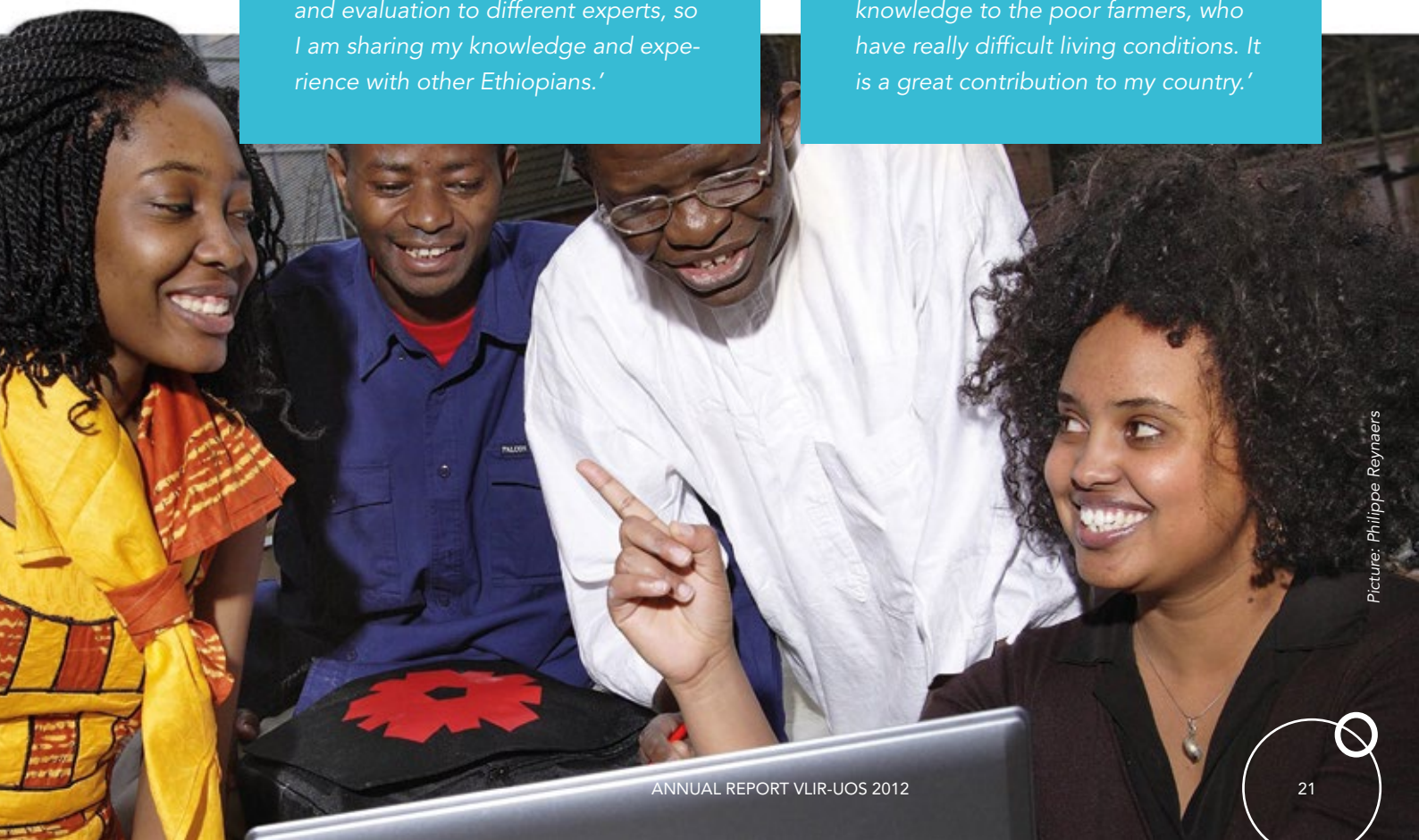
Fasika Kelemework studied the Master of Development Evaluation and Management (University of Antwerp) from 2004 to 2005:

'Actually I am monitoring and evaluation manager of the European Union delegation to Ethiopia. My master's in Belgium on evaluation really helped me to take up this new post. I am providing various trainings on monitoring and evaluation to different experts, so I am sharing my knowledge and experience with other Ethiopians.'

'It is a great contribution to my country'

Fikru Regassa studied the Master in Molecular Biology (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, KU Leuven and University of Antwerp) from 2008 to 2010:

'After my master's I started to teach what I learned in Belgium at the university, so the knowledge has been multiplied. I am active in animal health. When my students practice their profession they also transfer the knowledge to the poor farmers, who have really difficult living conditions. It is a great contribution to my country.'



Picture: Philippe Reynaers



WHEN GOOGLE CANNOT PROVIDE THE ANSWER

Rudy Gevaert (Ghent University) has been leading ICT capacity building projects in Cuba and Ethiopia. He wrote an article on his experiences. Need to know how to deal with limited bandwidth, build robust network infrastructure and motivate trainers? Rudy Gevaert has the answer. 'I learned not to panic so easily, Rome was not built in a day.'

Rudy Gevaert works at the Information and Communication Technology Department at Ghent University. He wrote an article about the lessons he learned as a team member in the VLIR-UOS cooperation programmes with Mekelle University and Jimma University, both in Ethiopia, and Universidad Central Marta Abreu de las Villas (UCLV) in Cuba.

The USENIX Association invited him to present his findings at the 26th Large Installation System Administration Conference (LISA '12) in San Diego (USA).

Rudy Gevaert: "The objective is to help the local university to expand and professionalize its ICT services. In other words, we help them to set up their own central IT department."

Capacity building is far more important than infrastructure building

We realized that capacity building is far more important than infrastructure building. In many programmes they just buy some hardware, ship it over and then nothing really happens because the people do not know how to use the hardware.

We try to do it differently. We train the people in a train the trainer process using the hardware that we purchase. This is common in development aid programmes, but it frequently fails. The idea is that the people go back to their institution to implement the knowledge and give training to others. But most of the time this does not happen.

Initially we had the same problem. Then we changed the tactics a bit. We said to the people: 'OK, we are going to give you training, but when you return to your institution you are going to train other people from other universities, even other countries.' The other trainings were already planned, so they knew they needed to implement the knowledge. This really made a difference.

It is important to experience the conditions people are working in

It is important to experience the conditions people are working in. System administrators use Google frequently to solve problems. But imagine you are in a situation where there is no internet connection for three days, and you need to fix a server. What can you do? Well, you can only rely on your own knowledge. Then you experience the local conditions the people are facing when setting up IT services.

We created a central email system in Ethiopia

We accomplished several things. In Ethiopia for instance our biggest success was the creation of a central email system for the universities in Jimma and Mekelle. When we started, the Ethiopian partner universities did not have a working email system. They were using an online email service,



Rudy Gevaert (left) and Manuel Oliver (right) next to the servers that were donated by Ghent University to UCLV in Cuba. (Picture: Rudy Gevaert)

but the internet was really slow. By learning how to set up and implement a local email server they were able to save a lot of bandwidth.

We also focused a lot on building capacity in free software technologies. We taught the programmers in the central IT department how to use the PHP programming language, so they were able to develop their own applications for the university intranet.

We learned how to manage limited bandwidth

What did we learn? The first thing is that in a developing country the bandwidth is limited and you need to manage it. When we started in Ethiopia in 2006 the university had 4 megabits per second for the whole university. In Cuba today the university still has half a megabit per second

for internet; by comparison Ghent University has two times a one gigabit per second uplink.

We set up local servers at the universities. That way we can offer services locally instead of using bandwidth. We also taught the universities to implement policies, for instance to limit the use of Facebook during office hours, to save bandwidth.

Download the paper and watch the video of Rudy Gevaert's presentation at <https://www.usenix.org/sustainable-model-ict-capacity-building-developing-countries>

MINISTER LABILLE PRESENTS ICT PRIZE IN DR CONGO

The Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation, Jean-Pascal Labille, visited two cooperation projects involving Belgian universities in DR Congo. He presented a prize to 13 winners of an ICT competition. The ICT project unites Flemish, French-speaking and Congolese universities.



Picture: Joseph Moura

The aim of the UniversiTIC project is the digitization of universities in DR Congo and Burundi. It allows for better communication between the universities and with universities worldwide. All Flemish universities are involved, as well as several Flemish university colleges and French-speaking Belgian universities.

UniversiTIC was started in 2007 by VLIR-UOS and CIUF-CUD, the umbrella organizations for interuniversity cooperation with Flemish and French-speaking universities respectively.

On 21 March 2013 Minister Labille visited UniversiTIC in Kinshasa, which runs on wind

and solar energy. He also visited the Higher Institute of Applied Technology (ISTA), where he received information about another cooperation project on the renewal of the education curricula. The project aims to bring the curricula in DR Congo into line with international standards.

After his visit Minister Labille said he was convinced of the significance of university cooperation for the development of DR Congo. He promised to fight for continued funding for interuniversity cooperation in the federal council of ministers.

FROM WASTE TO DESIGN LAMP IN THE PHILIPPINES

In 2012 HOWEST Industrial Design Center student Sep Verboom spent time in the Philippines on a student placement. His aim was to give a second life to local waste and create jobs in Cebu City. His project placed second in the 2012 OVAM Ecodesign Award for Students.

Sep spent five months in Cebu City, the twin town of Kortrijk in Belgium. The two cities worked together on waste policy. Cebu City has a big refuse problem. Sep was commissioned by Barangay Luz, a working-class district of Cebu City, to look for an innovative approach to transforming waste materials into a new product together with the inhabitants.

Sep went to work on old vent caps and recycled plastic strips. He identified all stakeholders, studied the possible materials and got the local community involved, including user tests and design and creativity workshops.

A unique product

The lamps were given the name FANTasized. These lamps from recycled materials are made and sold by the local population. Each lamp is personally signed by the person who made it, making it unique.

FANTasized can be used as decorative lamp, desk lamp or hanging lamp. It is perfect for hotels, shops, restaurants and people who want to show their support for the environment and invest in the local community.

Local innovation with a global impact

Sep's placement was part of HOWEST's Design for Impact initiative, which looks for innovative, sustainable solutions to meet local needs and challenges in the South, based on product design, working with organizations and NGOs in the South. The starting point is that innovation in a local community can drive global innovation and sustainable advancement.

Sep Verboom received a travel grant from VLIR-UOS.

Watch the project video at www.designforimpact.be/988.
More information at www.fantasized.eu.



Picture: Sep Verboom

THE POWER OF STORIES BRINGS THE ORAL HISTORY OF THE BATHO TOWNSHIP TO LIFE

The *Power of Stories* targets the inhabitants of Batho in Bloemfontein, South Africa. The aim of the two-year project is to contribute to the identity formation of the inhabitants, with a permanent exhibition on Batho at the National Museum in Bloemfontein.

The story of Batho as the cradle of the ANC

Flemish project director Bruno Neuville (Thomas More): *'Batho's oral history occupies center stage in The Power of Stories. Batho is one of the oldest townships in South Africa and the cradle of the African National Congress (ANC). Batho has a rich oral tradition, passed on by the inhabitants down the generations.'*

As senior museum scientist at the National Museum in Bloemfontein historian Derek du Bruyn studies the history of Batho. He stresses the importance of oral history:

'The National Museum launched the Batho Community History Project to uncover the history of Batho by making use of oral history and community history. Batho is one of the oldest

townships in Bloemfontein and there are many stories to be told about its history. We want to listen to them so that we can write our story.'

'My research experience has already been put to good use here'

The project arose in 2012 from a student placement partnership between the professional Communication Management bachelor's programme at Thomas More and the Central University of Technology's Life Sciences department in Bloemfontein. The National Museum in Bloemfontein joined the partnership in 2006.

The Bloemfontein project is a unique international, intercultural experience for the Thomas More communication management students. Student Lisa Smets:

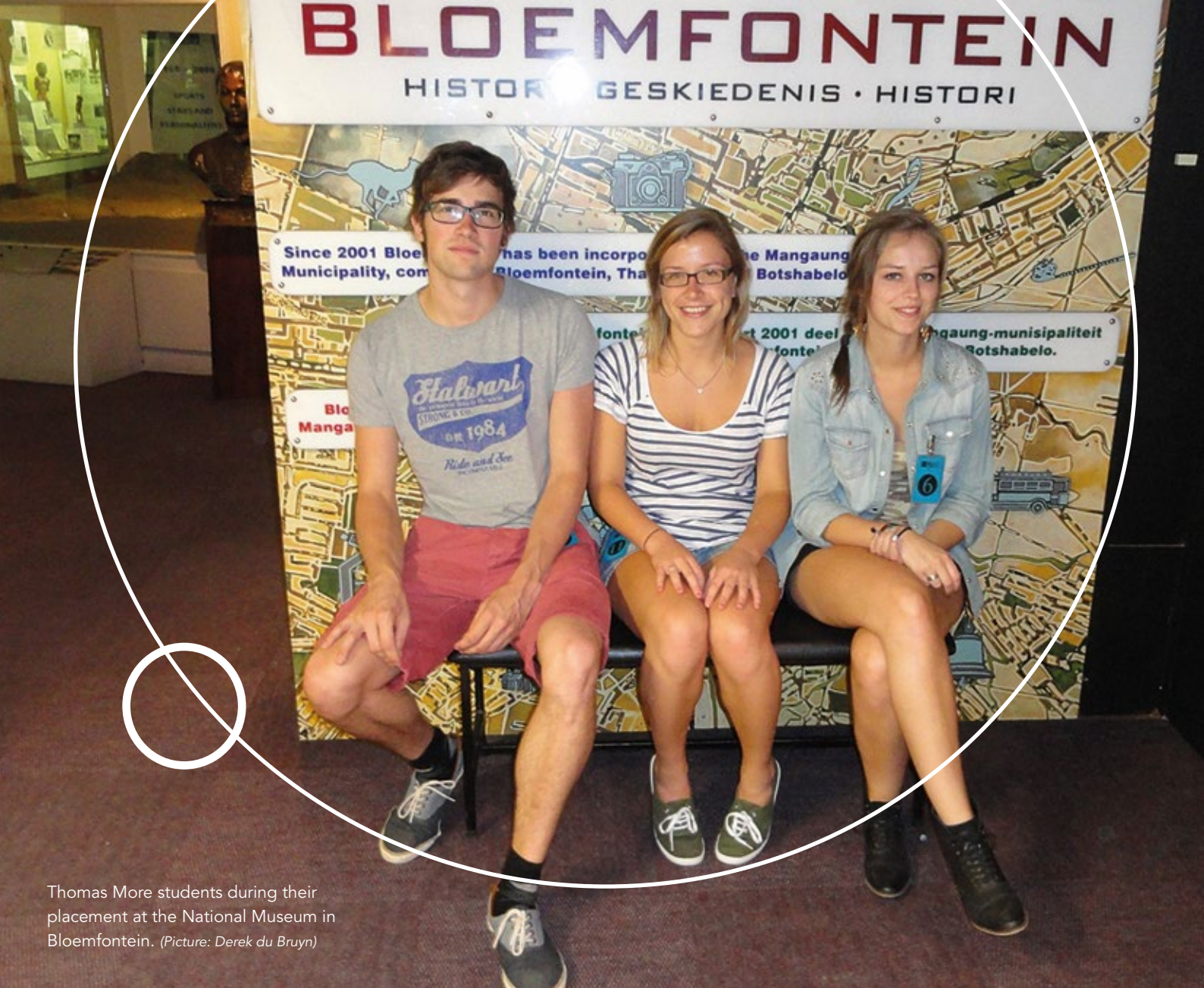
'My research experience has already been put to good use here. We had to devise the questions for the test interview ourselves. It was very instructive bearing in mind some questions are not appropriate, while others generate some very interesting responses in the South African context.'

Permanent exhibition on Batho at the National Museum

In December 2013 the National Museum in Bloemfontein will open a permanent exhibi-



Patrick Letsatsi, collaborator of the National Museum of Bloemfontein, during his visit to Belgium
(Picture: Louwna Pelsner)



Thomas More students during their placement at the National Museum in Bloemfontein. (Picture: Derek du Bruyn)

tion on Batho. The aim of the exhibition is to introduce museumgoers to the people of Batho. Residents will be able to read, hear and comment on their own stories. And thanks to the Batho stories the local community strengthens ties with the people of Bloemfontein.

Four South African students, two lecturers and two members of the National Museum's staff spent two weeks in Belgium in 2012 as part of the project. They attended lessons and seminars about social media as well as graphic and interior design. The museum visits in particular provided inspiration for the exhibition at the National Museum.

The Power of Stories wraps up in May 2014 with a symposium in Mechelen on community history.

The project 'The Power of Stories: Popular memory communication as a tool for collective identity endorsement' is supervised by Bruno Neuville (Thomas More) and Derek du Bruyn (National Museum Bloemfontein) and receives support from VLIR-UOS under the South Initiatives programme.

PAUL JANSSEN RECEIVES A PRIZE FOR DISSEMINATING BIOMETRY IN THE SOUTH

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR UNIVERSITY COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT TRAILBLAZER

In 2012 professor Paul Janssen, vice-rector research at UHasselt, was given the Rob Kempton Award in recognition of his contribution to disseminating biometry in developing countries. Well deserved, says rector Luc De Schepper. Among other things Paul Janssen laid the foundations for the International Master's Programme in Biostatistics.

The Rob Kempton Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Dissemination of Biometry in the Developing World is presented by the Biometric Society (IBS) every two years. The IBS represents over 6000 biostatisticians from all over the globe.

Biometry or biostatistics is of global importance, in the study of AIDS epidemics and the development of new drugs, for example. Biostatistics is concerned with designing and conducting biological and medical experiments as well as data collection and analysis.

Paul Janssen was one of the founders of UHasselt's Biostatistics Master's Programme 25 years ago.

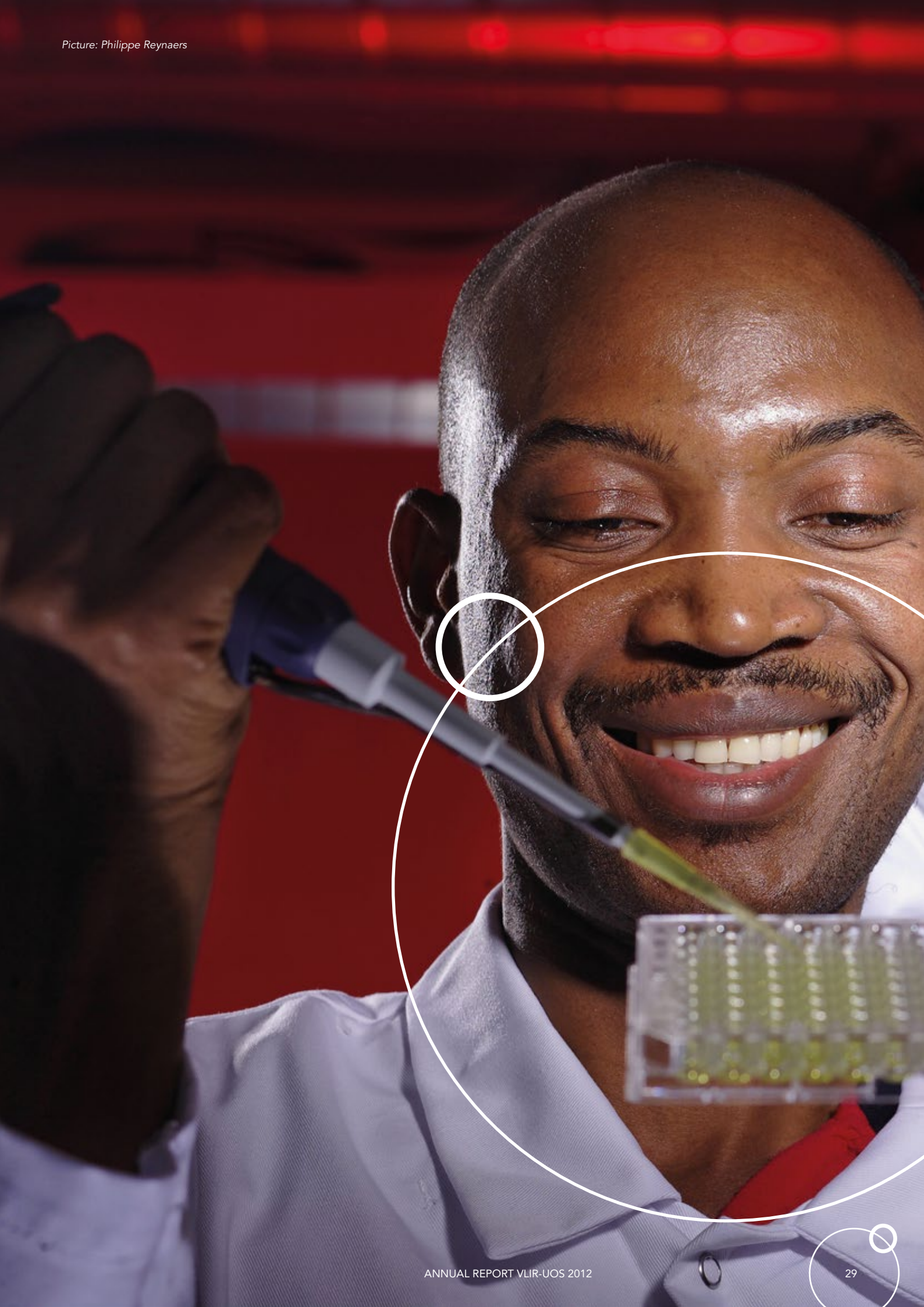
Every year 16 students from developing countries are given the opportunity to follow the master's programme at UHasselt. UHasselt has helped create scientific biostatistics networks in such countries as Kenya, South Africa and Ethiopia. VLIR-UOS set up the statistics crosscutting project to support biostatistics in East Africa, including Uganda.

Quite a number of former students already have their PhD, a significant number of whom are academically active. The IBS felt this was an impressive series of initiatives, which led it to present the award to Paul Janssen.

Rector Luc De Schepper: *'Well-deserved recognition for our vice-rector research, who is generally acknowledged in Flanders as a trailblazer in university cooperation for development.'*

The Biostatistics Master's Programme is supported by VLIR-UOS. Paul Janssen is member of the UOS Bureau of VLIR-UOS.







VLIR-UOS CHAIR KOEN DE FEYTER: 'THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE.'

A NEW FUTURE FOR VLIR-UOS

First we did not know whether we would receive funding in 2013, nor how much or from whom. The Belgian federal government wanted to transfer university cooperation for development to the regions. Then we got the message that we would only receive 67% of our budget. Unexpectedly it became 100% after all. It is a story of months of uncertainty, image loss and political struggle.

Budget 2013: from nothing to 67% and finally the full budget

It was only at the beginning of May 2013 that the federal government assured us that 67% of the foreseen budget was guaranteed. The remaining 33% continued to be in doubt. 32 cooperation projects between universities and university colleges in Flanders and the South and 19 training courses in Flanders would be cancelled. Furthermore 451 students from the South and from Flanders would not receive their scholarship.

At the beginning of July 2013 the federal government announced that the remaining 33% for 2013 would be made available after all. This was formally confirmed in the middle of July. Because of this VLIR-UOS will yet be able to finance the cancelled cooperation projects and scholarships.

What kind of future after 2013?

VLIR-UOS has, together with the Flemish rectors, continuously pointed out that development cooperation is a parallel responsibility. It belongs both to the federal and to the regional governments.

VLIR-UOS and the Belgian federal government have agreed to focus on twenty partner countries. Since 2010 we have adjusted our way of working to this agreement. In the coming years we will further develop the country policies.

The Flemish government is willing to make new commitments in the coming years and to play a role in university cooperation for development. We are pleased to receive an invitation from the



Symbolic action by the Flemish and French-language universities, university colleges and student organizations on 7 May 2013 at Egmont Palace in Brussels (Picture: Jean-Michel Clajot)

Flemish government to find out together what this new, autonomous Flemish university cooperation would comprise.

International image loss

The uncertainty about the budget 2013 and the future of university cooperation has led to serious image loss of the Flemish higher education abroad. Who likes to collaborate with an unstable partner? How can we build long term partnerships when we do not know whether there will be financial means or not?

This is important for everyone

Koen De Feyter, professor at the University of Antwerp and chair of VLIR-UOS: 'Cutting in the budget for university cooperation for development is cutting into our future. We invest in scientists in the South and at home, to build knowledge that is needed to respond to urgent societal challenges, such as global warming, inequality and food insecurity. This is important for everyone.'



Minister for Development Cooperation Jean-Pascal Labille (left), with director Kristien Verbruggen and chair Koen De Feyter during the 7 May 2013 action. (Picture: Jean-Michel Clajot)

If you want to advance in research you need lots of ideas. They come from dynamic young people from all over the world.

RONNY SWENNEN



VIDEO: Is there still sense in cooperating with the South?

Absolutely! Partnerships with the South remain exceptionally important for the South and for us. VLIR-UOS made a short video about the added value of university cooperation. Watch the video at www.vliruos.be/en/about-us.

Marleen Temmerman (World Health Organization), rector Paul De Knop (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Rony Swennen (KU Leuven), Larry Pokpas (University of the Western Cape) and Peter Piot (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) explain why we have to continue to invest in cooperation.

It's impossible to find answers to the great global challenges in Flanders or Belgium alone. Today, we have innovation not only in the rich West, but just about everywhere.

PROF. PETER PIOT





“Knowledge knows no boundaries. Our universities and university colleges must dare to look further. We give them the opportunity to be part of the world and bring the world to them.”

PAUL DE KNOP



“In my work with the European bodies of the World Health Organization I’ve noticed that the VLIR-UOS model is a fairly unique one that other countries are looking at with interest.”

MARLEEN TEMMERMAN



“This is not about money, it’s about the uniqueness of entering into a specific area of university peer to peer collaboration that very few donors, funders or countries have gotten right.”

LARRY POKPAS

'OUR COOPERATION HAS A TRADITION. IT WILL WITHSTAND TWO YEARS OF HEAVY WEATHER.'

On 1 August 2012 Koen De Feyter (University of Antwerp) succeeded Patrick Sorgeloos (Ghent University) as chair of the University Cooperation for Development Bureau (UOS Bureau). He didn't have much time to settle in. The future of VLIR-UOS was immediately on the line. How does a chair feel about that? We asked him.

You have now been VLIR-UOS chair for almost a year. What is your overriding memory?

Chaos. And the lost honor of university cooperation for development. It seems to be a bauble in a cynical political game between federal and regional governments. First there was a decision to allocate 67% of the promised 2013 budget after months of hesitation; then the impossible distribution of that 67%. It has been completely pointless from a development perspective. The whole operation felt like moving chairs around on a sinking ship.

We agreed an excellent reform of the selection procedure within VLIR-UOS, it's just that there was then nothing to select. The new calls have been postponed because we do not have any guarantee on future funding.

What future do you see?

2013 was a lost year; 2014 is about damage limitation. We have to resource now: we now have to develop an assertive vision on how we want to work in the coming years in a context of parallel powers of the federal government and Flanders. We have to make sure that our rectors speak and the politicians listen. We have to get a new system of high-quality university cooperation for development on the rails by 2015.

As a Flemish professor or researcher, is there still sense in cooperating with the South?

We cannot allow ourselves to be beaten by a government that has temporarily lost its way. Our cooperation has a tradition, which can withstand two years of heavy weather. We'll find new ways.

'My roots are really in Congo'

Professor Koen De Feyter teaches international law at the University of Antwerp and is the father of four children. He knows that combining a busy academic career with a family is not always easy: 'I travel abroad no more than ten times a year. That's been the subject of negotiation.'

What few people know is that Koen De Feyter has Congolese roots: 'I was conceived in Congo. My parents were living there in 1955. I ended up being born in Wilrijk, Antwerp.'

Koen De Feyter (in the middle) in
Uganda preparing the country strategy
for Uganda. (Picture: Herman Diels)



*“We have to develop an assertive vision on
how we want to work in the coming years in
a context of parallel powers of the federal
government and Flanders.”*

2012 VLIR-UOS BUDGET

Below is a summary of the VLIR-UOS budget for 2012. Precise insight into expenditure will only be available in the autumn of 2013, as we will not receive the project receipts until then.

South programmes	12.968.000,00	37,1%
Institutional cooperation and country cooperation (IUC programmes, thematic networks, research platforms and other national/international cross cutting projects)	9.512.000,00	27,2%
Projects with a duration of 1 to 5 years (TEAM, Research Initiatives Programme, South Initiatives)	3.456.000,00	9,9%
Research in Flanders	645.947,00	1,8%
Policy oriented research: O*platforms	548.000,00	1,6%
International Conferences (INCO)	97.947,00	0,3%
PhD programmes	2.271.818,00	6,5%
Flemish PhD scholarships (VLADOC)	1.090.788,00	3,1%
ICP PhD scholarships for researchers from developing countries	1.181.030,00	3,4%
Education programmes in Flanders for students from developing countries	8.204.606,00	23,5%
International Course Programme (ICP)	4.121.306,00	11,8%
International Training Programme (ITP)	359.025,00	1,0%
Short Training Initiatives (KOI)	345.275,00	1,0%
Education costs for Flemish universities	3.379.000,00	9,7%
Scholarships for education programmes in Flanders	7.178.891,75	20,5%
Travel grants for Flemish students	500.000,00	1,4%
ICP scholarships	5.851.683,00	16,7%
ITP scholarships	432.596,25	1,2%
South North South and Short Research Stays scholarships	183.940,00	0,5%
KOI scholarships	210.672,50	0,6%
Structural costs	3.676.762,25	10,5%
CO2 compensation	35.000,00	0,1%
VLIR-UOS secretariat, cofounding contacts at universities, coordination costs scholarships	3.641.762,25	10,4%
TOTAL	34.946.025,00	100,0%

TOP 10 COUNTRIES

Three quarters of the VLIR-UOS budget for countries in the South went to ten countries in 2012. The first five countries accounted for half of the country budget. These are DR Congo, South Africa, Ethiopia, Ecuador and Kenya. The figures are based on the budgeted amounts for 2012.

	Country	Budget
1	DR Congo	2.204.769
2	South Afrika	1.560.056
3	Ethiopia	1.329.917
4	Ecuador	1.062.486
5	Kenia	913.699
6	Cuba	889.550
7	Suriname	824.287
8	Mozambique	778.534
9	Vietnam	743.211
10	Peru	739.570



Top ten countries with the biggest investment in 2012

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM) AND THE SOUTH, LOOKING FOR INNOVATIVE RESPONSES TO GLOBAL AND LOCAL CHALLENGES

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. More information: www.vliruos.be

About the annual report 2012

In compiling this annual report we tried to find a balance between the various higher education institutions and the partner countries. If you have an interesting case you feel deserves a place in the 2013 annual report, if you have any comments you would like to share over this annual report, email hans.vandewater@vliruos.be.

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