



Call for Projects 2023

Short Initiatives

25 November 2022

Revised version of February 2023,
following the BUOS decision of 10/2/2023 relating to eligibility criteria

Table of contents

Summary	3
1. Introduction	5
1.1. <i>Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development</i>	5
1.2. <i>FYP2 ambitions</i>	5
1.3. <i>What's new in this call?</i>	6
1.4. <i>Next SI calls</i>	6
2. Eligibility criteria	7
3. Budgetary framework and implementation	9
4. Timeline	11
5. Application modalities	12
6. Selection	15
7. Theory of change and objectives	18
8. Project formats, call annexes and background information	26
Abbreviations	29

Summary

Aim	<p>Short Initiative (SI) projects are short-term projects that aim to explore, build and deepen academic/scientific collaborations among diverse teams of academics and researchers focusing on a sustainable development challenge and are able to realise objectives within the limited timespan of maximum 2 years.</p> <p>With SI projects, VLIR-UOS aims to strengthen the research and educational capacities of higher education and science institutions in partner countries. In addition, SI projects are expected to create the conditions for uptake of new and relevant knowledge, applications and/or services by academic, civil society, private and public actors.</p>
Key features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Short Initiative (SI) is expected to produce short-term results within the duration of two years. • SI projects are very accessible, in particular for new/young project promoters that were sensitised via the Global Minds framework or via involvement in ongoing projects of other promoters, and/or are eager to go for a first experience as a promoter of a VLIR-UOS project. Also academics with VLIR-UOS experience have access. • Allows for differentiated aims (exploration, innovation, valorisation, etc.) and approaches (education, research, policies, outreach, people, networks). • The partnership can vary in terms of size and composition: one or more Flemish higher education institutions, one or more local higher education and science institutions and/or other actors; one or more disciplines; young/new and/or more experienced academics, etc.
Who can apply?	<p><u>Affiliation and statute of the promoters:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flemish promoter: professor/specialist employed at a Flemish university or a professor/lecturer at a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts. Details on the eligibility requirements can be found in section '2.1 Eligibility of applicants: who can apply?' • Partner promoter: employed at a recognised higher education institution or national public (not for profit) research institute located in a VLIR-UOS project partner country. <p><u>Additional criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants (Flemish/partner) can submit a maximum of 2 SI projects in case they have no ongoing SI 2022 or TEAM 2022 project. Promoters of a SI 2022 or TEAM 2022 project can submit only 1 SI 2023 project. • At the level of the partner institutions, no further criteria apply. Former and present IUC partner institutions are fully eligible, without any restriction.
Project partner countries	<p>Higher education and science institutions located in 17 project partner countries:</p> <p>Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cuba, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam</p>

Budgetary Framework	The project budget amounts to a maximum of 70.000 EUR for two years. The overall budget for SI 2023 allows for a maximum of 29 selectable projects.
Project duration	Maximum of 2 years
Launch date of the call for proposals	25 November 2022
Deadline for submission to VLIR-UOS	16 March 2023
How to submit a proposal?	<p>Who? An application involves a Flemish and a partner promoter in one of the project partner countries. However, it is the (main) Flemish promoter who submits to the ICOS of the Flemish university (association) for quality control. The ICOS will validate and submit to VLIR-UOS.</p> <p>How? Project applications are submitted via the online submission tool.</p>
Assessment procedure	<p>All project proposals will be assessed and selected based on four standard selection criteria: Relevance and coherence of the project; Quality of the project design; Implementation set-up of the project; Potential impact and sustainability.</p> <p>Project proposals are assessed by Regional Selection Commissions (Africa, Asia, Latin America) in May 2023.</p> <p>The selection decision will be communicated shortly after the ratification of the decision by the Bureau UOS, ultimately in May 2023.</p>
Start of the project	Selected projects start as of 1 September 2023.

1. Introduction

1.1. Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development

There is an increasing consensus on the role of strong higher education and science institutions (HE&SIs) and systems in addressing sustainable development challenges. Higher education and science institutions play a key role in achieving the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the aim to end poverty, protect the planet, foster gender equality, defend and promote cultures and cultural understanding, and ensure prosperity for all. In this respect, the Global Sustainable Development Report calls upon all stakeholders to facilitate multidirectional collaboration in science and (transfer of) technology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It considers academic and scientific capacity strengthening and partnerships as one of the four main levers to achieve the 2030 Agenda and implies a strengthened link between higher education institutions, governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector. Higher education institutions offer disciplinary and transdisciplinary teaching and research as they generate and contribute to the development of new and innovative approaches to global, regional, and local issues.

Through research, HE&SIs play a unique role as drivers of change by producing new knowledge and innovation to address global challenges, by transferring knowledge through training, by providing evidence for informed (public) policy and implementation, and by knowledge mobilisation. Through their teaching, universities and university colleges empower generations of new leaders and skilled professionals to drive sustainable development. Today's students are the decision-makers and professionals of tomorrow, who think both critically and ethically, have learnt to cope with ethical dilemmas, and can apply systems thinking approaches to serious and complex societal problems.

HE&SIs have also taken up a central role in providing global citizenship education to nurture a global understanding and a more profound intercultural awareness. Through service delivery and community engagement, HE&SIs work with a rich variety of stakeholders – including governments, the private sector, and civil society – for local, national, regional, and global impact.

1.2. FYP2 ambitions

VLIR-UOS outlined new ambitions for its Five-Year Programme 2022-2027 where the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development serves as the main reference point. VLIR-UOS is committed to purposefully mainstream the 3 SDG principles of 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB)', 'Interconnectedness' and 'Multi-stakeholder partnerships', throughout its ambitions, policies, programmes, portfolio, partnerships and scholarships. The focus of Agenda 2030 on meaningful impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships resonates with the ambition of our FYP2, "Connect4Change". It is our goal to focus on cooperation among and beyond academic actors, on collective learning and mutual inspiration (Connect, Learn, Inspire) and on societal impact (valorisation).

These policy ambitions have been translated into the project selection criteria and descriptors for all our programmes. VLIR-UOS wants new projects to **capitalise** on former and/or other relevant projects as a stepping stone, and to stimulate **interinstitutional cooperation** among and beyond academic actors. It is an added value in the competitive selection of projects when collaborations are sought beyond the academic sector or when different Flemish or partner HE&SIs are involved in a project proposal, be it universities, universities of applied sciences and arts, or both.

A specific objective of VLIR-UOS is to mobilise academics who have no prior experience with VLIR-UOS to engage in “sharing minds, changing lives”, with specific focus on young academics, female academics, academics with expertise in disciplines which are underrepresented in VLIR-UOS, This is why the number of project (proposals) per promoter has been limited for SI. In case of ex aequo ranking in the selection of projects, preference will be given to academics without prior experience with VLIR-UOS, to projects coordinated by academics from the underrepresented sex in their sector, and/or to gender-specific projects.

Second objective is to intensify interinstitutional cooperation among Flemish HEIs, especially between universities and universities of applied sciences and arts. The Flemish universities will support the Flemish universities of applied sciences and arts and their lecturers through “*associatieve projecten*” when submitting and/or implementing VLIR-UOS projects. The universities and universities of applied sciences and arts will also jointly actively promote, facilitate and activate mutual cooperation through specific initiatives.

1.3. What’s new in this call?

- On the basis of lessons learned from the collective experiences of the VLIR-UOS community with the 2022 VLIR-UOS project calls, some optimizations were introduced at the level of the project call and project proposal format as to clarify concepts such as multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs), complementarity and coherence.
- The call document structure and SI narrative format were simplified using less sector specific vocabulary and simplifying different sections. In terms of requirements the ToC approach for SI projects was further downscaled. The requirement to fill out policy markers and thematic tags has been left out, as also the requirement to identify and fill out the standard indicators.
- The selection descriptors were simplified for SI projects in order to match better with the lesser requirements as compared to TEAM projects.
- The [Framework for Scholarships In Belgium](#) has been renewed with revised reference amounts.
- The format for activities’ planning and registration of team members, as also the budget format were optimized as to guarantee more straightforward upload of information in the online submission tool.
- Finally, given the importance of transparency as to the respective roles and responsibilities of the key players in the project, especially in the case of projects involving more than two project partners (partner institutions) some more elaboration is requested as to module 3 – Organisation. At the level of the Flemish institutions, there is always the distinction between a promoter (and ‘main’ Flemish institution via which a proposal is submitted) and co-promoters (linked to the same or multiple Flemish HEIs), whereas at the level of the partner institutions in the partner countries the promoter role can be taken up by multiple persons and institutions. Next to the role of promoters and co-promoters, a variety of experts can be part of a project team (team members).

1.4. Next SI calls

The SI call is launched every year within FYP2. The next SI call is scheduled to take place by the end of 2023 for projects to start in 2024.

2. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria define whether a proposal meets the minimum criteria to be accepted to enter the selection process. Each call for proposals defines its clear eligibility criteria, using the following sections where applicable. This practice is common within the academic community. In case of VLIR-UOS calls for proposals, the following eligibility criteria apply :

2.1. Eligibility of applicants: who can apply?

Affiliation and statute of the promoters

When submitting a project proposal, a promoter must meet both the internal criteria and regulations as to project promotership of his/her institution and the minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS.

Specific details of the eligibility criteria and internal regulations as to project promotership of the respective Flemish universities, have recently been under discussion. On 10 February 2023, the Bureau UOS took the following final decision as to the calls SI 2023, ITP 2023 and PSP FYP2.

The minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university** to submit a proposal are the following:

- one must be able to be an account holder within one's own institution;
- one must have a ZAP status (Independent Academic Personnel) at the time of submission, with a minimum appointment level of 10%;
- postdocs can also submit, depending on the Flemish institution's internal criteria and on condition that a ZAP member with at least 50% appointment of the institution with whom the contract will be signed is included in the project team as co-promoter;
- ATP members (Administrative and Technical Personnel) can also submit, depending on the nature of the project and provided they can be account holders within their own institution, without a ZAP member with minimum 50% appointment as co-promoter being part of the project team.

The minimum conditions set by VLIR-UOS for a lead promoter **from a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts** to submit a proposal are the following: one must be professor or lecturer. Most professors/lecturers might not have permission to be budget holder. In that case, another person, e.g. the director, can be assigned as budget holder for the project.

The lead promoter will be invited to confirm, when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool, to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations.

Additional criteria

A Flemish promoter can submit a maximum of 2 SI projects in case they have no ongoing SI 2022 or TEAM 2022 project.

The rule of maximum 2 projects applies to the lead promoter and, in case a postdoc submits as lead promoter, also to the ZAP member who is co-promoter. Co-promoters are only counted from the 2023 calls on, as the rule did not yet exist for the 2022 calls.

This framework is considered a pilot project for the 2023 calls. There will be an evaluation of the impact of these new eligibility criteria on the number of proposals and their distribution.

Additional criteria:

- Applicants (Flemish/partner) can submit a maximum of 2 SI projects in case they have no ongoing SI 2022 or TEAM 2022 project. Promoters of a SI 2022 or TEAM 2022 project can submit only 1 new SI 2023 project. This applies to both Flemish and partner promoters.
- At the level of the partner institutions, no further criteria apply. Former and present IUC (Institutional University Cooperation) partner institutions are fully eligible, without any restriction.
- At the Flemish level, the application is submitted via a (main) Flemish promoter. Co-promoters can also be part of the project team. At the partner level, multiple partner institutions can be part of the application. If the Flemish project promoter cannot take financial responsibility for the project on behalf of his/her institution, another person can be assigned as budget holder. This person should be clearly specified in the project proposal (see project module Organisation).

Related to the eligibility check, in principle it is the responsibility of the Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation (ICOS) or GEO of the association (see 5.2.1.) to check whether the Flemish promoter is allowed to act as a project promoter and as budget holder within their own institution, hereby performing a check of the respective relevant internal regulations.

However, given the diversity in staff statutes at the different Flemish HEIs and given the time constraints to perform checks, it was decided that the lead promoter will be invited to confirm, when submitting the proposal in the VLIR-UOS tool, to meet both the internal and VLIR-UOS eligibility criteria and regulations. In case of a postdoc submitting, he/she also has to confirm that the ZAP member taking up the role of co-promoter also meets the criteria.

In terms of the eligibility of the partner promoters, the additional criteria cannot be checked by the ICOS. This is understood as a first check. It is, however, the responsibility of the partner promoter to confirm that the number of project proposals does not exceed the allowed maximum number.

It is the responsibility of promoters or co-promoters who are not only affiliated to a Flemish university or university of applied sciences and arts, but also to an institution which is eligible for DGD funding, e.g. Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, on a project or structural basis to assess and confirm that the selection of the proposal by VLIR-UOS would not entail a conflict of interest or overlap with DGD funded projects and hence imply double funding by DGD.

It is up to the Flemish associations to decide whether only the ICOS or both the ICOS and GEO will be mandated to check and submit project proposals to VLIR-UOS. Please contact your ICOS.

2.2. Eligibility of budget and implementation period

The budget and implementation period will be checked with the included boundaries in the call. The maximum budget is 70.000 EUR and the implementation period is 2 years.

2.3. Eligibility of countries

The following countries are eligible for Short Initiatives:

Country
1. Benin
2. Bolivia
3. Burundi
4. Cuba
5. DR Congo
6. Ecuador
7. Ethiopia
8. Indonesia
9. Kenya
10. Morocco
11. Peru
12. Philippines
13. Rwanda
14. South Africa
15. Tanzania
16. Uganda
17. Vietnam

2.4. Eligibility of submission

The proposal must meet the submission requirements as described below:

- **What?** The proposal needs to use/contain all information incl. annexes as requested by the call (see format section 8). Without the requested information (formats), we cannot accept the proposal.
- **Who?** An application involves a Flemish and partner promoter, but it is the (main) Flemish promoter who submits to the ICOS of the Flemish university (association) for quality control. The ICOS will validate the proposal and submit it to VLIR-UOS.
- **How?** Project applications must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university association via the [new tool for the submission of project proposals](#)
- **Deadline?**
 - Proposals must be submitted to the ICOS of the Flemish university association. For specific internal deadlines at the level of the association, check with your ICOS.
 - The final deadline for submission to VLIR-UOS by the ICOS is **16 March 2023 at 17h00 CET (Central European Time)**.

3. Budgetary framework and implementation

3.1. Available budget

The budget for this call allows for a maximum of 29 projects.

This is the 2nd SI Call within FYP2.

3.2. Implementation

After project selection, VLIR-UOS will inform the project promoters on the selection decision, and perform a check of essential personal and budget data in view of the contracting procedure. During the contracting procedure, VLIR-UOS will draft an agreement between VLIR, the partner institution, and the Flemish institution with which the promoters of the selected project are affiliated, to establish rules governing the management and use of, and responsibility for the allocated resources.

Selected projects will start as of 1 September 2023 and run for a maximum of 2 years : from 1 September 2023 until 31 August 2025. **No extension is possible.**

3.3. Financial guidelines for proposal writing

The VLIR-UOS financial framework for SI projects indicate which expenses are allowed in the framework of a project, how budgets are to be determined, and how expenses have to be accounted for. In order to support the project formulation, we provided you with a basic set of guidelines needed for filling out the budget proposal. (see [Call Annex 2](#)).

The applicable budget lines are:

- A. Investment costs (durable goods with a long life that can be depreciated in the accounts over several years)
- B. Operational costs ("project-related" costs incurred for the purchase and/or operational use of goods that are not depreciated in the accounts and costs directly related to a specific project activity)
- C. Personnel costs
- D. Scholarship costs
- E.1. Coordination cost at the level of the Flemish institution (5% of the A-D total)
- E.2. Coordination cost at level of the partner institution(s) (5% of the A-D total)

4. Timeline

STEP IN PROCESS	RESPONSIBLE	DATE
Launch call	VLIR-UOS Team	25 November 2022
Information session (online)	VLIR-UOS Team	6 December 2022, from 13:00 until 15:00 CET
Training sessions (on campus): VLIR-UOS will offer a number of training sessions about proposal writing and using the submission tool	VLIR-UOS Team	To be determined in consultation with the ICOS/GEO, period: January-February 2023
Deadline for submission to ICOS	Flemish promoters	Most likely around 2 weeks before the VLIR-UOS deadline, but please contact the ICOS or GEO of the Flemish institution (university association level, see contact details)
Deadline for submission by the ICOS to VLIR-UOS	ICOS	16 March 2023 (17h00 CET)
Eligibility check and decision, and notification in case of non-eligibility	VLIR-UOS Team and Bureau UOS	31 March 2023
Selection Commission meeting	VLIR-UOS Team	1 st half of May 2023
Ratification of selection	Bureau UOS	2 nd half of May 2023
Notification of selection	VLIR-UOS Team	End of May 2023
Finetuning/data check selected projects	VLIR-UOS Team and promoters/ICOS	June 2023
Signing of contract	VLIR-UOS, Flemish and partner institutions	July-August 2023
Start of projects	Project promoters	1 September 2023
End of projects	Project promoters	All projects will end ultimately on 31 August 2025

5. Application modalities

5.1. Methodological approach and formulation guidelines

All projects need to be identified and formulated following the general principles of the Theory of Change approach and the Managing for Development Results paradigm. These principles were translated into an [extensive guide with background information](#) supporting the formulation of VLIR-UOS projects. The formulation of a project is much more than writing a document. It is a participative process in which partners co-create a project based on a shared vision of change, and a shared understanding of the current situation. A project formulation presentation ([Call annex 1](#)) specifically for Short Initiatives (SI) provides practical and operational support and information on the different modules that need to be developed to arrive at a qualitative project proposal. The development of these interrelated modules is explained in a stepwise process. The modules form the basis for the online project development tool.

The guide consists of 8 Modules¹ as demonstrated in the figure below:



5.2. Application support

The ICOS function as liaison between the VLIR-UOS Team and the individual Flemish institutions and academics/lecturers. The ICOS are the first line of contact to assist the promoters with the elaboration of their project proposal (eligibility check, explanation of the financial framework, assistance in filling out the project modules, etc).

As a general principle, support will be provided in a multi-stage process, in which applicants first contact the ICOS at the level of their institution. Where needed, the ICOS will cluster and forward the questions they cannot answer to VLIR-UOS. VLIR-UOS will provide a “Questions and Answers” section relating to the SI call on its website.

Questions related to the VLIR-UOS project tool can be sent or forwarded to info@vliruos.be.

¹ Module 6: risk management, is not included in the application form of Short Initiatives

In the case of this call, 1 general online information session about SI will be organised on **6 December 2022, from 13:00 to 15:00 CET** (invitation link will be provided on the website), focusing on the call info, formats, and guidelines. All relevant information is included in this call document, but will also be provided on the call page on the VLIR-UOS website.

VLIR-UOS also offers to organise specific training session(s) on proposal writing and on the use of the tool, at the level of the Flemish associations (timing to be determined in consultation with ICOS). Please check our [website](#) or the ICOS for updates.

5.2.1. Contact addresses of the ICOS

University Association	Name	Address	Phone	Email
KU Leuven Association	Tupac Calfat	International Office, VLIR-UOS projects, Naamsestraat 63 - bus 5001, 3000 Leuven	+32 16 37 94 40	Tupac.Calfat@kuleuven.be
Associatie Universiteit & Hogescholen Antwerpen	Katharina Verstraelen	International Relations Office Gratiekapelstraat 10, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium	+32 3 265 44 07	Katharina.Verstraelen@uantwerpen.be
Ghent University Association	Barbara Lobert	Dienst Onderzoeks-aangelegenheden - Afdeling Onderzoekscoördinatie Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Gent	+32 9 264 82 23	Barbara.Lobert@ugent.be
Associatie Universiteit-Hogescholen Limburg	Thomas Peeters	Dienst Internationalisering en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (DIOS), Campus Hasselt, Martelarenlaan 42, 3500 Hasselt	+32 11 26 82 86	Thomas.Peeters@uhasselt.be icos@uhasselt.be
Universitaire Associatie Brussel	Annabel Van Damme	Vrije Universiteit Brussel International Relations and Mobility Office Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel	+32 2 614 80 66	Annabel.Lieselot.van.Damme@vub.be / icos@vub.be

Note: if needed, the contact details of the respective GEO per university of applied sciences and arts can be obtained via our [website](#).

5.2.2. Contact at VLIR-UOS

Topic	Name and function	Phone	Email
Overall coordination TEAM and SI projects Country-specific info for Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Vietnam and Ethiopia	Peter De Lannoy <i>Global Partnerships Coordinator</i>	+32 2 550 19 64	Peter.Delannoy@vliruos.be

Country-specific info for Benin, Burundi, DR Congo, Morocco, Uganda	Kathleen Wuytack, <i>Global Partner- ships Manager</i>	+32 2 289 05 55	Kathleen.Wuytack@vliruos.be
Country-specific info for Tanzania and Kenya	Geraldine Mabbe <i>Global Partnerships Manager</i>	+32 2 550 19 62	Geraldine.Mabbe@vliruos.be
Country-specific info for Rwanda, South-Africa, Indonesia and the Philippines	Laura Uwase <i>Global Partnerships manager</i>	+32 22890559	Laura.Uwase@vliruos.be

6. Selection

6.1. Selection criteria

Each call for proposals will apply the same set of four selection criteria. These four criteria are further defined, and translated into a non-exhaustive list of descriptors that are illustrative but provide an objective interpretation of the criteria, both for the applicant as well as for the selection commissions.²

Next to the criteria mentioned in the table below, their underlying values are also important in the VLIR-UOS selection system: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, expected impact, sustainability, partnership strategy, synergies and learning.

Criteria	Definition	Descriptors
Relevance and coherence of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal responds to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies (relevance) and fits with the programme Theory of Change (ToC) and within the institution/context (coherence).</i>	<p>1.1 The proposal aligns with the Agenda 2030, national and local policies, as well as with the programme ToC.</p> <p>1.2 The proposal is based on a genuine and evidence-based context and stakeholder analysis with attention to gender, vulnerable people and the environment (LNOB and interconnectedness).</p> <p>1.3 The proposal is compatible/links up with or capitalizes on other related (including preceding) initiatives in the same context or topic (a.o. by taking into account the VLIR-UOS country frameworks).</p> <p>1.4 The proposal demonstrates local ownership and is in line with the local partners' priorities.</p>
Quality of the project design	<i>The extent to which a proposal presents a convincing project strategy.</i>	<p>2.1 Linked to the project strategy / Theory of Change, the proposal articulates a realistic, convincing project logic, with a clear and realistic flow between a long-term sustainable development objective/impact level, the outcomes expected from the project, and the envisaged intermediate changes (=results) by formulating activities/identifying deliverables linked to one or more of the six standard VLIR-UOS project domains, with due attention for the Agenda 2030 principles.</p> <p>2.2 The proposal is original, creative, innovative (scientific, academic or pedagogical excellence).</p> <p>2.3 The proposal elaborates an appropriate and feasible (scientific, academic or pedagogical) methodology or approach that recognises/addressess the interconnectedness of the sustainable development challenges (e.g. multidisciplinary or systems approaches) (INT).</p>

² Based on the ERC (European Research Council) and OECD-DAC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee) definitions.

Implementation set-up of the project	<i>The extent to which the proposal presents a strong plan and partnership for the execution of the project.</i>	<p>3.1 The project ToC is translated into a clear planning which will facilitate effective project execution, follow-up and monitoring, with due attention for the Agenda 2030 principles.</p> <p>3.2 The proposal is cost-effective, the budget is reasonable and justified.</p> <p>3.3 The proposal involves an appropriate mix of partners (persons and their organisations) (with the required profile, experience, and expertise) to successfully deliver all aspects of the project (quality of the partnership) and to clarify an adequate and equitable distribution of the roles and tasks for all partners involved, demonstrating the commitment and active contribution of all participating organisations (incl. coordination and communication between the involved partners).</p> <p>3.4 It is an added value if different (Flemish or partner) HE&SIs are involved in the proposal, either universities, universities of applied sciences and arts, or both.</p> <p>3.5. It is an added value if in the proposal different stakeholders are genuinely involved in the implementation of the project (Multi-stakeholder partnerships)</p>
Potential impact and sustainability	<i>The extent to which the project is likely to produce positive long-term effects (impact) and benefits which will be continued after the project duration (sustainability).</i>	<p>4.1 The proposal has potential to contribute to applications/policies/services and respond to the needs of direct and indirect beneficiaries, while paying attention to gender, vulnerable people (LNOB), and the environmental impact.</p> <p>4.2 The proposal presents a convincing stakeholder management plan to facilitate stakeholder engagement, while paying attention to gender and vulnerable people (LNOB).</p> <p>4.3 The proposal has a clear uptake strategy while paying attention to gender and vulnerable people (LNOB), with the aim to significantly increase knowledge uptake and innovation. Eventually, this will lead to inclusive and enduring transformations with potential positive socio-political, environmental, and economic effects at the level of the ultimate beneficiaries within and beyond the HE&SIs (e.g. local communities, policy makers, local industry, etc.).</p> <p>4.4 The proposal is likely to realise institutional embeddedness (within the partner organisation; with relevant local, national, international networks and stakeholders) and envisages organisational capacity strengthening to allow the benefits to continue after the funding (institutional and financial sustainability).</p> <p>4.5. The proposal pays close attention to interlinkages and potential trade-offs between environmental and socio-economic factors. The proposal's sustainability strategy ensures a reasonable balance of social, economic, and environmental sustainability (INT).</p>

6.2. Scoring of the criteria

All proposals are assessed by the commission members, guaranteeing equal treatment and triangulation.

The **scoring** of each of the criteria is done using a qualitative interval scale:

- A: Very good (no revisions are needed)
- B: Good (minor revisions might be needed)
- C: Weak (major revisions are needed, hence the proposal cannot be selected. Proposal can be remediated towards a next submission)
- D: Very weak

During a selection commission meeting, the selection commission will – on the basis of individual scoring – formulate an agreed-upon score for each criterion. In order to be 'fundable', a proposal should obtain an A or B score on each criterion. In case a proposal is awarded with a C or D score for 1 criterion, the proposal is not discussed any further. For fundable projects, the more A's the better, and the following selection criteria are applicable in declining order of priority:

1. Relevance and coherence
2. Quality of the project
3. Potential impact and sustainability
4. Implementation set-up

More details about the VLIR-UOS selection system can be found on the VLIR-UOS website.

6.3. Selection commission

6.3.1. Composition

Considering the expected high amount of proposals for SI calls, with a strong focus on thematic sustainable development challenges in relation with country level contextualisation and in order to guarantee balanced distribution of projects over continents, the selection of SI will be organised via Regional Selection Commissions:

- Regional selection commission Africa 1 for the selection of SI proposals in Africa: Benin, Burundi, DR Congo, Morocco, Rwanda
- Regional selection commission Africa 2 for the selection of SI proposals in Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda
- Regional selection commission Asia for the selection of SI proposals in Asia: Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam
- Regional selection commission Latin America for the selection of SI proposals in Latin America: Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru

6.3.2. Follow-up of selection commission meeting

The selection meetings will take place in May 2023. During the meeting of the Regional Selection Committee the promoters are not expected to orally defend their proposal. The Bureau UOS will ratify this selection.

Once the Bureau UOS has made the final decision about the selection of the project proposals, all promoters will be informed of the outcome of the selection process and the reasons for approval or rejection of their proposal(s), including an indication of criteria that – if relevant - did not reach a sufficient (A or B) score.

7. Theory of change and objectives

7.1. Aim and key features of SI projects

Aim:

Short Initiatives (SI) projects are short-term projects that aim to explore, build and deepen academic/scientific collaborations among diverse teams of academics and researchers. SI projects focus on a sustainable development challenge and are able to realise objectives within the limited timespan of **maximum 2 years**.

With SI projects, VLIR-UOS aims to strengthen the research and educational capacities of higher education and science institutions in partner countries. In addition, SI projects are expected to create the conditions for uptake of new and relevant knowledge, applications and/or services by academic, civil society, private and public actors.

Key Features:

- A Short Initiative (SI) is expected to produce short-term results within the duration of two years.
- SI projects are very accessible, in particular for new/young project promoters that were sensitised via the Global Minds framework or via involvement in ongoing projects of other promoters, and/or are eager to go for a first experience as a promoter of a VLIR-UOS project. Also academics with VLIR-UOS experience have access.
- Allows for differentiated aims (exploration, innovation, valorisation, etc.) and approaches (education, research, policies, outreach, people, networks).
- The partnership can vary in terms of size and composition: one or more Flemish higher education institutions, one or more local higher education and science institutions and/or other actors; one or more disciplines; young/new and/or more experienced academics, etc.

7.2. Theory of Change for SI projects

The SI projects' Theory of Change below reflects the general Theory of Change for the VLIR-UOS portfolio and how the objectives of SI fit in. The VLIR-UOS Theory of Change explains how a given project, or set of projects, is expected to lead to a long-term development change. The ToC draws on a causal analysis based on available evidence, clarifying the anticipated pathways to impact. It clarifies how VLIR-UOS wants to make a contribution to Agenda 2030, which changes SI projects can make, and how they can do so.

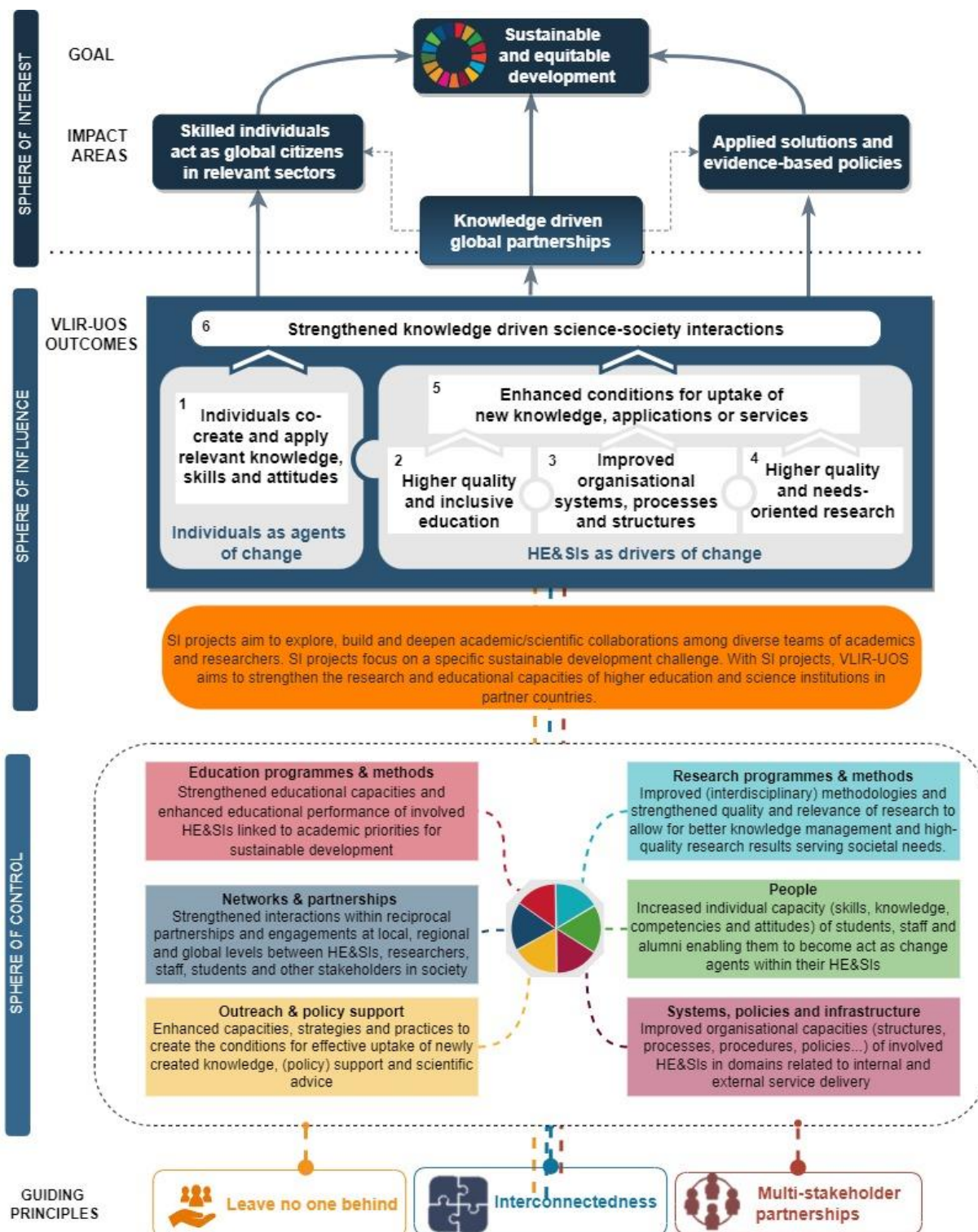


Figure 1 Schematic representation Theory of Change associated with Short Initiatives projects

7.2.1. Long-term impact

VLIR-UOS considers global engagement for higher education as a goal (SDG 4: Quality Education) and a means for attaining other SDGs through knowledge co-creation, transfer, and valorisation. In the long run, Short Initiatives projects are expected to contribute to more sustainable and equitable development by fostering:

- **Application of solutions and evidence-based policies:** In short, this refers to the role of higher education in applying new knowledge, insights, and evidence for sustainable development. Effective partnerships are conducive to ensure the relevant stakeholders are engaged and opportunities for uptake are created. This leads to a broader application of new knowledge by end-users and can include policymakers applying evidence from research in their policies, local communities adapting new practices that address their local needs, and private companies adapting innovative approaches.
- **A global community of skilled individuals who act as global citizens in relevant sectors:** In short, this refers to the potential of HE&SIs to develop generations of new leaders and skilled professionals. These skilled individuals are expected to drive social and economic development with their contributions to relevant sectors. As critical global citizens, they are likely to have a multiplier development effect because of (i) their capacity to understand and question global power structures and to communicate and work/study effectively outside one's environment, (ii) their consideration of interdependence and social concern for others, and (iii) their civic engagement in the form of pro-environmental and pro-social behaviour.
- **Knowledge-driven global partnerships:** In short, this refers to the idea that reciprocal partnerships are essential to safeguard knowledge co-creation, exchange, and uptake within and beyond the scope of the supported projects. In line with SDG 17, VLIR-UOS aims for sustainable, effective, and efficient partnerships at various levels, including the individual, institutional, country, and regional levels, both within the HE sector, and with other sectors.

7.2.2. What difference SI and TEAM projects make: project outcomes

To effectively contribute to these generic objectives, VLIR-UOS focuses on **two strategic axes**:

- Enabling HE&SIs to strengthen and take up their role as *Drivers of Change*
- Enabling individuals to act as *Agents of Change*.

Both strategic axes can reinforce one another. For instance, the extent to which HE&SIs take up their role as development actor is likely to affect the embedded scholarship students' development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to effectively act as agents of change within and beyond the setting of the HE&SI.

Along these strategic axes, VLIR-UOS identifies **six outcomes**. **Outcomes refer to the change(s) a project want to realise by the end of the implementation period. Every Short Initiative is expected to clearly align to at least 2 of these outcomes**, namely:

- (1) **Individuals apply relevant co-created knowledge, skills, and attitudes.** This outcome indicates the co-creation and transfer of state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to individuals who then apply these in their own organisation. The skills and knowledge also include critical thinking, global citizenship skills and attitudes, leadership skills, etcetera.
- (2) **HE&SIs provide higher quality and more inclusive education.** This outcome concerns the improved quality and inclusiveness of education as a result from strengthened educational capacities available at HE&SIs.
- (3) **HE&SIs make use of improved organisational systems, processes, and structures.** This outcome was formulated to highlight the importance of the organisational capacity of HE&SIs to enable changes in terms of research and education capacities. It encompasses improved organisational processes (e.g.

ICT/digitalisation), support systems (e.g. quality assurance), and structures as well as human capacities that contribute to HE&SIs' enhanced institutional performance.

- (4) **HE&SIs conduct higher quality and needs-oriented research.** This outcome reflects the VLIR-UOS ambition to strengthen research capacities in order to enable HE&SIs to develop higher quality and needs-oriented research processes and results. This outcome signifies HE&SIs becoming (more) research active and innovative and being enabled to produce solutions to local and global challenges. It also refers to research that is gender-sensitive and equity-focused as a means for achieving excellence in research.
- (5) **HE&SIs create enhanced conditions for the uptake of new knowledge, applications, or services.** VLIR-UOS identifies this outcome as the production of new knowledge, applications, and services and the creation of conditions for uptake by relevant external stakeholders. It can involve strategic, uptake-oriented stakeholder management, targeted dissemination, and capacity strengthening of end-users (or intermediaries).
- (6) **HE&SIs and their stakeholders engage in knowledge-driven science-society interactions.** This outcome responds to the growing awareness of the importance of the science-society interface which has been identified as a weakness in recent VLIR-UOS evaluations. It reflects the VLIR-UOS ambition to support networks, partnerships, or platforms which can constitute an eco-system where academic (HE&SI's staff, students and alumni) and non-academic stakeholders (policymakers, ANGCS, donor organisations, private sector, embassies etc.) interact to facilitate the valorisation and uptake of knowledge.

When referring to the outcomes in SI projects, they particularly aim at contributing to VLIR-UOS outcomes (2) *higher quality and more inclusive education*, (4) *higher quality and needs-oriented research*, and (5) *improved conditions for the uptake of new knowledge, applications or services*. While it is not VLIR-UOS intention to impose restrictions on individual projects, all SI projects are mandated to ensure that their change process contributes to the enhanced conditions for the uptake of the knowledge, applications, or services. These need to be generated in relation to the specific developmental challenge the project aims to address (VLIR-UOS outcome 5). Thus, besides VLIR-UOS outcome 5, individual projects may choose to focus on a sub-selection depending on the priorities and needs of stakeholders in the partner country. However, projects are required to document their choices through Theory of Change to ensure they are aligned with the programme's vision towards change, as set out in this document.

7.2.3. How do projects deliver on their outcomes: domains of intermediate change/outputs

In general, SI projects are expected to bring about results in potentially **six (project) domains**: *Research programmes and methods, Education programmes and methods, Outreach and policy support, People, Systems, policies and infrastructure, Networks and partnerships*.

The table below presents a non-exhaustive and indicative list of deliverables and activities that individual projects can undertake within the six domains through partnerships between HE&SIs and other local, national or global stakeholders. The deliverables, processes, and changes in these domains are interlinked and not mutually exclusive. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that expectations in relation to these domains should vary for SI projects in view of their distinct scope (in terms of time and budget).

Domain	General description (VLIR-UOS ToC)	Activities (examples)
Research programmes and methods	Improved (interdisciplinary) methodologies and strengthened quality and relevance of research to allow better knowledge management and high-quality research results serving societal needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New knowledge and technologies are developed about sustainable development relevant topics, responding to local needs (prioritising vulnerable groups 🧑) • High-quality research publications and training manuals for academic use are produced, contributing to increased research output and university reputation • Gender balanced participation is promoted in research programmes • Research takes into account the impact on gender issues (how the results positively/negatively impact men/women) and environment 🏡 • Integration of new research methods, training lab techniques in optimised research practices • Improved data collection methods and analysis techniques • Practice-based research leading to an improvement/innovation in the professional practice/work field (e.g. university colleges projects) • Etcetera
Education programmes and methods	Improved, innovative, and inclusive teaching methods, didactics, and digital approaches. Improved curriculum content to support knowledge co-creation and equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge, ensuring employability after graduation and the ability to tackle global challenges from a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Master programmes are implemented • New courses are included in the curricula • New trainings are developed for (non-)academic stakeholders 🧑 • New didactical, pedagogic and teaching methodologies are introduced, adapted, and implemented by staff • Research-based educational programmes are developed and implemented, connecting MSc students to research • Courses and training content are created with improved integration of equity and equality, e.g. gender concepts, intersectionality, inclusion, (implicit) bias, ... 🧑 • Etcetera
Outreach and policy support	Enhanced interaction with relevant public, private, and academic stakeholders to share knowledge, create conditions for uptake, and provide policy advice/support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities to facilitate and contribute to the use of research evidence by policymakers, private sector, civil society, and other development actors • Guidelines are developed and made available for uptake by stakeholders; Policy briefs are published for policy advice • Collaboration in spin-offs, commercialisation of new knowledge products, registration of IP, pilot initiatives • Involvement of end-users in research processes • Stakeholder engagement strategies are developed/implemented • Platform for regular exchanges/demonstration workshops with stakeholders (incl. women/vulnerable groups) • Improved scientific communication methods and strategies to share results with broader audience • Seminars with industry, government agencies, and development partners are organised on a regular basis 🧑 • Etcetera
Systems, policies, and infrastructure	Better management, information systems, educational and research policies to improve functioning of HE&SIs, including policies on gender and diversity, research integrity and uptake. Improved equipment, laboratories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of efficient structures, processes and procedures (e.g. introduction of lab procedures) and integration in the daily workflows (e.g. well-functioning lab) • Establishment of adequate “institutions”, policies, rules and regulations (e.g. development of a new research/ accreditation/ HR

	and offices for education and research	<p>policy, gender policy, environmental policy, technology transfer, Extension office, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate policies to support access for students from vulnerable groups and ensure gender-balance among students and staff • Upgrade of research and education facilities • Improved software technologies for data collection and analysis • Measures are taken to reduce environmental impact (CO2 compensation, less paper-based, limited travel, recycling, etc.) 🏠 • Etcetera
People	Students, alumni, staff, researchers are trained/sensitised in a supportive learning environment to strengthen knowledge, skills & attitudes in diverse domains (e.g. leadership, global citizenship).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of adequate skills, knowledge, competencies, and attitudes (e.g. PhD scholarships) • Application of skills, knowledge, and competencies on the workplace (e.g. PhD holder applies new knowledge and skills) • Reduction of staff turnover, facilitation of skills, and knowledge transfer within institutions (e.g. PhD remains staff member) • Transversal competencies (skills, knowledge, attitudes) to become critical global citizens and change agents are strengthened, awareness about gender and environmental issues, human rights, and global sustainability challenges. (transversal integration of global citizenship in VLIR-UOS portfolio) 🏠 • Etcetera
Networks and partnerships	Strengthened interactions within reciprocal partnerships and engagements at local, regional, and global levels between HE&Sis, researchers, staff, students, and other stakeholders in society (public actors, private actors, other civil society organisations (CSOs), communities, etc.) for sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional and international HE cooperation on a specific topic is facilitated • Multi-disciplinary and interconnectivity is implemented by collaborating with different teams/units/departments in the HE&SI (e.g. different projects along the value chain of an agricultural product, strong complementarity & synergy with other projects) 🏠 • New research partnerships with private and public actors or civil society are developed to have more societal impact 🏠 and attract new funding to ensure sustainability • A stakeholder platform concept (e.g. stakeholder advisory board) and associated stakeholder workshops are developed to build a network with private sector, policy-makers, and civil society (e.g. women groups, communities, marginalised groups) 🏠 • Etcetera

7.3. SDG principles as a compass for VLIR-UOS projects

The SDG principles serve as a compass for VLIR-UOS' endeavour of sharing minds, changing lives. As visualised in the ToC, they are transversally integrated, using a broad interpretation of the principles, to make the activities and change processes SDG-proof. Additionally, VLIR-UOS uses the SDG principles as a compass to integrate the principles of “synergy and complementarity” and the integration of transversal and priority themes of the Belgian Development Cooperation into its operations. Integration of these principles is an important element in the selection of projects.



Interconnectedness: VLIR-UOS recognises that given the complexity, scale and interconnectedness of current societal challenges, meaningful social, economic and ecological transformations can only be realised by approaching the SDGs from a holistic and integrated viewpoint. More precisely, VLIR-UOS strives for holistic transformations by encouraging projects to reflect on their position in the interplay of global challenges and national needs, and to bring together the different types of expertise that are necessary to successfully implement the project. As an essential first step in considering the complexity of societal change, all VLIR-UOS supported projects develop a holistic context analysis that moves beyond sectoral and disciplinary borders and should analyse the positive as well as negative interlinkages between the SDG goals. This also includes attention for the transversal themes gender equality and environment sustainability. With regard to **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge* and *fixing the organisation* in line with the theoretical three-fixes model of Londa Schiebinger (See [VLIR-UOS gender policy document](#)). Projects are expected to align with this threefold gender strategy in their proposal. With regard to **environment**, project applicants are invited to consider the environment and environmental sustainability during the project identification & formulation phase, as well as to monitor and reflect upon the project's effects on the environment and the risks posed by the environment on their project. Thereby, projects should be guided by the ‘do no harm’ principle to prevent, reduce, and control the risk of environmental harm. Besides integration of gender equality and environmental sustainability concerns within project management, the transversal themes can also feature in the projects' content.



Coherence, interinstitutional collaboration and Multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP): The complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of the current societal challenges that the SDG framework is seeking to address, requires a concerted effort or collaboration by a wide variety of actors. This need for concertation/collaboration is translated to 3 potential approaches. Proposals are invited to explore these.

- **Coherence:** The Agenda 2030 urges actions to be **coherent** with the actions and networks of other actors and/or other HES4SD initiatives. An analysis of complementary actions by academic and non-academic actors is essential for each partnership (to ensure coherence). VLIR-UOS wants to facilitate coherence and connections between different actors and projects present in each country and across borders. With these objectives in mind, Country Reference

Framework (CRF) documents ³ support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis per country, focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector, and by providing an overview of Belgian development actors active in the country and of their ongoing projects and partners, in view of exploration of opportunities to connect and assure coherence.

- **Interinstitutional collaboration:** This concerns a structural collaboration between several higher education institutions at Flemish and/or partner level within the framework of a project, pooling available expertise, with the aim of obtaining better results.
- **Multistakeholder partnership (MSP):** this concerns a structural collaboration with at least 1 non-academic actor (= multi-stakeholder; civil society, private sector, governmental actors, etc.) in which this actor plays an active role in the project implementation. VLIR-UOS takes into account the MSP principle by promoting collaboration between different actors (beyond HEIs) to co-create, share, and mobilise knowledge and expertise across disciplines, sectors, interest groups, and borders. More precisely, VLIR-UOS explicitly puts forward the science-society interface and knowledge uptake, and the importance of strengthening it.



Leave no one behind: VLIR-UOS recognises the need for pro-active strategies to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised populations are included and benefit from higher education partnerships for sustainable development. The LNOB principle is taken into account by looking at partners with whom we work, at beneficiaries for whom we work, and at what we focus on in projects. VLIR-UOS encourages projects to take gender and vulnerable groups into account, by putting forward partnerships with mid-range or small-scale institutions, by awarding scholarships to a diversified group of beneficiaries and by promoting transformative or community-based types of research. More precisely, international top higher education institutions are only considered when they participate as supporting partners in projects, scholarship attribution is not only based on academic excellence in terms of scientific output, and mainstreaming approaches are put in place to consider inclusion and (gender) equality in each project. Short Initiatives, in particular, aim to be accessible for academics/researchers at the early stages of their academic career interested to explore the potential for higher education for sustainable development. As mentioned earlier, with regards to **gender**, VLIR-UOS and its partners engage in *fixing the numbers*, *fixing the knowledge* and *fixing the organisation* for gender equality. This is also an important dimension of the Leave No One Behind principle.

³ Country reference frameworks were elaborated for the 17 countries + Belgium in the VLIR-UOS project partner country list. (see links at the end of this document)

8. Project formats, call annexes and background information

8.1. Project formats

Formats that are available on our [website](#) and which have to be submitted:

Format for a project proposal (offline working document)	<i>This format is to be followed when drafting the project proposal and includes the guiding questions for the narrative sections per module. All information in this working document will need to be included directly in the online tool for project submission.</i>
Annex 1: Format Project proposal	<i>This excel format is used for the input of general project info, details on team members and the activities per intermediate change domain, and is to be uploaded in the project submission tool.</i>
Annex 2: Format Budget proposal	<i>A project proposal is only complete if a duly completed and detailed budget is added. This document gives you the format of a budget table, and is to be uploaded in the project submission tool.</i>

Mandatory annex, as a free format / no template available :

Annex 3: CVs of the promoters	<i>Please add the CVs of the promoters in the module organisation (via an online link if so possible, or upload a pdf version of the short CV. Optional: CVs of the co-promoters.</i>
Annex 4: Endorsement Letter (free format)	<i>Endorsement letter of the partner institution: institutional support letter, referring to the employment link of the main partner promoter with a (recognized higher education) partner institution, and the support of this same institution to the project. The letter should be signed at least by an authority at Faculty level.</i>

8.2. Call annexes

The following annexes are essential background information when formulating a proposal, and can be downloaded from the VLIR-UOS call page:

Call Annex 1: Intro to the formats and formulation guidelines SI 2023	<i>A guiding powerpoint is provided with an introduction to the formats and main formulation guidelines.</i>
Call Annex 2: Financial guidelines for SI project proposal writing for SI and TEAM projects	<i>This presentation provides an overview of the VLIR-UOS financial framework. These provide an overview of the budget lines that are applicable and indicate what expenses are allowed within the framework of SI projects. The overview also refers to the new scholarship framework and the current Hotel and per diem allowances (version 6 July 2018) available on the VLIR-UOS website.</i>

8.3. Background information

Links to country reference framework documents per project partner country : These documents provide (i) an overview of ongoing VLIR-UOS projects (ii) summary info on a partner country's approach towards Agenda 2030 and the SDGs; and (iii) general info on the higher education sector and on proposed activities of Belgian cooperation actors, with a focus on the non-governmental cooperation.

Benin
Bolivia
Burundi
Cuba
DR Congo
Ecuador
Ethiopia
Indonesia
Kenya
Morocco
Peru
Philippines
Rwanda

South-Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
Vietnam

Looking for inspiration: check out our website with the links to [Community talks](#), the publication [20 years of Impact - Sharing Minds, changing Lives](#), and on the integration of the SDG principles via the background document [Theory of Change and methodological handbook](#).

Abbreviations

ANGC	Belgian Actor of Non-Governmental Cooperation
ATP	Administratief en technisch personeel (Administrative and Technical Personnel)
DGD	Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid
FYP	Five-Year Programme
GEO	Global Engagement Officer at level of a Flemish university of applied sciences and arts
HE&SI	Higher Education and Science Institution(s)
HEI	Higher Education Institution(s)
ICOS	Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation
IUC	Institutional University Cooperation
JSF	Joint Strategic Framework
SI	Short Initiative project
TEAM	TEAM project
ToC	Theory of Change
tJSF	Thematic Joint Strategic Framework
UOS	Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (University Cooperation for Development)
VLIR	Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad (Flemish Interuniversity Council)
VLIR-UOS	VLIR-Universitaire Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (VLIR-University Cooperation for Development)
ZAP	Zelfstandig Academisch Personeel (Independent Academic Personnel)