vliruos

sharing minds, changing lives

Indonesia

Country Reference Framework

(Updated version of March 2026)

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Country reference framework Indonesia

Background

In FYP1 the VLIRUOS country strategies presented the strategic niche for future VLIRUOS cooperation in a specific country, leading to strategy-based calls for proposals.

In FYP2, however, we shift towards an approach whereby a country reference framework provides information rather than strategic guidance. The country reference frameworks will be used mainly to support teams of academics when identifying and formulating project proposals, by providing a context analysis focused on Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development and the higher education sector in a given country, and by providing an overview of Belgian actors, their ongoing projects and partners in that country in view of exploration of opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

The country reference frameworks consist of three components:

(i) overview of VLIRUOS projects in the country;
(ii) context analysis focused on the Agenda 2030 framework and the higher education sector;
(iii) overview of Belgian actors (ANGCs involved in thematic or geographic JSFs & Enabel), their local partners and their regional/thematic focus.

The frameworks have been elaborated based on information available at the time of drafting this actor programme and through consultations with both Flemish and local project promotors and with geographic JSFs, when applicable, to ensure relevant information for coherent project formulation is included.

Prior to the launch of competitive calls, the ANGCs active in the country/region will be invited to list a number of research themes/questions that can be addressed by HE&SIs in the framework of VLIRUOS funded projects or scholarships. Synergy and complementarity will be integrated as an element in the selection of project proposals, more in particular when discussing the (developmental) relevance and coherence of the proposals and the extent to which the multi-stakeholder partnership principle has been reflected in the project's implementation set-up. By this mode of operation, the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development links up with the other geographic JSFs.

Evidently, the frameworks will be updated regularly in consultation with the HEI&SI stakeholders and with the respective geographical JSFs and, where appropriate, also with ARES, and especially prior to the launch of competitive calls by VLIRUOS, to be compatible and responsive to evolving/emerging needs and priorities of academic and international actors active in the country/region/sector.

1. VLIRUOS in Indonesia

1.1. Overview projects & scholarships (2003 – 2025)



Legend

- Indonesian Soil Research Institute
- Bogor Agricultural Institute
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Brawijaya University
- Bandung Institute of Technology
- Universitas Gadjah Mada
- Universitas Padjadjaran
- Universitas Halu Oleo

Projects 2000-2025				Scholarship Type	Finished	Ongoing	Total
Type	**Budget (€)**	**Number**		**ICP**	178	33	211
Total	***1.920.552***	***18***		**ICPPHD**	2		2
TEAM	1.160.778	4		**ITP/KOI**	107		107
SI	588.008	11		**REI**	1		1
JOINT	134.476	1		**SRS**	13		13
INCO	37290	2		**Total**	301	33	334

Indonesia is a young partner country with potential. From 2003 to 2023 VLIRUOS spent about € 1,9 million in project cooperation with Indonesia. There are 3 ongoing SI 2025 and one TEAM 2024 projects in Indonesia.

More detailed information can be found on our VLIRUOS website vliruostats (statistics).

1.2. Ongoing projects and future calls (2022-...)

List of ongoing projects as of activity year 2024-2025						
Type	**Runtime**	**Title**	**Flemish promoter**	**Local promoter**	**Local institution**	**Total budget**
SI	2022-2024	Deciphering the Dream Pond. Empowering Sulawesian scientists in genomic biodiversity research.	Hannes Svardal (UA)	Nadiarti Nurdin	Universitas Hasanuddin	69.972,10
SI	2023-2025	Empowering Women Farmers to Actualise Rights to Seed for Sustainable and Resilient Food System in East-Java Indonesia	Koen Byttebier (VUB)	Intan Soeparna	Universitas Airlangga	69.531,00
SI	2025-2027	Fostering climate-resilient vanilla production in Indonesia	Koenraad Van Meerbeek	Kurniatun Hairiah	Universitas Brawijaya	69.993,00
SI	2025-2027	Enhancing Asian catfish farmer livelihoods through sustainable farm-made feed innovations	Annelies Declercq	Julie Ekasari	Bogor Agricultural University	69.991,90
SI	2025-2027	Lifting Sulawesi's biodiversity research into the era of genomics	Hannes Svardal	Nadiarti Nurdin , Fahri Badjeber	Universitas Hasanuddin , Universitas Tadulako	69.990,80
TEAM	2024-2029	Customer-Led Business Incubator for Farmers and Chocolate Crafters in Indonesia	Joachim Schouteten (UG)	Dahlia Elianarni , Ariza Budi Tunjung Sari , Radityo Putro Handrito	Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) , Indonesian Coffee and Cocoa Research Institute , Universitas Brawijaya	299.904

Abbreviations (type): SI=Short Initiatives, TEAM projects. Abbreviations (Flemish institutions): KUL= Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; UG=Ghent University; UA=University of Antwerp; UH=University of Hasselt; VUB=Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Competitive calls for new projects will be launched and announced on our website. Nationals of Indonesia are eligible[1] to apply for scholarships for the International Master Programmes (ICP).

[1] Admission requirements, application procedures and selection procedures differ across the programmes and host institutions.

2. Indonesia and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2.1. Indonesia and the Sustainable Development Goals

Indonesia is committed to implement the SDGs through the enactment of the Presidential Decree No. 59 of 2017. The SDGs are institutionalised from the highest national level to the subnational entities (regional, provincial and district/city levels), and integrated in national and subnational development planning. The country has mainstreamed the SDGs into the **national development agenda** and the Indonesia Vision 2045. The ambition is to become the world's fourth or fifth largest economy by 2045.

Two Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) of the Republic of Indonesia's Implementation of the SDGs have been published in 2017 and 2019, and a third for 2025 is in the making 3rd VNR in preparation. According to the Voluntary National Review 2019, Indonesia has made **progress** in reducing inequality, complemented by sustained and inclusive economic growth and accountable governance. Poverty has been reduced for the first time in history, job opportunities and access to education increased at all levels, while GHG emission and disaster risks were reduced. Indonesia still faces several **challenges** in implementing the SDGS. These challenges can be grouped in **three categories**:

- limited access to public services including education and economic opportunity due to poverty and remoteness of locations;
- not all public services comply with national standards and are applied without discrimination;
- the availability of adequate, up-to-date and disaggregated data and information as a basis for inclusive development planning.

In the education sector, the most important challenge is to improve the **quality of teaching** and students' learning outcomes, as well as to **improve education governance** including quality of spending and management within the context of decentralization.

Indonesia has formulated a 2nd National Development Plan 2025-2029 with the following **key aspects**:

Economic Goals: Aims for rapid economic growth, targeting 8% by 2029, through industrial competitiveness and productivity gains.

Social & Human Development: Focus on enhancing human capital (index 0.59%), reducing poverty rates (4.5-5.0%), and implementing a free nutritious meal program for children.

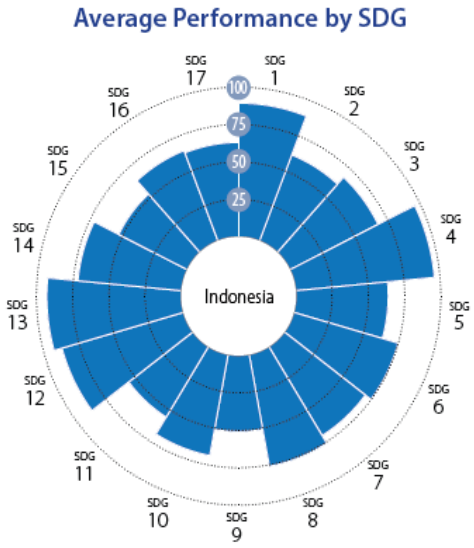
Infrastructure & Sustainability: Focuses on green infrastructure, renewable energy, and adapting to climate change in line with Paris Agreement commitments.

Key Focus Areas are:

- Food Security: Enhancing agricultural productivity and developing rural areas.
- Digital Economy: Promoting digitalization across sectors.
- Global Integration: Strengthening international cooperation, including South-South and triangular initiatives

Taking into account the global aspect of the SDGs, the sustainable development report assesses where each country stands with regard to achieving the SDGs. The Indonesia Country Profile shows that challenges remain, Indonesia ranks 77th out of 167 countries included in the report.





As an umbrella organisation that works with calls for proposals, VLIRUOS supports interventions for and through higher education institutes, supporting them in the areas of education, research and uptake and thereby strengthening them in their role as development actor. Doing so, the impact of the interventions supported by VLIRUOS can be found in a large variety of sectors. In line with its major intervention area, VLIRUOS positions itself within the education sector, especially focused on higher education, research and innovation (SDG 4 and 9). However, through its interventions, VLIRUOS intervenes in different sectors as well. VLIRUOS recognises that given the complexity, scale and interconnectedness of current societal challenges, meaningful social, economic and ecological transformations can only be realised by starting from a holistic and integrated approach to the SDGs. When translated into SDGs, the projects that were financed by VLIRUOS in Indonesia covered mainly, apart from SDG 4 and 9, SDGs 12 and 13. Top sectors for VLIRUOS in this country for the past decade are environment (e.g. natural resource management, climate change), sustainable agriculture and food security (e.g. agri-food export sector), government/civil society (e.g., conflict, democracy) and the cross-cutting theme of higher education, research and innovation (e.g. statistics for development).

More background information and context analysis on Indonesia can be found in the **geographic Joint Strategic Framework** for Indonesia, which will be shared with (potential) project promotors when new calls are launched.

Additional sources on progress related to higher education & science (SDG 4)

- UNESCO-UIS: overview data resources indicators related to SDG4
- Our World in data:
  - Indicators related to educational mobility and inequality
  - Indicators related to tertiary education
  - Indicators related to projections of future education (demand)
  - Indicators related to science and research

2.2. Higher education landscape in Indonesia

Indonesia has the fourth largest education system (World Bank, 2019). It is decentralised and perceived as very complex. As of 2019, 3129 private higher education institutions (HEIs) and 122 public HEIs provide services to 8 million students. There are 5 types of higher education institutions: universities, institutes, colleges, (community) academies, and polytechnics. The four main groups of higher education institutes are:

- 5-7 'elite' public universities;
- other public universities of mixed but generally low quality;
- a vast private sector of highly variable quality (universities, institutes, academies and polytechnics). The top 15 or 20 private institutions "appear to have standards comparable with the better public institutions" (OECD, 2015);
- a large number of universities and other institutions administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Universities have expanded rapidly in Indonesia in recent years. One of the **challenges** is that graduates do not match labour market needs of the private sector. There is also a lack of qualified staff at universities. The Indonesian government has launched various initiatives to improve the quality and competitiveness of universities and higher education institutions. Programs and incentives include introducing lecture-focused scholarships to improve the quality of faculty members, providing infrastructure funding, and offering online courses. Another issue is the large number of unaccredited universities, most of the underperforming universities are private. There is also a significant inequality in the distribution of institutions throughout the country, with poorer regions having the fewest institutions of higher education, and a number of provinces within these regions having no public higher education institutions at all.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST) is responsible for developing and executing policies and programs across higher education, science, and technology. This core function is defined by the Minister's Regulation Number 1 of 2024. Its mission is to formulate and implement policies that serve the Indonesian people, particularly by strengthening the 4,416 universities, academic communities, and lecturers under the purview to achieve global excellence. MoHEST actively pursues international collaboration to foster research, academic exchange, and innovation, ensuring the nation's sustainable development.

Accreditation in Indonesia is primarily managed by government-mandated bodies: BAN-PT (National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education) for universities, LAM-PTKes (IAAHEH) for health programs, and KAN (National Accreditation Body of Indonesia) for labs and certification bodies. There is also a separate accreditation agency for primary and secondary schools. These agencies ensure national standards and quality, with KAN also supporting international recognition.

Following the OECD education statistics 2025, the share of female doctoral graduates in the field of natural sciences, mathematics and statistics is relatively high (77.6%).

According to the international Webometrics university ranking, more than 20 Indonesian universities fall within the 2000 ranking worldwide. The first ranked Indonesian university is Universitas Indonesia on the 543rd place in the World Rank.

2.3. Leaving no one behind

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community pledged to leave no one behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. The principle of leaving no one behind can be defined as a three-part imperative: to end absolute poverty in all its forms, to stop group-based discrimination that results in unequal outcomes for disadvantaged populations, and to take action to help the furthest behind.

According to the document Leave No One Behin in Indonesia 2022/2023 (LNOB), the recommendations emphasize strengthening the implementation of the “Leave No One Behind” (LNOB) principle through improved data, planning, partnerships, and policy action. Regarding the Indonesian context, there is a lack of literature on this topic.

LNOB should be systematically integrated into Indonesia’s planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes. This includes ensuring that LNOB groups are clearly reflected in the Cooperation Framework, Joint Work Plans, and agency-specific strategies, as well as in monitoring indicators and reporting systems. Capacity-building for planning and monitoring staff may also be needed to ensure that LNOB considerations are effectively incorporated. In addition, programming should adopt an intersectional approach, recognizing that vulnerability often results from overlapping factors such as gender, age, disability, and geographic isolation.

Stronger partnerships and communication are also essential, promoting meaningful engagement with civil society organizations, particularly those representing disadvantaged groups, and ensure their participation in planning and implementation processes.

For the Indonesian government, the recommendations highlight the need to strengthen social protection systems with greater attention to the most vulnerable populations, particularly older persons, women in remote areas, and people with disabilities. Efforts should also focus on preventing child labor by keeping children in education or training, while improving legislation and policies that protect marginalized groups. Finally, reducing regional inequalities remains critical, especially for remote areas. More balanced economic development, improved physical and digital connectivity, and investments in sectors such as information technology and renewable energy can help ensure that people living in remote regions are not left behind in Indonesia’s development.

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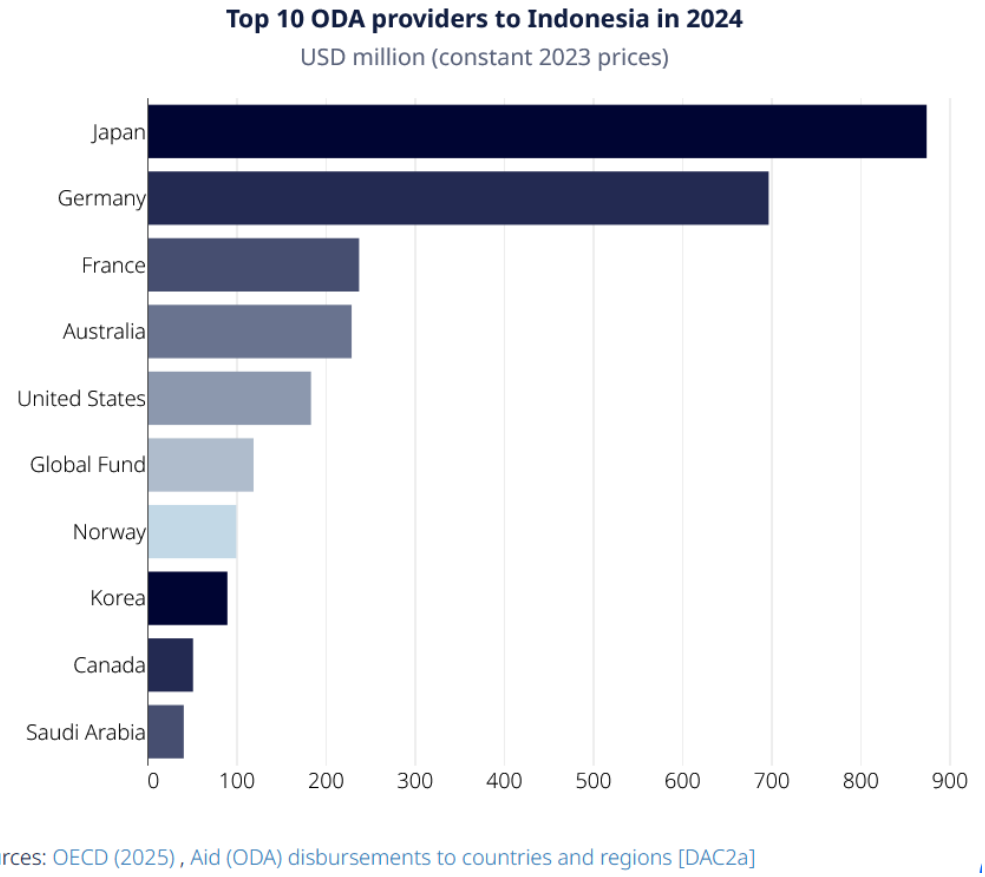
Finally, reducing regional inequalities remains critical, especially for remote areas. More balanced economic development and improved physical and digital connectivity are necessary.

The Indonesian will tackle some key areas, among which: 1/ Disability Inclusion: A specific project to improve the lives of over 23 million Indonesians with disabilities through better data, training, and networks; 2/ Climate Resilience: The Joint SDG Fund supports the government in creating "Adaptive Social Protection" to protect vulnerable households from climate-related disasters; 3/ Economic Empowerment: Promotion and Inclusion of employment for people with disabilities, particularly in the informal sector.

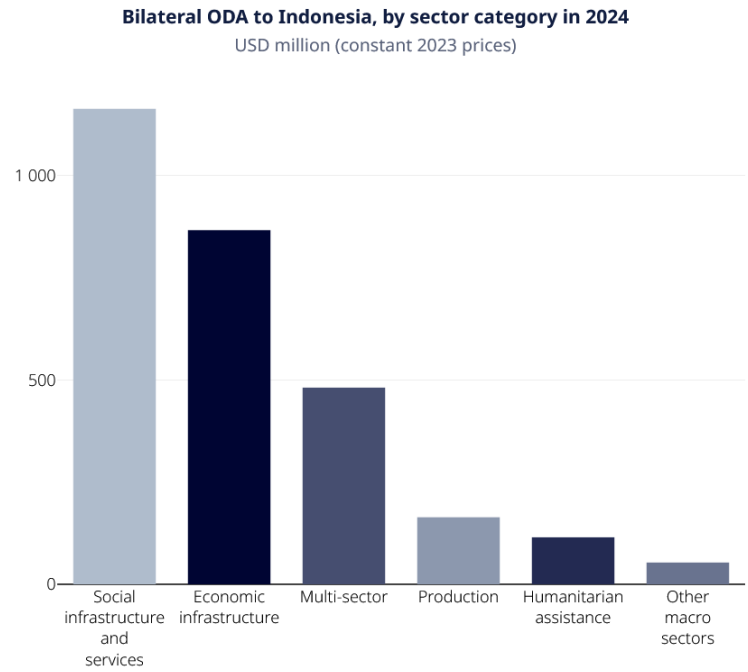
2.4. Multistakeholderpartnership - Stakeholder analysis

The complexity, scale, and interconnectedness of the current societal challenges that the SDG framework is seeking to address, requires a concerted effort of a wide variety of different stakeholders. As such, the principle of multistakeholderpartnership – which promotes cooperation and partnerships at different stages and spanning the boundaries of civil society, private sector, government, and academia – is ubiquitous across the 2030 Agenda. An analysis of these stakeholders is essential for each partnership.

Looking at the international partners of Indonesia, Japan is the main donor of gross official development aid (ODA) in Indonesia, followed by Germany. With the withdrawal of USAID funds since the Trump administration took over in 2025, this situation is expected to change in the following years.

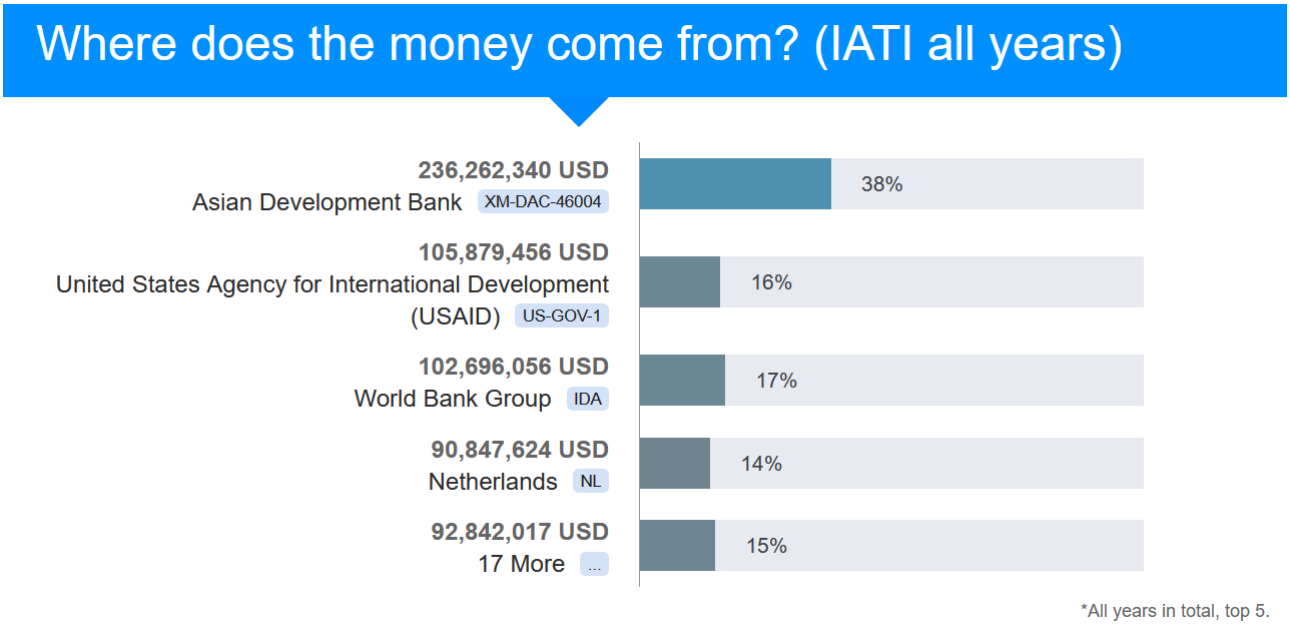


Sources: OECD (2025) , Aid (ODA) disbursements to countries and regions [DAC2a]



The sectors receiving the biggest funding is social infrastructure and services.

Based on data from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), the Asian Development Bank is the main donor in the higher education sector.



VLIRUOS contributes to the 2030 agenda by realizing a societal impact, implying an impact on local communities, civil society, governments, private sector or other higher education institutions. In what follows we list the role and the desired change among the main actors involved in the change process that VLIRUOS envisages to support through *its interventions*.

Actor	Role and interest/influence
Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia	HEIs in Indonesia are important boundary partners in the realization of VLIRUOS outcomes in terms of its contribution to Agenda 2030, and the potential contribution to local sustainable development. As project owners they are expected to contribute to HEIs' enhanced institutional performance in the core tasks relating to education, research and societal service delivery strengthening the HEI's visibility and recognition as a centre of excellence. In the long-term, partner HEIs are also expected to have a multiplier effect on the higher education system and development sector in the country or region through their engagement in (global) knowledge-driven partnerships with academic and non-academic stakeholders.
DGD (incl. Belgian embassies in partner countries)	DGD has an advisory role in the VLIRUOS selection commissions and follows-up on the VLIRUOS portfolio and the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development. The Belgian Embassy in Jakarta can play a role in facilitating the uptake of knowledge, the identification, mobilisation and relation building with other stakeholders (e.g. links with European Union, national government, other donors), the contextual updates etc.
Students, professionals, and alumni	**Students** can be direct (e.g. as a recipient of a PhD scholarship within a project) or indirect beneficiaries (e.g. enjoying improved/innovative didactical approaches) of the projects. As direct beneficiary, their changed role will be about the generation and use of newly acquired knowledge, competences (e.g. global citizenship) and networks in view of sustainable development. Alumni from VLIRUOS-projects in Indonesia will be important stakeholders in connecting VLIRUOS projects with each other, with other actors, etc.
Academics/researchers	As direct beneficiaries of the projects, academics and researchers affiliated within Flemish and partner HE&SIs play an important role in co-creating, disseminating and creating conditions for uptake of knowledge relevant to the achievement of the SDGs in line with the needs, policies and priorities of the partner HE&SIs, local/national or regional stakeholders.
Members of the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development	VLIRUOS, ITM and ARES have initiated the JSF on HESD4SD to further unlock the developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other local, Belgian and international partners as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a platform for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. In Indonesia, only VLIRUOS is present.
Belgian Actors of the Non-governmental Cooperation	VLIRUOS continuously tries to identify and encourage synergy and complementarity between Belgian ANGCs and academic stakeholders.

	Through the uptake of research results, mobilisation of local stakeholders, participation in trainings or courses, identification and communication of relevant research questions/opportunities, hosting of international internships, facilitating student mobility… these actors play a critical role.
Belgian bilateral cooperation (BIO & Enabel)	Indonesia is not a partner country of Belgian bilateral cooperation. However, in case opportunities via Belgian foreign affairs or via BIO should appear, synergy and complementarity with academic projects of the partner HEIs (e.g. through country reference frameworks, JSF platform) will be looked into.
International organizations and other donors (e.g. WHO, UNESCO, World Bank, European Commission…)	Interventions undertaken by international organisations like UN agencies such as FAO or international donors active in higher education cooperation can be complementary in the achievement of the objectives of projects. They can, for instance, play a role in the use and upscaling of new knowledge or practices or serve as seed money for bigger interventions financed by these international organisations.
Academic/science (inter)national and regional networks	Regional or (inter)national academic/science networks (e.g. CAMES, IUCEA) are among the potential indirect beneficiary as targeted HE&SIs strengthened in their research/educational capacities can improve the functioning of the networks they are part of through the co-creation, exchange and uptake of knowledge among academic stakeholders. Similar effects can be realized in the case of alumni and scholarship networks/associations when former scholarship students act as agents of change within these networks.
Public sector: Local or central government and political community	Engage in evidence-based governance that puts knowledge to the test by being a stakeholder in the co-creation of inclusive (innovative) solutions and effective user of research results to foster good governance for sustainable and coherent policies.
State owned/Private sector	To ensure that the resource-led sustainable industrialization process is both sustainable and beneficial, the government will work closely with the **private sector**. This includes developing both the private sector and human capital to build an educated, skillful, and productive labour force to drive industrialization.
Civil society, social movements and local communities	Civil society actors, social movements and local communities are expected to co-create, access and use the knowledge and research products generated within the framework of projects thereby making a potential contribution to the entire range of SDGs. Although efforts have been made, significant challenges in democracy, governance and human rights remain. According to Amnesty International Development projects affecting Indigenous Peoples lacked free, prior and informed consent. Concerns were raised about energy policy and the government's plan for zero net emissions. Research revealed that intrusive spyware and surveillance technology was imported and deployed by the government.

3. Synergy and Complementarity with other (Belgian) actors in Indonesia

3.1. VLIRUOS approaches to synergy and complementarity

Drawing upon their longstanding common history, VLIRUOS, ARES and the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) jointly developed the thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science for Sustainable Development (JSF HES4SD). Through cooperation with civil society, private and public sector, the JSF initiators[2] aim to further unlock the huge developmental potential of higher education and science cooperation for sustainable development and make it accessible to other Belgian, local and international partners, in different ways: as partner in a multi-actor partnership, as scientific advisor to other partners' projects, partners or policy bodies, as a knowledge broker for sharing state of the art scientific results, information, expertise and experience and for exploration of possibilities for synergy and complementarity. This reference framework for Indonesia will feed into the **platform** that the initiators of the JSF HES4SD plan to create to proactively communicate opportunities and facilitate such cooperation. More precisely, the platform can be used to:

(i) communicate about the launch and results of competitive calls for projects;
(ii) communicate other opportunities for projects or scholarships;
(iii) gather/exchange on collaboration opportunities (e.g. requests for scientific advice);
(iv) share information about ongoing projects, events and seminars in the country/region.

3.2. Bilateral cooperation (Enabel) in Indonesia

Belgium is not ranked in ODA overview for Indonesia.The country is only a small beneficiary of Belgian cooperation through non-governmental support. Indonesia is not included as one of the partner countries of the direct bilateral cooperation of Belgium through Enabel.

3.3. Belgian actors of the non-governmental cooperation in Indonesia

3.3.1. Thematic Joint Strategic Framework on Higher Education and Science

Together with ARES and ITM, VLIRUOS forms a thematic joint strategic framework on higher education and science for sustainable development (JSF HES4SD): hes4sd.be

However, ARES nor ITM have project activities in Indonesia.

Collaboration with the geographic JSF of Indonesia will be facilitated by systematically sharing information on projects and grants, by allowing Belgian ANGC to submit their needs in applied research or training, and by encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships through competitive calls for proposals (VLIRUOS).

[2] The three JSF initiators represent 60 Belgian higher education institutions (HEIs), being 11 universities, 32 university colleges, 16 school of arts, and ITM.

3.3.2. Indonesia Joint Strategic Framework

	Description of the strategic goal	ANGCs (active members)
SG1	ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE AND PROTECTION OF RIGHTS DEFENDERS • ANGCs contribute to a comprehensive agenda of ecological justice, which aims to improve environmental management and strengthen climate justice while defending and protecting the rights of HRDs	11.11.11., Rikolto, Trias
SG2	ECONOMIC JUSTICE BASED ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE • ANGCs contribute to a comprehensive agenda of economic justice towards promoting sustainable agriculture (incl fishing), healthy food and entrepreneurship	11.11.11., Rikolto, Trias

3.3.3 Other Thematic Joint Strategic Frameworks

Besides collaboration with the thematic JSF on Higher Education and Science, there will also be collaboration with the thematic JSF of Decent Work through ANGCs in Indonesia that work on 'Decent work' related topics. The ANGCs active in this field are WSM, ACV-CSCi and ISVI-IFSI.

The Decent Work JSF (DW JSF) contributes to the four strategic targets, which correspond to the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. It is important to emphasize that these four pillars are inseparable, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. In a complementary and synergistic manner, the DW JSF's ANGCs will contribute to all the targets, which in turn contribute to social and climate justice and the UN's 2030 Agenda. The four strategic targets are 1/creation of decent jobs, 2/guarantee rights at work, 3/extend social protection, 4/strengthen social dialogue and other forms of institutionalized dialogue for all.