

VLIR-UOS - Close the Gap Partnership Outreach Programme

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1 Introduction

The Flemish Interuniversity Council for University Development Cooperation (VLIR-UOS) supports research and higher education institutions in the South through partnerships with Flemish universities. VLIR-UOS' specific objectives are to build up the capacity of institutions in the South and to maintain and expand the expertise and support available within Northern hemisphere societies.

VLIR-UOS and Close the Gap have committed themselves to processing proposals in the framework of which refurbished computers would be available to VLIR-UOS partners in the South. As a result of this agreement a de facto **VLIR-UOS Close the Gap ICT Fund** has been established.

Through this collaboration following inputs are matched as to generate mutually beneficial value added:

- Expertise and a broader collaborative context as delivered by the Flemish and local university;
- Funding and quality control mechanisms delivered by VLIR-UOS;
- Low cost high quality hardware delivered by Close the Gap.

The collaboration between both organisations is meant to contribute to enhancing:

- The impact of the Interuniversity Co-Operation (IUC) programme at the level of IUC partner universities;
- The outreach and societal orientation of the IUC partner universities in terms of delivering ICT services.

This document will focus on the VLIR-UOS Close the Gap ICT Fund and especially on the impact it has on outreach initiatives.

2 VLIR-UOS Close the Gap ICT-Fund

2.1 Explanation

University extension or outreach activities are seen as one of the social responsibilities of universities in developmental countries. Such activities aim to strengthen the contact between the university and the society and thus the potential development relevance is enormous since the project can create a basis for wider outreach and support of new groups in society.

Therefore the VLIR-UOS Close the Gap Fund expects partner universities to collaborate with external local organisations (collaborative partner) in order to create a positive societal impact. The partner university must generate benefits for target groups, not associated with the university, in order to strengthen the collaborative partner. In this regard following partnerships are possible:

→ The partner university can directly serve the clients of the collaborative partner (extension service of a line ministry, trade union, school, etc.). In the long run this will benefit the 'clients' of this intermediary organisation, the objective is related to building the ICT capacity of this organisation (change at the level of the intermediary being an institutional objective);

→ The partner university directly serves the clients of the collaborative partner. Henceforth, the intermediary organisation (extension service of a line ministry, trade union, school, etc.) is working with the university in the framework of a project, i.e. assisting farmers, teachers, small businesses etc. (change at the level of specific target groups being a developmental objective).

The Fund encourages IUC partners to develop ICT outreach initiatives in exchange for no-cost provision of high quality refurbished ICT equipment. In exchange for this hardware the collaborative partner is expected to pay for the technical services of the partner university that are required. In order for the project to be eligible training and capacity building of the users, such that the hardware delivered can be properly used, is compulsory.

In fact a wide range of non-profit intermediary organisations can be considered, i.e. hospitals, NGOs, schools, ministries, libraries, interest groups etc. However political parties or their affiliates, satellite organisations of the partner university, ICT related intermediaries and foreign or international organisations are not eligible as a Collaborative Partner.

2.2 The proposal as such

A Full Collaborative Proposal (FCP) consists of the Collaborative Proposal (CP) with a Partner University Proposal (PUP).

The CP refers to the project that has been formulated collaboratively by the partner university and the external agency. This proposal will be subject to review and selection.

The PUP is a description of the proposed utilisation of the computers provided to the IUC partner university. This PUP will only be considered following the acceptance of the CP.

2.3 Mutual Benefits

In general terms, this represents a co-financing in the sense that the partner university through VLIR-UOS brings in hardware while the collaborative partner is expected to seek funding to cover the cost of the local technical expertise provided. In terms of cost and organisation, it opens the possibility for the partner universities to either generate income directly or establish semi-private satellite organisations through which they could work.

Additionally, and as an incentive, VLIR-UOS wishes to avail a certain number of computers or printers to the partner university free of charge over and above the number of units required to attain the project objectives as such. At this stage a ratio of 1 to max. 3 units (computers or printers) is proposed. This means that for every printer or computer provided to the collaborative partner the partner university may receive up to 3 computers or printers.

In this manner the partner university benefits in terms of:

- The ability to generate income (technical services are paid for);
- In-kind support through the acquisition of computers;
- Linkages that in itself could open up possibilities for research etc.

The combination of the above also contributes to the sustainability of the projects.

2.4 Outreach programme project examples

2.4.1 Saint Louis University - Philippines

2.4.1.1 Collaborative Partner: Baguio City National High School

Baguio City National High School (BCNHS) is a national public school with around 12,192 students. Per record this is the high school within the Cordillera Administrative Region that provides Saint Louis University with the highest number of first year enrollees.

BCNHS is a public high school dependent on funds provided by the national and city government. It also shares in the national concern on lack of teachers, lack of classrooms and lack of facilities. With the rising cost of education and the prevailing economic difficulties in the Philippines, most of the students would rather enrol in a public high school than go to a private high school. As such, BCNHS is beset with the growing problems on lack of facilities, teachers and resources as they are mandated to take in all who will enrol in the school.

Through the collaborative partner project with the Saint Louis University, BCNHS received 80 computers. These additional computers facilitate the proposed development and use of CD-ROM based learning material to aid the student learning process and counter the difficulties faced by the institution on lack of resources. The use of CD-ROM based learning material is an added alternative in the delivery of instruction. The project does not only forge closer ties among the academic institutions, but also individually assessed problems on lack of ICT resources are addressed.

The primary goal of this collaborative project is to enable stakeholders, particularly students and teachers, to develop skills and standards of educational uses of technology that facilitate school and learning improvement. The project works to define areas for training for faculty and staff which will be translated to a better learning to the student. It also works to define standards for development of projects such as web development and CD-ROM based material development or other electronic forms of learning as defined through assessment activities.

A 2 year faculty development programme was developed to ensure that there is a continuing collaboration with the partner university throughout the life of the project. Faculty experts from Saint Louis University conduct and facilitate the faculty development programme to the high school faculty, particularly those who are teaching industrial technology which includes computer subjects.

All this provides an opportunity for individual students to achieve their full academic potential. Besides this it also assists individual students in becoming autonomous, confident and effective learners in order to successfully meet academic standards. At the same time it provides advice, assistance and resources to faculty seeking to embed ways of improving student learning strategies in their curricula. Implementing such a project improved the delivery of instruction which is also translated to an improved quality education.

With the collaborative projects involving faculty, students and administration of both institutions, the educational link of both institutions is strengthened.

2.4.1.2 Partner University: Saint Louis University

The Saint Louis University (SLU) counts 9 colleges with about 22.000 students, 1493 employees of whom 756 are part of the teaching staff.

With the increasing growth of enrolment at the university and with only 1461 computers the computing resources at that time were not enough to cater to the computing needs (educational, ICT support, research and daily operational activities) at the institution. With such slow computing units in the offices, one cannot expect effective delivery of student services or the faculty to innovate or come up with teaching alternatives. Therefore the university received 250 computers to meet the computing needs of the SLU community.

A faculty can only deliver quality education and quality content when given the opportunity or exposure to develop necessary skills and knowledge. When such is in place, necessarily the computing tool is very vital to carry out the skills and knowledge learned through training. A comprehensive and continuing plan to upgrade computing equipment paves the way for an effective delivery of skills and knowledge of faculty.

SLU, through its technical staff, maintains its computing equipment to ensure that effective instruction as well as effective delivery of educational services is carried out.

2.4.2 Universidad Central de las Villas - Cuba

2.4.2.1 Collaborative Partner: Public Library in the province of Santa Clara

This cooperation project intends to contribute to develop higher quality services to the community by introducing the use of ICT in the Public Library System of Santa Clara. This allows the introduction of new kinds of services supported by ICT. With the installation of 130 computers in libraries in Santa Clara, an upgrading plan was developed to train technicians and specialists in the use of ICT applied to the library services. All these capacities will allow a better processing of information and its diffusion, as well as to develop research projects on applied library sciences with the support of these technologies.

Thirteen libraries of the province received computers, all connected to a network. The purpose is to create technological capacities, to access information electronically and to computerise the library management systems. To achieve these aims a training plan was executed for the personnel's preparation with support and consultant ship of the Universidad Central de las Villas. The Centre for Cultural development provided classrooms responding to the educational needs of the project.

2.4.2.2 Partner University: Universidad Central de las Villas (UCLV)

The Partner University Project was integrated to the Project 'ICT infrastructure and e-administration' by adding 180 computers to the computer rooms that were created through an earlier Interuniversity Co-operation programme.

UCLV is integrated in the above mentioned collaborative project in tasks of personnel training, consultant ships in the computer network set up, methodological consultant ship and in the development of joint research with the library system.

2.4.3 University of Nairobi - Kenya

2.4.3.1 Collaborative Partner: International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH)

ICRH Kenya is an NGO which is very active in the Coast Province in the field of health (HIV/AIDS, Child Health and Sexually Transmitted Diseases). The collaborative project supports the structure of the 60-staff organisation as well as providing the computers as a tool for communication with the distant health centres and empowerment of the target groups. Problems faced at the time were acute shortage of PCs within the organisation, need for wireless communication with operational and research sites and the digital divide young people are facing. Objective of the project is to build ICT capacity of the intermediary organisation and assistance to youth in the framework of HIV/AIDS prevention.

ICRH received 50 computers that improved the capacity of the NGO, the wireless communication with the different sites of the NGO and increased the access for young people to PCs and the Internet. The University of Nairobi will provide technical services to the ICRH. Students of the university were involved in the installation of the PCs and development and testing of the wireless networks on a work study programme or on volunteer basis.

2.4.3.2 Partner University: University of Nairobi

Before this project, access to computing services at the university was limited due to a lack of computers. Therefore the university wanted to increase the PC: student ratio from 1 :> 30 to 1:10. Since the university didn't possess the adequate funding to realise this objective they participated into the VLIR-programme. As a result, the academy could access personal computers and set up student computer laboratories. The university received 132 computers through the VLIR programme. The institution met the other costs itself to set up computer laboratories, including purchase of UPS, local network development, furniture, setting up the operation environment and connecting to the university backbone network.

Thanks to this project the university will better be able to serve its student population