



Evaluation of SI and ITP Programmes

Final Report



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Final Report

Evaluation of SI and ITP

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List of abbreviations

CA	Contribution Analysis
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC criteria)
DGD	Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FYP	Five-Year Programme
GM	Global Minds
HE&SIs	Higher Education & Science Institutions
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICOS	Institutional Coordinator for Development Cooperation
ICP	International Course Programme
ITP	International Training Programme
IUC	Institutional University Cooperation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MIP	Multi-institutional partnership
MSP	Multi-stakeholder partnership
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OH	Outcome Harvesting
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SI	Short Initiatives
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training-of-trainers

Executive Summary

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

VLIRUOS commissioned an independent evaluation of Short Initiatives (SI) and International Training Programmes (ITP) implemented between 2022 and 2025. The evaluation aims to support both accountability and learning, with a particular focus on informing the design of the new GROW programme.

The evaluation adopts a portfolio perspective, combining analysis of 16 SI case studies across five countries with a full review of the 11 completed ITP programmes. It is based on a mixed-methods approach, integrating document review, interviews, group discussions and participatory sensemaking with stakeholders.

The analysis is structured around the OECD-DAC criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and relevance, with impact considered as a higher-level lens.

Overall assessment

The evaluation finds that SI and ITP are **relevant and effective instruments** that consistently achieve their intended results, particularly at the level of individual and institutional change.

Both modalities demonstrate strong performance in:

- generating and applying knowledge;
- strengthening competencies and institutional capacities;
- building and sustaining partnerships and networks.

At the same time, the evaluation highlights a consistent pattern across the portfolio: while application of knowledge by academics and professionals is strong, the translation into uptake of solutions and broader impact is uneven. This reflects not a lack of quality or relevance of the instruments, but the influence of scale and duration of the projects as well as external contextual factors such as institutional capacity, resource availability and system-level conditions.

Key findings

Effectiveness

Results are strongest where partnerships are strong, approaches are hands-on, and projects are well aligned with institutional or professional needs. Progression beyond these immediate results is more uneven, however, and is often constrained by short duration, limited institutional capacity, weak follow-up, and wider contextual barriers such as resource shortages or unstable implementation environments. Overall, effectiveness is shaped not only by project quality, but also by partnership maturity and context.

Impact

Both instruments contribute to higher-level changes (application of evidence-based solutions, global partnerships and global citizens) primarily through intermediate outcomes such as improved practices, strengthened capacities and enhanced networks. Evidence of societal-level impact is limited and indirect, reflecting the scale and duration of the interventions.

Efficiency

Implementation is generally efficient and adaptive. Projects deliver outputs within available resources, but efficiency depends heavily on the effort of coordinators and project teams rather than on streamlined systems. External constraints, such as procurement and logistical challenges, also affect efficiency.

Coherence

Projects are well aligned with institutional mandates and sectoral priorities, supporting relevance and application of results. However, coherence is primarily implicit, with limited coordination across instruments or with external initiatives, and less institutionalised engagement beyond academia.

Relevance

Relevance is consistently high as projects respond to recognised needs and are closely linked to the roles and responsibilities of participants and partner institutions. However, relevance is more strongly demonstrated at thematic level than through systematic analysis of institutional constraints and uptake conditions.

Key conclusions

The evaluation leads to the following overarching conclusions:

- **SI and ITP are both effective and relevant instruments and they function as catalytic instruments in different ways.** SI contributes primarily through strengthening institutional collaboration, research capacity, methodological innovation and exploratory trajectories for future uptake, while ITP contributes primarily through strengthening individual and professional competencies, application of knowledge in practice, and diffusion through professional and institutional networks.
- **Across both instruments, the strongest and most consistent contributions lie at individual and institutional level.** These include the application of knowledge, strengthening of capacities, support to context-sensitive learning and innovation, and the development of partnerships and networks. Broader societal or systemic change is generally more indirect, catalytic and context-dependent.
- **Progress towards uptake, institutionalisation and broader impact depends strongly on contextual and institutional conditions.** Particularly important are partnership maturity, institutional capacity and support, decision space, incentives, and wider system conditions. Results are therefore differentiated across cases rather than uniform.
- **Efficiency is generally pragmatic and adaptive, but relies heavily on people rather than on optimised systems.** In both SI and ITP, implementation resilience often depends on the flexibility, commitment and problem-solving capacity of promoters, coordinators and project teams.
- **Coherence is a clear strength, but it is mostly expressed as alignment rather than as actively managed coordination.** Projects are generally well aligned with institutional mandates, sectoral priorities and professional practice, but complementarities, follow-on pathways and cross-instrument linkages are not yet systematically operationalised.

Recommendations

Building on these conclusions, the evaluation provides a set of practical recommendations to support the further development of the GROW programme and the positioning of the portfolio. These recommendations aim to preserve the strengths of SI and ITP, while addressing the factors that most often limit the translation of relevant results into more consistent and sustained uptake.

1. **Maintain accessibility while managing expectations on impact** – preserve the low-threshold and accessible character of GROW, while ensuring that expectations regarding societal impact remain realistic and proportionate to project scope and duration.
2. **Safeguard focus within a broad and flexible modality** – ensure that individual GROW projects maintain a clear primary focus to prevent diluting objectives and results.
3. **Create a selective uptake extension for promising GROW results** – consider a light, selective uptake extension for completed GROW projects that demonstrate particularly credible prospects for wider use or institutionalisation, focused on dissemination, communication, stakeholder mobilisation or change-management support.
4. **Synthesize and communicate GROW results and challenges more deliberately within the Belgian development sector** – use GROW not only as a funding instrument, but also as a source of structured, externally visible learning on effective uptake strategies and conditions in selected themes, geographies or institutional contexts.
5. **Improve internal and external coherence as part of longer-term partnership trajectories** – strengthen internal coherence within the GROW portfolio and VLIRUOS ecosystem and with the larger Belgian development landscape.
6. **Use early implementation as a structured learning phase** – use the planned evaluation after the first GROW call as a deliberate learning moment to refine the modality, particularly regarding assumptions on uptake, MSP and impact pathways.

7. **Combine organisational alignment and societal relevance more explicitly in project design** – require projects to explain more clearly how they respond to identified needs of both academic and non-academic actors, and why the selected organisation is the logical and legitimate entity through which the societal issue is best addressed.
8. **Clarify actor-based pathways towards uptake and impact and make stakeholder engagement more operational** – require projects to distinguish more explicitly between application, uptake and broader system change or scaling, and to specify which stakeholders are involved, for what purpose, at what stage, and with what expected contribution to relevance, uptake or sustainability.
9. **Integrate a light financial and practical feasibility check for uptake** – ask projects to reflect proportionately on whether key actors have the incentives, capacity, opportunity and practical conditions to take results forward, including financial and organisational feasibility beyond the project period.
10. **Embed simple monitoring of uptake and learning** – introduce practical approaches to track how results are used and to facilitate learning across projects, so that VLIRUOS can assess contribution to outcomes more systematically and support adaptive management.

1 Introduction

1.1 Evaluation purpose, scope and intended use

VLIRUOS commissioned an independent evaluation of two programme components implemented during the period 2022–2025: Short Initiatives (SI) and International Training Programmes (ITP).

The evaluation serves a dual purpose of accountability and learning. More specifically, it aims to:

- generate credible evidence on the results achieved;
- assess how the programmes were designed, managed and implemented;
- inform strategic and operational decisions for the next five-year programme (FYP3), including through actionable recommendations and practical dissemination products.

The evaluation focuses on the first phase of FYP2 (2022–2025) and covers all SI and ITP projects completed by December 2025. While the primary unit of analysis is the individual project, the evaluation adopts a portfolio perspective, drawing lessons across projects and instruments where relevant.

Geographically, the evaluation covers Belgium and VLIRUOS partner countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In-depth data collection was carried out on a purposive sample of 16 SI projects across five countries, complemented by a sample of 11 ITP programmes.

The analysis is structured around four OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and relevance. The criterion of impact is treated as a higher-level lens, with a focus on identifying early signs of change and plausible pathways, in line with the available evidence.

The evaluation was conducted between January and April 2026 by a team of international consultants from MDF Training & Consultancy, in collaboration with national consultants in Ethiopia, South Africa, the Philippines and Ecuador.

1.2 Evaluation questions and criteria

The evaluation is guided by a set of evaluation questions structured around the OECD-DAC criteria and tailored to the specific characteristics of SI and ITP modalities.

These questions focus on:

- the extent to which SI and ITP projects achieved their intended results and contributed to broader changes (effectiveness and impact);
- how efficiently the programmes were implemented and managed (efficiency);
- how well they align and interact with other initiatives and within the VLIRUOS portfolio (coherence);
- and the extent to which they respond to the needs and priorities of stakeholders and institutions (relevance).

A complete overview of the evaluation questions, sub-questions and indicators is provided in Annex A (Evaluation Matrix). Throughout the report, findings are structured in line with these criteria, while maintaining a coherent analytical narrative.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the programme logic and provides an overview of the SI and ITP portfolio.
- Chapter 3 describes the evaluation methodology and discusses its limitations.
- Chapters 4 to 8 present the findings, structured around the evaluation criteria: effectiveness, impact, efficiency, coherence and relevance.
- Chapter 9 presents overall conclusions.

- Chapter 10 translates the findings into implications and recommendations for the GROW programme.

Supporting materials, including the evaluation matrix, methodological tools and case summaries, are included in the annexes.

2 Programme logic and portfolio characteristics

2.1 SI and ITP modalities

The evaluation covers two programme modalities:

- **Short Initiatives (SI):** flexible, two-year partnership projects to explore, build and deepen academic/scientific collaboration around sustainable development challenges, strengthening research and educational capacities and creating conditions for uptake of knowledge.
- **International Training Programmes (ITP):** practice-oriented training courses for professionals (typically within a 3-year project frame), aimed at equipping participants as change agents who apply knowledge, skills and attitudes in their professional contexts.

2.2 Theory of change of the SI and ITP projects

The evaluation used the theories of change (ToC) for SI and ITP as the shared frame of reference – see Figures 1 and 2. Both modalities sit within a common higher-level **impact vision** (sustainable and equitable development) and **three impact areas** (skilled individuals as global citizens; knowledge-driven global partnerships; applied solutions and evidence-based policies).

At outcome level, SI and ITP share six outcome areas; SI projects are required to contribute to at least two outcomes and must address outcome 5 on conditions for uptake. ITP projects primarily emphasise outcome 1 (participants applying acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes in their professional context), while depending on the specific course, they may also contribute to outcomes 2 and 4 on education and research quality. These anchors are important for maintaining analytic clarity around “what success looks like” at outcome level for each instrument.

On this basis, we drew a clear boundary between effectiveness and impact during the evaluation. We interpret effectiveness as the achievement of outcome-level changes within the project period: for ITP, primarily individual behavioural change (application of knowledge/skills/attitudes at work), and for SI, organisational and institutional change in education quality, research quality, systems and processes, conditions for uptake, and the science–society interface. Impact, by contrast, concerns significant, higher-level effects—such as durable partnerships, application of solutions and evidence in policy, and the emergence of “global citizens”- which were explored cautiously and proportionately to the available evidence. We took note of the fact that while the projects had to align with the VLIRUOS Theory of Change, they have formulated their own outcomes and impact.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the theory of change associated with SI projects

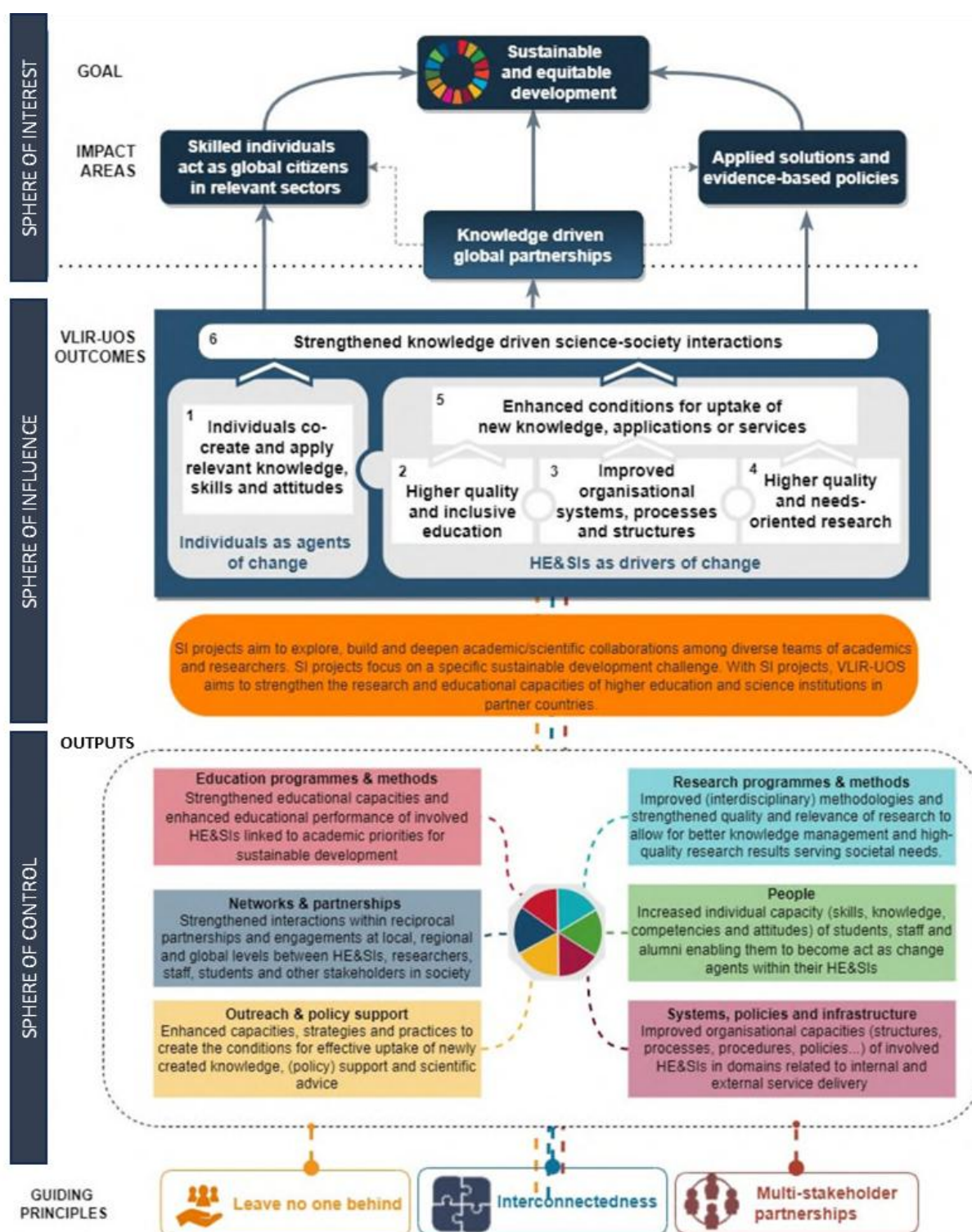
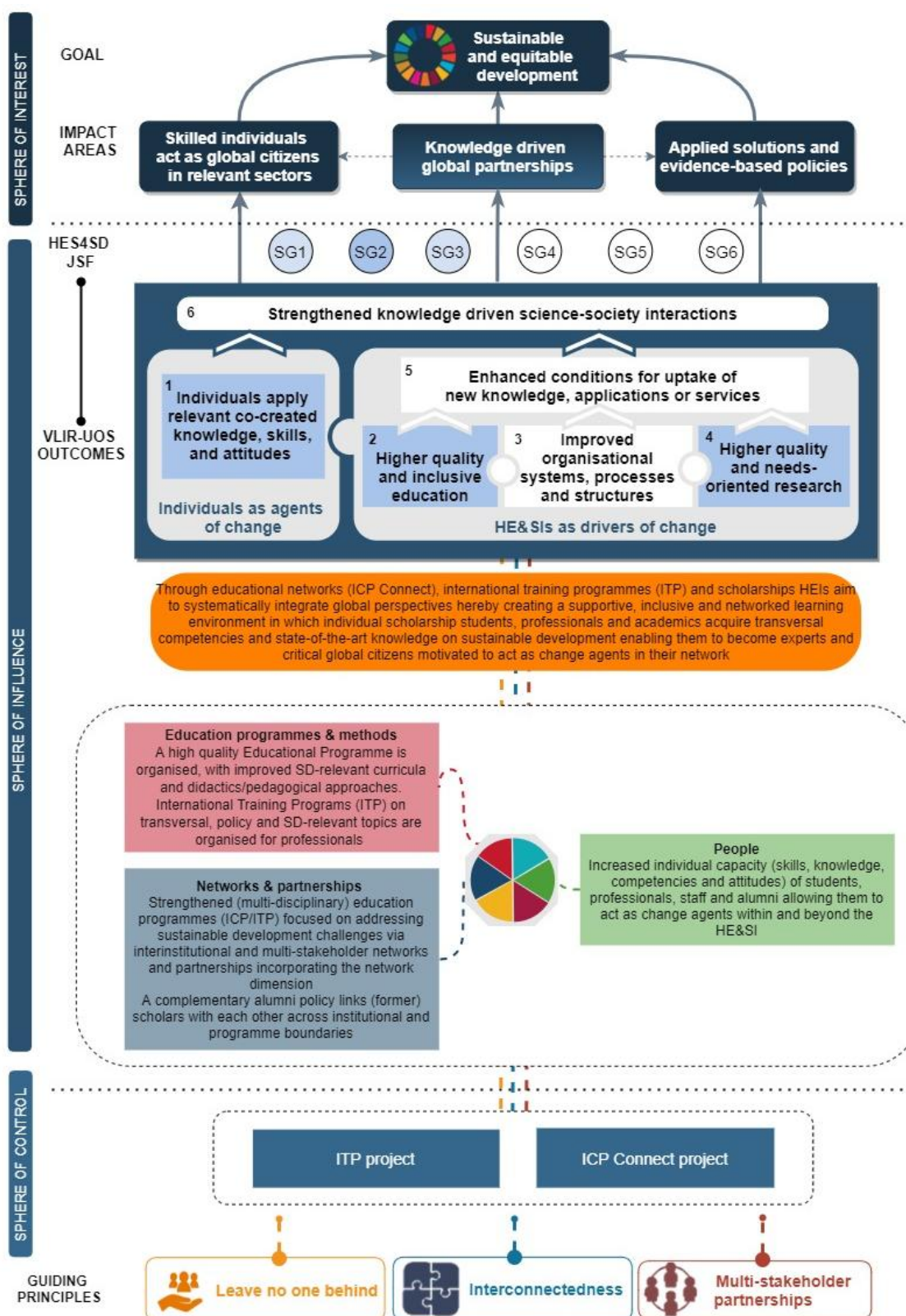


Figure 2. Schematic representation of the theory of change associated with ITP projects



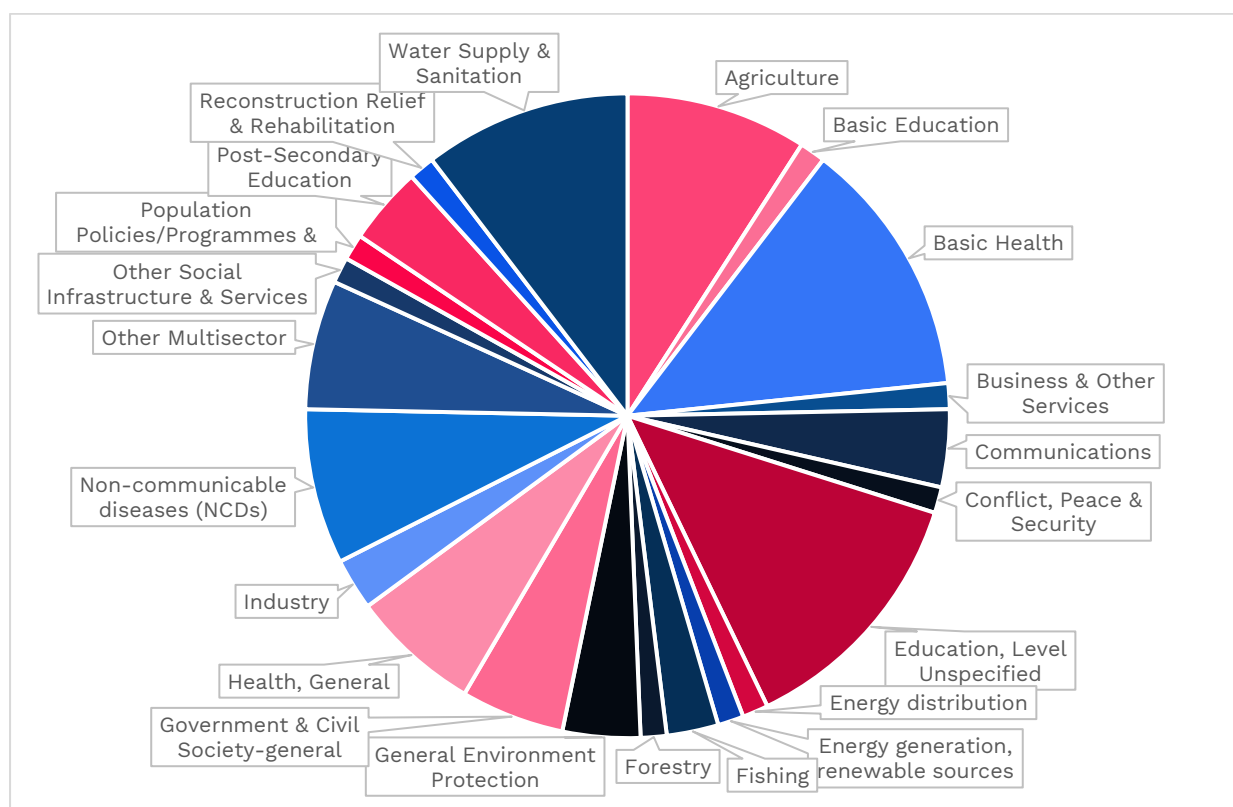
2.3 Portfolio characteristics

Portfolio characteristics of SI¹

The VLIRUOS SI mapping (including 77 SI projects finished in 2025) shows great diversity in terms of thematic areas, geographies, modalities and configurations. This diversity is described shortly in this section and is meant for context and framing for the findings.

Thematically, the portfolio is diverse, with some more prominent topics. The largest categories are health (Basic Health:10 and Health general:15), followed by Education, Level Unspecified (10), Water Supply and Sanitation (8), Agriculture (7) and Non-communicable diseases (6). Overall, the portfolio combines a strong health and education orientation with a secondary cluster of agriculture, water and environment, and governance-related work

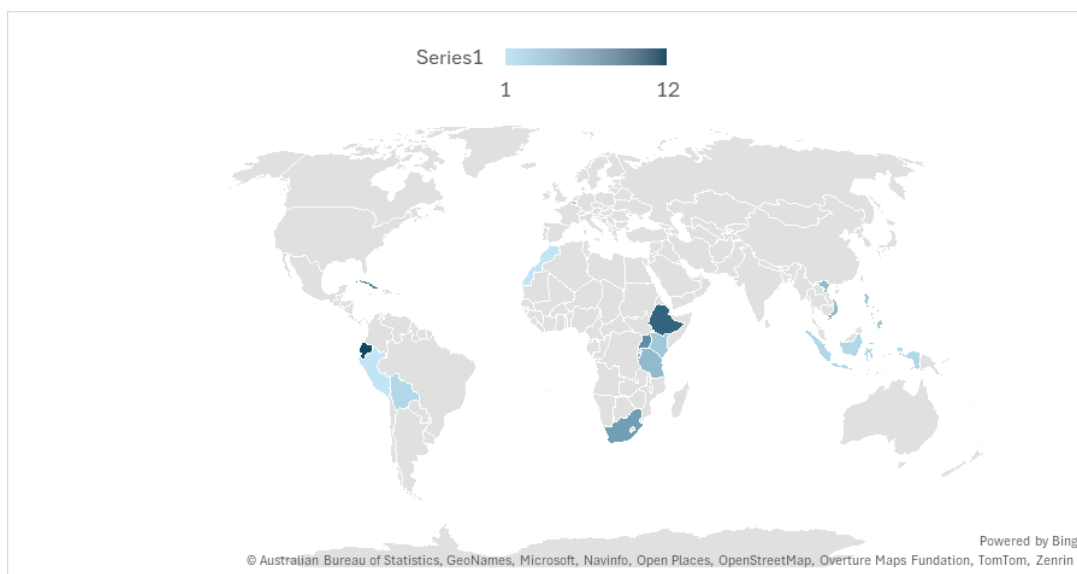
Figure 3: Thematic coverage of SI projects according to VLIRUOS mapping



Geographically, the portfolio is also diverse and rather unevenly distributed across regions. The largest concentrations are in Ecuador (12), Ethiopia (10) followed by DR Congo (8), Cuba (8), Uganda (7), and South Africa (6). This suggests a reasonably broad spread across regions and countries, but with a clear concentration in a limited number of contexts.

¹ Based on VLIRUOS mapping of projects.

Figure 4: Geographical coverage of SI projects according to VLIRUOS mapping



In terms of **MSP / MIP modalities and stakeholder composition**, the mapping shows that multi-stakeholder partnerships are more visible than multi-institutional partnerships in a stricter sense – which was also illustrated in the 16-case sample. Strong MSP is flagged in 49 projects (over 60%), whereas strong MIP is flagged in 22. The presence of non-academic team members is recorded in 30 projects, which suggests that engagement beyond academia is present in almost 40% of cases, but not dominant across the portfolio. Where non-academic team members are present, the most frequently identified categories appear to be research and government actors, with more limited representation of industry and NGOs.

For the **VLIRUOS outcome areas**, the mapping² suggests strongest coverage (at proposal/ design stage) of:

- Outcome 1: Individuals apply knowledge and skills (58 projects)
- Outcome 4: Higher quality research (54)
- Outcome 5: Enhanced conditions (54)
- Outcome 6: Strengthened interactions (48)

while Outcome 3: Improved systems (36) appears less frequently – also visible in the 16-case sample.

On the cross-cutting thematic areas, the picture is mixed. **Environment and climate thematic focus** is flagged in 23 SI projects, but strong climate inclusion in only 15, showing that climate is sometimes addressed but not embedded as a strong cross-cutting lens. **Gender thematic focus** is flagged in 11 SI projects, while **strong LNOB focus** appears in 35 SI projects, suggesting that inclusion is more often captured through a broader LNOB framing than through explicit gender focus.

Overall, the SI portfolio combines the breadth of thematic, geographic and VLIRUOS outcome coverage with uneven depth in certain cross-cutting areas or modalities (i.e., climate, gender, LNOB, and non-academic engagement are all present, but not with the same consistency across projects). Other differences in conceptualisation, results or configuration of MSP are addresses as relevant in the findings chapters.

Portfolio characteristics of ITP

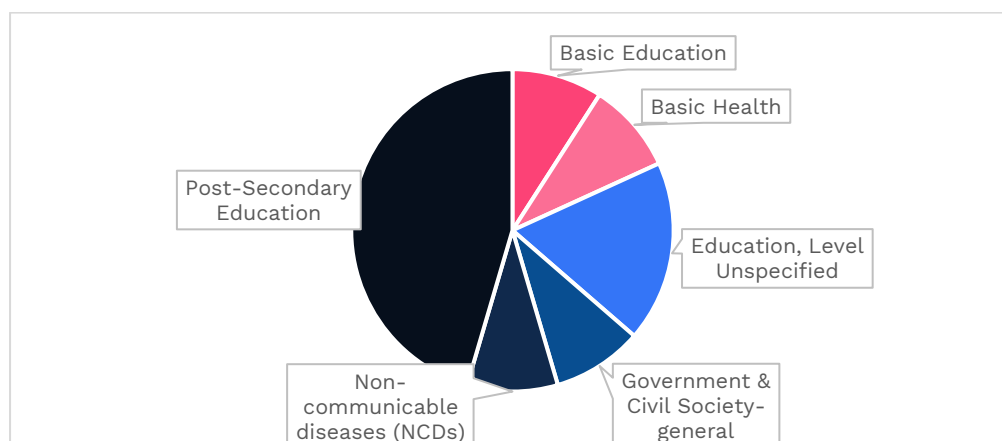
Similarly to the SI, the key feature of the ITP portfolio is its diversity. Across all closed ITP programmes included in this evaluation, the instrument does not appear as a standardised

² Worth noting, VLIRUOS does not have full information for SI 2022 projects regarding the proposed addressed outcomes. At the time of these projects' application, their forms didn't have yet the predefined fields to explicit which outcomes were being addressed.

intervention model, but rather as a flexible modality that is used in different ways across themes, target groups, delivery formats and intended change pathways. This is in line with the VLIRUOS framework, which allows programmes to adapt to specific contexts and objectives.

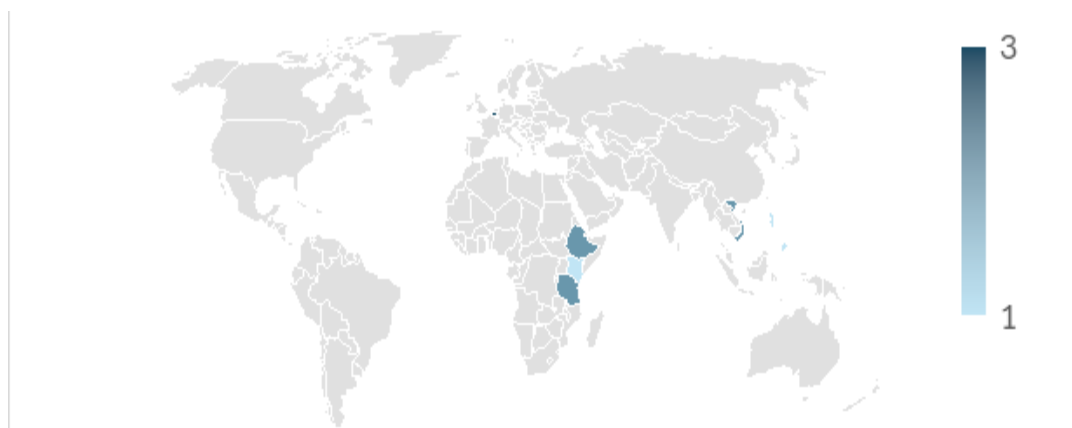
A first dimension of diversity is the **thematic scope**. The portfolio includes highly technical programmes, such as machine learning for climate mitigation in Vietnam or biotechnology training in Kenya, alongside more socially oriented initiatives, such as inclusive teacher education, citizen science in the Philippines, or sexual and reproductive health education in Tanzania. This shows the wide range of sectors and development challenges addressed through the instrument, also illustrated in the figure below according to the VLIRUOS project mapping:

Figure 5: Thematic coverage of ITP projects according to VLIRUOS mapping



Geographically, the ITP portfolio is more limited in scale but reasonably spread across regions, with programmes active in Belgium (3), Ethiopia (2), Tanzania (2), Vietnam (2), Kenya (1) and the Philippines (1).

Figure 6: Geographical coverage of ITP projects according to VLIRUOS mapping



The **cross-cutting themes coverage** in the ITP portfolio is quite limited in breadth. Environment is the best-represented area, with 4 ITPs flagging both a thematic focus and strong integration. Gender focus is mapped only in 2 programmes, with both thematic focus and strong gender equality aligned, while LNOB appears in only 1 programme, distinct from the gender-focused ones.

In terms of **outcomes covered**, all 11 ITP projects addressed Outcome 1 as expected, given this is at the core of the ITP Theory of Change. It is worth noting that although the focus of ITP projects is on change at individual level, the projects often address at design stage most VLIRUOS outcomes: Outcome 2 is addressed in the proposals by all ITPs; Outcome 5 is addressed by 9 projects while Outcomes 3, 4 and 6 are addressed by 8 ITPs each.

In terms of **MSP / MIP modalities and stakeholder composition** Only one ITP included a strong MSP approach, while 7 included a strong MIP approach, also illustrative of the instrument specific modalities.

Beyond thematic, geographical, outcome and cross-cutting themes, the ITP portfolio varies across several other dimensions as illustrated by the desk review and (group) interviews. This concern **participant profile, delivery model, scale and intensity or intended level of change**. Firstly, some ITPs target academic staff, researchers or postgraduate students, while others engage non-academic groups such as health professionals, teachers or policy actors — shaping both the type of capacity built and how results are applied. Secondly, the delivery model, ranges from training stays in Belgium to in-country and blended formats, reflecting the instrument's flexibility to adapt to logistical and contextual conditions. Third, the scale and intensity vary, with some programmes focusing on small, intensive cohorts and others combining depth with broader outreach. Finally, ITPs differ in their intended level of change: some target individual competencies, while others aim to influence organisational practices or wider systems — as illustrated by the NCD programme in Ethiopia, where training materials were integrated into accredited curricula — and in the degree to which they are embedded in longer-term institutional partnerships rather than operating as stand-alone interventions.

3 Methodology and limitations

3.1 Overall evaluation approach

The evaluation was designed to understand what has changed as a result of SI and ITP projects, and how these changes came about, rather than to assess performance against predefined indicators.

Given the nature of the programme, the evaluation focused on behavioural, organisational and institutional changes, which are often complex, non-linear and not fully captured in monitoring systems. The approach therefore prioritised identifying concrete examples of change and analysing the role played by the projects in these processes. For this purpose, the evaluation combined elements of Outcome Harvesting and Contribution Analysis:

- Outcome Harvesting was used to identify and structure observed changes across the different cases. This made it possible to capture both intended and unintended results, and to look beyond outputs towards changes in practices, relationships and capacities.
- Contribution Analysis was used, mainly for the SI case studies, to assess whether and how projects contributed to these changes. This involved looking at other influencing factors and assessing the plausibility of the project's role, rather than attributing results directly to the intervention.

The analysis focused on identifying recurring patterns within each instrument, and the conditions under which results are more or less likely to occur. The objective was not to compare or rank individual projects, but to draw lessons that are relevant for the future design and positioning of the programme(s).

3.2 Data collection

The evaluation combined document review of secondary data with primary qualitative data collection.

For SI - The analysis of SI projects is based on a purposive sample designed to capture diversity across regions, themes and partnership types. Out of a total of 77 SI projects within the evaluation scope, 16 projects were selected across five countries (Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, the Philippines and Ecuador), representing approximately one quarter of the completed SI portfolio. Data sources included project documentation, online interviews with Flemish promoters, and on-site interviews with partner institutions and selected external stakeholders. Given the limited time available per case (typically one day on-site), data collection prioritised key informants with direct knowledge of project implementation and results.

For ITP - The analysis covered all 11 completed projects. Data collection included document review, online group discussions with trainees, and interviews with Flemish and partner promoters. The use of group discussions, supported by prior written reflection from participants, was intended to maximise the depth and efficiency of data collection within time and logistical constraints.

Instrument	Total portfolio (closed programmes)	Coverage in evaluation	Geographic scope	Approach
SI	77 projects	16 projects	Ethiopia, Uganda, South Africa, Philippines, Ecuador	Purposive sample (diversity in themes, partnerships and contexts)
ITP	All closed projects	Full coverage	Multiple countries	Complete portfolio analysis

An overview of the projects included in the data collection is provided in Annex B.

Across both instruments, additional interviews were conducted with VLIRUOS staff to provide programme-level perspectives.

The evaluation also made use of the VLIRUOS portfolio mapping dataset to support descriptive analysis of portfolio characteristics, to inform data collection efforts and the interpretation of findings. However, as this dataset primarily reflects design intentions and self-reported information, it was not used as standalone evidence of results.

3.3 Analytical approach

The analysis followed a structured but iterative process.

First, data from document review and interviews were synthesised at the level of individual SI case studies and ITP projects, focusing on identifying evidence according to the OECD-DAC criteria. For the assessment of effectiveness, outcome-level changes were categorised according to the VLIRUOS Theory of Change outcome areas.

Second, cross-case analysis was conducted to identify patterns. For effectiveness, particular attention was given to the substantiation of the six VLIRUOS outcomes across cases, as well as recurring enabling and hindering factors. The differences between SI and ITP modalities were considered throughout the process reflecting their distinct intervention logics.

Third, preliminary findings were presented and discussed during a participatory sensemaking workshop with VLIRUOS stakeholders. This step served to validate the clarity, completeness and recognition of findings, and to enrich the interpretation of results through stakeholder perspectives. The workshop revealed general recognition of preliminary findings, including a reflection on positive and critical findings to be considered in the design of the future programme.

Finally, the evaluation team refined the analysis by integrating feedback from the sensemaking process, while maintaining an independent judgement on the evidence.

Throughout the analysis, a clear distinction was maintained between:

- **Findings** (what is observed in the data),
- **Interpretation** (what this means), and
- **Judgement** (assessment against evaluation criteria).

3.4 Limitations

The evaluation design entails a number of methodological limitations, which are important for interpreting the findings.

Depth and coverage of case studies

For SI projects, fieldwork was limited to short on-site visits, typically one day per project. This constrained the number and diversity of stakeholders that could be consulted, particularly external actors and end beneficiaries. As a result, some findings rely primarily on project-internal perspectives, with more limited external substantiation.

Reliance on self-reported data

A significant part of the evidence—particularly for ITPs—relies on self-reported information from participants and project stakeholders. While efforts were made to triangulate findings, independent verification of behavioural change (e.g. through employers or external stakeholders) was only partially feasible. This is especially relevant for assessing application of knowledge and “agent of change” effects.

Uneven availability and quality of monitoring data

Across both SI and ITP projects, outcome-level monitoring data is uneven and often limited. Documentation tends to focus on outputs and activities, with less systematic evidence on behavioural and institutional change (VLIRUOS outcomes). This required the evaluation to treat

reported outcomes as claims to be substantiated during the interviews, rather than as verified results.

Challenges in stakeholder mobilisation and data collection

As noted during the sensemaking process, practical constraints—including scheduling, availability of respondents, and connectivity issues for online discussions—affected the breadth and depth of data collection in some cases. These constraints were mitigated through adaptive approaches (e.g. group discussions, written inputs), but may still have influenced the balance of perspectives captured.

Portfolio diversity and comparability

Lastly, the SI and ITP portfolios are highly diverse in terms of thematic focus, modalities, target groups and expected outcomes which naturally limits the extent to which findings can be compared across cases or aggregated into uniform conclusions.

Implications for interpretation of evaluation results

Taken together, these limitations imply that the evaluation findings should be interpreted as:

- indicative of patterns and mechanisms across the portfolio,
- supported by varying levels of substantiation,
- and not as exhaustive or statistically representative evidence.

Notably, the impact assessment needs to be read with caution as it is based on a relatively thin evidence-base. Given the small scale and duration of the projects evaluated, the contributions to impact level changes are naturally difficult to be distinguished and credibly measured within the scope of the evaluation. Instead, the evaluation focuses on identifying credible examples of change and analysing plausible pathways to impact.

Where evidence is limited or less robust, this is explicitly reflected in the analysis.

4 Effectiveness

This chapter presents the evaluation findings on effectiveness across the SI and ITP instruments. In line with the OECD-DAC criterion, effectiveness refers to the extent to which an intervention achieves its objectives and intended results. The chapter addresses first the evaluation question on achievement of intended results within project duration for both SI and ITP, then it presents specific findings on SI projects, followed by findings on ITP projects aligned with the evaluation questions. The chapter closes with cross-cutting insights and conclusions on both instruments.

4.1 Achievement of intended results (Q1)

Across both SI and ITP, intended results are generally achieved, particularly at the level of outputs and immediate outcomes. Projects and programmes consistently deliver planned results, generating observable changes in knowledge, practices and collaboration.

At the same time, the depth and sustainability of these results vary. The evidence shows that most interventions achieve results at the level of application and use (outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 3 where applicable), while fewer show institutionalisation or advanced conditions for uptake (outcomes 5 and 6). This variation is generally linked to factors such as partnership maturity, institutional context and the design of interventions.

A key distinction emerges between the two instruments in line with the programmes' respective design. SI projects tend to generate results at institutional level, particularly in research and teaching, while ITP programmes are especially effective at the level of individual participants, with strong evidence of application of knowledge in professional practice. In both cases, effectiveness is strongest where results are closely embedded in existing (non-academic) institutional processes and supported by conducive environments.

For example, the SI project on primary health care assessment tools (PCAT) in Africa achieved stronger results because the collaboration was embedded in the long-standing PRIMAFAMED network and linked directly to ongoing institutional activities in family medicine departments. Project outputs and pilot research were rapidly connected to broader regional collaboration and subsequently helped catalyse a larger externally funded NIHR programme involving more than 20 African countries.

Overall, SI and ITP can be considered effective in achieving their intended results. However, effectiveness is best understood as a progression across different levels of change, rather than as a uniform achievement of higher-level outcomes.

4.2 Effectiveness of SI projects (Q2-Q5 with explicit reference to Q1)

4.2.1 Academic, institutional and societal outcomes (progress towards VLIRUOS outcomes)

SI projects are effective in generating academic and institutional outcomes. Across the case studies, there is consistent evidence that projects contribute to the development of new knowledge and research outputs, improvements in teaching and curricula, and the strengthening of research and technical capacities within partner institutions.

These outcomes are typically closely embedded in ongoing academic activities. Respondents frequently indicated that project outputs—such as datasets, methodologies or teaching materials—are not only produced, but also used in research, education or professional practice. For example, in several SI projects, newly developed teaching materials or case studies were incorporated into existing university courses, allowing students to engage with locally relevant content. In other cases, project outputs such as analytical methods or protocols were taken up within departmental research practices.

At societal level, outcomes are less directly observable and more dependent on follow-up processes. Where such effects are reported, they typically occur through intermediate steps, such as improved

training of professionals or contributions to sectoral practices. As discussed in the impact chapter, these effects are best understood as part of longer-term change pathways.

This pattern becomes clearer when analysing results across the VLIRUOS outcome areas (figure 3 below):

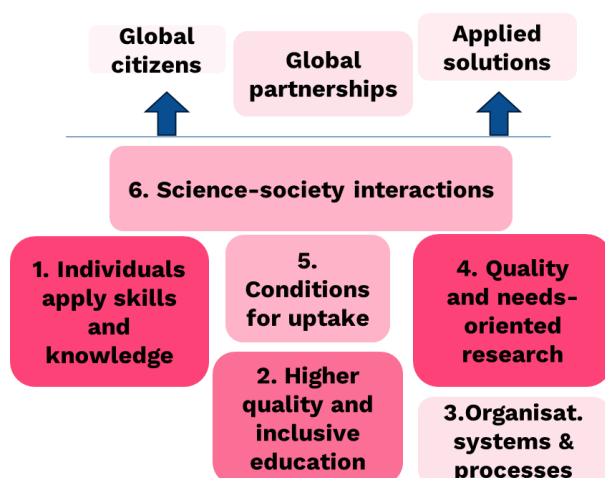


Figure 7: Substantiation of VLIRUOS outcomes across the 16 SI case studies. The smaller light pink boxes show more limited signs or progress, while larger intense pink boxes show more consistent and meaningful changes.

The visual shows that:

- The strongest and most consistently substantiated results are found in:
 - the application of knowledge and skills (Outcome 1), and
 - research and academic outputs (Outcome 4)
- Education-related outcomes (Outcome 2) are also frequently achieved, particularly in projects with a strong teaching/educational component. These findings correspond closely to the observed integration of project results into curricula and academic practice.
- By contrast, more advanced outcomes - such as system-level changes (Outcome 3), strengthened uptake conditions (Outcome 5), and science-society interaction (Outcome 6) are present but less consistently substantiated. This reflects the fact that these outcomes depend not only on project activities, but also on broader (non-academic) institutional and contextual conditions (e.g., political will, capacity, policy environment, funding opportunities, etc.). This is broadly consistent with the ToC outcome interdependencies whereby outcomes 5 and 6 are the result of outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

This variation is illustrated by the following examples drawn from the case studies.

Illustration of stronger outcome-level effectiveness

This pattern is particularly visible in the palliative care project where activities went beyond training and awareness-raising. In this case, partners report the introduction of new care protocols, including systematic pain assessment, the establishment of a dedicated service unit, and the initiation of home-based care. These changes suggest that project outputs were effectively embedded in existing service delivery structures, contributing to tangible improvements in professional practice. While the Flemish promotor emphasises capacity development and visibility of the initiative, in-country stakeholders point to concrete changes in how care is organised and delivered.

Illustration of more limited translation to outcomes

This pattern is observed in the sustainable / circular construction project. The project successfully delivered training, curriculum development and research outputs, and contributed to increased expertise on environmentally sustainable construction materials. However, the translation of these outputs into practical application remained limited, with little evidence of piloting or uptake in real-world settings. Both promoters and local partners indicate that structural constraints (e.g., regulatory frameworks and limited infrastructure) restricted the move from exploration to implementation.

Taken together, these examples reflect a broader pattern observed across the portfolio: while SI projects are generally effective in delivering planned outputs and strengthening academic and institutional capacities, the extent to which these translate into sustained changes in practice or societal outcomes varies considerably.

4.2.1.1 Application of knowledge by individuals to become "agents of change" (outcome 1)

A key dimension of effectiveness in SI projects is the extent to which knowledge is applied within partner institutions.

Interview data provides multiple examples of such application. In several cases, project results were integrated into teaching, for instance through the introduction of new modules or the use of project-generated materials in existing courses. In other cases, respondents referred to the use of project outputs in research or professional practice, such as the adoption of new methods, tools or protocols within departments.

In terms of most effective capacity strengthening methods, the cases highlight hands-on and practice-based training that is linked to real tasks as most effective (for example training of health professionals on palliative care, telerehabilitation or hepatitis B screening and treatment, biosecurity etc.). A second strong pattern is that graduate research trajectories (MSc, PhD, and thesis work) were an important mechanism for strengthening applied knowledge and individual capacity (in projects on sustainable construction, digital inclusions, PCAT, wild edible plants, poultry biosecurity, etc.) Besides, training-of-trainers and cascading capacity development were effective to support wider dissemination. Pedagogical and curriculum-oriented training was also valuable in education-focused projects and in some health and technical cases where newly acquired approaches were embedded into teaching. In several cases, knowledge application was strengthened because training included practitioners, communities, service providers, or local intermediaries besides academics.

There are also indications that individual staff members play an active role in promoting the use of results within their organisation. Interviewees described situations where project participants introduced new approaches in their teams, shared knowledge with colleagues, or contributed to changes in working practices.

At the same time, the extent to which these dynamics lead to broader institutional change varies. Application is strongest where individuals are well positioned within the organisation and where institutional support is present. Where these conditions are lacking, the use of results remains more limited or project bound.

4.2.1.2 Improved quality of education and needs-oriented research (outcomes 2 and 4)

Evidence on Outcome 4 is widespread across the portfolio and appears mainly through more needs-oriented and context-relevant research. SI projects frequently contributed to filling recognised knowledge gaps through studies, datasets, pilot tools, publications, and improved methodological approaches. In many cases, the collaboration with Flemish HE&SIs seems to have strengthened research quality, sharpened the focus on local development challenges, and improved the visibility and practical relevance of research. The most common changes concern reorientation of research agendas towards local priorities, stronger applied or interdisciplinary approaches, and improved research capacities among staff and students.

Comparatively, evidence on Outcome 2 is most visible in education-focused SI projects, where collaboration contributed to changes in pedagogical quality, curriculum content, teaching methods, and the development of new modules or programme elements. In several cases, projects introduced

more practice-oriented, inclusive, or context-sensitive approaches to teaching, and in some cases these changes were embedded in compulsory curricula or wider teaching practice.

The strongest examples are those where lecturers, students, and training institutions were very closely involved, allowing project outputs to be translated relatively quickly into educational practice. This was particularly visible in the medicinal plants project in Ecuador, where collaboration combined academic research with ancestral and community-based knowledge on the use of local medicinal plants. The close interaction between universities, researchers, students and local communities contributed not only to context-relevant research outputs, but also to learning processes that were directly integrated into teaching, fieldwork and applied research practice.

A similar dynamic was observed in the South African digital inclusion and crowdsourcing-related collaboration, where students and researchers were actively involved in generating and analysing locally grounded data and methodologies linked to digital participation and social vulnerability in HIV/AIDS-related contexts. Because teaching, applied research and stakeholder engagement were closely connected, project outputs could rapidly feed into curricula, student research activities and broader methodological discussions within the participating institutions.

4.2.1.3 Improved organisational systems and infrastructure (outcome 3)

Evidence on Outcome 3 appears in a smaller number of cases and is generally linked to concrete organisational changes including upgraded laboratories, grants management offices or arrangements, strengthened administrative units, and in some cases improved organisational routines or systems for external engagement. Where such changes occurred, they were often important and tangible. At the same time, deeper organisational change remained limited in many cases. Short implementation periods, infrastructure gaps, administrative bottlenecks, and dependence on a small number of key actors appear to have constrained the extent to which collaboration could translate into broader or more durable organisational transformation.

As we look at outcome 3 to also include improved organisational systems and infrastructure in non-academic institutions engaged in the projects, we see examples particularly in health-oriented projects where organisational strengthening became visible through the introduction of new diagnostic procedures, improved laboratory practices, or the creation of dedicated service structures. In the palliative care-related collaboration, stakeholders referred not only to individual training effects but also to adjustments in service organisation and care delivery routines within participating institutions.

4.2.1.4 Conditions for uptake and knowledge driven science-society interaction (outcomes 5 and 6)

A more nuanced picture emerges when looking at the conditions for uptake and interaction beyond the immediate academic environment. In line with the programme Theory of Change, SI projects are primarily expected to create the conditions that can enable uptake rather than to achieve uptake within the short project duration. Across the portfolio, these conditions were conceptualised differently depending on the nature of the project. In some cases, they related to future service delivery uptake while in other cases to policy influence, educational uptake, attitudinal change, community readiness, or proof of concept for later use and scaling.

Across the cases, the strongest conditions for later uptake were the extent to which projects created a **concrete bridge between project outputs and a plausible next user or host**. In practice, the projects aim to 1) create some form of non-academic institutional anchoring that could carry results forward after project closure; 2) train and position capable (non-academic) actors to apply, adapt or champion the results; 3) create tangible and ready-to-use outputs that could realistically be taken up in practice; and 4) align early with intended users or stakeholders to build legitimacy and ownership around the innovation. Where these conditions were combined with a visible transfer pathway, such as curriculum integration, service embedding, dissemination to a defined user group, or follow-up proposals, projects were better positioned to move beyond awareness-raising towards more credible prospects for later uptake.

The telerehabilitation project in the Philippines illustrates how projects can create early conditions for future uptake by aligning closely with local service delivery needs and municipal outreach initiatives. Although implementation remained at pilot level, the project generated interest from local authorities and informed broader discussions on extending rehabilitation access to underserved island communities. **The most favourable conditions for uptake** were observed where four elements came together: a clearly identified host institution, a defined user group, a concrete uptake object, and some form of continuity mechanism. By contrast, weaker cases were those where conditions remained more generic: awareness was raised, stakeholders were informed, and useful groundwork was laid, but there was no strong conversion mechanism linking project results to later application.

SI projects were generally more successful in creating **foundational or seed conditions** for future uptake than in establishing fully robust, self-sustaining conditions. This partly reflects the nature of the modality itself. In many cases, two years was sufficient to generate relevant knowledge, engage stakeholders, and develop early tools or prototypes, but not to consolidate these into something more durable. The cases show that these conditions are often shaped by wider system feasibility. In a number of cases, projects were technically sound and locally relevant, but the enabling environment for later implementation remained uncertain because of political, financial, or organisational constraints. This helps explain why conditions for uptake were often useful and credible, yet still insufficient on their own to support continuation without follow-up resources or broader institutional support.

Illustration of constraints to uptake at system level (link to SI programme impact)

This challenge is illustrated in the SI project on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B. While the intervention is medically sound and well aligned with national and global health priorities, uptake is constrained by system-level feasibility.

First, integration into routine antenatal care increases the workload for already overstretched health staff, without clear or sustained incentives for adoption. Second, the full intervention package—screening, viral load testing, treatment and follow-up—entails recurrent costs that are high relative to available public health budgets.

As a result, while the intervention demonstrates effectiveness at pilot level, its integration and scaling within the public health system remain uncertain without additional funding or structural adjustments. This example highlights that even technically robust interventions may face limited uptake if questions of incentives and financing are not sufficiently addressed.

In the men-friendly health services project in Southern Africa, the SI created valuable new partnerships and generated strong exploratory research, but stakeholders noted that long-term continuation depended on future funding and the ability to maintain engagement in an increasingly crowded policy and research field. Such constraints help explain why, across the SI portfolio, uptake often remains partial and dependent on follow-up beyond the project duration.

Similarly, science–society interaction varies across cases. In some projects, stakeholders are actively involved through co-creation or participatory processes. In others, interaction is more limited to consultation or dissemination. This variation helps explain differences in the extent to which project results are taken up beyond the academic sphere as further elaborated under section 5.3.

4.2.2 Enabling and constraining factors

The variation in effectiveness across SI projects can be explained by a combination of internal programme contributors, external conditions and pre-existing contextual factors.³ These factors do

³ Worth noting, the Contribution Analysis method highlights the key contributing and hindering factors to achievement of results as described by the respondents. In that sense, it may confirm or validate existing design features or best practices.

not operate in isolation but reinforce each other and shape the extent to which projects move beyond initial outputs towards (sustained) outcomes.

The analysis also suggests that effectiveness depends partly on the role the SI project plays within a broader collaboration trajectory: in many cases as an entry point for partnership-building, in others as a building block for further development and valorisation.

Internal programme-related contributing factors

The first key factor is the **quality of partnerships**. Projects characterised by strong relationships between Flemish and local partners—based on trust, reciprocity, clear division of roles and effective communication—tend to achieve more advanced outcomes. Complementarity of expertise further strengthens this dynamic, allowing partners to combine methodological and contextual knowledge in a productive way. Another important dimension of the collaboration is a good understanding of the context in which the projects are implemented, reportedly enabled by visits by the Flemish partners to understand local dynamics. Overall, where partnerships are less mature, projects are more likely to remain at the level of outputs or limited application.

A second factor is the **practical orientation of capacity strengthening activities**. Projects that emphasise hands-on approaches, directly linked to real-world application, show stronger evidence of use of results. This includes, for example, training linked to ongoing research, field-based activities or laboratory work. In contrast, projects that remain more conceptual or research-driven without a clear application pathway tend to show more limited (conditions for) uptake.

The **tangibility of project outputs** also plays an important role. Projects that produce concrete outputs (e.g., datasets, laboratory setups, protocols, guidelines or teaching materials) are more likely to generate application and continued use. These outputs provide a clear entry point for integration into (non-academic) institutional processes and practices, whereas more abstract outputs (e.g., raised awareness or sensitisation) are harder to translate into practice.

Closely related to this is the nature and intensity of **stakeholder engagement**, particularly with intended users of project results. Stakeholder engagement was present across all SI cases and forms an important element of the SI modality. However, we observed important differences in how stakeholders were involved. Projects that involve stakeholders through co-creation or field-base collaboration tended to achieve stronger alignment with local needs and more credible pathways towards uptake. Where stakeholder engagement remained more consultative or was concentrated around dissemination and validation moments, results were less likely to be used beyond the immediate project context.

This difference was visible, for example, in the sustainable construction materials project, where stakeholders from the construction sector were consulted and informed throughout the collaboration, and where awareness around sustainable materials increased. However, interaction with potential end-users remained largely exploratory, while regulatory and certification pathways for practical implementation were not yet sufficiently operationalised. As a result, the project generated strong academic and technical outputs, but with more limited translation into concrete uptake practices during the project period.

Another important factor is the **embedding of SI activities within existing institutional structures**. Where SI activities became connected to existing institutional structures — such as ongoing teaching programmes, laboratory services, or research trajectories — there were stronger indications that results could continue beyond the immediate project period. For example, in Ecuador, the intercultural education project supported the use of more culturally responsive teaching approaches and contextualised materials within existing pedagogical practice at UTN.

Several SI cases were characterised by **active engagement from partner institutions**, which helped strengthen organisational embedding and capacity development within the project period. This included support for supervision, coordination, curriculum integration, laboratory strengthening, and the allocation of staff time to project activities. For example, the intercultural education project in Ecuador became connected to ongoing pedagogical practice at UTN, while the Primary Care Assessment Tool collaboration in Southern Africa benefited from existing academic networks and

institutional commitment that supported continued methodological exchange and regional collaboration. Across the portfolio, institutional engagement appears to have contributed positively to the integration of project activities into ongoing teaching, research, and professional practice..

External contributing factors

Projects that **aligned with ongoing national policy priorities or sector reform agendas** generally demonstrated stronger stakeholder engagement and clearer prospects for continuation or uptake. This was particularly visible in the Ecuador energy-related SI project, where the project's focus on sustainable and locally adapted energy solutions corresponded closely to broader national priorities around energy transition and rural development. Stakeholders indicated that this alignment helped create institutional interest and facilitated collaboration with relevant actors beyond the immediate academic sphere. Similar dynamics were observed in several health-related projects, where alignment with recognised public health priorities increased the legitimacy and visibility of the interventions and helped position project results within broader sectoral discussions and reform processes.

Similarly, the **engagement and support of external stakeholders**, such as local authorities, service providers or other partner institutions, can facilitate application and scaling. Where such actors are actively involved, projects are better positioned to move beyond the academic sphere.

The **availability of follow-on funding opportunities** is another critical factor. In several cases, continued collaboration or further development of results depends on additional resources. Where such opportunities exist, projects can build on initial achievements and move towards more advanced outcomes. In their absence, momentum is often difficult to sustain.

Preconditions

The effectiveness of SI projects is also shaped by conditions that predate the SI intervention.

Projects that **build on pre-existing networks or institutional platforms** tend to achieve results more quickly and at a higher level. Existing structures provide a foundation for collaboration and facilitate coordination and implementation.

Similarly, **prior collaboration or personal relationships** between partners contribute to trust and efficiency, reducing the time needed to align expectations and establish working arrangements. In contrast, projects with new partnerships often require an initial phase of relationship-building, which affects the level of outcomes that can be achieved within the project duration. In such cases, part of the effectiveness of the SI lies in its function as an entry point for collaboration and in identifying future pathways for joint work, rather than only in achieving higher level outcomes within two years.

Finally, projects addressing **clearly recognised knowledge gaps often generated strong stakeholder motivation and visibility**. For example, the digital inclusion project in South Africa responded to the absence of robust empirical tools to measure digital inclusion and digital inequality in the local context. Similarly, the wild edible plants project in Uganda addressed growing interest in climate adaptation and food security through underutilised indigenous species.

Internal / SI programme hindering factors

A number of recurring hindering factors help explain why some SI projects remained at the level of outputs or preparatory outcomes. A first internal constraint is the **short duration of the SI modality relative to the level of change sought**. In several cases, two years was sufficient to generate evidence, build capacity, or initiate collaboration, but too limited to consolidate organisational change, test and refine solutions, or move from pilot work to meaningful conditions for uptake. This appears particularly relevant where projects aimed at service innovation or product development.

A second internal constraint visible in a small number of cases was the **dependence of the SI projects on a small number of key individuals**. In the poultry biosecurity project in Ethiopia, for example, early implementation delays were linked to staff changes and recruitment challenges, affecting coordination and technical follow-up. Similarly, in the telerehabilitation project in the Philippines, several activities depended heavily on a small group of highly engaged university staff and local actors who played a central role in coordination, stakeholder engagement and continuity-building.

A further internal factor is that some projects were **more strongly oriented toward research generation than toward uptake pathways**. Where project design focused primarily on publications or exploratory research without a sufficiently clear strategy for user engagement, operationalisation or scaling, outcomes tended to remain strongest in the academic domain. In such cases, projects often generated relevant knowledge and early stakeholder interest, but with weaker translation into institutional practice or use beyond the institution.

External hindering factors

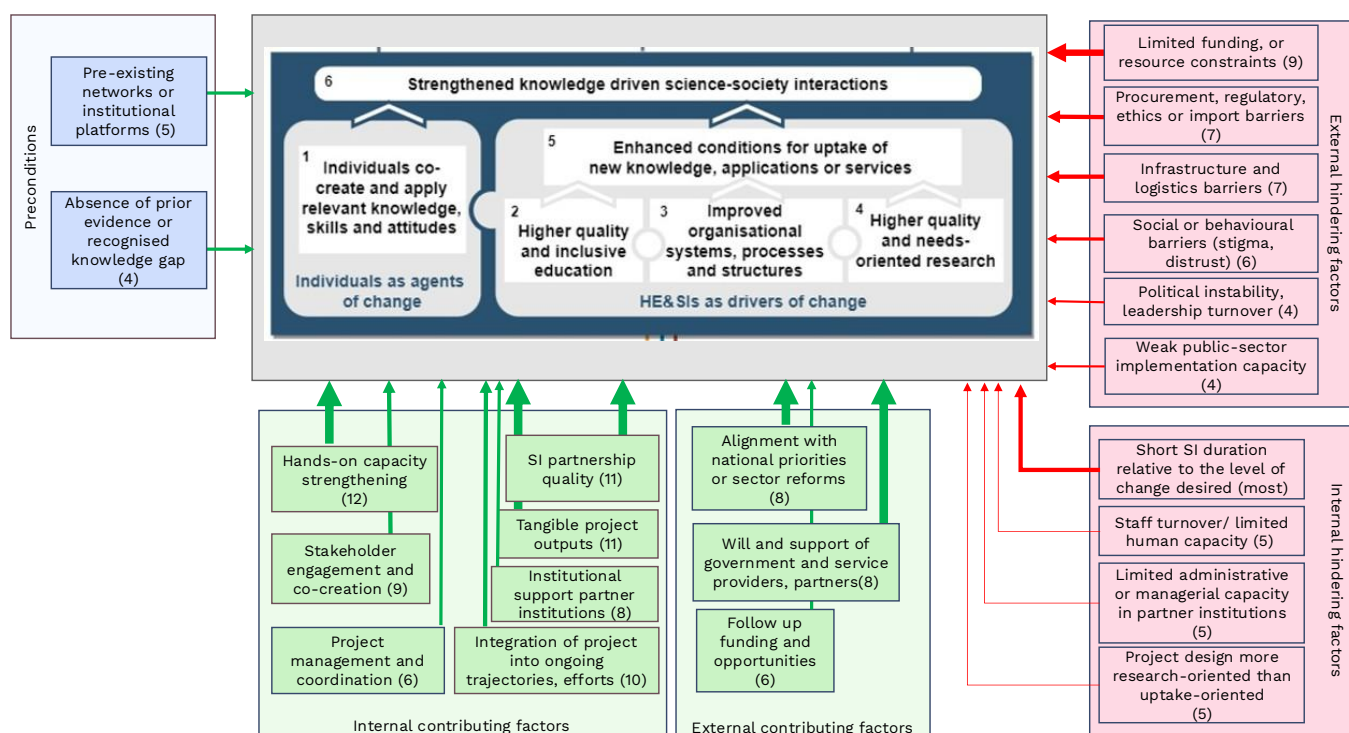
External constraints were also important. In several contexts, **wider system funding and resource limitations** reduced the prospects for uptake, even where projects were technically sound and locally relevant. This was particularly evident in cases where further implementation depended on recurrent public funding, additional staffing or sustained institutional support beyond the SI project. Similarly, **political context, leadership turnover and institutional discontinuity** could weaken follow-up, disrupt stakeholder engagement or reduce commitment to adoption, requiring project teams to re-build the relationships and trust of the powerholders.

A further set of constraints concerns **procurement, regulation, ethics approvals and import barriers**. Delays in obtaining equipment, approvals or specialised materials reduced implementation time and sometimes prevented completion of planned components. These issues were compounded in settings with **infrastructure and logistical constraints**, including distance to project sites, transport challenges, power outages, flooding, and weak telecommunications, all of which increased transaction costs and slowed implementation.

Finally, several projects faced **social and behavioural barriers** that affected both uptake and continuity. These include stigma around mental health or disability, distrust of outside actors or limited openness to behavioural change among users or (non-academic) institutions. Such factors did not necessarily prevent project achievements, but they often meant that more time, trust-building, and sustained engagement were needed than the SI projects could realistically provide within scope.

Figure 4 shows the relative significance of the identified contributing and hindering factors across the 16 SI cases in terms of frequency (i.e. how often the factor is identified as a significant contribution or hinderance to the achievement of project results).

Figure 8: Contribution analysis synthesis of the 16 SI cases showing key contributing and hindering factors, both within programme control and external/contextual with relative significance towards outcome areas.



4.3 Effectiveness of ITP projects (Q6–Q8, Q21–Q22)

4.3.1 Application of knowledge by individuals to become “agents of change”

Across the sample, there is strong and consistent evidence that ITPs achieve their intended direct outcomes in terms of strengthening knowledge and skills. This is the most robust and uniformly documented result across the portfolio. Participants acquire technical, methodological and pedagogical competencies that are directly linked to their professional roles, often reinforced through practice-oriented learning approaches.

Beyond knowledge acquisition, the evidence shows that participants apply these competencies in their professional environments, confirming the programme’s underlying assumption of developing “agents of change.” The most common form of application is the integration of new approaches into teaching, research and professional practice. For instance, in the machine learning programme in Vietnam, participants incorporated newly acquired methods into postgraduate teaching, thereby extending the reach of the training beyond the initial cohort.

In several cases, this application extends to institutional change. A particularly strong example is the non-communicable diseases programme in Ethiopia, where training materials were integrated into accredited curricula and continuous professional development systems, allowing for sustained use beyond the project duration. Such cases illustrate how ITPs can move beyond individual capacity development towards more structural effects, although this is not systematically achieved across all programmes.

At a more advanced level, some ITPs demonstrate pathways towards societal-level change, particularly where stakeholder engagement is explicitly embedded in the design. The SRH programme in Tanzania, for example, contributed to changes in communication and practices among teachers, health workers and families, strengthening linkages between schools, health services and communities. However, such effects remain more context-specific and depend strongly on programme design and external conditions.

Overall, the evidence suggests that ITPs are most effective at the level of individual and organisational change, while broader systemic effects are less consistent and require specific design features and enabling environments.

4.3.2 Levels of change

The effectiveness of ITPs can be understood in terms of different levels of change:

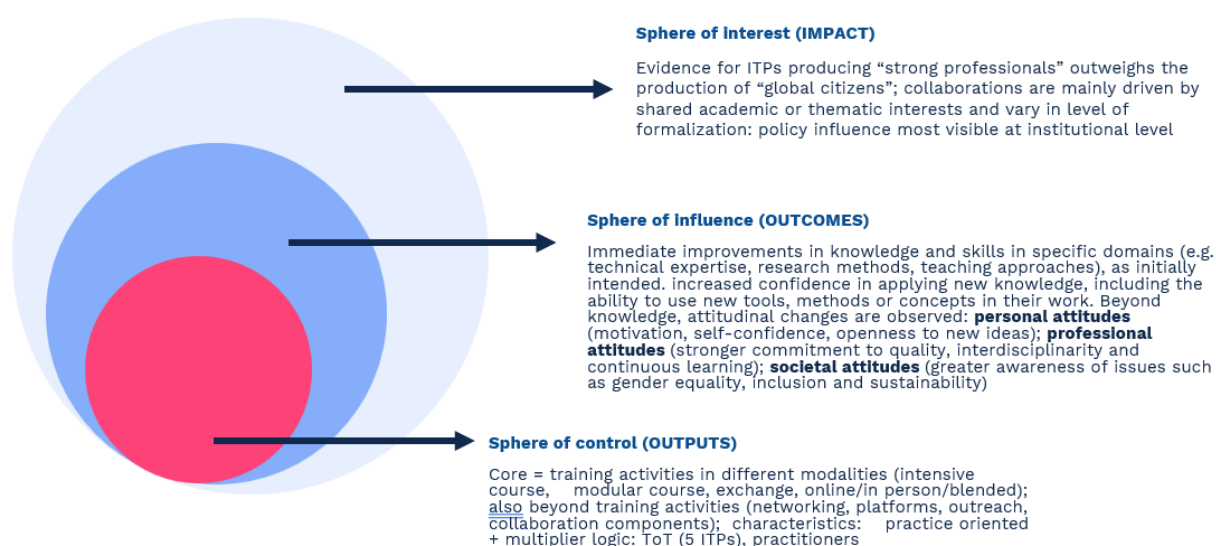
- application of knowledge, which is strong and consistent across all programmes
- diffusion of knowledge within organisations, which is widely observed but varies in intensity; and
- effects beyond the immediate institutional context, which are more limited and depend on specific design features and contextual conditions.

This pattern is strongly supported by the empirical evidence. Participants consistently apply what they have learned in their own work. In many cases, they also share knowledge with colleagues, students or professional networks, for example through workshops, mentoring or curriculum development.

Broader effects—such as influencing sectoral practices or reaching community-level actors—are less systematic and occur mainly in programmes that explicitly engage external stakeholders. For example, the SRH programme in Tanzania contributed to changes in communication and practices among teachers, health workers and families, strengthening linkages between schools, health services and communities.

Based on these findings, ITP programmes achieve their intended results to a high extent at the level of individual learning and application (see figure 5). Participants consistently acquire and apply relevant knowledge and skills. However, the translation of these results into organisational change or broader effects beyond the immediate context is uneven and depends on enabling conditions beyond the training itself (linked to impact-level changes addressed in chapter 5).

Figure 9: levels of change for ITP programme



4.3.3 ToT effectiveness and sustainability

Where implemented, training-of-trainers (ToT) approaches contribute to extending the reach of ITPs beyond direct participants. Several programmes in the sample explicitly integrate ToT mechanisms in their design. For example, the SRH programme in Tanzania trains teachers and healthcare workers with the explicit objective of transferring knowledge to adolescents and communities, while the biotechnology programme in Kenya and the land management programme in Ethiopia target professionals with training responsibilities who are expected to disseminate knowledge within their institutions and sectors.

There is clear evidence that participants contribute to the diffusion of knowledge and practices within their professional environments. This includes training colleagues and students, sharing knowledge through workshops and seminars, and contributing to curriculum development or the uptake of new methods within departments. These dynamics confirm that ITPs are effective not only at the level of individual learning, but also in extending their effects within organisations.

At the same time, the extent and sustainability of these ToT effects vary. Diffusion is strongest where participants occupy roles that allow them to train others – such as lecturers, trainers or mid-level professionals with coordination responsibilities – and where institutional structures support knowledge transfer. In these contexts, ToT contributes to more sustained and wider-reaching outcomes.

Where such conditions are not in place, cascading effects remain more limited and depend largely on individual initiative. Overall, the evidence shows that ToT approaches are effective where they are embedded in institutional structures, but that their sustainability depends primarily on institutional anchoring rather than on individual motivation alone.

4.3.4 Enabling and constraining factors

The effectiveness of the ITP programme is shaped by a combination of internal design and implementation factors and external contextual conditions.

Internal / ITP programme contributing factors

A key enabling factor is the **strong alignment between training content and participants' professional roles and needs**. ITPs appear most effective when participants are already engaged in teaching, training, coordination, or professional practice related to the programme topic. This makes it easier for them to apply knowledge directly in their work.

The **practice-oriented nature of the training** is another important contributor. Hands-on, applied, and context-relevant approaches, such as laboratory work, field applications, or case-based learning, support direct use of knowledge and skills. This is particularly visible in more technical programmes.

Effectiveness is also strengthened where projects include **structured dissemination or training-of-trainers approaches**, and where **participant diversity**, including multi-country or multi-disciplinary composition, supports peer learning. **Strong institutional partnerships**, often building on existing collaborations, further support implementation. In some cases, **flexibility and adaptive implementation** in terms of modalities, content, or participant targeting also helped maintain relevance.

External contributing factors

The institutional position of participants matters for effectiveness. Participants with the ability to influence teaching, practice, or decisions are better placed to apply and spread what they have learned.

Similarly, institutional support for applying new knowledge is important. Where home institutions provide recognition, resources, or openness to change, outcomes are more likely to be sustained. Existing networks can also support continued collaboration and exchange beyond the programme period.

Finally, alignment with national and sectoral priorities appears to facilitate relevance and uptake.

At the same time, several factors constrain higher-level outcomes.

Internal/ITP programme hindering factors included limited engagement with non-academic stakeholders, partial reach beyond core trainees, and weakly structured follow-up or dissemination reduce the likelihood that effects spread more broadly. In some cases, programme ambitions, such as policy or system change, may also exceed what the ITP format can realistically achieve.

External constraints are also significant. Participants often face high workload and competing priorities, which limit application. In some contexts, they also have limited decision-making power

within hierarchical institutions⁴. In addition, the use of new knowledge may depend on resources, infrastructure, funding, or equipment that are not always available. Broader policy, regulatory, or cultural constraints can also affect uptake, as can the difficulty of engaging private sector actors or cross-sector partners.

4.4 Summary of findings against evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Summary answer
Q1. The extent to which SI and ITP projects achieve their intended results within the project duration.	SI and ITP generally achieve their intended results, especially at the level of outputs and immediate outcomes. SI is strongest at institutional level, particularly in research and teaching, while ITP is strongest at individual level through learning and application in professional practice, in line with their respective TOCs. Higher-level outcomes are achieved less consistently and depend strongly on context and follow-up conditions.
Q2. The extent to which SI projects generate academic, institutional, and societal outcomes that contribute to VLIRUOS outcomes according to the Theory of Change.	SI projects contribute clearly to academic and institutional outcomes, especially application of knowledge and skills and needs-oriented research. Education-related outcomes are also frequently achieved in teaching-focused projects. Organisational change, uptake conditions and science-society interaction are present but less consistently substantiated, while societal outcomes are generally indirect and emerging.
Q3. The extent to which SI design and implementation modalities serve as stepping stones for additional funding or follow-up projects.	In many cases, SI functions as a stepping stone by generating pilot evidence, strengthening partnerships and leading to follow-up proposals or new funding opportunities. This is strongest where there is prior collaboration, a clear knowledge gap, and sufficient institutional capacity to build on results. In other cases, SI serves more as exploratory groundwork without leading to concrete continuation.
Q4. The extent to which SI design and implementation modalities serve as bringing existing partners together in learning and valorisation initiatives.	SI is generally effective in bringing existing partners together for joint learning, knowledge exchange and co-production of results. This is particularly visible where projects build on prior collaboration and use practical, hands-on activities to connect research, teaching and professional practice.
Q5. Specific for projects led by universities of applied sciences and arts: the extent to which SI design and implementation modalities are effective in supporting practice-based research and educational innovation initiatives.	SI can effectively support practice-based research and educational innovation, especially where activities are closely linked to local practice and stakeholder engagement. Their strengths lie in applied learning, contextual relevance and innovation in service models. At the same time, broader uptake and institutionalisation beyond academia remain dependent on follow-up and enabling conditions.
Q6. The extent to which ITP participants act as agents of change in their institutions and sectors, and the extent	ITP participants often act as agents of change within their institutions by applying and sharing acquired knowledge in teaching, training and professional practice. This role is strongest where participants occupy positions that allow influence and where

⁴ While best practices were not identified to deal with this challenge, the evaluation team notices that since projects are often recognised as stepping stones for the development of societal relevant solutions - the more relevant and visible these solutions are, the more externally recognised the partner institution can become for pioneering them. This may create a stronger case for the project towards management to create the appropriate institutional conditions for projects to flourish.

Evaluation question	Summary answer
to which enabling and constraining factors influence this role.	institutional support is present. It is constrained where participants face high workloads, limited authority, or lack the resources to apply what they learned.
Q7. The extent to which ITP design and implementation modalities serve as stepping stones for additional funding or follow-up projects.	In several cases, ITPs contribute to follow-up collaboration, continued exchanges, or new initiatives, although this is not systematic across the portfolio. Their stepping-stone role is strongest where programmes build on existing partnerships and where participants and institutions remain engaged after the training. In other cases, continuation depends more on individual initiative than on structured follow-up.
Q8. The extent to which ITP design and implementation modalities serve as valorisation of other (VLIRUOS) projects.	ITPs often function as a form of valorisation by extending knowledge, methods or partnerships developed through other VLIRUOS initiatives into training and professional application. This is particularly visible where ITPs are linked to ongoing institutional collaboration or research trajectories. However, this valorisation function is not always explicit or systematically documented.
Q21. The extent to which ITP trainees apply acquired knowledge and skills in their workplaces.	This is one of the strongest and most consistently evidenced results across the ITP portfolio. Participants regularly apply acquired knowledge and skills in teaching, training, research and professional practice. The extent of wider diffusion within organisations varies depending on institutional role, support and opportunities for further dissemination.
Q22. The extent to which training-of-trainers (ToT) approaches within ITP projects are effective, and the extent to which conditions for their sustainability are in place.	Where used, ToT approaches are generally effective in extending knowledge beyond direct participants through colleagues, students and institutional training activities. Their sustainability is strongest where participants hold training roles and where institutions provide support for continued dissemination. Where such conditions are weak, ToT effects remain more limited and depend mainly on individual motivation.

Cross-cutting effectiveness insights

Across SI and ITP, several common patterns emerge.

- First, both instruments are effective in achieving application-level outcomes. Most projects lead to changes in knowledge and practice, particularly at individual and institutional level.
- Second, few projects achieve more advanced levels of change, such as:
 - sustained institutionalisation,
 - or broader uptake beyond the immediate project context.
- Third, effectiveness is strongly influenced by:
 - partnership maturity (new versus established),
 - (non) academic institutional context (capacity, resources, governance),
 - and the role of individuals as agents of change.
- Fourth, SI and ITP show complementary strengths:
 - SI is more effective at institutional level, particularly in research and organisational capacity, while
 - ITP is more effective at individual level, particularly in knowledge and skills development.
- Finally, effectiveness is closely linked to other dimensions analysed in this evaluation:
 - relevance (alignment with needs),
 - coherence (integration with (non-academic) institutional context),
 - and impact (pathways to higher-level change).

5 Impact

In line with the evaluation questions, this chapter examines the extent to which SI and ITP projects generate impact. In line with the OECD-DAC definition, impact refers to the broader, longer-term effects of an intervention, whether intended or unintended, positive or negative, and in the context of this evaluation is understood as the extent to which SI and ITP results contribute to institutional and societal change pathways beyond their immediate outputs and outcomes. Given the relatively short duration and limited scale of SI and ITP projects, most observable changes are situated at the level of **institutional and behavioural outcomes**, such as strengthened capacities, improved practices and the application of knowledge (Q18-19 – see Annex A). Since many of these have been described in the effectiveness chapter, the focus of this chapter is on the extent to which such results appear to extend beyond the immediate project context and contribute to broader change pathways. In particular, the analysis looks at:

- whether project results are sustained or diffused over time,
- whether they influence practices, relationships or decisions beyond the original direct users,
- and whether and how SI and ITP create pathways towards institutional or societal impact.

Where relevant, the chapter distinguishes between institutional-level effects, which are more directly observable, and societal-level effects, which are typically indirect, emerging and less immediately visible. It concludes with cross-cutting insights on the three impact areas of the Theory of Change.

5.1 Intended and unintended impacts at institutional and societal level (Q18)

Across both SI and ITP, the most visible impacts are at institutional level. These include continued use of knowledge and methods, changes in teaching or professional practice, stronger collaboration structures, and in some cases the extension of project results into new activities, follow-up initiatives or organisational routines. In several SI cases, project outputs such as datasets, protocols, tools or teaching materials continued to be used beyond the immediate intervention. In ITP, participants frequently reported that learning continued to shape their teaching, training or professional work after the programme, sometimes with wider effects through colleagues, students or institutional processes.

Societal-level impacts are more limited and typically less direct. Where they are reported, they tend to occur through intermediate steps, such as improved service approaches, stronger interaction with external stakeholders, greater visibility of neglected issues, or increased readiness for future uptake. In most cases, these effects are still emerging and cannot yet be interpreted as broader systemic change. This is particularly the case for SI projects, where the scale and duration of the intervention often allow only early movement towards societal impact rather than its full realisation.

In addition to intended effects, the portfolio also shows several positive unintended impacts. These include the strengthening of networks beyond the original project scope, new collaboration opportunities, increased visibility of partner institutions, and in some cases follow-on proposals or related initiatives that build on earlier results. Negative unintended effects appear limited, but in some cases, respondents noted raised expectations for continuation without existing prospects, increased workload for staff, or frustration where promising pilots could not yet be sustained or scaled.

Overall, the evidence suggests that SI and ITP do generate intended and unintended impacts, but these are more strongly substantiated at institutional than societal level. Their contribution to impact is therefore best understood as incremental and pathway-oriented, with most projects creating visible higher-level effects within institutions and more indirect or still-emerging effects beyond them.

5.2 Strengthened knowledge, competencies and networks (Q19)

A consistent finding across both SI and ITP is that projects and programmes contribute to strengthened knowledge, competencies and networks. As discussed in the effectiveness chapter, this is a strong result in itself. From an impact perspective, the relevant question is whether these strengthened capacities and relationships continue beyond the immediate intervention.

For SI, the strongest signs of impact relate to the continued use and extension of institutional knowledge and capacities. In several cases, project-generated methods, datasets, teaching materials or technical approaches continued to be used after the project period in research, education or professional practice. In this sense, SI projects do not only strengthen capacity during implementation, but in some cases also leave behind resources and competencies that remain available for future use. There are also indications that partnerships established or strengthened through SI can persist beyond the project phase and form the basis for continued collaboration, follow-up proposals or joint research trajectories.

For ITP, the strongest evidence is found at the level of individual participants. Participants reported acquiring new knowledge and skills that are directly relevant to their professional roles and applying these in teaching, training, service delivery or programme implementation. In many cases, this also led to a multiplier effect, where participants shared knowledge with colleagues, students or peers, thereby extending the reach of the programme beyond the initial training group.

In addition to knowledge and competencies, both instruments contribute to the development and consolidation of networks. For SI, these networks are often institutional and partnership-based. Collaboration between Flemish and local institutions is frequently reinforced or newly established, and respondents often noted that such partnerships extend beyond the project duration and create a basis for continued collaboration⁵, joint research or follow-up funding proposals. In some cases, projects also strengthened thematic or professional networks involving other academic or non-academic actors, thereby increasing visibility and future collaboration opportunities.

For ITP, networks are formed through interaction among participants from different institutions and countries, as well as through continued contact with programme organisers and resource persons in few cases. The respondents referred to continued interaction through academic collaboration, informal peer exchange, WhatsApp groups, joint research initiatives, follow-up trainings, conference participation, or continued communication with trainers. In some programmes, participants remained connected mainly with fellow participants, while in others contact continued more directly with the Flemish institution or training team. At the same time, continued engagement often depended on individual initiative rather than on a systematically organised alumni or follow-up mechanism.

Taken together, these findings suggest that SI and ITP contribute to impact through the strengthening of capacities and networks that continue to shape practice, collaboration and knowledge use over time, functioning as pathways through which longer term impact may be achieved.

5.3 MSP⁶ approaches leading to strengthened uptake and impact (Q20)

SI projects often engage public sector actors, service providers, private sector actors, civil society or community-level stakeholders, creating opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange beyond academia. In practice, this engagement takes different forms— from consultation or validation of findings to more direct involvement in piloting, implementation support or early

⁵ Continued collaboration often means keeping in touch, attending together conferences, exploring potential opportunities for funding or working on joint publications – different in scope than the regular collaboration during the project period.

⁶ Multi-stakeholder partnership – with non-academic actors. As compared with MIP = multi-institutional partnership with academic actors.

application of results. Respondents indicated that such involvement strengthens the relevance of projects and can facilitate the use of results within professional settings.

The case evidence shows that stakeholder engagement is an important condition for uptake but also highlights that it is not sufficient on its own. Even where engagement is meaningful and sustained, uptake can remain constrained by system-level factors that lie outside the scope of the partnership itself. In a project on food loss and waste, farmers and small enterprises were actively involved in awareness raising and validation of findings, supporting relevance and shared understanding – yet the transition to implementation remained limited, as adoption required additional investment, compliance efforts and market development. In a project on energy planning, industry stakeholders were closely involved in the development of a planning tool, yet application was constrained because the tool demanded more time and expertise than existing planning practices allowed. In a health-focused project on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B, health professionals were trained, actively involved and tested the intervention, which was well aligned with national priorities – yet application is limited due to the increased workload and high recurrent costs of screening, treatment and follow-up that the public system is not realistically able to absorb. Across these cases, while the quality of the stakeholder engagement can be linked to variation in the follow up and system readiness, uptake is often hindered by incentive structures, institutional routines, system financing and human resource constraints that the projects were not designed to address.

This points to an important distinction between engagement that supports relevance and ownership, and engagement that actively works through the conditions required for adoption. The stronger cases are those where non-academic actors are involved not only as consultees or validators, but also as co-shapers, intermediaries, implementers or intended hosts of the results. Such arrangements appear to strengthen alignment with user needs and organisational realities, and may improve the prospects for later uptake. This has been strongly validated during the sensemaking session with the wider group of VLIRUOS stakeholders and promoters. Nonetheless, even in the cases where non-academic actors are engaged, broader system-level conditions still matter and MSP alone does not guarantee continued adoption.

Overall, SI projects do engage multiple stakeholders and create useful opportunities for collaboration, but the extent to which structured MSP approaches are used and contribute to uptake and impact varies across cases and is not systematically documented. Across the portfolio, the effectiveness of MSP approaches appears to depend less on the presence of stakeholder engagement as such, and more on the extent to which the partnership is linked to realistic incentives for adoption, institutional practices, and broader system capacities.

5.4 Summary of findings against evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Summary answer
Q18. The extent to which SI and ITP projects generate intended and unintended impacts, both positive and negative, at institutional and societal level.	SI and ITP mainly generate impacts at institutional level, including continued use of knowledge, strengthened practices, follow-up activities and, in some cases, new organisational routines. Societal-level impacts are more limited, indirect and still emerging. Positive unintended effects include stronger networks, greater visibility and new collaboration opportunities. Negative unintended effects are limited and mainly concern workload, raised expectations for continuation, or frustration where pilots could not yet be sustained. Overall, impact is incremental and more strongly evidenced at institutional than societal level. Overall, the contribution to impact is incremental, context-dependent and more strongly evidenced at institutional than societal level.
Q19. The extent to which SI and ITP projects strengthen knowledge,	Both SI and ITP make a strong contribution to strengthening knowledge, competencies and networks. For SI, this is most visible in the continued use of institutional capacities, outputs

Evaluation question	Summary answer
competencies, and networks across Flemish HEIs, partner institutions, and beneficiaries.	and partnerships. For ITP, it is most visible in the continued application and sharing of knowledge by participants. In both instruments, strengthened networks support continued exchange, collaboration and follow-up, and function as pathways towards longer-term impact.
Q20. The extent to which SI projects made use of MSP approaches leading to strengthened uptake and impact.	SI projects often engage non-academic stakeholders and create useful opportunities for collaboration beyond academia. These partnerships generally strengthen relevance and ownership, and in some cases support later uptake. However, their contribution to uptake and impact varies across cases and remains strongly shaped by wider factors such as incentives, institutional routines, financing and system capacity. MSP appears most promising where non-academic actors are involved as co-shapers, intermediaries, implementers or intended hosts of results.

Cross-cutting insights and conclusions on impact

Across both SI and ITP, impact is more consistently visible in *(non-academic) institutional change, professional practice, and partnership development* while broader societal or policy impact is more selective and usually depends on follow-up support and the wider enabling environment. According to the three impact areas, the findings:

- **Applied solutions and evidence-based policies**

For SI, a limited number of cases show clear application beyond the immediate institutional setting. More often, projects generated conditions for later uptake: evidence, tools, prototypes, local service models and stakeholder dialogue. A recurring constraint is that projects often demonstrate technical relevance, but the uptake is hindered by the financial and operational conditions. For ITP, although not intended, impact is most visible at institutional level, especially through curriculum change, revised teaching methods, and/or changes in professional practice where individuals acted as agents of change, therefore multiplying the effects of the ITP projects. Influence on government policy appears only in a few cases.

- **Knowledge-driven global partnerships**

This is one of the clearest impact areas. SI often acts as a starting point for longer-term collaboration, especially where partners already had a basis for cooperation and could build toward follow-up funding. ITP also contributes consistently to continued collaboration through follow-up exchanges, joint applications, and sustained formal or informal networks. In both instruments, these partnerships are often more institutional and thematic than global in scope.

- **Global citizenship**

For SI, this impact area is not strongly or systematically evidenced. For ITP, there are clearer signs of attitudinal change, especially where sustainability, equity, or inclusion are explicit design features. The international dimension often broadens perspectives and encourages reflection on practice. Still, the evidence suggests that ITPs more clearly produce stronger professionals than well-defined “global citizens”.

6 Efficiency

This chapter presents the evaluation findings on efficiency across the SI and ITP instruments. In line with the OECD-DAC criterion, efficiency refers to how well resources are used to convert inputs into results in a timely and cost-effective manner. The chapter is structured as follows: findings on SI are presented first, followed by findings on ITP. A summary table then provides concise answers to the evaluation questions for this criterion. The chapter closes with cross-cutting insights and conclusions that draw on both instruments to identify shared patterns and analytical observations.

6.1 Efficiency of SI projects

6.1.1 Delivery of use of resources

SI projects are generally able to deliver their planned outputs, particularly where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and collaboration between partners functions well.

In these cases, SI projects can be considered efficient in producing tangible outputs, such as research results, teaching materials or practical tools and protocols. However, efficiency is more constrained at the level of processes and implementation conditions, explained below.

6.1.2 Cost structure and spending across SI portfolio

The evaluation team used the portfolio mapping validated by VLIRUOS to make an analysis of the cost structures and spending across projects. Overall, initial budget structures do not align especially well with realised cost structures, particularly for coordination and scholarships.

- Coordination is consistently underbudgeted. The approved coordination share is fixed at 9.1%, while actual spending averages 15%. In 70 of 77 projects, coordination spending exceeded the approved share, and in 23 projects it was above 15%. This suggests that coordination needs are structurally underestimated or that underused budget lines leave more room for coordination costs in practice.
- Scholarship spending is below plan. The average approved scholarship share is 16.1%, compared to only 10.5% spent. This is the largest downward shift in the portfolio and may point to implementation bottlenecks or pressure to shift resources toward operations and coordination.
- Personnel costs also tends to underspend to some degree - personnel averages 8.4% approved versus 6.9% spent.
- Operational costs are stable overall but volatile across projects. At portfolio level, operations remain close to plan, but project-level variation is high. This suggests that operational spending acts as the main balancing category.
- Investment spending is slightly above plan. Actual investment spending is on average about 2.1 percentage points above the approved share, across a substantial subset of projects.
- Spending between Flemish and partner institutions is nearly balanced on average, at 52.1% and 47.9% respectively, though variation across projects is wide. This is somewhat surprising, given that the formal procedures allow distributing a minority of the project budgets to the Flemish partners. This may be explained by agreements between partners whereby Flemish partners kept the budget and made the expenses for local costs where this was more convenient or favourable.
- In terms of distribution of roles, some projects are managed almost entirely by Flemish institutions, while others are predominantly local partner-managed. This has been explained by their respective administrative capacities or local contexts, with arrangements aiming to benefit both parties.

6.1.3 Administrative burden and procedural efficiency

A recurring theme in the data is the perception of administrative and reporting requirements, but views on this are not uniform.

Some respondents consider the administrative burden to be relatively high in relation to the small scale of SI projects, pointing to:

- detailed financial reporting requirements,
- strict budget line management with limited flexibility,
- and the level of scrutiny required for relatively small expenditures.

In these cases, administrative tasks are seen as time-consuming and disproportionately carried by academic staff, rather than dedicated administrative personnel. At the same time, other respondents indicate that procedures are clear and manageable and that requirements are reasonable given accountability standards. Generally, respondents did not express criticism about the narrative reporting which was generally perceived as manageable.

This divergence suggests that the perceived burden depends on factors such as:

- prior experience with donor-funded projects,
- availability of administrative support,
- and the capacity of partner institutions.

As a result, administrative efficiency is **uneven across projects**, rather than systematically problematic.

6.1.4 Timeframe and implementation constraints

The short duration of SI projects creates additional efficiency challenges. In several cases:

- delays related to procurement, approvals or coordination reduce the effective implementation time;
- projects need to balance delivery of outputs with the time required to establish collaboration and operational arrangements.

This is particularly visible in projects where partners do not have a prior collaboration history. In these cases, a significant part of the initial phase is devoted to getting to know each other, aligning expectations and working methods, agreeing on roles and division of tasks and building mutual trust. This should not be seen only as a constraint. **It reflects an important function of the SI instrument**, which often serves as a starting point for new partnerships, allowing partners to test collaboration, explore shared interests and assess whether a longer-term engagement is worthwhile.

At the same time, this dynamic has clear implications for efficiency:

- time invested in partnership formation reduces the time available for implementation,
- coordination efforts are higher in the initial phase, and
- the scope for achieving more advanced outcomes within a short timeframe is limited.

As a result, SI projects with new partnerships tend to produce more exploratory or preparatory results, while projects building on existing collaboration are better positioned to deliver more advanced and consolidated outcomes within the same duration. This reinforces the importance of aligning expectations of results with the maturity of the partnership and the intended role of the SI.

6.1.5 External constraints affecting efficiency

A significant constraint affecting SI implementation relates to difficulties in procuring and importing equipment, particularly in certain country contexts (for example, Uganda and Ethiopia). Projects that rely on laboratory equipment, technical tools or specialised materials reported challenges such as:

- delays in customs clearance,
- administrative and regulatory barriers,

- and additional costs or uncertainties related to import procedures.

These constraints are largely outside the control of VLIRUOS, Flemish institutions or local partners but have direct implications for efficiency, as they delay implementation, reduce the effective project duration, and in some cases limit the full utilisation of project outputs. They may also affect sustainability, where the use and maintenance of equipment depend on timely availability and local capacity to manage imported resources or to find workable alternatives.

6.1.6 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

At portfolio level, the SI programme appears to have limited systematic MEL for steering, outcome tracking and cross-case learning. Steering seems strongest at the selection stage, where alignment with VLIRUOS strategic objectives is checked against strict criteria. After approval, responsibility for achieving proposed outcomes appears to remain largely with the implementing teams. As a result, portfolio management seems stronger on selection and compliance than on learning and steering based on outcome-oriented monitoring. Therefore, programme knowledge appears to remain largely tacit and person-dependent, concentrated among VLIRUOS staff overseeing specific regions or portfolios and project promoters. There is little evidence of a structured system for tracking SI results at outcome level across the portfolio, and this evaluation appears to be the first more systematic exercise to assess SI contributions against the VLIRUOS outcomes.

During the evaluation, VLIRUOS developed an elaborate extraction of information from proposals and reports across thematic areas, strategic priorities, modalities and financial data. VLIRUOS noted that the information was not systematically verified and should therefore not be treated as evidence on its own. The evaluation team notes that while this mapping could be a useful step as basis for a portfolio MEL system, it is too extensive to be useful for steering and decision making.

6.2 Efficiency of ITP programmes

6.2.1 Delivery and implementation

Across the sample, ITPs largely deliver their planned activities. Training programmes are implemented as foreseen, target groups are reached, and outputs are achieved within the expected timeframe, with only minor and justified adjustments.

Where deviations occur, these are typically related to logistical constraints—such as travel arrangements, visa procedures or scheduling—or to necessary adaptations in delivery formats, including hybrid or online modalities. In several cases, programmes demonstrated flexibility in adjusting delivery without compromising objectives. For example, in the biotechnology programme in Kenya, elements of the training were adapted to reach a wider audience through streaming, while maintaining the core technical components for the main participant group.

Overall, implementation can be characterised as reliable and adaptive, with programmes generally able to maintain continuity despite operational constraints.

6.2.2 Adaptation and optimisation of resources

Several ITPs demonstrate a pragmatic approach to resource use, including:

- shifting to hybrid or online formats to reduce costs and increase reach;
- expanding participation beyond the initially planned group, for example through streaming or additional sessions, and
- mobilising complementary resources or linking with other projects.

For instance, some programmes extended their reach by opening selected sessions to a broader audience beyond the core participant group, thereby increasing the number of beneficiaries without proportionally increasing costs. In other cases, programmes leveraged existing institutional infrastructure—such as university facilities or ongoing training platforms—to deliver activities more efficiently.

At the same time, different implementation models coexist. Some ITPs prioritise depth, focusing on intensive engagement with relatively small groups of participants, often involving hands-on training or laboratory work. Others aim for broader outreach through more flexible or scalable formats. These models reflect different strategic choices rather than clear efficiency differences. Given the available data, it is not possible to determine which approach is more cost-effective. Rather, efficiency appears to be closely linked to programme objectives and design choices.

6.2.3 Coordination and workload

A key finding across ITPs is that efficient implementation relies heavily on the effort of promoters and project teams.

Generally, coordination tasks such as logistics, communication and reporting are substantial. These tasks are often carried out on top of existing responsibilities, due to the limited dedicated personnel budgets. This is particularly visible in programmes involving international mobility, multiple partners or diverse stakeholder groups.

Interview data suggests that promoters play a central role in ensuring smooth implementation, often relying on personal commitment and informal problem-solving to address operational challenges. For example, in programmes with complex international logistics, promoters reported investing significant time in managing travel arrangements, visa issues and participant coordination, beyond what was initially planned.

While this high level of commitment enables programmes to function effectively, it raises questions about sustainability. Efficiency in these cases appears to depend not only on programme design, but also on the willingness and capacity of individuals to absorb additional workload.

6.2.4 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring and evaluation practices in ITPs are generally flexible but weakly structured at outcome level. Across programmes, data collection focuses primarily on outputs, such as the number of participants or sessions delivered. Evidence on behavioural change and application, while present, it is often based on self-reporting or informal follow-up, rather than systematic tracking.

Some programmes demonstrate that more structured follow-up is feasible. For example, certain ITPs track alumni trajectories or gather information on how participants apply their learning in professional contexts. These cases show that it is possible to generate more robust evidence on outcomes and longer-term effects. However, such practices remain exceptions rather than the norm. As a result, opportunities to use data more systematically for learning, programme improvement and efficiency optimisation are not fully realised.

6.3 Summary of findings against evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Summary answer
Q9. Cost-effectiveness of SI and ITP projects	SI and ITP projects generally deliver planned activities and outputs within the available budgets and demonstrate a pragmatic use of resources, including adaptations in delivery formats and outreach. However, the available data does not allow for a robust assessment of cost-effectiveness or comparison across different implementation models (e.g. depth versus reach). Efficiency should therefore be understood primarily in qualitative terms, based on how resources are translated into outputs and early outcomes.
Q10. Efficiency of management and implementation	Implementation is generally effective, but efficiency is achieved largely through flexibility and the effort of promoters rather than through streamlined systems. For SI projects, efficiency varies across contexts: some respondents consider administrative requirements proportionate and manageable, while others experience them as relatively heavy given the project scale, particularly where administrative support is limited.

Evaluation question	Summary answer
	Efficiency is also affected by the short project duration and, in cases of new partnerships, by the time required to establish collaboration and trust—reflecting the role of SI as a starting point for partnerships. External factors, such as delays in procurement and import of equipment, further affect implementation timelines but are largely outside programme control. For ITPs, delivery is generally on track and adaptive, but relies heavily on promotor workload due to limited personnel support. Across both instrument

Cross-cutting insights on Efficiency

Across both SI and ITP, implementation is generally effective and pragmatic, with most projects delivering planned activities and outputs within the expected timeframe and budget. However, efficiency is achieved less through streamlined systems and more through adaptation in implementation and significant effort and commitment from promotor and project teams. Perceptions of administrative burden and procedural efficiency also vary considerably depending on the experience and capacity of partner institutions, the availability of administrative support, and the specific implementation context. Some constraints affecting efficiency are external to the programme and its partners — in particular regulatory and logistical barriers such as procurement and import of equipment — which can significantly affect implementation timelines and resource use. Finally, monitoring and learning systems are weakly structured at outcome level, limiting the ability to assess and improve efficiency systematically across the portfolio.

Several consistent patterns emerge across the two instruments:

1. **Efficiency is achieved through adaptation rather than system design.** Projects are generally able to deliver planned activities and outputs, but this is largely the result of flexible implementation choices — such as adapting formats and adjusting timelines — and the commitment and problem-solving capacity of project teams.
2. **High coordination effort is a structural feature.** Both SI and ITP rely heavily on promotor and project teams managing logistics, communication and reporting, often without dedicated personnel budgets. Respondents indicated that given the limited budgets and the importance of the project and the partnership for partners, funds were allocated with priority for operational costs, rather than personnel cost.
3. **Efficiency varies depending on institutional capacity and experience.** Some respondents experience reporting and financial procedures as disproportionate to the scale of the funding, especially where administrative support is limited. Others consider these requirements clear and manageable, particularly in institutions with prior experience in donor-funded projects. Procedural efficiency is therefore not uniform, but influenced by institutional capacity, availability of administrative support, and familiarity with similar funding modalities.
4. **External factors significantly affect efficiency.** Certain constraints lie outside the direct control of VLIRUOS and its partners but have a strong effect on efficiency. In particular, procurement and import of equipment, ethics procedures, and logistical or infrastructure barriers can lead to delays, additional costs, and reduced implementation time, especially in technically oriented projects.
5. **Efficiency is linked to the maturity and function of partnerships.** Efficiency dynamics differ depending on whether partnerships are newly established or build on existing collaboration. Projects with new partnerships often function as a way to explore and build collaboration, requiring time for alignment, trust-building and coordination. Projects with established partnerships are better positioned to use available time and resources for implementation and to achieve more advanced outcomes. This reflects a deliberate feature of the SI instrument but also implies that not all projects should be expected to achieve the same level of results within the same timeframe.

6. **Trade-offs between depth, reach and feasibility are not explicitly managed.** Across both SI and ITP, different implementation models coexist: some prioritise intensive engagement with a limited number of participants or partners, while others aim for broader outreach through more flexible or scaled approaches. These choices are often pragmatic but are not systematically articulated nor explicitly linked to expectations of results or efficiency.
7. **Weak monitoring systems limit learning and potentially portfolio efficiency.** Across both instruments, monitoring focuses primarily on outputs, while outcome-level data is uneven and not systematically comparable. As a result, it is difficult to assess cost-effectiveness, and opportunities to use evidence to improve efficiency at programme level are not fully realised.

7 Coherence

This chapter presents the evaluation findings on coherence across the SI and ITP instruments. In line with the OECD-DAC criterion, coherence refers to the extent to which an intervention is compatible with other interventions, policies and institutions, and how well it fits within its wider context. The chapter is structured as follows: findings on SI are presented first, followed by findings on ITP. A summary table then provides concise answers to the evaluation questions for this criterion. The chapter closes with cross-cutting insights and conclusions that draw on both instruments to identify shared patterns and analytical observations.

7.1 Coherence of SI projects

7.1.1 Coherence within the VLIRUOS portfolio (Q11)

SI projects are often positioned as **entry points, stepping stones or valorisation pathways** within broader VLIRUOS collaboration trajectories.

In many cases, projects build on previous collaboration and contribute to follow-up proposals or continued partnerships. This is illustrated in cases where SI projects build on earlier collaboration under IUC or TEAM programmes and subsequently lead to follow-up proposals or continued joint research (often with TEAM projects). In these cases, the SI functions as a testing and consolidation phase within a longer-term partnership trajectory.

This creates a form of continuity across instruments, where SI projects help test collaboration, explore feasibility of ideas and lay the groundwork for future initiatives. Nonetheless, the projects may create value at institutional level without follow-up initiative being necessary.

However, interaction between VLIRUOS instruments during implementation remains limited. Synergies are more visible before the SI (as continuation of earlier collaboration), or after the SI (as follow-up funding or new projects), rather than as active coordination or synergies during the project itself.

7.1.2 Coherence with external initiatives (Q12)

Project proposals often refer to Belgian-funded programmes, international organisations or other donor initiatives, and annual reporting templates include references to active linkages with other Belgian development actors. While some connections with Belgian partners — such as technical actors and Belgian embassies — are identified to strengthen SI results, these tend to be exploratory rather than consolidated partnerships and are primarily aimed at amplifying results within the SI project itself rather than ensuring complementarity with other external initiatives.

At country level, stakeholders seem often unaware of other Belgian or donor-funded interventions operating in the same field. Although Belgian cooperation representatives participate in the selection process to ensure coherence with other initiatives, SI projects do not appear to be systematically positioned within a broader intervention landscape in practice. This is recognised as an area for improvement within VLIRUOS, and is explained by two factors: first, the limited internal capacity for steering at portfolio level or within specific country contexts, compounded by the short duration and limited scope of individual projects; and second, the competitive nature of the selection process, which makes it difficult to guarantee coherence across the portfolio within a given country context.

7.1.3 Compatibility with country, sector and institutional contexts (Q13)

This is the strongest dimension of coherence for SI projects.

Across cases, SI projects are well aligned with:

- national and sectoral priorities,
- institutional strategies of partner organisations,

- and ongoing research or service delivery activities.

For example, in several health- and agriculture-related projects, research topics are closely aligned with national priorities and ongoing institutional activities, which facilitates the integration of results into teaching, service delivery or further research.

However, an important nuance is that alignment at thematic level (e.g. relevance of the topic) does not always translate into institutional capacity to sustain or scale results, as described in earlier chapters (Effectiveness and Impact). In several cases institutions lack the resources, systems or mandate to take forward project results beyond the pilot phase.

7.1.4 Coherence with academic and non-academic stakeholders (Q14)

SI projects show:

- strong and often long-standing academic partnerships, with clear complementarity between Flemish and local institutions;
- meaningful but less institutionalised engagement with non-academic stakeholders.

Non-academic actors (e.g. public authorities, practitioners, private sector) are often involved in consultations, piloting or project-level collaboration (as explained under 5.3). However, these relationships are often project-bound, rely on individual champions and are not systematically embedded in institutional structures. In practice, this means that while non-academic stakeholders may be actively involved during the project—for example in piloting or validation—the continuity of these relationships beyond the project often depends on individual initiative rather than formal institutional arrangements.

7.2 Coherence of ITP programmes

7.2.1 Coherence within the VLIRUOS portfolio (Q11)

ITP are reportedly frequently embedded in broader VLIRUOS collaboration trajectories. In many cases, training programmes build on earlier projects or partnerships, and in turn create opportunities for follow-up initiatives.

This coherence is most visible in the continuity of relationships and thematic focus over time. Several ITPs draw directly on previous VLIRUOS-funded collaborations, using established partnerships as a basis for programme design and implementation. For example, land management programmes in Ethiopia and environmental initiatives in the Philippines build on earlier cooperation and have subsequently contributed to new project proposals, including SI projects and broader research trajectories.

In addition, ITPs often act as **connective elements within longer-term engagement**, linking education, research and capacity strengthening. Networks created through training programmes sometimes lead to joint research proposals, continued academic collaboration or further mobility opportunities for participants.

At the same time, coherence is primarily expressed through the continuation of collaborations over time, where programmes build on previous initiatives and create opportunities for follow-up activities. As a result, coherence is largely emergent—based on evolving relationships and opportunities—rather than systematically planned or managed across the portfolio.

7.2.2 Coherence with external initiatives (Q12)

Although ITP proposals frequently refer to international organisations, donor programmes or national initiatives, there is limited evidence of structured coordination with these actors during implementation.

In a few cases, programmes engage with external initiatives in a more substantive way. For example, the citizen science programme in the Philippines engaged with the Department of Science and Technology and linked training activities to broader national discussions on citizen science and

higher education. Similarly, some programmes—particularly in areas such as land management in Ethiopia—engage with government institutions and sectoral platforms, linking training to ongoing policy and implementation processes.

However, these examples remain exceptions. In most cases, references to external initiatives remain at the level of alignment or awareness, without translating into sustained coordination mechanisms or joint implementation. This suggests that coherence is primarily reflected in how collaborations continue and develop over time, rather than in structured coordination across programmes.

7.2.3 Compatibility with country, sector and institutional contexts (Q13)

ITPs are generally well aligned with sectoral challenges and the institutional contexts of participants. Programme topics (public health, education, agriculture or digital innovation) respond to clearly identified needs, and participants are typically selected based on their relevance to these domains.

Participants are usually embedded in universities, ministries or professional organisations and often hold roles in teaching, training or coordination. This positioning enables them to apply and disseminate knowledge within their institutions. For example, in several programmes, participants reported integrating new content into curricula or using acquired skills in ongoing programmes, reflecting strong alignment between training content and institutional responsibilities.

This alignment contributes directly to the effectiveness of ITPs, particularly at the level of application. At the same time, the analysis shows that this alignment is often implicitly assumed rather than systematically assessed. While participants are well placed to use the knowledge gained, there is limited evidence that programmes explicitly analyse institutional constraints or capacities that may affect the uptake and sustainability of results.

7.2.4 Coherence with academic and non-academic stakeholders (14)

As with SI projects, collaboration within ITPs is strongest within the academic sphere. Partnerships between Flemish and local higher education institutions are typically well established and form the backbone of programme implementation.

Beyond academia, engagement with non-academic stakeholders—such as public institutions, NGOs or community actors—is more variable. In some programmes, such engagement is an integral part of the design. For example,

- PHI-UHass-ENVIR reports that workshops created local consortia, research collaborations, course integration and a Philippine Citizen Science Network, with stakeholder collaboration around research projects and engagement with the Department of Science and Technology.
- BE-PXL-Educ inclusion shows sustained collaboration among partner universities, shared development of the e-course, examples of dissemination, and follow-up plans involving UTN, RUPP, JU and NWU.
- ETH-UGENT-Land documents collaboration with the Bureau of Agriculture, basin offices, IWMI, public offices and universities in regional workshops, and explicitly states that these activities strengthened collaboration among institutions working on land and water management.

Together, these examples illustrate that realised synergies are strongest where ITPs are embedded in broader institutional and stakeholder networks rather than relying only on training delivery.”

However, in several cases, such engagement remains limited in scope or duration. Interaction with non-academic stakeholders is often linked to specific training activities or pilot applications and is not always sustained beyond the programme period. Engagement with private sector actors in particular, appears to be limited across the sample.

This pattern suggests that while ITPs create opportunities for broader stakeholder engagement, coherence beyond the academic sphere is not systematically embedded in programme design. As a result, the potential for linking training outcomes to wider systems or markets is not fully realised.

In practice, “synergy” is often understood as collaboration or engagement, rather than joint value creation or long-term institutional partnership.

7.3 Summary of findings against evaluation questions

Overall, SI and ITP programmes demonstrate strong coherence in terms of alignment with institutional mandates and sectoral needs, as well as continuity within the VLIRUOS portfolio.

However, coherence is less developed as an active and strategic dimension of programme design, particularly in relation to:

- coordination with external initiatives,
- structured stakeholder integration beyond academia,
- and the deliberate creation of synergies.

This suggests that while projects are well embedded in their immediate context, there is significant potential to strengthen their contribution through more deliberate and operationalised coherence strategies.

Evaluation question	Summary answer
Q11. Interaction and synergies within VLIRUOS programmes	SI and ITP contribute to continuity across VLIRUOS instruments, particularly by building on previous collaborations and generating follow-up initiatives (e.g. new SI, IUC or TEAM proposals). Their role as entry points or stepping stones is clearly visible. However, interaction between various instruments (including between SI and ITP) during implementation is limited, and synergies tend to materialise before or after projects rather than through active coordination across instruments.
Q12. Coherence with Belgian and other donor-funded initiatives	References to Belgian-funded or other donor initiatives are frequently included in project design, indicating awareness of the broader landscape. In practice, however, these linkages rarely translate into operational collaboration. Coherence remains largely descriptive, with limited evidence of joint activities, coordination mechanisms or deliberate positioning of SI/ITP projects within wider donor programmes.
Q13. Compatibility with other interventions in country, sector or institution	Compatibility is generally strong at institutional and sector level, as projects are well aligned with national priorities, partner mandates and ongoing academic or professional activities. This facilitates the integration of results within institutions. However, this alignment is typically implicit rather than based on explicit coordination with other interventions and does not always ensure the capacity or resources required to sustain or scale results beyond the project phase.
Q14. Realisation of synergies with academic and non-academic stakeholders	Academic partnerships are a clear strength, often long-standing and based on complementary expertise, with evidence of continued collaboration beyond individual projects. Engagement with non-academic stakeholders is also present and contributes to relevance and application of results, particularly through consultation, piloting or validation. However, these relationships are often project-bound, rely on individual initiative, and are less frequently institutionalised or sustained over time, limiting their contribution to longer-term synergies and impact.

Cross-cutting insights and conclusions on Coherence

Across the SI and ITP portfolio, coherence is strongest where projects are closely connected to the roles, mandates and ongoing activities of participating institutions and stakeholders. In practice, many interventions are not stand-alone initiatives but are embedded in existing teaching programmes, ongoing research or sector agendas, or the professional practice of participants and partner organisations.

This reflects a strong form of alignment between what projects aim to achieve and what institutions and stakeholders are already doing or seeking to improve. At the same time, coherence is less developed when it comes to active coordination with other initiatives and systematic positioning within a broader landscape of actors and interventions.

Across both instruments, coherence is better understood as alignment and compatibility rather than active collaboration and synergy, with a consistent asymmetry between relatively strong coherence within the VLIRUOS ecosystem and more limited, less operationalised coherence with external initiatives.

Five key patterns characterise coherence across the cases:

1. **Strong alignment with institutional roles and sector needs.** Projects are closely connected to what institutions and participants already do, which supports relevance and the application of results.
2. **Internal coherence is stronger than external coherence.** Continuity within the VLIRUOS portfolio is well established, while coordination with external initiatives remains limited.
3. **Coherence is primarily expressed as compatibility rather than coordination.** Projects fit well within their context but are not systematically positioned within a broader ecosystem of actors.
4. **Academic partnerships are a clear strength.** These are often long-standing, complementary and sustained.
5. **Engagement beyond academia is less institutionalised.** Non-academic collaboration is meaningful but more fragmented, more dependent on individuals and less sustainable.

8 Relevance

This chapter presents the evaluation findings on relevance across the SI and ITP instruments. In line with the OECD-DAC criterion, relevance refers to the extent to which an intervention's objectives and design respond to the needs, policies and priorities of its target groups and context. The chapter is structured as follows: findings on SI are presented first, followed by findings on ITP. A summary table then provides concise answers to the evaluation questions. The chapter closes with cross-cutting insights and conclusions that draw on both instruments to identify shared patterns.

8.1 Relevance of SI projects

8.1.1 Alignment with needs and strategic interests of Flemish and partner institutions (Q15)

SI projects are generally well aligned with national and sectoral priorities, institutional strategies of partner organisations, and the academic agendas of both Flemish and partner institutions. This is consistently reflected in both project documentation and interviews with Flemish promoters and in-country stakeholders. In many cases, respondents indicated that project topics build on existing research agendas and respond to recognised challenges within specific sectors. This alignment is often reinforced by long-standing partnerships, where previous collaboration has helped shape both the focus and design of the project.

At institutional level, SI projects are often embedded in ongoing activities such as research programmes and teaching. Interviews across several case studies indicate that project outputs such as data, tools or curricula are typically intended for direct use within existing institutional structures, which gives them strong practical relevance.

At the same time, the evidence is less consistent on how far this alignment is based on an explicit and systematic assessment of institutional needs. In several cases, needs assessments and contextual analyses are not systematically documented, and relevance is instead inferred from existing collaboration or shared interests. This means that thematic and partnership-level relevance is usually clear, but the extent to which project design responds to specific institutional constraints and opportunities is not always fully evidenced.

The analysis also suggests that relevance differs depending on partnership maturity. In established partnerships, relevance is often linked to longer-term institutional agendas. In newer partnerships, relevance is more exploratory and may evolve during implementation as partners gain a better understanding of each other's context and priorities.

Alignment with needs of SI end-users and non-academic actors

While the extent to which projects respond to the needs, interests and capacities of the non-academic actors who are expected to use, support or sustain the results are not explicitly part of the scope of the relevance assessment, the case studies revealed important lessons. In several cases, meaningful engagement with service providers, communities, public authorities or intermediaries strengthened the practical relevance of the intervention by helping to define the problem, validate the proposed approach, or create (initial) ownership around the results. This underlines the importance of MSP not only as a mechanism for uptake, but also as a relevance guarantee - where non-academic actors are involved early and substantively, projects are generally better grounded in real-world demand and operating conditions.

At the same time, the evaluation finds that relevance and stakeholder engagement do not automatically translate into uptake or sustained use of results. Across several case studies, respondents highlighted constraints related to limited resources, staffing capacity, (non-academic) institutional mandates or the absence of longer-term incentives and financing mechanisms that affect the ability of stakeholders to continue, scale or embed project supported practices beyond the project phase.

In some cases, external actors were willing to engage during implementation because projects temporarily facilitated participation, experimentation or service delivery, while the continuation of these practices after project closure remained uncertain.

This suggests that while the issues addressed are relevant, the feasibility sustaining the proposed solutions and stakeholder engagement mechanisms is not always fully aligned with institutional and financial realities. While these realities are sometimes accounted for in the design/ proposal stage as risks to be mitigated by the projects as part of the selection criterium ‘Potential impact and sustainability’, in practice, projects are often not able to ensure external guarantees for continuation or to mitigate the risks that are often beyond their scope within the limited timeframe.

8.1.2 Relevance in addressing VLIRUOS higher-level impact areas and broader academic cooperation contexts (Q16)

The evidence suggests that SI projects are generally relevant to the three VLIRUOS higher-level impact areas.

Relevance is clearest in relation to **applied solutions and evidence-based policies**. Many SI projects address concrete sector challenges and produce context-specific knowledge, tools, pilot models or technical approaches intended for use in teaching, service delivery, professional practice or later uptake. In several cases, projects were clearly aligned with national or sector priorities, which strengthens their relevance for applied use. At the same time, the evaluation shows that this relevance more often concerns the potential to contribute to applied solutions or policy-oriented knowledge than direct policy influence within the SI timeframe.

SI projects are also strongly relevant to **knowledge-driven global partnerships**. Many projects are embedded in broader academic cooperation trajectories, build on existing institutional collaboration or serve to initiate and test new partnerships. The SI modality appears particularly relevant as a low-threshold instrument for developing or consolidating international cooperation around shared research interests and locally relevant challenges.

By contrast, relevance to **global citizenship** is less explicitly evidenced in the SI sample. This dimension appears more indirectly through Outcome 1 on individual level changes as well as through participatory approaches, attention to local relevance, inclusion or stronger engagement with communities and non-academic actors

8.1.3 Relevance and added value of programme modalities and innovations (Q17)

SI projects provide a flexible and accessible mechanism for testing ideas, exploring partnerships and developing applied research in a context-specific way. This flexibility is one of the modality’s main sources of added value, especially in exploratory settings or where collaboration is still emerging. The instrument allows partners to identify shared priorities, generate early evidence and develop context-relevant solutions.

The added value of the instrument seems strongest where this flexibility is combined with hands-on or practice-oriented activities, such as field-based work, laboratory application, curriculum integration or stakeholder engagement, which help connect research more directly to institutional and societal needs. At the same time, the available evidence speaks more clearly to the relevance of the SI modality and its design features in practice than to the specific contribution of revised selection criteria or formal programme innovations as such.

8.2 Relevance of ITP projects

8.2.1 Alignment with needs and strategic interests of Flemish and partner institutions (Q15)

ITPs are highly relevant to participants, particularly because participants are selected based on their professional roles and the training content is closely linked to their areas of responsibility. This creates a strong connection between learning and practice, which facilitates the integration of new knowledge into participants’ work. Across the sample, participants reported multiple ways in which

they were able to apply what they had learned. These include lecturers incorporating new content and methods into their teaching, professionals applying newly acquired skills in programme implementation, and trainers adapting their training approaches. For example, participants in the machine learning programme in Vietnam reported integrating newly acquired methods into postgraduate teaching, while participants in public health programmes applied training content in ongoing work on non-communicable diseases or malaria control. These examples illustrate how training content aligns closely with participants' day-to-day responsibilities.

ITPs are also generally aligned with the institutional contexts in which participants operate, as well as with broader sectoral challenges. Participants are typically embedded in universities, public institutions or organisations where the thematic focus of the training is directly applicable. In several cases, this alignment is visible in how participants connect training content to ongoing institutional activities, for instance by integrating new content into curricula or using newly acquired skills within existing programmes or services.

At the same time, the evaluation finds that this alignment is not always based on a systematic analysis of institutional needs. In several cases, interviews suggest that the relevance of the training is assumed based on the profile of participants, rather than explicitly linked to institutional strategies or constraints. As a result, while participants are well positioned to apply their learning, the extent to which training content aligns with broader institutional priorities is not always clearly articulated. In some cases, this affects the ability to translate individual learning into organisational change. Notably, during the sensemaking session, the VLIRUOS team clarified that the needs at the institutional level are not the focus of the ITP programme (rather, the individual change trajectories).

“We try to apply the new approaches, but it depends on time, resources and whether the institution supports it.”

8.2.2 Relevance in addressing VLIRUOS higher-level impact areas and broader academic cooperation contexts (Q16)

The evidence suggests that ITPs are relevant to the three VLIRUOS higher-level impact areas, but not equally strongly across all of them.

Given the focus on individual behavioural change and empowerment, the relevance of ITPs for creating **global citizens** is noticeable, with numerous examples of trainees acting as agents of change within and beyond their immediate professional environments.

Relevance of ITP projects is evident also for **applied solutions and evidence-based policies**, as training content is often closely linked to participants' professional roles and can be applied in teaching, training, service delivery or technical practice. This is often closely linked to the extent to which participants are able not only to apply and share what they have learned within their professional context, but also to sustain these changes over time. Across the ITP sample, participants provided multiple examples of applying knowledge in practice, such as integrating new content into teaching, adapting training approaches or using technical skills in ongoing programmes. In several cases, participants also reported sharing knowledge with colleagues or students, for example through internal training sessions or curriculum development. However, the extent to which this leads to broader and more sustained organisational change varies across cases. Participants were better able to introduce and maintain changes where they held roles in teaching, training or coordination, and where they received support from colleagues or management. In other cases, applying, scaling up or sustaining changes was more difficult due to limited decision-making authority, resource limitations or institutional procedures that slowed down change processes. As one respondent noted: “At the individual level, the training is very useful. But for wider change, you need support from the organisation.”

Lastly, relevance to **knowledge-driven global partnerships** is also visible, particularly where programmes bring together participants from different institutions and countries and support continued exchange with peers, trainers or Flemish institutions.

8.2.3 Relevance and added value of programme modalities and innovations (Q17)

The design of ITPs is generally well appreciated by participants, particularly in terms of thematic focus and quality of delivery. Participants frequently highlighted the relevance of the content and the usefulness of the approaches used.

In particular, projects that combine theoretical input with practical application are perceived as highly relevant. In technical programmes such as biotechnology or laboratory-based health training, participants emphasised the importance of hands-on components that allowed them to directly apply new techniques in their own institutional context. Where training is closely connected to practical applications and participant needs, relevance is perceived as particularly strong.

At the same time, the degree to which programmes are tailored to specific country or institutional contexts varies across cases. Some participants indicated that training was closely linked to real-world applications and directly relevant to their context, while others noted a stronger emphasis on theoretical content. This suggests that the balance between theory and practice, as well as the extent of contextual adaptation, plays an important role in shaping perceived relevance.

Overall, the added value of the ITP modality lies in its targeted and practice-oriented approach to professional capacity development. However, the available evidence speaks more clearly to the relevance of the training design and delivery approach than to the specific contribution of programme innovations as such. The question can therefore be answered more confidently in terms of the added value of the modality and its design features than in terms of revised modalities or selection criteria specifically. Summary of findings against evaluation questions

Evaluation question	Summary answer
Q15. Alignment with stakeholder needs	SI and ITP are strongly aligned with sectoral challenges and stakeholder needs, particularly at thematic level. Project topics typically respond to recognised issues within sectors and are embedded in ongoing academic or professional activities, which reinforces their perceived relevance among participants and partners. At the same time, this alignment is often based on existing collaboration and shared interests rather than on systematically documented needs assessments, making it less explicit how project design responds to specific institutional constraints and priorities.
Q16. Relevance to VLIRUOS strategic objectives and Theory of Change	Projects and programmes are generally consistent with VLIRUOS strategic priorities and contribute to its Theory of Change, particularly in terms of strengthening academic capacity, knowledge generation and professional practice. Activities are well aligned with the programme's focus on capacity development and institutional strengthening.
Q17. Added value of programme modalities and innovations	SI and ITP offer distinct and complementary forms of relevance within the VLIRUOS portfolio. SI projects provide a flexible mechanism to explore partnerships, test ideas and develop applied research in a context-specific manner, particularly in early or exploratory phases of collaboration. ITP programmes offer structured opportunities for targeted capacity development, with clear relevance for participants' professional roles and institutional contexts. Their added value lies in their accessibility, flexibility and strong connection to academic and professional practice, although the extent to which these modalities translate into sustained institutional uptake or broader impact varies depending on context and follow-up opportunities.

Cross-cutting insights on Relevance

Across both SI and ITP, relevance is consistently high. Projects and programmes are generally well aligned with sectoral challenges, academic priorities and the professional roles of participants and

partner institutions. They address recognised needs in areas such as health, education, environmental sustainability and capacity development in higher education, and are closely connected to existing mandates and responsibilities.

In practice, results are often directly applicable in teaching, research or professional contexts. ITP participants frequently reported being able to integrate new knowledge into their work — for example by introducing new modules into curricula, adapting teaching methodologies or applying technical skills in ongoing programmes. Similarly, SI projects typically address clearly identified knowledge gaps or sector challenges, with outputs such as data, tools or teaching materials being used within partner institutions.

At the same time, relevance is more consistently demonstrated at thematic level than at the level of institutional needs and uptake capacity. While topics are clearly relevant, the extent to which projects are grounded in a systematic assessment of institutional realities varies across cases.

Five consistent patterns characterise relevance across the cases:

1. Relevance is a clear strength of the portfolio. Projects and programmes are well aligned with sectoral challenges and institutional contexts and are closely connected to the roles and responsibilities of participants and partner organisations. This contributes to the applicability of results and to the engagement of stakeholders.
2. Relevance is often evident in practice but less consistently demonstrated through explicit analysis. Needs assessments and contextual considerations are not always systematically documented, which makes it more difficult to assess how project design responds to specific institutional realities.
3. There is a clear distinction between thematic relevance and institutional uptake. Even where topics are highly relevant, institutional constraints can limit the extent to which results are applied or sustained. This applies to both SI and ITP, although it is particularly visible in the transition from individual learning to organisational change in ITP programmes.
4. MSP plays an important role. Projects based on established collaboration with non-academic actors tend to have clearer and more strategic relevance.
5. Finally, relevance operates at different levels. ITPs are particularly strong in terms of individual relevance, while SI projects tend to be more closely linked to institutional processes.⁷ In both cases, the translation of relevance into sustained outcomes depends on broader organisational and contextual factors.

⁷ Worth noting, ITP don't necessarily work together with a HEI partner institution as the target group don't need to be academics. An SI obligatorily needs a higher education partner institution as a counterpart of the Flemish university or university of applied sciences.

9 Conclusions

This chapter presents the overall conclusions of the evaluation, synthesising findings across effectiveness, impact, efficiency, coherence and relevance. Rather than repeating criteria-specific insights, it formulates overarching judgements on how SI and ITP function as instruments and what this implies for their contribution to VLIRUOS objectives.

9.1 Overall performance of SI and ITP

Across the portfolio, both SI and ITP demonstrate strong performance in achieving their intended immediate and intermediate outcomes, although through different operational modalities and change pathways. The evaluation does not assess SI and ITP as competing instruments, since they differ substantially in objectives, duration, target groups, budget size and intervention logic. Rather, the findings suggest that the two instruments contribute in complementary ways to broader VLIRUOS objectives around capacity strengthening, knowledge exchange and societal engagement.

SI projects are particularly effective in strengthening academic collaboration, research capacity, methodological development, and context-relevant teaching and innovation within partner institutions. Their contribution is strongest where they support exploratory research trajectories, institutional learning, and the development of networks and partnerships that create pathways for further collaboration, uptake or follow-on initiatives.

ITP programmes, by contrast, are particularly effective in strengthening individual and professional competencies and in supporting the application of knowledge and skills in professional practice. Across the portfolio, participants consistently reported applying newly acquired competencies in teaching, training, service delivery, coordination, or applied professional work, often extending effects through peer learning and dissemination within their organisations and professional environments. While many ITPs involve higher education institutions, their effects frequently extend beyond academia into broader professional and sectoral practice.

In both instruments, results extend beyond knowledge acquisition towards observable changes in practices, teaching, research, professional behaviour and collaboration. At the same time, more advanced forms of institutionalisation, scaling, policy influence and broader societal uptake remain uneven and strongly dependent on contextual and institutional conditions beyond the immediate intervention.

Overall, SI and ITP can be considered effective and relevant instruments, with a strong capacity to generate meaningful change at individual and institutional level, while their contribution to broader systemic change is more indirect, catalytic and context-dependent.

9.2 SI and ITP function as catalytic instruments in different ways

A central conclusion of the evaluation is that both SI and ITP instruments function effectively as catalytic instruments although through different mechanisms and at different levels.

For SI projects, the catalytic function lies primarily in generating new knowledge, strengthening institutional collaboration, developing methodological innovation, and creating early conditions for future uptake or follow-on trajectories. Across the SI portfolio, the strongest and most consistent results concern:

- Strengthening of research and academic capacities
- Development of context-sensitive and needs-based research
- Strengthening of institutional and inter-institutional partnerships
- Application of knowledge within teaching, research and professional practice

Many SI projects functioned as exploratory or trajectory-setting interventions that helped position partnerships, methodologies or thematic agendas for later development. In several cases, the SI

acted as seed funding that enabled later follow-on collaboration, larger research trajectories, or broader institutional engagement.

For ITP programmes, the catalytic function lies primarily in strengthening human capital and enabling diffusion of knowledge through individuals and professional networks. Across the ITP portfolio, the strongest and most substantiated results concern:

- Acquisition and application of knowledge and skills by participants;
- Diffusion of knowledge through teaching, mentoring and peer learning;
- Strengthening of professional practice;
- Creation and reinforcement of professional and institutional networks.

ITPs therefore contribute less through institutional research trajectories and more through the professional application and dissemination of competencies within organisations, services, educational settings and sectoral networks.

Across both instruments, progression towards more advanced outcomes — such as institutionalisation, scaling, sustained uptake or broader system-level change — depends less on the quality or relevance of project outputs alone and more on the conditions under which these outputs can be applied, supported and sustained. Particularly important are:

- Institutional capacity and organisational support;
- Availability of resources and incentives;
- Institutional mandates and decision space;
- Alignment with policy frameworks and wider system conditions.

Where these conditions are favourable, projects are more likely to move beyond initial application towards broader and more sustained outcomes. Where they are weaker, results often remain concentrated at the level of pilot use, academic application, or limited organisational follow-through.

The evaluation therefore suggests that SI and ITP should primarily be understood as catalytic instruments that initiate and support change processes by strengthening capacities, generating knowledge, supporting application, and creating networks and partnerships that may contribute to longer-term impact when enabling conditions are present.

9.3 SI Effectiveness is strongly shaped by context and partnership maturity

The evaluation shows that effectiveness related to institutionalisation and uptake are strongly influenced by pre-existing conditions, rather than by project design alone. Two factors are particularly important:

Partnership maturity

SI projects building on existing collaboration generally achieved more advanced outcomes because they benefited from established trust, clearer role division, prior institutional alignment and existing collaboration structures. In contrast, newer partnerships often used the SI primarily as an exploratory or relationship-building phase, focusing on identifying shared interests and establishing foundations for future collaboration.

For ITPs, effectiveness was strongly influenced by the institutional and professional position of participants. Participants who occupied roles allowing them to apply, disseminate or operationalise newly acquired competencies generally demonstrated stronger downstream effects than participants with more limited organisational influence or decision space..

Institutional context and organisational capacity

Across both instruments, the ability to apply and sustain results depended heavily on available resources, organisational support, staff continuity, and institutional openness to innovation or change. In several cases, broader system-level constraints — including financing limitations, procurement procedures, infrastructure gaps or policy uncertainty — limited the extent to which

promising results could be institutionalised or scaled. Effectiveness across the portfolio is therefore differentiated rather than uniform, reflecting the interaction between instrument design and contextual conditions.

9.4 Efficiency relies on people more than on systems

The evaluation finds that both SI and ITP are generally able to deliver meaningful results within the available resources and timeframe. However, this efficiency is achieved primarily through flexibility in implementation and the commitment and problem-solving capacity of promoters and project teams.

In SI projects particularly, implementation frequently relied on the problem-solving capacity, engagement and flexibility of a relatively small number of actors. In several cases, administrative procedures, procurement delays, ethics approvals, recruitment processes or logistical constraints reduced the effective implementation time available within the already short SI timeframe. Nevertheless, most projects adapted pragmatically to these constraints and succeeded in delivering core outputs and outcomes.

For ITPs, efficiency was strengthened by the focused nature of the modality and the direct applicability of training to participants' professional roles. At the same time, coordination, follow-up and dissemination often required more effort and institutional support than initially anticipated.

Overall, efficiency can be characterised as pragmatic and adaptive, demonstrating considerable implementation resilience.

9.5 Coherence is strong but largely implicit

The evaluation shows that coherence is a clear strength of both SI and ITP, particularly in terms of alignment with institutional mandates, sectoral priorities, and academic or professional practice.

SI projects were generally well aligned with partner institutions' research and educational priorities, while ITPs typically responded closely to professional capacity needs and sectoral challenges faced by participants and their organisations. This strong alignment contributed positively to relevance and facilitated the application of results in teaching, research and professional practice.

At the same time, coherence was less visible as an explicit operational strategy. Coordination with external initiatives, engagement with broader ecosystems of actors, and interaction across VLIRUOS instruments during implementation remained relatively limited and often depended on individual initiative rather than systematic programme design.

Similarly, stakeholder engagement beyond academia and immediate project partners was present across the portfolio, but varied substantially in depth and operationalisation. Stronger cases involved co-creation, iterative engagement and active interaction with intended users, while other projects remained more focused on dissemination or exploratory engagement.

Coherence is therefore best understood primarily as compatibility and alignment rather than as active coordination or integrated portfolio management. This suggests that additional strategic value could potentially be created through more deliberate operationalisation of complementarities, follow-on pathways, and cross-instrument linkages.

9.6 Final conclusion

Overall, the evaluation concludes that SI and ITP are relevant, effective and well-functioning instruments within the VLIRUOS portfolio, each contributing through distinct but complementary pathways.

SI projects contribute primarily through strengthening institutional collaboration, research capacity, methodological innovation and exploratory trajectories for future uptake and partnership development.

ITP programmes contribute primarily through strengthening individual and professional competencies, enabling the application and dissemination of knowledge, and reinforcing professional practice and networks.

The strongest and most consistent contribution of both instruments lies in:

- Enabling the application of knowledge;
- Strengthening capacities at individual and institutional level;
- Supporting context-sensitive learning and innovation;
- Building partnerships and professional networks.

Their contribution to broader societal or systemic change is generally indirect and catalytic rather than immediate or transformative. The evaluation therefore suggests that the added value of SI and ITP lies not primarily in delivering large-scale impact within a short project cycle, but in initiating and supporting longer-term change processes through capacity development, knowledge exchange, collaboration and early-stage application.

10 Lessons learned and recommendations for the GROW programme design and portfolio management

The introduction of the GROW programme marks an evolution in the VLIRUOS portfolio, replacing the SI and ITP modalities with a single, integrated instrument focused on application, capacity development and societal impact.

This chapter reflects on the extent to which lessons emerging from the evaluation of SI and ITP have been already incorporated into the GROW concept based on the evaluation team's understanding and identifies areas where further refinement could strengthen the programme's effectiveness and contribution to impact based on evaluation findings. Finally, it provides recommendations for the design, positioning and management of GROW at portfolio level.

10.1 Lessons from SI and ITP reflected in the GROW concept

The analysis indicates that the GROW concept builds on several key strengths and lessons identified across SI and ITP.

First, the programme demonstrates a **clear and explicit focus on application and uptake of knowledge**. Even though the SI projects had a clear objective of creating conditions for uptake, they were generally very effective in generating academic outputs and strengthening institutional capacities, while the translation of these outputs into practice was often partial. GROW responds to this by further explicitly targeting improved conditions for uptake and by positioning application and societal relevance at the core of the programme.

Second, GROW retains the **flexibility and low-threshold nature of SI projects**, which was widely valued by stakeholders. The thematic diversity, the accessible call for application process with relatively less requirements for proposal and the openness of the calls to both universities and the universities of applied sciences and arts have been noted as important value propositions of the instrument. Besides, the possibility to initiate, continue or complement collaborations allows the instrument to function as an entry point or a testing ground for collaboration and preparatory stepping stone for follow-up initiatives.

Third, the programme acknowledges the importance of **continuity across instruments within the VLIRUOS portfolio**. By positioning GROW as a complementary instrument alongside longer-term programmes such as TEAM and IUC, the concept aligns with the finding that SI projects often functioned as part of longer-term collaboration pathways, even if interaction during implementation remained limited.

Fourth, GROW integrates key elements of the ITP modality by incorporating **capacity development of professionals and academics**, including through training formats and applied learning approaches. This reflects the strong contribution of ITP programmes to individual competencies and their application in professional contexts.

Fifth, the **extension of the project duration to three years** responds to a frequently cited constraint of SI projects, where the two-year timeframe was often considered insufficient to achieve meaningful results beyond initial outputs.

Finally, the concept places stronger emphasis on **multi-stakeholder partnerships** and engagement with societal actors. This aligns with evaluation findings highlighting the importance of stakeholder engagement for relevance and uptake, even if such approaches were not always systematically implemented in SI projects.

Taken together, these elements indicate that the GROW concept successfully incorporates several of the most salient lessons from SI and ITP, particularly with regard to flexibility, capacity development and the need to strengthen pathways from knowledge to application.

10.2 Recommendations for the GROW programme design

At the same time, the evaluation suggests that some critical lessons from SI and ITP are not yet fully reflected in the current GROW concept. The following recommendations are structured in three blocks – the first two blocks particularly targeting VLIRUOS while the third block targeted future GROW grantees – including the role of VLIRUOS to facilitate future grantees.

Recommendations GROW framework arrangements

These recommendations concern the way the overall GROW framework is shaped.

1. Maintain accessibility while managing expectations on impact

The evaluation shows that many SI and ITP projects were able to deliver relevant and useful outputs within relatively small budgets and short timeframes. GROW should preserve this low-threshold and accessible character, while ensuring that expectations regarding societal impact remain realistic and proportionate to project scope and duration. This could be in selection criteria and communication, so that projects are not implicitly encouraged to over-promise on impact-level results that lie beyond what such interventions can reasonably deliver.

2. Safeguard focus within a broad and flexible modality

The integration of SI and ITP elements into a single instrument creates a risk of overloading GROW with multiple objectives, including applied research, training, capacity development and societal engagement. This may reduce clarity regarding the primary focus of individual projects and dilute the coherence of results. Individual GROW projects should therefore maintain a clear primary focus, for example on applied research, training, or institutional strengthening. This should be reflected in project design guidance and selection criteria.

3. Create a selective uptake extension for promising GROW results

The evaluation shows that SI and ITP often generate valuable applied results, early uptake conditions and promising partnerships, but that movement beyond project closure remains uneven and frequently depends on targeted follow-up, stakeholder mobilisation and communication. At the same time, in a resource-constrained development landscape, it may be strategic to selectively deepen the uptake prospects of strong results instead of spreading limited support thinly across all projects. VLIRUOS should therefore consider creating a light, selective uptake extension facility for completed GROW projects that demonstrate particularly credible prospects for wider use or institutionalisation. This should not function as a general project extension to complete unfinished deliverables, but as a short, purpose-driven window to increase the likelihood that existing results are taken forward. Eligible activities might include targeted dissemination to intended users, communication products tailored to decision-makers or professional communities, uptake-oriented stakeholder engagement or change-management support. Projects applying for such support could be required to present a concise uptake and or dissemination plan specifying what result is ready for further uptake, who needs to be reached or influenced, what barriers to uptake need to be addressed, and what continuation route is plausible after the extension period.

Recommendations for VLIRUOS portfolio management and positioning

These recommendations concern how VLIRUOS can manage and position the GROW portfolio more strategically.

4. Synthesize and communicate GROW results and challenges more deliberately within the Belgian development sector

VLIRUOS should consider using GROW not only as a funding instrument, but also as a source of structured, externally visible learning on effective uptake strategies and conditions in selected themes, geographies or institutional contexts. This could involve periodically synthesising lessons from the portfolio into short knowledge products, learning briefs, thematic insight notes or targeted external communications for donors, policy actors and strategic partners. The purpose would be 1) to strengthen the visibility and policy relevance of results emerging from the portfolio; and 2) to position VLIRUOS more clearly as a knowledge actor with evidence-based insight into how

development-oriented research and capacity strengthening can translate into practical uptake under constrained conditions.

5. Improve internal and external coherence as part of longer-term partnership trajectories

The evaluation shows that coherence is generally strong as alignment, but weaker as active coordination or synergy. At the same time, many SI and ITP projects function as part of broader collaboration pathways, either by building on previous cooperation or by creating the basis for follow-up through other (VLIRUOS) instruments. VLIRUOS should therefore strengthen both internal coherence within the GROW portfolio, as valuable component of longer-term partnership trajectories within the VLIRUOS ecosystem and with the larger Belgian development landscape.

Internally, coherence links to 1) portfolio level coherence and 2) coherence of GROW with other VLIRUOS instruments. The former could be achieved through light-touch mechanisms to connect projects thematically and strategically across the portfolio, such as thematic clustering, periodic exchange moments, or shared stakeholder mapping, while preserving project flexibility. For addressing the coherence within VLIRUOS ecosystem, VLIRUOS could clarify and actively manage the role of GROW within broader collaboration pathways, for example as an entry point, consolidation phase or bridge to larger programmes such as TEAM, depending on intended purpose and instrument specifics.

Beyond this, VLIRUOS could also consider a facilitation role in connecting projects with relevant Belgian cooperation actors where this may support uptake or strategic alignment. This could include Belgian embassies, Enabel, or other locally present Belgian representatives and thematic platforms that may be positioned to help bring promising project results into wider policy dialogue, sector coordination or government-facing conversations. Such a role would not make VLIRUOS responsible for uptake within limited project scope and funding, but could help reduce the gap between project-level innovation and the wider cooperation ecosystem in which uptake prospects may be strengthened.

6. Use early implementation as a structured learning phase

The planned evaluation after the first GROW call should be used as a deliberate learning moment to refine the modality, particularly regarding assumptions on uptake, MSP and impact pathways. This will support adaptive development of the programme.

Recommendations for project design and management under GROW

The evaluation shows that stronger uptake does not automatically follow from relevant topics, good outputs or stakeholder engagement. Designing for uptake requires explicit attention to organisational fit, societal relevance, actor pathways, feasibility and learning. The following interrelated recommendations are therefore directed at future GROW projects, while also indicating what VLIRUOS can do to facilitate them.

7. Combine organisational alignment and societal relevance more explicitly in project design

The evaluation shows that projects need to be embedded in broader organisational strategies that fit their societal mandates. Thematic relevance alone is insufficient if institutions lack the staff capacity, mandates, decision space or organisational support to achieve and sustain results. At the same time, projects should not rely primarily on existing partnerships or assumed relevance.

GROW should therefore require projects to explain more clearly how they respond to identified needs of both academic and non-academic actors, and why the selected partner organisation is the logical and legitimate entity through which the societal issue is best addressed. This implies combining stronger articulation of relevance and problem analysis with reflection on institutional readiness and constraints. In practice, project design and selection should include a simple assessment of whether intended results are sufficiently aligned with the mandate, strategic direction and operational priorities of the partner organisation to make continued use or institutional embedding plausible.

8. Clarify actor-based pathways towards uptake and impact and make stakeholder engagement more operational

The evaluation shows that projects conceptualise uptake and multi-stakeholder engagement differently, which leads to varying ambitions and results. There is a risk that a stronger focus on application and stakeholder engagement is assumed to lead automatically to uptake, whereas the evaluation shows this relationship to be complex and context-dependent. Uptake depends on contextual factors, stakeholder ownership, institutional feasibility and enabling conditions that often extend beyond the project's control.

GROW should therefore distinguish more explicitly between application, uptake and broader system change or scaling, and require projects to specify clearly which level of change they primarily aim for and what enabling conditions are needed. This implies that project design should reason backwards from the intended form of uptake or use, rather than beginning primarily from planned outputs or deliverables.

At the same time, GROW should clarify expectations around meaningful stakeholder engagement by asking projects to specify which stakeholders are involved, for what purpose, at what stage, and with what expected contribution to relevance, uptake or sustainability. VLIRUOS could support this by providing tested practical design tools to guide applicants in reflecting on which actors should be informed, consulted, co-create, implement or take results forward after project closure, such as stakeholder participation matrices or role-mapping tools.

9. Integrate a light financial and practical feasibility check for uptake

The evaluation shows that technically strong and relevant results often remain at pilot level when incentives, operational conditions or financing for continued use are unclear. Even where this was to some extent considered at design stage, case studies show that there may still be limited real capacity, opportunity or motivation among key actors to move forward.

GROW should therefore require projects to include a proportionate reflection on the feasibility of uptake as part of project design. In practice, this can be done through a light design step asking who is expected to adopt the results, what incentives exist for doing so, whether key actors are likely to support or resist uptake, and whether financial and organisational conditions allow for continued use beyond the project period. Tools such as power-interest matrices⁸ can support this reflection by illustrating which key actors are likely to support / oppose uptake and how powerful each of them are.

In addition, proposal and budgeting frameworks should provide clearer room for justified, temporary stakeholder support or incentive mechanisms where these are important for early uptake, experimentation or behavioural change. Applicants should be required to explain how such incentives, responsibilities and financing mechanisms are expected to remain feasible, embedded or financed beyond the project period.

10. Embed simple monitoring of uptake and learning

The evaluation shows that outcome-level monitoring and cross-project learning are currently limited across SI and ITP, hindering VLIRUOS' ability to assess projects' contribution to key outcomes and to extract learning for adaptive management. Given GROW's stronger emphasis on application and impact — and the growing pressure to demonstrate effectiveness in a context of decreasing development funding — addressing this gap becomes more important.

In response, GROW should introduce practical approaches to track how results are used and to facilitate learning across projects. This could be achieved through a limited set of qualitative indicators or reporting prompts using Outcome Harvesting principles (i.e., covering examples of use by specific targeted actors, changes in practice and enabling or constraining factors) that would be analysed and discussed periodically within VLIRUOS to inform course corrections, adaptations or

⁸ Examples and application of such tools: <https://simplystakeholders.com/stakeholder-matrix/>.

cross-fertilisation of effective practices. This would also provide an early indication of whether GROW's increased focus on application is generating more promising uptake trajectories than observed under SI and ITP.

The evaluation points to a more explicit and realistic articulation of how application, uptake and impact are expected to occur. By strengthening attention to feasibility, institutional context and learning, the GROW programme can build effectively on the strengths of SI and ITP while enhancing its contribution to sustained change.

Annex A: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Core indicators & evidence	Sources & methods
Effectiveness			
1. The extent to which SI and ITP projects achieve their intended results within the project duration.	Intended results are achieved to a substantive degree by end of project. Shortfalls are explained by external constraints and/or mitigated through adaptive management. Results are consistent with the project logic (outputs plausibly led to outcomes).	Indicators (signals): - Share of planned outputs delivered (and quality acceptable). - Progress against stated outcome targets/expected changes by project closure. - Evidence of timely delivery against milestones (or justified deviations or adaptations). Evidence: - Delivered outputs/products and evidence of use (training delivered, materials produced, pilots implemented, partnerships functioning). - Stated outcomes achieved vs expected, with examples and triangulation across stakeholders.	Aggregated findings from ITP and SI case studies' primary and secondary data (document review, project mapping, KIIs and FGDs with key stakeholders at project level)
Specific to SI 2. The extent to which SI projects generate academic, institutional, and societal outcomes that contribute to VLIRUOS outcomes according to the Theory of Change? 3. The extent to which SI design and implementation modalities serve as stepping stones for additional funding or follow-up projects. 4. The extent to which SI design and implementation modalities serve as bringing existing partners together in learning and valorisation initiatives.	SI outcomes aligned with VLIRUOS strategic objectives are substantiated. SI modalities are effective enablers of follow-up funding/projects and/or learning/valorisation. For UAS/arts-led projects, modalities are fit-for-purpose for practice-based research and educational innovation.	Indicators (signals): - Outcomes achieved at academic/institutional/societal level that are consistent with objectives. - Evidence of SI design and implementation modalities used as basis for additional funding, follow-up projects or valorisation initiatives. - Practice-based research outputs and/or educational innovation adopted/tested. Evidence: - Documented outcomes and examples (what changed, for whom, in what setting). "Connection dimension" mapping evidence showing follow up/valorisation from other VLIRUOS project	Q2-5: KII with VLIRUOS SI and ITP programme staff Q2-5: For 16 selected SI projects: Document review, (proposals, reports, etc), KIIs/ FGD with Flemish and Partner Institutions (Promoters and ICOS), KIIs with project stakeholders during on-site visits including respondents external to the projects (government authorities, experts) Q3-4: For all SI projects: Project Mapping (<i>dimension 8 on connection with other VLIRUOS project</i>)

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Core indicators & evidence	Sources & methods
5. <u>Specific for projects led by universities of applied sciences and arts</u>: the extent to which SI design and implementation modalities are effective in supporting practice-based research and educational innovation initiatives.		Evidence of practice-based research processes/products and education innovation implementation	
Specific to ITP 6. The extent to which ITP participants act as agents of change in their institutions and sectors, and the extent to which enabling and constraining factors influence this role. 7. The extent to which ITP design and implementation modalities serve as stepping stones for additional funding or follow-up projects. 8. The extent to which ITP design and implementation modalities serve as valorisation of other (VLIRUOS) projects. 21. The extent to which ITP trainees apply acquired knowledge and skills in their workplaces. 22. The extent to which training-of-trainers (ToT) approaches within ITP projects are effective, and the extent to which conditions for their sustainability are in place.	ITP projects produce applied competencies that translate into improved workplace practice. Alumni demonstrate agency for change where conditions allow, and constraints are properly identified/ mitigated. Modalities enable follow-up initiatives/funding and valorisation of wider VLIRUOS efforts. TOT are effective modalities and sustainability conditions are in place.	Indicators (signals): - Alumni report and demonstrate workplace application of learning (specific changes/actions). - Observable “agent of change” behaviours (initiatives led, improvements introduced, diffusion within institution/sector). - Identified enabling/constraining factors with consistent patterns across cases - Evidence of use of projects for follow up, additional funding or valorisation of lessons - Identified sustainability conditions for TOT modality sustained effectiveness Evidence: - Alumni accounts with concrete examples of application and change actions, triangulated with promoters where feasible. - Examples of institutional/sector changes linked to alumni roles, with identified constraints/enablers - Follow-up and valorisation evidence “Connection dimension” mapping evidence	Q6-8: KII with VLIRUOS SI and ITP programme staff Q6-8, Q21-22: For all 11 closed ITP projects: Document review, (proposals, reports, etc), online FGD with alumni (including interactive survey for skills self-assessment), FGD/ KIIs with promoters and ICOS. Q7-8: Project Mapping (<i>dimension 8 on connection with other VLIRUOS project</i>)
Impact			
18. The extent to which SI and ITP projects generate intended and unintended impacts, both positive and	Credible contribution to higher-level change (institutional/societal),	Indicators (signals):	Q18-Q20:

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Core indicators & evidence	Sources & methods
negative, at institutional and societal level. 19. The extent to which SI and ITP projects strengthen knowledge, competencies, and networks across Flemish HEIs, partner institutions, and beneficiaries. <u>Specific to SI:</u> 20. The extent to which SI projects made use of MSP approaches leading to strengthened uptake and impact.	including unintended effects, with plausible pathways from SI/ITP outputs and outcomes to observed change. Demonstrable strengthening of capacities and relationships that are relevant to project objectives and show evidence of use beyond training/project delivery. Effective use of MSP in SI projects for uptake and higher-level effects.	- Signs of skilled individuals acting as global citizens displaying changed attitudes and behaviour towards sustainable and equitable development. - Signs of knowledge driven global partnerships that continue to exist and function beyond the SI/ITP project in pursuit of sustainable and equitable development. - Signs of policies / policy makers that illustrate the use of new knowledge / research results generated through earlier SI / ITP projects. - Documented unintended effects (positive/negative) and their materiality. - Evidence of strengthened knowledge, competencies, and networks across Flemish HEIs, partner institutions, and beneficiaries. - MSP contributes to policy/practice uptake or sustained global partnerships. Evidence: - Examples/cases of uptake, diffusion, or institutionalization - Participant accounts and examples of application or follow through. - Evidence of ongoing functioning partnerships (MOUs, joint outputs, follow-up activities, co-funding, meetings). - Stakeholder accounts about MSP value added and impact, with examples.	KII with VLIRUOS SI and ITP programme staff SI: For 16 selected SI projects: Document review, on-site KIIs or FGD (if relevant) with partner institution representatives, beneficiaries and external stakeholders (government, experts)); (online) KII/ FGD with Flemish institutions representatives. ITP: For all 11 ITPs: document review, online FGDs with alumni and KIIs/FGD with ICOS and promoters.
Efficiency			
9. The extent to which SI and ITP projects are cost-effective in relation to the outcomes they deliver. 10. The extent to which SI and ITP projects are efficiently managed and implemented, by the Flemish and partner institutions, including administration, transaction costs, selection processes, and governance.	Resources (funds, staff time) and timelines are proportionate to outputs/outcomes achieved (based on comparison across SI and ITP projects). Delivery modalities are proportionate to objectives and constraints (cost, access, quality).	Indicators (signals): - Cost ratios are reasonable relative to similar SI/ITP projects. - Milestones achieved within planned timeframe (or justified deviations). - Administrative effort reported as manageable and proportionate by Flemish and partner institutions. - Selection and governance processes occur within expected timeframes and with clear decision points. - Modality choices match context and objectives (e.g., online where feasible, in-person where necessary).	Q9-10: Document review and analysis of the budget and expenditure dimensions mapped by VLIRUOS for SI (selected cases) and ITP projects. KII with VLIRUOS SI and ITP programme staff

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Core indicators & evidence	Sources & methods
		Evidence: • Spending ratios for investment, operational, personnel, scholarship. Coordination costs and expenditures of Flemish and partner institutions linked to achieved outcomes relative to similar SI/ITP projects. • Descriptions and examples of transaction costs (reporting load, coordination) and any streamlining practices. • Examples where modality choices reduced cost/time without compromising quality, or where inefficiencies occurred.	
Coherence			
11. The extent to which SI and ITP projects interact and create synergies with other VLIRUOS programmes (TEAM, Global Minds, ICP Connect, IUC, BSS). 12. The extent to which SI and ITP projects are coherent with other (Belgian) donor-funded initiatives, including their ability to leverage external opportunities. 13. The extent to which SI and ITP projects are compatible with other interventions in the same country, sector, or institution. 14. The extent to which SI and ITP projects realise planned synergies with academic and non-academic stakeholders.	Coherence and complementarity are intentional and realised: Project design shows evidence of systematically scanning what others do (VLIRUOS and wider donor/actor landscape). Complementarity is clear and based on collaboration arrangements (who does what, added value). Duplication is avoided or justified/ managed. Planned synergies with stakeholders are implemented and produce joint value (not just contacts).	Indicators (signals): • Documented mapping of relevant programmes/actors and design choices building on this mapping. • Concrete examples of synergy (shared activities, sequencing, referrals, joint outputs, aligned workplans). • Evidence of coordination mechanisms functioning (meetings, joint decisions, shared monitoring/learning). • MoUs, ToRs or working arrangements that structure collaboration, with evidence of use. • Stakeholder confirmation that collaboration reduced duplication and/or increased reach/uptake or other added value. Evidence: • Project proposals mapping of actors/ initiatives and planned synergies • Documented working arrangements that structure collaboration or accounts of informal collaboration • Lessons learned from collaboration captured in monitoring data and reporting • Accounts of added value of synergies with academic and non-academic stakeholders.	Q11-14: KIIs or FGD with promoters and ICOS; document review of SI and ITP case study project reports, KIIs with SI in-country project stakeholders (including external stakeholders like government, experts, scholars), KII with VLIRUOS SI and ITP programme staff (Global partnership hub) Q11+14: FGD with staff of VLIRUOS: SI and ITP; project mapping (<i>dimension 8 on connection with other VLIRUOS projects</i>).
Relevance			

Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Core indicators & evidence	Sources & methods
15. The extent to which SI and ITP projects align with the needs and strategic interests of Flemish HEIs and partner institutions 16. The extent to which SI and ITP projects are relevant in addressing VLIRUOS's higher-level impact areas (e.g. global partnerships, critical global citizens, capacity strengthening) and broader academic cooperation contexts. 17. The extent to which programme innovations (e.g. revised modalities or selection criteria) enhance the relevance and added value of SI and ITP.	Project objectives/design are aligned with priority needs and strategies of key stakeholders (Flemish HEIs, partner institutions, intended beneficiaries). Sign of change towards higher-level changes indicate relevance and ToC logic validation. Innovations provide clear added value versus prior approaches.	Indicators (signals): - Flemish HEIs and partner institutions' needs and priorities are explicitly reflected in objectives and design choices. - Stakeholder accounts confirming fit and usefulness. - Adaptations were made when context changed and were justified. - Innovations are linked to improvements (targeting, feasibility, partnership quality, inclusion, learning, uptake). Evidence: - Stakeholders accounts of projects responding to their needs with examples. - Project proposals show analysis of needs and refer to design choices aligned with partners' strategic interests - Changes in implementation modalities and/or project strategies recorded in monitoring and reporting data - Examples showing how an innovation changed implementation modalities or results (good or bad).	Q15: Document review including proposals, reports of the selection commission (relevance criteria), KIIs or FGD with promoters and ICOS. Q16: Signs of change at higher level impact areas from document review, KIIs and FGDs for 16 selected SI projects and completed ITP projects. Q17: for selected SI and 11 ITP, KIIs with key project stakeholders, KIIs or FGD with promoters and ICOS.

Annex B: SI project sample

Short project title	Country	ProjectCode	Flemish Institution	Partner Institution
Ecuador UTN inclusive higher education	Ecuador	EC2022SIN340B126	Hogeschool PXL	Universidad Técnica del Norte
Ecuador sustainable energy transmission planning	Ecuador	EC2022SIN342A101	KU Leuven	Universidad de Cuenca
Ecuador harmful algal blooms in Guayas basin	Ecuador	EC2023SIN379B125	Hogeschool Gent	Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral
Andean medicinal herbs phytotherapeutic product	Ecuador	EC2023SIN380A105	Vrije Universiteit Brussel	Universidad de Cuenca
Ethiopia palliative care capacity	Ethiopia	ET2022SIN346B126	Hogeschool PXL	Jimma University
Ethiopia sustainable construction materials	Ethiopia	ET2023SIN384A104	Universiteit Hasselt	Jimma University
Ethiopia poultry biosecurity & disease control	Ethiopia	ET2023SIN385A101	KU Leuven	Addis Ababa University
Philippines vegetable food loss upcycling	Philippines	PH2023SIN392A103	Universiteit Gent	Saint Louis University
Philippines telerehabilitation for PWDs	Philippines	PH2023SIN393B135	Thomas More	University of Santo Tomas
Uganda school mental health & digital referrals	Uganda	UG2022SIN360A101	KU Leuven	Kyambogo University
Uganda HBV MTCT viral load testing	Uganda	UG2022SIN361A102	Universiteit Antwerpen	Lira University College
Uganda indigenous famine crops & food systems	Uganda	UG2023SIN400A103	Universiteit Gent	Lira University College
Harnessing circular and carbon-sequestering local feed resources	Uganda	UG2023SIN401A103	Universiteit Gent	Makerere University
Africa WHO-CC family medicine & primary care	South Africa	ZA2022SIN355A103	Universiteit Gent	Stellenbosch University
South Africa digital inclusion assessment (DISA)	South Africa	ZA2023SIN394A105	Vrije Universiteit Brussel	University of the Western Cape
South Africa Men & Health HIV consortium	South Africa	ZA2023SIN395A102	Universiteit Antwerpen	University of Cape Town

Annex C: SI Impact stories

Ecuador

The SI **“A high-impact professionalization trajectory for UTN (and PXL)-lecturers to promote educational inclusion while respecting 'cultural identity'”** became a starting gate for pedagogical innovation, enabling diverse institutional practices that went well beyond the defined project scope. Initially targeting 22 lecturers, the project triggered the integration of intercultural, inclusive, and culturally responsive methodologies into curricula, classroom routines, and research agendas across faculties. This shift extended beyond the original participants through replication in new projects, creation of inclusive communication outputs (e.g., materials in indigenous languages, accessible content for visually impaired populations), and community-engaged practices (e.g., co-created murals, partnerships with local associations).

Several concrete examples illustrate the initiative’s scaling potential beyond its initial design. Notably, the integration of these methodologies and structured accompaniment into pre-professional teaching practices within pedagogy programs is intended to influence teaching approaches in primary and secondary education settings. Through linkage with community, the creation of dedicated development spaces for children with Down syndrome—implemented on campus and sustained through lecturers’ guidance and rotating engagement of students—has generated an unexpected and deep impact in UTN involved members and the involved families, while enhancing reciprocal learning processes, strengthening both inclusive pedagogical competencies among future educators and developmental outcomes for participating children.

At the institutional level, the initiative has contributed to a reorientation of priorities by embedding intercultural aspects and pedagogical competencies within training processes, while also generating expansion through formal academic platforms and cross-faculty; this is evidenced by the emergence of interdisciplinary research trajectories: for instance, a computer science academic co-designed a research-based social experiment to examine cultural bias and discrimination within programming education in Ecuador, while another lecturer, initially involved through communication support, pursued doctoral research focused on developing a bot to promote cultural awareness within the university environment. These cases signal a shift from isolated project outputs to sustained changes in research agendas and academic practice.

This momentum has translated into institutional continuity and resource mobilization. Following the initial phase, the university advanced into a second implementation stage and, by early 2026, secured IUC funding through VLIRUOS to deepen its engagement with communities. Overall, the initiative has moved beyond its original scope, influencing teaching practices, reshaping research orientation, and strengthening university–community collaboration, with tangible and expanding benefits for diverse and historically underserved student populations.

Ethiopia

Developing a Sustainable Palliative Care Network in Ethiopia Through Co-Creation of an Interdisciplinary Education Program

The initiation and implementation of this SI project in Jimma University Medical Center (JUMC), Jimma University has introduced the concept of palliative care; created awareness for health professionals through assessment of the status of palliative care practices and training and workshops.

Because of the palliative care concept introduction and awareness created activities in JUMC (1) palliative care is owned by the JUMC management, (2) the palliative care unit is upgraded into palliative care ward and strengthened with human resources (oncologist, psychologist, and 5 nurses) and facilities. In addition, (3) palliative care is introduced into postgraduate health education curricula system and implemented, (4) as the Ministry of Health has introduced palliative care initiation, JUMC is sharing its practices of palliative care services to other hospitals.



Chronically ill patients have benefited from the structure established. The implementation of the SI has attracted additional funding and collaboration on palliative care.

In the assessment, institutional ownership of palliative care, and inclusion of palliative care into education curricula are the SI institutional policy and regulation influence. Upgrading palliative care unit into palliative care ward and strengthening it with resources is structural change and reallocation of institutional resources. Sharing the implemented practices of palliative care is diffusion of the practice beyond JUMC. Attraction of further funding and collaboration is towards sustainable/durable practice. These have been triangulated by the local and Flemish promoters.

Philippines

Trash to treasure impact story

In Baguio City, the salad capital of the Philippines, vegetable trimmings and surplus produce are a common feature of trading posts and markets. In a context of high climate vulnerability and food insecurity, this raises concern about food loss and waste. With support from VLIRUOS, Saint Louis University in Baguio and Ghent University launched the “From Trash to Treasure” project in 2024 to explore food upcycling: converting vegetable trimmings and surplus into value-added products.

Although the two-year project period was too short to generate major societal impacts, the project appears to have achieved a number of intermediate results. It raised awareness among producers, manufacturers, MSMEs, the Department of Trade and Industry, local government actors, academic institutions, and students. Activities such as training sessions and cooking contests also stimulated product ideas, as well as initial testing and possible upscaling. One reported unintended result emerged from training at SLU: the owners of Macky Strawberry Farm in Tuba, Benguet began processing vegetable trimmings and surplus into garden chips, using onion leeks, taro, and sugar beet. According to the account provided, this initiative was later expanded to 56 farmers in the area and linked to direct sales arrangements with DMCI Homes, reportedly improving farmer incomes by removing middlemen and allowing farmers to set prices more directly.

The project also reportedly helped create momentum for follow-on support. Benguet State University and Central Luzon State University, both involved in the VLIRUOS-supported initiative, later secured DOST grants, with BSU receiving PHP 25 million to scale up related work. Among manufacturers, the project appears to have increased interest in valorising by-products from existing food processing, such as discarded wombok parts from kimchi production or by-products from tofu making. At the same time, these actors stressed that they still lack the equipment and funding needed for research and development. Overall, the case suggests that the project was most effective in raising awareness, stimulating experimentation, and opening pathways for further development.

Uganda

Harnessing Circular and Carbon-Sequestering Local Feed Resources to close the Nutrition Gap of Cross-Bred Dairy Cattle in Uganda

Dairy is one of the fastest-growing agricultural commodities in Uganda, and this project generated evidence on how climate-responsive dairy farming could be strengthened by addressing nutritional deficiencies in smallholder livestock systems. By applying academic research to the production of feed resources for cross-bred dairy cattle, the project aligned well with Uganda’s Climate Smart Agriculture framework, which seeks to enhance productivity, build climate resilience, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In this sense, the project spoke directly to an existing policy direction promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries.

A central contribution of the project was its focus on the uptake of non-conventional feed resources for smallholder dairy farmers, particularly during the transition to lactation, when nutritional demands are high. Through collaboration with private-sector and research actors, notably Ento Organic Farm Uganda and the National Livestock Resources Research Institute (NaLIRRI), the project explored a circular feed strategy aimed at generating more sustainable

protein sources for cattle. This provided field-based evidence relevant to policy and practice on climate-sensitive ruminant production systems, the capacity development of public extension workers, and the certification and accessibility of forage seed for dairy farmers.

The findings also point to areas where institutional or public resource allocation would need to be strengthened if such approaches are to be taken forward at scale. In particular, the study suggests the need for continued investment in extension capacity so that public services can respond to changing dairy-sector needs, as well as stronger systems for forage seed certification to reduce dependence on natural grass and imported feed sources. In this sense, the project appears to have highlighted strategic entry points for public investment rather than directly triggering resource shifts during the project period itself.

In terms of diffusion, the project points toward a model in which identified farmers could act as local learning hubs for wider dissemination. Makerere University could potentially work with such model farmers to support peer learning and build clusters that spread evidence-based feeding practices across smallholder dairy systems. However, while the project generated promising research-oriented solutions and appears to have demonstrated their practical relevance, the 24-month duration limited the extent to which wider dissemination and monitoring across the sector could take place. As a result, concrete broader-scale change for end-beneficiaries remains mostly prospective.

At institutional level, the project appears to have made a meaningful contribution by demonstrating the value of deliberate academic-industry collaboration in responding to practical economic challenges. It also helped position academia, and particularly higher education institutions, as actors that can contribute more directly to solving real-world problems. The cooperation between Ghent University and Makerere University illustrates how research agendas can be co-created around applied challenges, with the potential to reshape institutional practice and future research directions toward more use-oriented and context-relevant innovation.

South Africa

The **men's health crowdsourcing SI project** offers a concrete story of change that is modest but still meaningful beyond academia.

In South Africa, men's lower uptake of HIV testing and treatment remains a persistent challenge, despite the maturity of the national HIV response. The SI project responded to this by not starting with a pre-defined intervention, but by first trying to understand how men themselves experience barriers to care and what kinds of solutions they consider realistic. Through formative research, a crowdsourcing process, and the creation of a Community Reference Group, the project brought researchers, community members, and local stakeholders into a more structured dialogue on men's access to health services.

What appears to have changed most clearly is not clinic practice yet, but the quality of interaction between research and community realities. The project created a space in which men's health challenges could be discussed more openly and in more practical terms. Community members contributed ideas on issues such as clinic opening hours, waiting times, stigma, and the lack of male-friendly services. The Community Reference Group helped ensure that these discussions were not extractive, but shaped by local voices and priorities. In that sense, the project seems to have shifted the role of community members from being mainly respondents to becoming contributors to problem definition and early solution design. This approach demonstrates that stronger science-society interaction can itself be an important result: the project helped generate more grounded, socially informed knowledge on men's health, while also strengthening local research capacity and participation structures. The evidence remains cautious on broader impact, since the proposed solutions were not yet implemented within the SI period. Even so, the project appears to have produced an important proof of concept for participatory agenda-setting in an area where effective solutions depend heavily on trust, relevance, and local feasibility.

Annex D: List of respondents

SI Programme

The evaluation team has engaged overall 117 respondents across the 16 SI case studies. For each case study, the Flemish promoters were interviewed online and the VLIRUOS Global Partnership Coordinator was engaged for portfolio insights. Below the list of in-country respondents per project:

Ethiopia

- ET2022SIN346B126: Local project promotor; Director, Oncology Nursing; oncologist and team member; Director, Palliative Care Ward; Medical Director, JUMC and team member.
- ET2023SIN384A104: MSc researcher and beneficiary, Jimma Technology Institute; Dean, Material Science Engineering; project technical supporter; internal Civil Engineering staff; external stakeholder from Oma Private Construction Company.
- ET2023SIN385A101: local promoter, PhD student and beneficiary; training coordinator; manager of Farm Production Unit; MSc student and beneficiary; external stakeholder, farm veterinarian.

South Africa

- ZA2022SIN394A103: project promoter South Africa, Stellenbosch; PhD student Uganda; PhD student Benin; implementing partner in Eastern Cape (non-academic)
- ZA2023SIN394A105: project promoter, UWC; two PhD students; project member responsible for contracting; five team members; three external stakeholders including policy and sector actors
- ZA2023SIN395A102: project promoter and team, UCT; postdoc; three Community Reference Group stakeholders.

Ecuador

- EC2023SIN379B125: CADS local promoter; CADS researchers and lab technicians; thesis student; CIBE research technician; Environmental Monitoring lecture; CIBE local promoter; external water quality and lab technicians
- EC2022SIN342A101: Local promoter and main researcher; lecturer and researcher for environmental component; CEDIA-funded research technician and assistant; lecturer and former Director of Planning at CELEC
- EC2022SIN340B126: Local promoter and researchers; Critical Friends teacher and principal; implementing technical team; student group; more involved lecturers; less involved lecturers; community linkage coordinator
- EC2023SIN380A105: Local promoter and researcher; researchers; research technician; administrative support; thesis student; Parish Council board member; group interview with midwives, lecturer and intern VUB

Uganda

- UG2022SIN360A101: Local promoter; project team group interview, school representative (non-academic)
- UG2022SIN361A102: Local promoter; project team group interview, partner institution (non-academic)
- UG2023SIN400A103: Local promoter, researcher part of project team, external partner
- UG2023SIN401A103: Local promoter; project researchers.

Philippines

- PH2023SIN392A103 : Three SLU researchers; one DTI partner; one BAPTC representative; one farmer SME; one MSME manufacturer

- PH2023SIN393B135: Promoter and finance manager; focus groups with researchers; steering committee member and researcher; LGU counterpart researcher; focal person in LGU Binangonan;, trainer, profiler and writer; focal person in Talim Island.

ITP Programme

- VLIRUOS Global Partnership Coordinator
- BE2022ITP245A101: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP242A104: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP243B101: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP241B126: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP236A103: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP240A102: Flemish promoter; trainees
- BE2022ITP246A103: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP239A103: coordinators; trainees
- BE2022ITP237A105: promotor and coordinator; trainees
- BE2022ITP238A103: promotor; trainees
- BE2022ITP244A102: promotor and coordinator; trainees

Annex E: SI Case study summaries

1. ET2022SIN346B126 – Palliative Care Network in Ethiopia

The project appears to have made a relevant contribution to strengthening palliative care practice at Jimma University Medical Center (JUMC). Based on the information available, the project combined an assessment of palliative care provision with training, awareness-raising, and stakeholder engagement. Reported results include improved awareness and attitudes among health professionals and management, the introduction or strengthening of pain scoring and pain management practices, development of palliative care guidelines, and increased institutional attention to palliative care within JUMC. There are also indications that palliative care became more visible within education and multidisciplinary service provision.

The evidence suggests that the project moved beyond awareness alone and helped support changes in service organisation and professional practice within the hospital. At the same time, the available information also points to important limitations. Procurement of some equipment was not realised, morphine availability remained problematic, and infrastructure and staffing constraints limited the extent of implementation. It would therefore be more cautious to conclude that the SI plausibly contributed to institutional strengthening and service development within JUMC, rather than to claim broader systemic impact. Sustainability seems likely to depend on continued institutional ownership, national policy support, and follow-up resources.

2. ET2023SIN384A104 – Sustainable Construction

The project has been relevant to local needs around affordable housing, local materials, and environmentally friendly construction. The project reportedly supported MSc students, organised short-term training and seminars, developed an interdisciplinary course module, and disseminated results through multiple channels. Both local and Flemish sources suggest that it increased awareness and skills among academic and non-academic actors and helped stimulate research interest in local construction materials.

At the same time, the claims on practical application require caution. The Flemish promotor frames the project's achievements more as academic mobilisation, exploration, and agenda-setting than as delivery of ready-to-use construction solutions. The identification and prioritisation of promising materials, such as bamboo, appears to have been a central result, whereas piloting, certification, and broader practical use remained limited. Nonetheless, the project effectively generated knowledge, research capacity, and stakeholder dialogue while evidence of applied uptake remains modest and dependent on later policy, regulatory, and market developments.

3. ET2023SIN385A101 – Enhancing Poultry Biosecurity and Health Management

This project has delivered several planned outputs linked to poultry biosecurity and disease diagnosis. Reported activities include training of trainers, translation of the Biocheck tool into local languages, farm-based assessment and training, and MSc support in poultry disease diagnosis. Local accounts suggest changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices among farmers, farm attendants, veterinarians, and farm managers, as well as improved institutional capacity in advanced disease diagnosis.

The Flemish promotor broadly confirms these achievements, but introduces useful caution. Results seem strong for biosecurity awareness, practical training, and curriculum-related embedding, but more modest for more ambitious objectives such as reagent self-sufficiency or wider sectoral changes. The project also faced early delays due to staff changes and broader procurement constraints. Overall, the SI likely contributed to incremental improvements in training, awareness, and diagnostic capacity, with some evidence of early practical use, while broader systemic uptake remains less certain.

4. ZA2022SIN355A103 – Primary Care Assessment Tool / WHOCC trajectory

The project was strong in terms of research outputs, network effects, and follow-on trajectory. Its most clearly evidenced achievement was the development, validation, and piloting of a regional Primary Care Assessment Tool (PCAT) adapted to sub-Saharan African contexts. The project also

strengthened collaboration among Stellenbosch University, Ghent University, Makerere University, and CERRHUD in Benin, while increasing engagement with WHO priorities in primary health care research and measurement.

The SI did not achieve WHO Collaborating Centre designation within the project period but it appears to have created preconditions for that longer-term pathway through joint research, workshops, networking, and increased visibility. The project credibly achieved strong methodological, academic, and partnership results, and likely made an important catalytic contribution to later scaling.

5. ZA2023SIN394A105 – Digital Inclusion in South Africa

This project has been effective in delivering its core research outputs. It developed a digital inclusion measurement instrument, generated a multi-dimensional dataset across four provinces, and strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration around digital inclusion and digital transformation in South Africa. Reported outcomes also include PhD-related capacity development, dissemination to policy and practitioner audiences, and the creation of a stronger evidence base on digital engagement.

The move from a national survey to a four-province survey is framed as a pragmatic and methodologically sound adaptation that nonetheless affects the scale of the results. Evidence shows that effects beyond academia remain early. The most defensible conclusion is that the project appears to have produced a credible and useful evidence base, strengthened research capacity, and positioned the partnership well, while wider policy uptake and longer-term societal effects were still developing.

6. ZA2023SIN395A102 – Men’s Health / Crowdsourcing

This SI appears to have successfully implemented its planned research sequence: formative research, a crowdsourcing process, evaluation of the methodology, and the strengthening of a Community Reference Group (CRG). These elements seem to have contributed to stronger community engagement, local dialogue on men’s health, and capacity development among researchers, particularly around participatory approaches and crowdsourcing methods.

The most important achievement was the generation of feasible ideas, stronger participation structures, and local research capacity. The project seems strongest as a methodological and agenda-setting intervention rather than as an applied service innovation. Overall, the SI appears to have achieved most of its intended research and engagement outputs, while practical implementation of solutions remained beyond the project’s immediate reach.

7. PH2023SIN393B135 – Telerehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities

This project has produced important foundational results for future telerehabilitation and disability support in island communities. Reported achievements include profiling of persons with disabilities, creation of a database, support for ID card issuance, training of barangay health workers, stronger collaboration with local government units, and embedding of telerehabilitation-related approaches within UST’s teaching. The project also seems to have strengthened trust and cooperation between UST and local actors in Binangonan and Talim Island.

The project was not designed to fully operationalise telerehabilitation services within the SI timeframe. Local frustration about incompleteness therefore needs to be read against the project’s more preparatory scope. Overall, the SI appears to have built an enabling ecosystem and institutional base for future services, but did not yet deliver telerehabilitation implementation or clearly demonstrable service-level benefits.

8. PH2023SIN392A10 – Food Loss and Waste / Food Upcycling

The project has achieved its main diagnostic and awareness-related objectives. Reported outputs include food loss quantification, stakeholder engagement, knowledge transfer, and science communication around food upcycling and value addition. The project has brought together academic actors, farmers, processors, MSMEs and government actors around a theme of strategic relevance in the Baguio-Benguet food system.

At the same time, both local and Flemish perspectives suggest caution in interpreting practical effects. Some interviewees frame the project mainly as a diagnostic and early-stage pre-development effort,

while others suggest experimentation and promising follow-on initiatives. The project contributed to awareness, stakeholder mobilisation, and the opening of practical possibilities, but actual upcycling solutions remain largely exploratory and dependent on later R&D, equipment, and financing.

9. UG2022SIN360A101 – School-based Mental Health in Uganda

The project appears to have generated meaningful changes in school-level practice and attitudes around adolescent mental health. Based on the information provided, mental health became more discussable among learners, teachers, and caregivers; school clubs were used to create low-cost support structures and culturally resonant entry points such as sports, debate, churches, and radio helped reduce stigma. There are also reported changes in student participation and family-level dynamics.

The available evidence is strong for change within participating schools and communities, but not yet for policy adoption or scaled continuity. The project appears to have produced credible local-level behavioural and organisational effects, but wider impact and sustainability are uncertain and dependent on follow-up.

10. UG2022SIN361A102 – HBV Screening and PCR Capacity at Lira University

The SI delivered some of the clearer applied results in the portfolio. It reportedly established PCR laboratory capacity, trained staff, introduced antenatal screening and viral load testing, shortened diagnostic turnaround times, and supported treatment enrolment for HBV-positive women. These are concrete and institutionally anchored changes, and both local and Flemish stakeholders point to the importance of this contribution.

The main caution is about how far these changes can be interpreted as impact. The promoters stressed that health outcomes such as reduced mother-to-child transmission could not be demonstrated within the project period because neonatal follow-up was not completed and the public health system does not have the capacity to absorb the associated costs for the screening and treatment. The most balanced conclusion is that the project appears to have achieved strong service-level and laboratory-related outcomes and improved conditions for prevention and treatment, while evidence for sustainability and larger impact are dependent on external conditions.

11. UG2023SIN400A103 – Wild Edible Plants and Food Security

The project has generated valuable knowledge on wild edible plants and supported some community-facing experimentation. Local accounts suggest increased awareness among households, some home-level use or cultivation of wild edible plants, participatory breeding and trials and broader attention to these species as part of food security and climate adaptation. The project also seems to have expanded Lira University's research agenda and exposed staff and students to applied, interdisciplinary work.

The project appears to have made a useful academic and exploratory contribution, with some early local relevance, while stronger societal and institutional outcomes remain limited or still emerging.

12. UG2023SIN401A103 – Feed Resources, Biomarkers, and Livestock Innovation

The project has produced strong academic and technical outputs, including PhD completion, MSc supervision, strengthening of laboratory and diagnostic capacity, and methodological advances in livestock nutrition research. There are also indications of practical relevance, including interaction with private-sector actors, farmers, and feed-related stakeholders, and some use of findings for training and curriculum review.

At the same time, many of the innovations appear still to be in pilot, research, or demonstration stages. Nonetheless, the project made a strong contribution to research capacity and generated promising pathways toward application, but evidence of mature uptake beyond the research and innovation sphere is limited.

13. EC2022SIN340B126 – Intercultural and Culturally Responsive Education

The project has made a meaningful contribution to pedagogical reflection and classroom practice at UTN. Reported changes include more culturally responsive teaching, greater recognition of local identities and knowledge systems, stronger student engagement, new contextualised teaching resources, and broader awareness of diversity in both social science and technical fields. There are also indications that the project helped stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration and follow-on initiatives.

The project set up an activation and trajectory-setting phase. The strongest contribution seems to be the co-definition of the problem and the creation of a sustained pedagogical direction that later programmes could build on. Overall, the SI appears to have generated important attitudinal, pedagogical, and early institutional effects, while some of the more systemic institutional outcomes are still in formation.

14. EC2022SIN342A101 – Transmission Network Expansion Planning (TNEP)

This project appears to have delivered solid academic outputs, including publications, student involvement, methodological development, and continued collaboration between Universidad de Cuenca and KU Leuven. Interviewees also suggest some engagement with CELEC and complementary funding that helped continue related technical work.

The main achievement was the development of a research prototype and deep methodological exchange. Given the absence of a user interface, the complexity of the modelling approach, and the institutional conservatism of sector actors, broader uptake was not very realistic within the SI period. Overall, the project appears to have been academically strong and technically relevant, but with limited evidence of applied solution uptake during the project itself.

15. EC2023SIN380A105 – Ancestral Knowledge and Medicinal Plants

This SI appears to have delivered several early-stage research outputs. Key achievements included documenting ancestral knowledge, laboratory work on extraction and fingerprinting, and initial formulation and toxicity-related steps in collaboration with Belgian partners. The project also seems to have strengthened collaboration between institutions and contributed to the documentation and partial valorisation of medicinal knowledge.

At the same time, the promotor is explicit that later-stage objectives were not achieved. Product validation, stability testing, regulatory approval, and commercialisation remained beyond the reach of the SI period. Community relevance also appears somewhat more complex than a straightforward knowledge transfer story, since local healing practices often rely on mixtures of plants rather than single-species pathways. A cautious conclusion is that the project appears to have been effective mainly as an early-stage research and knowledge integration exercise, with societal and applied benefits still largely prospective.

16. EC2022SIN342A101 – Transmission Network Expansion Planning

The project appears to have delivered solid academic and technical outputs, including publications, student theses, methodological development, and continued collaboration between Ecuadorian and Flemish partners. The interviews suggest that it helped broaden transmission planning beyond purely electrical-technical criteria by incorporating environmental, territorial, and social dimensions, and it strengthened individual capacities and professional networks, including among actors linked to CELEC.

At the same time, the evidence remains cautious on applications. While CELEC reportedly showed technical interest and there were indications of openness to a follow-up phase, this did not materialise because of political change, leadership turnover, and wider sector pressures. The adoption would require a broader shift in mindset within public institutions and greater openness to academic tools and data-sharing. The SI's main achievement was a functional research prototype and proof of concept, rather than an operational tool taken up in routine planning.

Annex F: ITP Case summaries

1. BE2022ITP236A103 – Machine learning for low-carbon buildings (Vietnam)

This ITP appears to have been relevant and effective in strengthening participants' technical skills in machine learning and numerical modelling for climate change mitigation in buildings. Based on the available information, the programme responded to a clear knowledge gap in Vietnam and linked training to practical problems in energy use, greenhouse gas reduction and smart buildings. Its strongest reported results seem to be at the level of individual learning, exposure to advanced methods, and application in teaching and research by participants after the training.

From a VLIRUOS outcomes perspective, the clearest contribution appears to be to Outcome 1, through strengthening participants as agents of change who apply specialised knowledge and skills in academic and professional practice. There are also indications of contribution to Outcome 2, where learning fed into postgraduate teaching, and to knowledge-driven global partnerships, as the programme supported continued collaboration and new proposals with Vietnamese partners. By contrast, the evidence is more limited on broader institutional change or on the direct use of results as applied solutions or policy influence.

2. BE2022ITP237A105 – Biotechnology and molecular biology trainers (Kenya)

This programme appears to have made a useful contribution to strengthening biotechnology and molecular biology capacities among trainers, lecturers and other mid-level professionals in Kenya. The design seems to have combined technical training with a training-of-trainers logic, which likely supported diffusion of knowledge beyond direct participants. The programme also appears relevant to broader societal challenges in Kenya, especially where biotechnology skills are linked to agricultural, health or environmental applications.

At programme level, the clearest contribution seems to be to Outcome 1, as trainees strengthened technical competencies and were selected partly because they could apply and transfer these in their work. The ToT dimension also suggests a contribution to Outcome 2, through strengthening educational quality and training capacity, while the programme's wider outreach and streamed lectures indicate some extension beyond the immediate trainee group. There are references in the report to engagement with broader societal debates, including biosafety and GMO-related issues, but the evidence remains stronger for competence development and diffusion than for policy-level or sector-wide change.

3. BE2022ITP238A103 – Open Doors for women researchers in Africa

This ITP appears to have been particularly relevant as a targeted capacity development initiative for women researchers. The available information suggests that the programme supported participants through short research stays, training, exchange and networking, and that it addressed issues of academic development, confidence, visibility and progression in research careers. Its added value seems to lie not only in the content of the training, but also in the creation of peer support, mentorship and exchange across participants.

Viewed through the VLIRUOS framework, the programme appears to contribute most clearly to Outcome 1, through strengthening individual skills, agency and professional trajectories, and to knowledge-driven global partnerships, through continued peer, mentorship and institutional networks across countries. It is also one of the clearer ITPs in relation to the impact area of global citizenship, as the report links it to gender equity, leadership and role-modelling in academic environments. Evidence on broader institutional transformation is more limited, but the programme does appear to have supported stronger positioning of participants within wider academic and research networks.

4. BE2022ITP239A103 – Sustainable consumption and production

This programme appears to have been relevant to professionals working on sustainability, resource efficiency and responsible production, and to broader environmental and policy

challenges in participating countries. The training seems to have provided participants with conceptual and practical tools to assess and promote more sustainable practices, while also bringing together participants from different institutional and sectoral backgrounds. Its strongest reported results seem to be at the level of individual learning, application in professional contexts, and continued exchange among participants.

At programme level, the most evident contribution appears to be to Outcome 1, through participants' application of sustainability concepts and tools in their work, and to knowledge-driven global partnerships, given the continued exchange and follow-up collaboration reported among alumni and institutions. The thematic focus also gives the programme some relevance to the impact area of global citizenship, particularly where sustainability and social responsibility were explicitly part of the intended impact. However, evidence remains more limited on formal policy influence or durable organisational change, and stronger on individual and network-based outcomes.

5. BE2022ITP240A102 – Molecular malaria surveillance

This ITP appears to have delivered specialised training in molecular surveillance for malaria and to have been relevant to participants engaged in research, laboratory work and disease control. The programme likely strengthened technical skills, familiarised participants with advanced methods, and supported their ability to use these methods in academic or laboratory practice. It also seems to have been embedded in a wider international research network, which strengthens its relevance for continued scientific exchange and collaboration.

In terms of VLIRUOS outcomes, the strongest contribution appears to be to Outcome 1, through highly specialised skills and their application in research and laboratory practice, and to knowledge-driven global partnerships, as the programme was embedded in an existing international research network and helped sustain collaboration beyond the training itself. Its relevance to applied solutions and evidence-based policies is present mainly through its contribution to public health knowledge and technical capacity, but the evidence remains stronger for research and professional change than for broader system or policy effects.

6. BE2022ITP241B126 – Intercultural inclusive teacher education

This programme appears to have made a meaningful contribution to teacher education and educational inclusion, particularly through attention to interculturality, inclusive pedagogies and context-sensitive teaching approaches. The training seems to have been well aligned with the work of teacher trainers and pre-service educators and likely supported changes in teaching approaches, curriculum reflection and awareness of inclusion in educational practice. The participatory and partnership-based character of the programme appears to have been an important source of relevance.

From a programme-level perspective, this ITP appears to contribute most clearly to Outcome 2, through improved educational quality, pedagogy and curriculum-related practice, and to Outcome 1, as participants applied and shared these approaches within teacher education settings. It is also one of the clearer cases in relation to global citizenship, given the programme's explicit orientation to interculturality, inclusion and educational equity. The report also places it among the cases with stronger partnership and co-creation features, though evidence on wider institutional or policy embedding remains more selective.

7. BE2022ITP242A104 – Environmental citizen science in the Philippines

This ITP appears to have been relevant and innovative in linking environmental monitoring with citizen science approaches. The available material suggests that the programme supported participants in applying environmental methods while also strengthening reflection on participation, outreach and community engagement. The strongest reported contribution seems to be in combining technical and pedagogical elements in a way that made the training usable in academic, environmental and community-oriented settings.

At VLIRUOS programme level, the case appears to contribute to Outcome 1 through participant competencies, to Outcome 2 where methods were integrated into teaching and training settings,

and to knowledge-driven global partnerships through the creation of new research consortia and a Philippine Citizen Science Network. Compared with several other ITPs, this case also shows somewhat stronger pathways towards applied solutions and evidence-based policies, given its links to follow-on VLIRUOS initiatives and engagement with policy-relevant actors. Even so, the report remains more cautious on broad policy or societal influence than on institutional and network outcomes.

8. BE2022ITP243B101 – AI and IoT product development in East Africa

This programme appears to have been relevant to skills development in AI and IoT in East Africa, especially in relation to innovation, employability and stronger links between academic training and practical product development. The design seems to have emphasised practical application, entrepreneurship and real-life use cases, which likely increased its value for participants. There are also indications that the programme was connected to ambitions around competence centres, innovation hubs and prototype-to-product pathways.

From the perspective of VLIRUOS outcomes, the clearest contribution appears to be to Outcome 1, through strengthening technical and entrepreneurial competencies, and possibly to Outcome 2, where training capacities and learning environments were strengthened. The case also points towards the impact area of applied solutions, as the programme aimed to connect training more directly with product development and innovation pathways. However, the available evidence remains stronger on capacity development and emerging collaboration than on realised institutional transformation, strong private-sector uptake or wider labour-market effects.

9. BE2022ITP244A102 – Advanced NCD prevention and control (Ethiopia)

This ITP appears to have addressed a highly relevant and under-served area in Ethiopia by focusing on non-communicable disease prevention and control. The programme seems to have been grounded in a clear need and designed to equip health professionals, academics and trainers with up-to-date knowledge on NCD burden, determinants and response strategies. Compared with several other ITPs, this case appears relatively strong in institutional embedding, including accredited continuing professional development materials and integration into existing academic programmes.

In VLIRUOS terms, this appears to be one of the stronger ITPs in combining Outcome 1 with Outcome 2, as the training strengthened individual capacity while also feeding into accredited CPD materials and academic programmes. It also shows relatively strong relevance to applied solutions and evidence-based policies, as it involved ministry and health-system actors and linked training materials to national and institutional systems. The report nonetheless suggests that broader health system change should still be treated cautiously, with stronger evidence on institutional embedding than on wider policy impact.

10. BE2022ITP245A101 – School-based sexual and reproductive health education (Tanzania)

This ITP appears to have been highly relevant to local needs around adolescent sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and school-based support systems. The design seems to have deliberately brought together teachers, health workers and local stakeholders, which likely strengthened both practical relevance and prospects for application. Available information suggests that the programme aimed not only to strengthen knowledge, but also to build links between schools, health services and families.

This case appears relatively strong across several VLIRUOS dimensions. It contributed to Outcome 1 through strengthened facilitation skills and professional practice, and to Outcome 2 through school- and training-related application. It is also one of the clearer cases for global citizenship, as the report links it to more open, equitable and informed dialogue around gender and sexual and reproductive health, and to behavioural and relational changes beyond the immediate trainees. In addition, the programme seems to have strengthened collaboration between schools, health services and families, though the report still treats broader and sustained societal change as emerging rather than fully evidenced.

11. BE2022ITP246A103 – Sustainable land and water management (Ethiopia)

This programme appears to have been relevant to pressing challenges around land, water, climate and environmental degradation in Ethiopia. It seems to have combined advanced module-based training with ambitions for curriculum recognition, institutional harmonisation and local workshops for extension workers and professionals. The programme also appears well connected to broader academic cooperation, particularly through links with Bahir Dar University and longer-term educational collaboration.

At programme level, the clearest contributions appear to be to Outcome 1, through strengthening specialist and applied competencies, and to Outcome 2, where the programme linked training to future MSc and PhD trajectories, workshops and educational cooperation. The case also shows stronger evidence than several others on knowledge-driven global partnerships, given its close connection to longer-term collaboration between partner institutions and its role in supporting follow-up educational and research cooperation. There are also some pathways towards applied solutions, especially through work with extension workers and professionals, but the report remains cautious on broader policy influence or system-level effects.



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