



Annual report 2019

**Today's learners,
tomorrow's leaders:
every step of education
matters**

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In 2015, governments worldwide committed to fulfilling 17 promises by 2030. The turn of the decade initiated the 10-year countdown to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by that fast-approaching deadline.

As you probably know, dear reader, VVOB is in the business of SDG4: quality education. And it looks like we're going to have to intensify our efforts.

In 2019, more children and youth than ever before were in school, a commendable accomplishment we want to highlight first.

But... many are hardly learning and some aren't learning at all.

A learning crisis is raging. Learners, even though in school, are hindered in developing their full potential. This is not just a worrying fact. It is also a violation of children's rights. And this crisis reaches further than the individual level: the positive development of countries is curbed in the long run.

We want to make sure this learning crisis is a thing of the past. We do this in partnership with governments, who pledged to make SDG4 a reality and want to honour that pledge.

We take on the learning crisis at the earliest stage. Quality early childhood education ensures children – and most importantly vulnerable children – are well prepared before moving on to primary education and having to cope with all that new information. Great Equalizer, indeed.

In primary and general secondary education, our concern is not access but actual learning outcomes: "How is education contributing to learning, if at all?" Here too, the most vulnerable group of learners loses out first when the education system is not properly organised. Teachers and school leaders need to have tools at their disposal to ensure equity.

Introduction

For TVET, we invite the private sector to contribute. Collaboration between TVET schools and companies enables schools to increase the relevance of their trainings. A process VVOB applauds, stimulates and facilitates.

In this annual report, you can explore how we go about all this in practice.

VVOB opts for smart initiatives that are aimed at maximising learners' learning potential. Our focus is (still) on the professional development of teachers and school leaders. A choice we stand by: International research shows that these two actors have the biggest impact on learners' school performance, not considering learners' home environments.

VVOB undertakes these initiatives in collaboration with partners who will, in the end, take up full responsibility of the reform process. The most relevant partner is, of course, the government. This is VVOB's golden rule: we work in synergy with ministries of education and their institutions, and we never set up structures in parallel.

Our partners appreciate VVOB's approach. And those voices of appreciation lead to new partnerships. In 2019, we signed an agreement with the Ministry of Education and Sports of Uganda. Together, we will strengthen agricultural education in the Pearl of Africa. At the beginning of the year, VVOB developed a toolkit to integrate gender-responsive pedagogy in early childhood education in cooperation with FAWE and UNESCO-IICBA. Partly thanks to the support from the African Union, various governments have made plans to use the toolkit. Financially too, VVOB is growing. The Flemish government supports the implementation of a project in South Africa focussing on climate change education, and the LEGO Foundation has taken us on board to integrate learning through play in primary classrooms in Vietnam.

VVOB features on the international map as an organisation that imposes high standards of quality and ambition on itself. Our partners know they can fulfil their SDG4 promise with VVOB. That is how all VVOB colleagues contribute to a world where all children, without any form of discrimination, can develop to their full potential.

Stefaan Van Mulders
Chairperson

Sven Rooms
General Director

This annual report highlights our accomplishments of 2019, but we cannot disregard the COVID-19 crisis and its unprecedented impact on education.

In 2019, more children and youth than ever before were in school. The opposite is true for the first half of 2020. Over 1.5 billion learners are affected by school closures. Together with our partners, we are doing whatever it takes to make sure these learners don't incur a structural disadvantage. Crises tend to hit those who were already struggling the very hardest, and we've seen that this pandemic is no different.

UNESCO invited VVOB to be a member of the Global Education Coalition as the first Belgian organisation. The Coalition aims to support countries in responding to the educational challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Creating new opportunities for all children and youth in a rapidly changing world

The world is changing rapidly. Profound global changes in the use of technology, the nature of work and the environment have urgent implications for how children and youth are educated and prepared for their adult lives and for the labour market. Employers are increasingly looking for staff who are flexible, adaptable, proactive, creative and collaborative. This results in increased demands for transferable skills: the broad set of skills, attitudes, behaviours and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work with others, perform well and achieve their goals.

Many skills that were considered valuable only a decade ago, are already considered obsolete today. And there is no doubt that many valuable skills of today will be obsolete in a few years. Many children who are in school today will be getting jobs that don't even exist yet. Education should equip children with skills that will help them thrive in the 21st century.

Children in preschools today will enter the workforce around 2035. Although we cannot predict exactly what their world will look like then, we do know that children and adults will continue to need basic skills in reading and math. They will also need a greater ability to learn how to learn, to collaborate and to com-

municate. They will have to possess creativity, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and be resilient in the face of fast-moving technological changes and health and climate emergencies.

But many education systems across the world are ill-prepared for these new realities. Teachers and school leaders need more and better support in dealing with these, since they are the two most critical sets of actors in raising the quality of learning and well-being of all learners. VVOB contributes to this by strengthening the capacity of institutions which support teachers and school leaders, such as national ministries of education, local education authorities, colleges and universities, and civil society organisations.

Children start developing many of these required skills from a very young age and then pick up different kinds of skills at different stages of their development. That's why VVOB focuses on learning and wellbeing of children and youth across different sub-sectors of the education system, covering key stages in childhood and adolescence: from early childhood education and primary education, to general secondary education and secondary technical and vocational education.



Early childhood education: unlocking future potential of all children

Learners need an excellent start in early childhood if they are to cope with 21st century challenges. The first years of life have a foundational impact on a child's future wellbeing and learning. For that reason, early childhood education is a 'now or never' investment, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It results in better learning outcomes, lower levels of repetition and drop-outs, as well as in the child's overall wellbeing and emotional, social, and mental development. Within early childhood education, VVOB has made great progress in 2019 in promoting gender-responsive and learning-through-play pedagogies, unlocking new potential for children's futures.

Young children are extremely susceptible to prevailing gender stereotypes in the societies they are growing up in. This has a profound impact on the expectations both girls and boys have about their future lives and thus choices. In order to allow all girls and boys to develop to their full potential, VVOB and its partners developed a practical approach to gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education (GRP4ECE). Learn more about gender-responsive education and the toolkit on page 8 of this report.

Between the ages of 3 and 6, children also start playing more imaginatively. Play and learning cannot be separated; play is fundamental to how we learn. Moreover, play allows children to engage with multiple domains of learning simultaneously. Learning-through-play has been proven to enhance wellbeing and involvement in learning. It fosters a breadth of skills and cultivates creativity and imagination, thus preparing learners for success in the 21st century.

VVOB's understanding of learning-through-play has been inspired by the research of Jennifer M. Zosh and her colleagues, who identified 5 characteristics of learning-through-play* for the LEGO Foundation:

1. Learning-through-play is joyful
2. Learning-through-play is meaningful
3. Learning-through-play is actively engaging
4. Learning-through-play is iterative
5. Learning-through-play is socially interactive

Introducing learning-through-play and gender-responsive pedagogy in early childhood education often requires a paradigm shift. Experiences of VVOB in Vietnam and in Zambia demonstrate how innovative play-based and gender-responsive pedagogies can be introduced and scaled successfully, even in low-resource settings. VVOB is committed to further scale these experiences and to include learning-through-play and gender-responsive pedagogy in all its early childhood education programmes. Moreover, VVOB is expanding learning-through-play to its primary education activities.

VVOB introduces learning-through-play and gender responsive-pedagogies in pre-service teacher training systems, for instance through curriculum reform at the level of teacher training institutions or by preparing teacher educators to include learning-through-play and gender-responsive pedagogies in their courses. VVOB also strengthens induction and continuous professional development for (new) teachers, for instance by preparing those responsible for coaching and mentoring in-service teachers.



Primary education: building foundational skills in reading and math

In recent years, millions of children across the world have enrolled in primary education. But too many of these children are not learning, leaving primary school without being able to read or do basic math. But these foundational learning outcomes are key for children's further education and lives. To make sure no child is left behind, VVOB's programmes in primary education support governments and education stakeholders so that teachers and school leaders can help every child acquire basic skills in reading and math.

VVOB always works closely with its government partners determining the highest priorities for reaching these important learning outcomes in a particular context. In Cambodia for example, one of VVOB's programmes focuses on effective classroom management and maths-specific pedagogical content knowledge of new teachers. In 2019, VVOB also developed a new in-service teachers' package to improve early grade math teaching, in partnership with UNESCO. In South Africa, VVOB has been strengthening school leadership and professional learning communities for early grade reading. Still in South Africa, two of VVOB's programmes have been strengthening primary school teachers' inclusive teaching practices, so that disadvantaged learners can also acquire reading and math skills.

Learners who are left behind in primary education also need access to effective recourse programmes to catch up. VVOB is doing exactly that in its Catch Up project in Zambia. Catch Up implements the Teaching At the Right Level approach, which groups learners by ability rather than age and uses interactive and participative materials based on clear and simple learning goals. The 2019 Economics Nobel Laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo worked closely with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and the education NGO Pratham in India to develop and research this approach. VVOB has been implementing the Teaching at the Right Level approach in Zambia for years now, from pilot to scale, together with J-PAL, Pratham, TaRL Africa and UNICEF. Up from a modest 80 schools in the pilot year, close to 1,800 schools will be participating in Teaching at the Right Level in Zambia in 2020. The impact of the approach is impressive: in 2019, learners' abilities to read a simple paragraph or do a simple subtraction increased with 21 and 24 percentage points respectively after just six months of Catch Up.

General secondary education: raising future opportunities

Adolescence is a transformational phase of human life, but also a period of heightened risk and vulnerability. Quality secondary education is a pivotal factor in raising the future opportunities for adolescents, especially for adolescent girls and other vulnerable groups.

Within secondary education, VVOB focuses on three priority levers for change:

1. Creating safe and supportive secondary schools:

Quality secondary schools are free from violence, set high expectations for their students and provide support where needed.

2. Ensuring equity:

Quality secondary schools promote norms and behaviours that dismantle patterns of unequal power, social status and opportunity.

3. Enabling smooth transitions to work and further learning:

Quality secondary schools have connections and provide students with linkages between schooling and participation in the world of work and in lifelong learning.

VVOB's programmes in secondary education in Cambodia and Rwanda are changing gender norms, which can stand in the way of girls choosing more STEM-related fields of study.

In Rwanda, VVOB works with several partners on the Mastercard Foundation's 'Leaders in Teaching' initiative, focusing on four important pillars in secondary education: recruiting the best teachers, training them, leading them and motivating them.

Addressing the climate emergency has become a matter of concern for many secondary school students around the world. The role of education in addressing the challenges of the climate emergency is increasingly recognised. Secondary education can provide children and young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about how to adapt individual lives and ecological, social or economic systems to a changing environment. In the new 'Keep it Cool' project in South Africa, VVOB and partner GreenMatter work with teachers and school leaders of secondary schools to make climate change education part of school and classroom practice.

Secondary technical and vocational education: getting ready for decent work and lifelong learning

By focusing on relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship within secondary technical and vocational education, VVOB smoothen the transition from schools to work and further learning.

VVOB's programmes on boosting agricultural entrepreneurship in the DR Congo and Uganda make use of active pedagogies in the classroom and on the practice fields, and equip students to deploy a broad range of skills, including problem-solving, creativity, risk-taking, (financial) planning, collaboration and communication.

In Ecuador, VVOB invests in the quality of upper secondary technical education, paying special attention to creating safe and supportive schools, gender equity and linking schooling with the world of work. VVOB's programmes in Ecuador focus on technical fields that are known to generate employment for youth and promising sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and sustainable tourism.

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting is a major cause of drop-out in upper secondary education in Ecuador. This does not only have a negative effect on the future opportunities of the young parents, but also on their child's. VVOB and its partners developed a protocol that schools can apply to help pregnant and parenting teens and keep them from dropping out.

A recent study showed that one in five 11-to-18-year-old students suffer school-related violence. VVOB support has therefore included the development of a policy framework as well as a modular training and coaching package for the use of restorative practices in school settings.

In Suriname, VVOB supports a particularly vulnerable group of adolescents: those in lower secondary vocational education. VVOB's programmes in Suriname focus on quality training in safe and supportive learning environments. This is done through a whole school approach. Evidence-based tools are used to discuss student behaviour more openly and arrive at the most appropriate educational responses.

Covering all crucial stages

By improving education from early years to adolescence, VVOB covers all crucial stages in the learning journeys of children and youth. And by targeting all learners – including those from disadvantaged backgrounds – VVOB's programmes ensure inclusion and develop diverse talents needed in a rapidly evolving world. Together with partners supporting teachers and school leaders as professionals today, VVOB contributes to the development and empowerment of people, communities and countries tomorrow.



The gender equalising power of early childhood teachers

Early childhood education has great potential to challenge limiting gender stereotypes at a time when children are still developing their gender norms and identities. Joining forces with partners, VVOB developed and implemented an innovative approach to gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education (GRP4ECE).

GRP4ECE supports preschool leaders and teachers to become aware of their gender biases and to become agents of change in their classrooms and schools. It provides young children with opportunities to develop to their full potential according to their unique talents and interests, irrespective of their sex.



Harmful gender stereotypes guide our lives

Martin Mwansa is an early childhood education (ECE) teacher at Mashikili primary school in Zambia's Central Province. Martin is an exception. He is one of the few male ECE teachers in Zambia.

Being an ECE teacher is “a woman’s job”. The same stereotype stretches to nurses, midwives and hairdressers. “A man’s job”, on the other hand, would be a truck driver, construction worker or doctor. This limiting mentality is what children are taught from a very young age. Such gender stereotypes are not only relevant to the professions of men and women. Gender stereotypes invade all areas of life, including our schools and classrooms. This starts at a very young age and is not without consequence. On the contrary.

Research shows that the concept of gender in children forms between the ages of 3 and 7. During this period, children acquire strong gender biases, such as which jobs men and women should fulfil. By this age, girls have often already been negatively affected by gendered interactions and boys’ masculine conduct in schools. Altogether, this has a tremendous impact on children’s future life-paths. Rigid understandings of gender norms, identities, and stereotypes seriously limit young children’s freedom to develop to their full potential according to their unique and valuable talents and interests, irrespective of their sex.

As one of the few male ECE teachers in Zambia, Martin Mwansa is indeed an exception. He is also a role model that challenges stereotypes.

A case for gender-responsive ECE

ECE practitioners are well-placed to challenge gender stereotypes that their young learners are constantly confronted with at home, in the media, and in learning materials. However, many preschool leaders and teachers may be unconscious validators of harmful gender stereotypes themselves. Girls, for example, are more often praised by teachers for their clothing, appearance and caring behaviours. Boys, on the contrary, are complimented for their physical strength, are given more complex tasks and attention in class and experience more space to express themselves than girls.

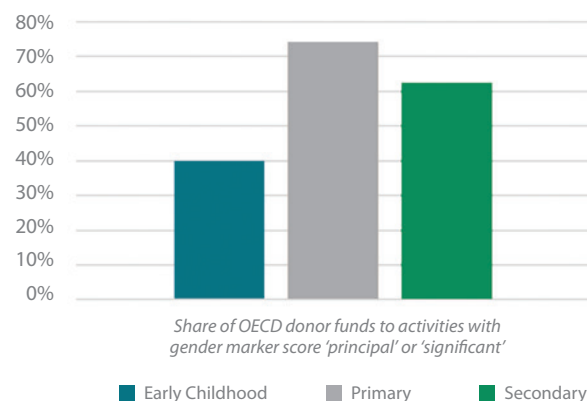
Maureen Namwinga, ECE teacher at Shalubala primary school in Zambia, says it well: “We used to view girls as not being good at mathematics, [...] And in technology studies for instance, we would prefer to interact mostly with boys and not involve the girls.” In this way, too often preschools lay the foundations for a society in which life opportunities for boys and girls, men and women, are unequal.



Martin Mwansa (second from left) with colleagues at Mashikili primary school, Zambia

With enrolment in preschools rising in every region of the world, there is a growing sense of urgency to work on gender at this early stage during which children develop gendered norms and identities that will have a tremendous impact on their future lives. But while gender is quite well mainstreamed in global education interventions in general, the share of education interventions at early childhood level that focus on gender equity is considerably lower than at primary or secondary level (see figure below).

Share of funds to 'gender' according to education subsector



Powerful change in one toolkit

Together with the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), VVOB has been taking important steps to fill this void. VVOB and FAWE joined forces with ministries of education, teachers and teacher trainers in Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia to develop a 'gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education' toolkit (GRP4ECE). Endorsed by the African Union and the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), this toolkit empowers preschool teachers and school leaders to become agents of change in their classrooms following a two stepped approach.

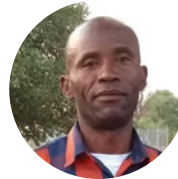
- In a first crucial step, the GRP4ECE approach supports preschool teachers and school leaders with a set of practical low-cost instruments which they can use to reflect on their own gender biases and help them translate this self-awareness into more equitable (inter)actions in their classrooms.
- In a second step, the toolkit strengthens teachers with hands-on tips and tools to become proactive champions of gender equity, challenging the gender stereotypes that reach their learners through many different channels: role models at home or in their communities, media, advertisements, toys and learning materials, their peers, etc.

Launched officially in February 2019 and developed as an Open Educational Resource free for all to use and distribute, the GRP4ECE toolkit struck a chord with ECE policymakers and practitioners worldwide: from Brookings' *Girls' education research and policy symposium* and a webinar hosted by Global Partnership for Education, to UNESCO's *African conference on the quality of early childhood education and the professionalization of educators* and the *12th Policy Dialogue Forum of the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030*.

Pre- versus post-GRP4ECE

Encouraged by the wave of enthusiasm, VVOB has upped the ante on GRP4ECE in its own projects and programmes: contextualising and translating the approach to the different work contexts of the organisation, implementing the approach in different forms and sizes and adding research to build evidence.

A research pilot in a limited number of schools in Central Province, Zambia, has delivered some first promising results. After only a few training and coaching sessions with preschool leaders and teachers, their awareness of gender stereotypes increased, their understanding of the impact of these stereotypes on learners improved and more teachers were observed challenging gender stereotypes in their classrooms.



Martin Mwansa, our ECE role model from before, was one of the teachers trained in this research pilot. For Martin, it was an eye-opening experience: "We used to have clear ideas of what boys and girls should or should not do. Through the programme, I came to understand that we should treat boys and girls equally. Previously, we would only let girls sweep the classrooms and we would ask the boys more – and more challenging – questions. Now, all children participate in sweeping and I am careful to balance my questions for boys and girls."





Maureen Namwinga, the other above-mentioned teacher who also participates in the programme, agrees: "Through the programme I learnt that it is very important to give equal opportunities to both types of learners, girls and boys. It really helped me in the sense that there are a lot of things which I didn't understand or never took into consideration due to the way I was raised. The workshop really opened my mind to give attention to gender in our lesson planning, in the games we use, etc. We have always been biased when it comes to gender."



Susan Willombe, responsible for ECE pre-service teacher training at the Department for Teacher Education and Specialised Services (TESS) of the Zambian Ministry of Education – one of VVOB's partner in this programme – stresses the importance of gender-responsive pedagogy in ECE: "Gender-responsive pedagogy is very important because girls have been disadvantaged in this country for a long time. As they will eventually be married off, girls are being introduced to household chores from a young age and are often barred from continuing their education. Boys will be given more time to prepare for school, to do their homework, to read, while girls will be told: "No, your place is in the kitchen. Go and help with the cooking, washing the dishes, ..." While of course boys can also do this work."

A global challenge warrants global effort

Originally developed in Africa, the GRP4ECE approach has since already made its way into VVOB's programmes in Vietnam. As is the case in most regions of the world, young children in Vietnam are also exposed to gender stereotypical roles and expectations. This early gender socialisation is reinforced in preschool environments. Particularly in the central provinces of Vietnam, inequalities due to early gender socialisation are among the most persisting equity issues, affecting both girls and boys.

Based on the model developed in the GRP4ECE toolkit, the GENTLE project in Vietnam supports preschool leaders and teachers in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces to challenge social and gender norms, and support children in adopting new, more equitable attitudes and behaviours. They are provided with tools to effectively implement gender-responsive play-based learning at school and to advocate for this approach at home too with the parents of their young learners.

In the words of **Nguyen Thi Kim Tien**, teacher at a preschool in Quang Nam province: "Before, I often encouraged boys to play physical games such as football and girls to play gentle games such as playing with dolls. But after participating in the programme, I recognised that this is a gender stereotype and limits children's opportunities. I decided to change. Now, I encourage both boys and girls to play any game, and in any type of play corners they want to."



Looking forward to 2020 and beyond, VVOB continues to invest in and improve the GRP4ECE approach to fit the context of all preschool classrooms of the globe.

Joining the project, I have a better understanding about sex and gender so that I can implement it better in my class.

There are many flashcards with images of activities and different occupations in the toolkit that both boys and girls can do. Through the games in the toolkit, for example the Bingo game, teachers can integrate gender issues as well as introduce different jobs that children can become in their future. Therefore, they can try their best to pursue their dreams."

Mai Thi Ngoc Han – Teacher at Anh Duong preschool,
Minh Long district, Quang Ngai Province,
Vietnam



Teachers as agents of inclusion: strengthening inclusive teaching practices

2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education. The signatories of this statement recognised that human differences are normal, and that learning must be adapted to the needs of the child. This requires appropriate preparation of teachers to provide special needs – and more broadly: inclusive – education.

2019 also marked the conclusion of VVOB's Learning and Teaching for Inclusive Education project in South Africa. The project strengthened primary school teachers' inclusive teaching practices. At pre-service level, VVOB worked together with leading universities to embed inclusive teaching practices in education modules. At in-service level, VVOB set up a system of in-school mentoring as well as professional learning communities.



First things first: why inclusive education?

Disadvantaged and vulnerable learners can benefit most from quality education and yet, they are learning the least. In South Africa, there is a significant learning gap between the poorest 60 per cent and the wealthiest 20 per cent of learners, that further widens as they progress through school.

The challenges these and other disadvantaged learners face in school are manifold. Whereas some learners cope with social-emotional problems or learning difficulties, others struggle with a learning disorder, such as dyslexia, or with a physical, visual or hearing impairment. Equitable and inclusive quality education means that learners' personal and social circumstances do not form barriers to learning. It recognises that learners are different, and therefore require different approaches.

South Africa as a pioneer in inclusive education: White Paper 6 and its contribution to SDG4

The 1994 Salamanca Statement states that learners *"with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs"*. Setting an international example, South Africa adopted a progressive national policy on inclusive education in 2001. The policy paper outlines key strategies to address barriers to learning and development, whether resulting from age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability or HIV status.

Among other strategies, it envisioned the transformation of ordinary schools into full-service schools, i.e. of mainstream schools to schools that can cater to all learning needs. Teachers from special schools – called resource centres from then on – were to share expertise and support teachers in ordinary schools during the transformation. District-based support teams were expected to further assist teachers in strengthening inclusive teaching practices.

Having laid the foundations, White paper 6 paves the way to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030. SDG 4 wants to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education, particularly for the vulnerable *"including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations"*.

Since the enactment of White Paper 6, however, there has been little exchange between teachers from ordinary schools, full-service schools and resource centres. And, to this day, many district education officials remain unsure about the scope and goals of inclusive education. While a selection of teachers had been trained on how to accommodate learners who face barriers to learning, few teachers have been reached beyond the direct participants.

Equipping tomorrow's teachers with inclusive teaching skills

In the framework of the Teaching and Learning for Inclusive Education project, VVOB's university partners – the University of the Free State (UFS), Central University of Technology (CUT), University of Witwatersrand (Wits), North West University (NWU) and Fort Hare University (FHU) – conducted a study to assess teacher trainers' and student teachers' knowledge of inclusive education. While some student teachers and teacher trainers appeared well-informed and deeply concerned with all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, others seemed unfamiliar with White Paper 6 and narrowed down the scope of inclusive education to learners with physical impairments.

To strengthen inclusive education in initial teacher education, Wits and NWU subsequently revised their curricula. Instead of a stand-alone subject, inclusive education is now embedded within the various education methodology courses they offer.

"Students are no longer hearing about inclusive education for one module, then going away and never hearing about it again", a teacher trainer shares anonymously in an evaluation. "Now, they are hearing about it in different areas, in different courses, at different points in time of their learning trajectory. This way, it becomes reinforced." From now on, teacher trainers also pay attention to inclusive teaching practices when observing student teachers during their practice periods. All partner universities also organised professional development series for teacher trainers to strengthen their knowledge of inclusive education – a success!



Learning from each other's classroom experiences

In their first months of practice, many teachers lack the confidence to put to practice what they learnt in theory about inclusive education. To smoothen the transition from university to teaching practice, VVOB set up a year-long teacher induction pilot together with the South African CSO Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA). 80 new teachers from 28 schools of the districts of Motheo (Free State province), Francis Baard (Northern Cape province) and Bojanala (North West province) received a practical teacher handbook and mentorship from an experienced teacher. Over the course of one year, mentor and teacher would meet at specific times for support and guidance. In addition, IESA organised monthly expert input sessions on a specific topic. The pilot proved highly successful and a new induction trajectory is being prepared. It also laid the groundwork for a national framework on induction. The materials of this framework will be tested in the field in three provinces first, and rolled out nationally in 2021.

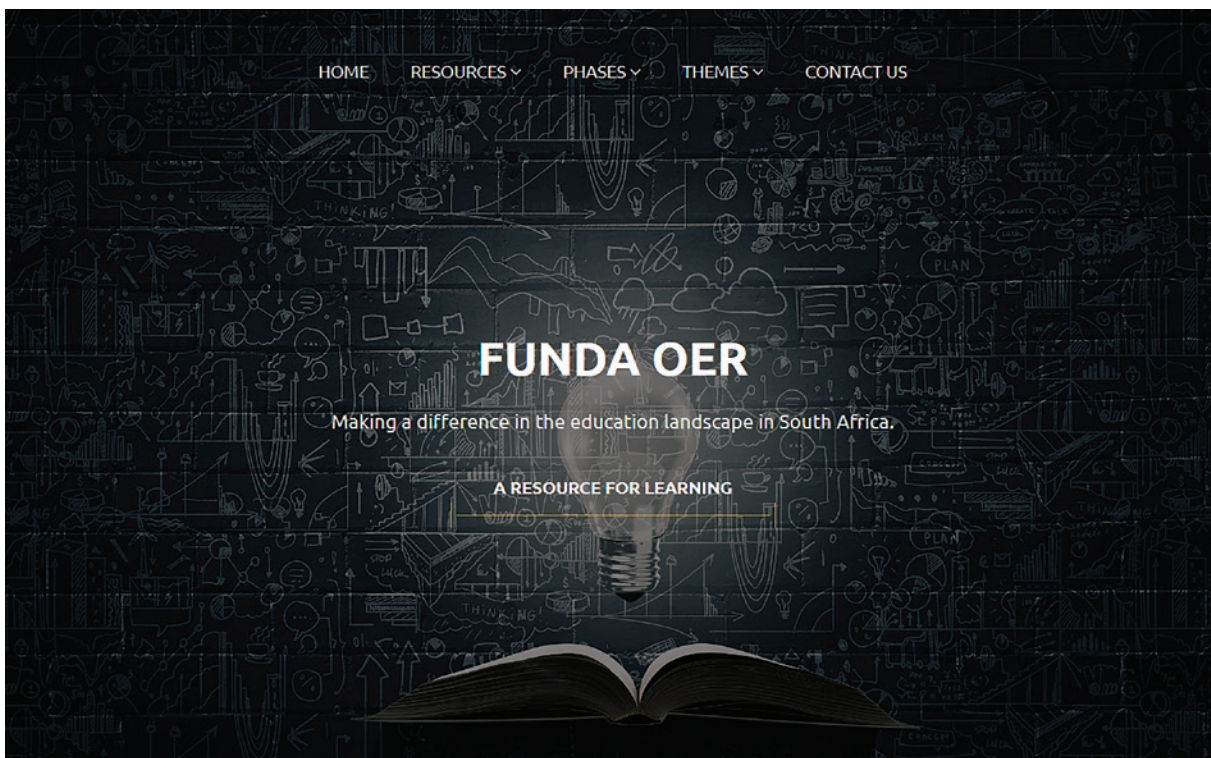
To strengthen the inclusive teaching practices of more experienced teachers, VVOB worked together with the district-based support teams of the same districts to establish professional learning communities (PLCs). "PLCs are a high quality programme whereby educators help each other", a participating teacher explains in an evaluation. "We are there to teach methods and approaches to each other, and to face the challenges that we come across in our classrooms. It has changed us a lot, it has changed me a lot too. I would like to motivate other educators to join this PLC so that we can produce better results, and we can help the children even better tomorrow."



What is particular about these PLCs, is that primary school teachers from ordinary and full-service schools come together with teachers from resource centres. Together, they discuss the challenges they face and come up with activities to address those challenges. In Free State province, for instance, teachers discussed how to support learners speaking African languages at home to overcome linguistic barriers to learning in the province's English-dominated school environment.

To further inspire South African primary school teachers and to showcase best practices, VVOB created **FundaOER.org**, an online platform to share so-called Open Educational Resources (OERs). OERs are open-access teaching and learning materials, digital or otherwise, that are targeted at pre-service providers, in-service providers and educators in training or in the classroom. FundaOER is a digital library of videos, factsheets, articles and teaching guides, not developed by VVOB and IESA alone, but also by other education actors in South Africa.

A must-watch, according to us? VVOB's Bambanani video series that showcases different strategies for differentiated teaching.



Embedding inclusive education into the system

To ensure sustainability of our efforts, VVOB works closely together with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) at all levels. In the framework of the Leadership and Teaching for Diversity (LT4Diversity) programme, we are building the capacity of key ministerial staff to coordinate school-based continuous professional development (CPD) for the inclusion of all learners. Through the organisation of mini-seminars and national symposia, VVOB supports DBE staff to develop recommendations and guidelines on, as well as practical tools for, mainstreaming inclusive education in officially endorsed CPD activities. VVOB also cooperates with the South African Council for Educators (SACE), which oversees teacher registration and manages teachers' CPD. In the course of a three-year cycle, South African teachers and school leaders must collect a minimum of 150 CPD-points to demonstrate their investment in their own professional development.

VVOB also builds the capacity of provincial and district education officials. Particularly promising, VVOB has set up an action research trajectory focusing on inclusive education. The process supports the officials to investigate their own practice to support schools and teachers to respond to learner diversity and adopt inclusive pedagogy. The trajectory has been insightful.



Tshidi Hlapane, deputy chief education specialist, explains how action research has taught her to approach teachers in a different way: "When you come in with a monitoring tool and tell them: "Sit down, I want to monitor your work", this teacher will think: "Oh my goodness, she is going to criticise me." We need to avail ourselves to these teachers: "Here I am. Where are you stuck? How can I help?""

Equity: a crosscutting VVOB theme

Equity is a crosscutting theme in VVOB's programmes across the world. In Rwanda, VVOB developed a unit on inclusive education at, and together with, the University of Rwanda - College of Education for integration in CPD programmes. The unit introduces Rwandan teachers to inclusive education and provides strategies to ensure that all children receive opportunities to fully participate and learn in school. This year, the unit on inclusive education was adapted to a digital environment enabling school leaders and teachers to access the unit from home.

In Zambia, VVOB partners with the Ministry of General Education, UNICEF and Teaching at the Right Level Africa – a consortium of J-PAL and Pratham – to build teachers' competences to 'teach at the right level'. Many learners fail to develop foundational skills in the early grades, without any recourse to catch up later. After grouping learners by ability rather than level or age, teachers implement the Teaching at the Right Level approach. They use participatory teaching methods and alternate between whole class teaching, group and individual work to ensure all learners are reached. As in previous years, last year's progress has been remarkable. In 2019, the share of students able to read a simple paragraph increased 21 percentage points (p.p.) to 56 per cent; and able to do subtraction by 24 p.p. to 51 per cent.

Shifting towards Inclusive Mindsets – the 2019 International Symposium on Teacher Education for Inclusive Teaching

In July 2019, the University of the Free State (UFS) and the Central University of Technology (CUT) joined forces with VVOB to organise the fourth international Symposium on Teacher Education for Inclusive Teaching. This year's edition was about 'Shifting towards inclusive mindsets: Achieving meaningful participation for all'.

From all over South Africa, 150 educators, education officials and experts made their way to Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng. Special guest and keynote speaker Kwame Akyeampong, Professor of International Education and Development at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, came all the way from the United Kingdom. He spoke about reconstructing teacher education towards the production of teachers as agents of inclusive practice.

Quality STEM education prepares youth for the future they deserve

The nature of work is changing. The digital age exposes a dire need for more advanced skills, such as problem-solving and creativity. These skills are also needed to cope with the detrimental effects of climate change. To develop these competences, youngsters need hands-on exploration and practice. In many countries, however, the curriculum remains highly knowledge-focused and pedagogies teacher-centred.

Rwanda wants to prepare its youth to enter the workforce of tomorrow. Currently dependent on agriculture and mining, the country aspires to shift towards a service-based, ICT-led economy by the end of 2020. To unlock youth's potential in this new economy, Rwanda introduced a new competence-based curriculum, spearheaded by science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). To ensure the quality of STEM teaching, VVOB and partners equip STEM teachers with the required competences.



Maximising job opportunities through quality STEM education

Rwanda's population is young and growing. Every year an estimated 220,000 adolescents enter the labour market. Like their peers in the rest of the world, these youngsters aspire to decent work and earnings. Yet, there are few jobs in the formal sector, and many youngsters lack the adequate competences to access those that are available. By investing in STEM education, the government of Rwanda aims to increase adolescents' job opportunities after graduation, as stipulated in the government's Vision 2020 and Vision 2050 policies. In particular, the government wants to invest in the development of ICT skills. The digital sector is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years. Moreover, ICT can be used as a tool for self-employment too.

Traditional content-based education no longer suffices to compete in today's labour market. Youngsters need to develop critical and problem-solving skills and creativity. Aware of this, the Rwandan Ministry of National Education (MINEDUC) introduced a new competence-based curriculum in 2015. Teaching and learning are now centred on the learners. Through group work, roleplay and storytelling among other techniques, students now participate actively in the learning process. The new curriculum also includes cross-cutting issues, such as environmental education, and focuses on the development of generic competencies, such as creativity and innovation.

Improving teaching practices through coaching and mentoring

To familiarise teachers with the new curriculum, all schools provide school-based trainings. These trainings are facilitated by school-based mentors (SBMs). But so far teachers are generally still more comfortable with the old curriculum and teaching methods. What is more, many teachers in Rwanda lack the necessary content knowledge and pedagogical skills, particularly in the field of STEM. To tackle the issue, VVOB has partnered with the University of Rwanda – College of Education (UR-CE) and the Rwanda Education Board (REB) to provide SBMs and STEM subject leaders with the skills and competences to coach and mentor their colleagues to enhance the quality of STEM education.

In 2019, over 400 secondary STEM subject leaders successfully completed the continuous professional development (CPD) certificate programme 'Coaching and mentoring for STEM teachers'. The certificate programme consists of two modules: The first focuses on coaching, mentoring, professional learning communities (PLC) and induction activities; The second is dedicated to

the pedagogy of teaching STEM, which is centred around the 5Es: engage/excite, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate. The entire programme focuses on application. Before graduating, the STEM subject leaders submit four practice-based assignments and pass an examination. Throughout the programme, they also keep a portfolio of evidence documenting how they apply the lessons from the programme in their daily teaching.

Gasasira Gratien is a biology subject leader at G.S Gahini in Kayonza district. He shares how the training has been beneficial not only to him, but also to his eight STEM colleagues in school: "We were relying on imported laboratory reagents in our science laboratory. However, we learnt that locally available substances can also be used to perform the same experiments. So, we started using potatoes, maize, beans, avocado, eggs... to conduct food experiments."



A similar CDP programme was set up for SBMs. In 2019, 227 SBMs took part in and passed the certificate programme 'Educational mentorship and coaching'. Because SBMs come from different subjects, their training focuses on the first above-mentioned module alone. In June of 2019, a second cohort of 404 STEM subject leaders and 166 SBMs started one of two certificate programmes, now offered in blended learning mode. Indeed, to complement face-to-face training, the new participants engage in online learning too. Technology-enhanced learning enables flexible and personalised learning, which increases students' sense of ownership over their own learning process.



Peers: teachers' first line of support to address the challenges they face

The certificate programmes also prepare STEM subject leaders and SBMs to establish and facilitate PLCs. Teachers gather in a PLC to discuss common challenges, learn from each other and identify contextualised ways forward. They help each other make sense of the new competence-based curriculum and jointly develop appropriate STEM teaching materials and lesson plans. Low-cost materials such as plastic bottles, glasses, nails and index cards are now used to teach topics such as Newton's Laws, pressure and equilibrium in a captivating way.

Marie Solange Nyirazaninka teaches mathematics at G.S Rutoma, a 9-Year Basic Education school in Rwamagana district. PLCs were new to her: "Before I attended the training, STEM teachers would meet to discuss issues in general, without a clear strategy to find solutions. Now, we identify issues, prioritise them, and then set activities to solve one issue at a time. For instance, we resolved the issue of conducting experiments: we now make use of the science laboratory of a neighbouring school since our school doesn't have one. This has increased the love for science among our students," she says.

To share insights and lessons learnt beyond one's own PLC, VVOB publishes a peer learning magazine for teachers, *Uranana rwabarezi*. In 2019, editions 8 and 9 came out: the former focused on the contribution of ICT to improving the quality of education, while the latter discussed learning from each other through sharing good practices and solving challenges. Among other topics, the 8th issue discussed the current state of digital literacy in Rwanda, the distribution of ICT devices in school, parental control over internet access, and the use of ICT to enhance teacher professional development. As for the 9th edition, the emphasis was on the successes and challenges of a PLC, highlighting how issues such as student absenteeism and insufficiency of teaching aids, among others, are addressed.

Focus on girls

Rwanda has made great strides towards achieving gender equality in education. Currently, there are even more girls than boys enrolled in secondary education. Yet, boys still outperform girls on the national exams. As a result, many girls believe that they cannot perform as well as their male peers. This is particularly true in the field of STEM. On top of that, many girls in Rwanda hesitate to choose STEM-related fields, believing STEM is a subject for boys.

Teachers have the power to change those beliefs. That is why the certificate programmes also include a unit on gender. The unit provides STEM subject leaders and SBMs with tools and strategies to create a gender-responsive school environment, as well as guidelines on how to use gender-responsive language and to include role models in their lessons.

After their subject leader had been trained, the STEM teachers at G.S. Rutoma decided to create science groups for girls, stimulating them to choose STEM. "In those groups, girls are given STEM exercises and assignments, and they are encouraged to ask any question they have", Marie Solange Nyirazaninka explains. "Other than the girls' science groups, we now also provide small gifts such as pens and notebooks to the best performing students - boys and girls - in science. Since we initiated this, students', especially girls', performance has increased."



In 2019, VVOB's Goodwill Ambassador, Herman Van Rompuy (former Prime Minister of Belgium and former President of the European Council) visited our activities in Rwanda

On to the next challenge: climate change in Rwanda and beyond

Like the rest of the world, Rwanda is increasingly facing the consequences of climate change. The country is particularly prone to flooding, causing landslides as well as droughts. To address this, the Rwandan government has put in place strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change. In addition, it wants to promote eco-friendly policies in all sectors of the economy and promote green growth. Did you know that Rwanda banned plastic bags in 2006 already? The inclusion of environmental education as a crosscutting issue in the new curriculum further reflects the country's commitment. VVOB contributes by supporting the Teacher Training College (TTC) of Mururu to become a green TTC and a model for all other TTCs in the country.

Much like Rwanda, South Africa is hit particularly hard by climate change. The observed rate of warming, for instance, has been 2°C per century or even higher – more than twice the global rate of temperature increase. In 2011, the government issued the National Climate Change Response White Paper (NCCRWP), which called to mainstream climate change education (CCE) in the education system. Yet, so far, a strategy to coordinate and implement CCE had been missing. VVOB could not stand idly by. Together with GreenMatter, a South African NGO, VVOB launched 'Keep it Cool' in September 2019. At the core of this project is the implementation of innovative, curriculum-aligned CCE projects, involving students and communities from 100 secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo – the most populous provinces in South Africa.

Environment is a cross-cutting issue in all VVOB's programmes. In Cambodia, VVOB has developed an eco-school manual aiming to ban plastic from the school compound. And, in Ecuador, one of our projects revolves fully around skilling youth to work in the sector of sustainable tourism.

Measuring our impact in Rwanda

The certificate courses 'Coaching and mentoring for STEM teachers' and 'Educational mentorship and coaching' are part of the Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LTLT) programme, which aims to improve the quality of education at secondary and primary level across 17 districts in Rwanda. In addition to school-based mentors and STEM subject leaders, it also provides support to sector education inspectors and school leaders.

To assess our impact in an effective and systematic manner, VVOB in Rwanda makes use of the so-called New World Kirkpatrick evaluation of trainings framework (2015). In addition to gauging participants' satisfaction with a training and increases in knowledge, the framework sets out to assess changes in behaviour and, ultimately, evaluate impact on the overall school environment. Through focus group discussions, telephone and in-depth interviews as well as surveys, VVOB started collecting information at these four levels.

Early results show that participants are very satisfied with our trainings, although they believe more time is required to delve into all issues. Learning outcomes are positive too, with consistent improvement in participants' knowledge. In terms of behavioural change, SBMs now regularly organise coaching and mentoring activities, while subject leaders have started evaluating their learners in a more systematic manner. As teachers are collaborating more and feel supported within their school, the school climate has improved significantly.



Initial teacher education as a lever to improve the quality of TVET

Secondary education is the springboard for work. To gain the skills needed to make the jump successfully, young people depend on capable teachers. Globally, teacher education is still strongly geared to delivering academic or general teachers, with less attention going to aspiring teachers in the field of technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

Encouragingly, three of VVOB's partner countries have prioritised the improvement of TVET teacher qualifications as an area of cooperation: In 2019, (1) a study profile for lower TVET teachers was approved by Suriname and a first cycle of the newly developed curriculum for initial teacher education was implemented; (2) Ecuador approved a new post-graduate diploma course in Pedagogy for TVET teachers; and (3) VVOB launched its partnership with the National Instructors College Abilonino (NICA) in Uganda.



No quality TVET without quality initial TVET teacher education

To achieve the global commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4, the world is in urgent need of a new generation of teachers wanting to make a difference. But many TVET systems are facing critical shortages of qualified teachers. TVET teachers often have an unfairly low status and salary compared to colleagues in general education and compared to the private sector. They also often have the additional professional responsibility of working with a particularly challenging group of learners.

Although solid teacher education alone cannot address all these constraints, it is important for teacher motivation and satisfaction. Quality initial teacher education (ITE) raises TVET teachers' confidence and status as well as their professional skills and competencies. In some cases, such as Ecuador, Suriname and Uganda, holding the right qualifications also has a positive impact on TVET teachers' remunerations. Investing in ITE also makes basic economic sense. Bringing un- or underqualified teachers into the system and then attempting to raise their qualifications through continuous professional development (CPD) is simply not efficient in the absence of a solid base.

Core competencies for a dual professional identity

The professional competences of teachers have a crucial effect on the effectiveness of their teaching practices. The bar is high for TVET teachers, who have the unique responsibility of preparing learners for the world of work and for lifelong learning. For those who teach technical and practical courses, we can even speak of a dual professional identity. To be effective, they need to be skilled in a particular occupation and they need to use the best blend of teaching practices and methods to bridge learning and labour market needs. In a rapidly changing world, they are also expected to be early adapters of new technologies and constantly innovating ways for their students to grasp information.

With an ITE curriculum that combines technical with pedagogical-didactic coursework, the National TVET Teacher Training College – *Lerarenopleiding Beroepsponderwijs* (LOBO) – in Suriname clearly takes this dual professional identity to heart. When LOBO embarked on a curriculum review and revision process with support from VVOB and two expertise partners from Belgium, one of the first steps was to formulate a national study profile for lower secondary vocational teachers. While the existing profile for teachers in general was a useful starting point, it also became clear that it did not do justice to the dual professional identity of TVET teachers.

Through consultations with representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, LOBO and the world of work, nine core competencies for LOBO graduates were identified, tailored to the specifics of Suriname's lower secondary vocational teachers and translated into indicators of observable learning outcomes (teacher practices). The national study profile is a perfect fit and was approved by Minister Liliane Ferrier in 2019.

Core competencies of Suriname's lower secondary vocational teachers

- **Teaching strategies / didactics** – LOBO graduates are able to create a powerful learning environment that offers equal learning opportunities to all students.
- **Pedagogy** – LOBO graduates create a safe and supportive learning environment through their pedagogical approach and attitudes, to ensure that all students are motivated to participate actively.
- **'Subject' content and competence** – LOBO graduates combine subject content knowledge with occupational knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- **Organising** – LOBO graduates are able to plan, structure and manage complex activities and learning processes in the classroom, workshop and school.
- **Innovating** – LOBO graduates continually work on their own professional development in order to integrate new insights into their teaching practice.
- **Reflecting** – LOBO graduates systematically reflect on their own professional practices and deliberately improve their own functioning.
- **Collaborating with colleagues** – LOBO graduates work together with school leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff to guarantee the quality of education and the wellbeing of each student.
- **Collaborating with external parties** – LOBO graduates work together with relevant institutions and enterprises to create a learning environment geared towards the world of work.
- **Taking into account students' home situation** – LOBO graduates engage with parents and caregivers to work together for the full development of each learner.

No quality initial TVET teacher education without a quality curriculum

The development of the national study profile marked the kick-off of a larger curriculum redesign process that aimed at a better integration of subject content knowledge, occupational competence and pedagogical-didactic competence. With support from VVOB, LOBO lecturers grouped into curriculum design teams working on two technical areas – Construction and Fashion Design – as well as two design teams working on Pedagogy and Didactics. It was believed that working in these collaborative teams would have two important positive effects: firstly on the professional development of the lecturers; and secondly on the implementation of the curriculum change, as the lecturers would feel a sense of ownership over the change process. The curriculum change was less likely to succeed if the lecturers had been viewed merely as implementers of the plans of others, like VVOB or the Ministry.

By the end of academic year 2018-2019 it was clear how the nine core competencies and their observable learning outcomes would be developed across the areas of Construction, Fashion Design, Pedagogy and Didactics with a meaningful progression. The modules for the first year of study were developed and ready for implementation in the academic year 2019-2020. Peer-to-peer lesson observations were organised to further foster collegial collaboration and stimulate and improve the implementation of the new curriculum in practice.

In the meantime, VVOB had also worked together with LOBO leadership to establish an internal quality management (IQM) team and framework. With the staffing and training of the IQM team close to being sorted, the team was ready for its first test case by the fall of 2019: screening the modules that had been developed for Construction, Fashion Design, Pedagogy and Didactics. The improvement measures that came out of the screening were validated by the respective design teams, who are now revising and improving their modules where necessary. Having gone through all core design activities – analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE) – with relative hands-on support from VVOB, LOBO is now also ready to embark on the design process for other technical areas in a more autonomous manner. By the end of 2021, all technical areas for which LOBO prepares teachers will be renewed.



“Thanks to this professional development trajectory, we have improved our curriculum. Our student teachers are not just equipped with technical but also didactical competencies.”

Ike S. Muler, teacher trainer and coordinator at LOBO and member of the curriculum design team for Construction



Curriculum development from scratch in Ecuador

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education introduced a career ladder not long ago that links teacher qualifications to salary grade progression and career progression opportunities. Naturally, this increased the demand for teacher professional development, also among TVET teachers, many of whom have (technical) skills qualifications, but no pedagogical degree. The challenge? None of the existing teacher training institutions offered programmes specifically tailored to TVET teachers. To address that gap, VVOB partnered with the *Universidad Nacional de Educación* (UNAE) and the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador* (PUCE) and the *Universidad Técnica de Manabí* (UTM) to establish a pedagogical *posgrado* programme for TVET teachers in line with the accreditation requirements.

The UNAE, in the meantime, has enrolled its first cohort, and as many of them are in fact practicing teachers, we expect to see school-level quality improvements soon. In 2019 the Ministry also approved the programme that will be provided by the PUCE as of academic year 2020-2021.



Practice makes perfect

Classroom practice is widely regarded as vital in ITE, and so this ‘tethering of practical knowledge and experience to theory’ needs to be a profoundly integrated in the curriculum. For TVET teachers, gaining industry experience is crucial as well and it makes sense to also include work-based learning in the curriculum as a way of fostering TVET teachers’ dual professional identity.

This is well understood in Uganda, where VVOB signed a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Education and Sports and started up operations in 2019. One of VVOB’s operational partners in ‘the pearl of Africa’ is the National Instructors College Abilonino (NICA) – for now the only public higher education institution that provides initial TVET teacher education. During both years of study, student-instructors at NICA undertake six weeks of school practice and six weeks of industrial training to practice both the pedagogical and practical skills in the fields they teach. One of the priorities of VVOB’s support to the institute is to enhance the quality of these 24 pivotal weeks, specifically for the student-instructors of NICA’s agriculture departments. Special points of attention? Improving support-supervision by NICA lecturers, strengthening the mentorship provided by the host institutions and making sure these hosts provide a safe learning environment to the NICA students.

“We really look forward to VVOB’s support in developing a competence based agricultural education and training that embraces entrepreneurship education. Although still relatively new in Uganda, already we see the seeds being planted for long-lasting impact through the approaches VVOB brings.”

Dr Jane Egau, Commissioner Teacher and Instructor Education and Training (TIET) Department, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda



Scaling and VVOB

Effective, scalable professional development for Rwanda's school leaders? Check!

In 2019, the first cohort of 550 head teachers and deputy head teachers completed the ICT-enabled diploma course in Effective School Leadership offered by the University of Rwanda – College of Education (UR-CE). A year earlier, 234 sector education inspectors (SEIs) followed UR-CE's certificate course in Educational Mentorship and Coaching, preparing them to effectively facilitate professional learning communities of head teachers. By the end of 2021, another 1,300 head teachers will graduate. The courses are developed in blended format with support from VVOB through its Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LTLT) programme. They are the culmination of more than a decade of focused investment in the professional development of Rwanda's school leaders. They show that scaling effective professional development for school leaders is possible and within reach.

Effective school leadership matters

One of the principle characteristics of scalable interventions is that they address an objectively significant and persistent need – particularly a need that is sharply felt by potential beneficiaries and recognised as such in policy.

In the first half of the 2000s, the Rwandan government embarked on an education reform that combined the ambition for rapid expansion of access to quality education with the decentralisation of management and implementation responsibilities to districts, sectors and schools. It quickly became clear that effective school leadership was both a critical condition for the success of the reform as well as a critical challenge. Head teachers and deputy head teachers, who are the main source of leadership in their schools, have a direct impact on teachers' motivation, expectations and standards and a significant, albeit indirect, effect on students' learning outcomes and wellbeing.

But the Rwandan education system lacked sufficient school leaders capable of initiating and implementing the various school improvement strategies necessary to make the reform work. To ensure the issue would receive the attention it deserved, the Rwanda Education Board (REB) set up a School Leadership and Management Unit in 2011, which was supported by VVOB from the outset. One of the first major accomplishments of the Unit was the formulation and introduction of professional standards for school leaders, which were informed by the best available evidence on successful school leadership.

An innovative, credible model

With VVOB's support, REB developed two modalities for the professional development of school leaders:

- A continuous professional development (CPD) diploma course on Effective School Leadership, aimed at equipping school leaders with the competences needed to fulfil their roles. The programme was first offered as a 12-month course at UR-CE. As early as 2016, close to 400 head teachers had successfully graduated.
- Professional learning communities (PLCs) of school leaders, aimed at bridging the gap between the theory, policy and practice of effective school leadership, and at creating a forum for sharing good practices. Between 2014 and 2016, VVOB trained 120 sector education officers to facilitate these PLCs and coach the school leaders participating in them.

The fact that concrete results could be made visible – for example, when graduation ceremonies received attention in the media – helped build the credibility of the model. VVOB also quickly started building an evidence base to demonstrate that the model



“works” and to gain eminent support within Rwanda and beyond. For instance, early innovation funding was used to prove initial concerns about potential cultural barriers to a coaching approach unfounded: the coaching concept worked well and enthused and empowered the SEIs, while head teachers expressed their satisfaction with the approach.

Embedded in the government system

When it comes to education that balances quality and equity, government systems provide the best pathway to scale. VVOB’s strategy for scaling, then, does not so much consist of taking education innovations from pilot to scale, but is rather focused on ensuring that effective innovations are adopted at scale. Close alignment with government policy, structures and resources is key to this effort.

These are some of the critical milestones that were achieved in scaling the two-mode model for the continuous professional development of school leaders in Rwanda:

- Establishment of the School Leadership and Management Unit at REB;
- Introduction of Professional Standards for Effective School Leadership through the unit;
- Provision of incentives for decentralised level staff to engage in the implementation of the CPD model, making sure that (i) government budgets cover travel for SEIs and head teachers, allowing them to engage in PLCs; (ii) professional development opportunities for district directors of education and SEIs are permanently provided;
- Official accreditation of the diploma course in Effective School Leadership and the certificate course in Educational Mentorship and Coaching.

In this way, scaling clearly is about more than “reaching numbers”. It is about bringing about lasting change in the education system by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms that make the system operate in a particular way.

Harnessing the power of ICT

Reaching numbers remains important, of course, especially if the issue at hand impacts a great amount of beneficiaries, as does effective school leadership. When it comes to reaching many people,

ICT-mediated learning has some obvious advantages over conventional face-to-face learning environments. It enables cost and time efficiency and allows flexible and personalised learning that gives learners the ownership of their own learning. The government of Rwanda is keen to harness this power of ICT. Policies such as *Vision 2020*, a long-term strategy for Rwanda’s development, the ICT in Education Policy and the National Open, Distance and eLearning Policy position ICT as one of the strategic levers for addressing key challenges of access to education, quality, equity and relevance of education and training, and management efficiency.

As part of LTLT, VVOB has redeveloped the original training programmes for school leaders for delivery in a blended modality. Future and current head teachers who want to obtain a diploma in *Effective School Leadership* can now learn the content online from their workplace or at home. The frequency of face-to-face sessions in the diploma course has been reduced and dedicated to deepening the understanding of the content through peer learning and exercises. Interactive learning activities have been developed for an online learning management system (Moodle), with offline alternatives for contexts of limited connectivity. UR-CE lecturers are responsible for the delivery of these courses, after having received a training on e-tutoring facilitated by VVOB.

As the initial needs assessment revealed limited digital literacy in a technology-challenged environment, considerable effort was made to design a user-friendly interface. All participants took part in a digital literacy training and trainers followed an e-tutoring training. VVOB also invested in laptops for schools, modems, internet connectivity and tablets for SEIs, a tool the latter also use for eMonitoring and data collection on various aspects of the PLCs they facilitate. The online modalities allow REB to establish mechanisms to follow up on the CPD of school leaders countrywide.

Focus across sources of funding and over multiple funding cycles

Many education innovations fail to scale up to achieve wider impact, not because they aren’t effective, but because they cease to exist after initial funding ends. Since scaling is a long-term endeavour – experts estimate that the average time for scaling a successful pilot to national application is 15 years – it is an important achievement of VVOB in Rwanda to have maintained focus over multiple funding cycles and to pull in funding from various sources to complement REB’s existing resources. A smart combination of multiple cycles of funding from the Belgian government, short-term innovation funding from the UK and a well-targeted boost to ICT-innovation and scaling from the Mastercard Foundation made the current success possible.

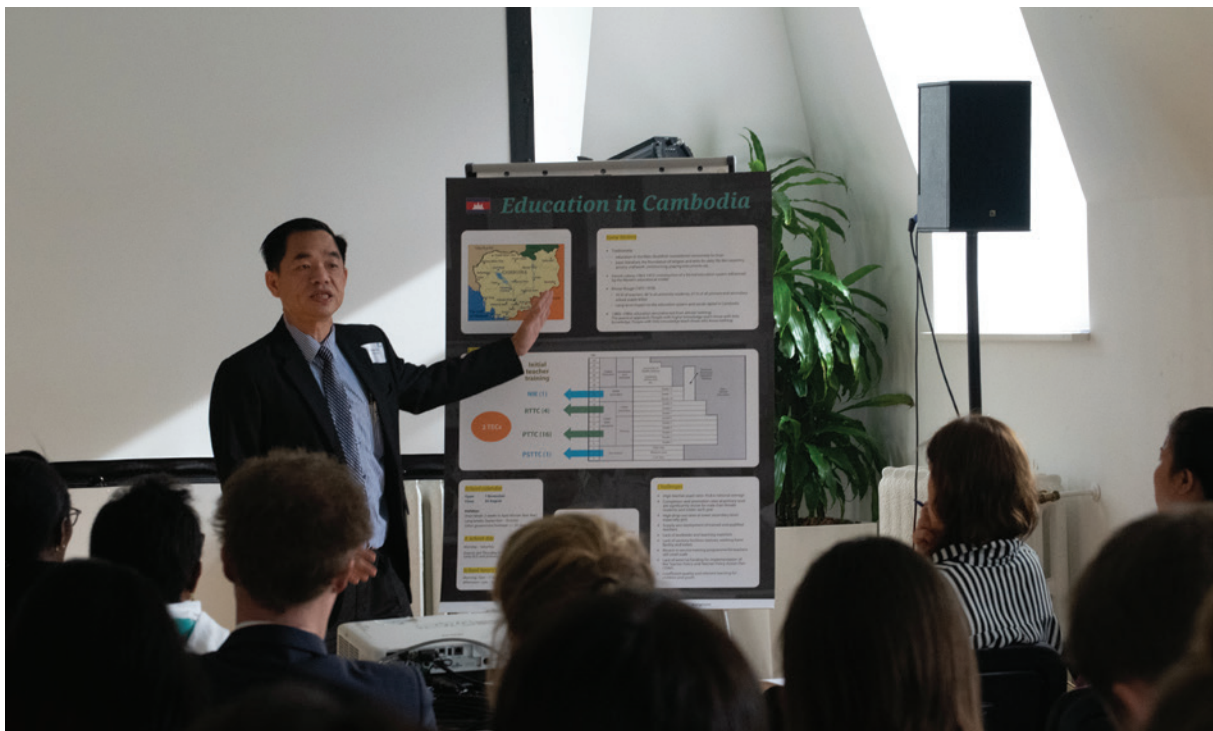
“A focus on scale almost always requires a shift from a project mentality to a systems mentality,” says Larry Cooley of the Governing Board of the ELMA Foundation – also a donor of VVOB in Rwanda. In this respect, the path we walked in Rwanda most definitely holds valuable lessons for VVOB, its donors and government partners.

Exchange between Belgium and our other partner countries

International dialogue broadens the mind

VVOB's activities in its partner countries in Africa, Asia and South America lead to many insights. Those lessons learnt are also a major added value for VVOB's activities in Belgium. International exchange, dialogue and cooperation broaden the horizons and offer new inspiration. Creating sustainable relationships across borders between education professionals or between schools ensures the development of intercultural competences and equity in education.

VVOB facilitates (international) exchanges between Belgium and its other partner countries via three different programmes. eNSPIRED, SchoolLinks and Educaid.be have been providing support for years to create this international dialogue. This was also the case in 2019.





Dialogue and interactive cooperation

International cooperation with dialogue and interactivity as key components can reduce prejudice, because unknown means unloved. VVOB is committed to building equal partnerships and chooses collaborations where all partners are stimulated to reflect critically and to be open-minded.

eNSPIRED, Educaid.be and SchoolLinks are aimed, in the first place, at Belgian actors in the fields of education and development where 'learning from and with each other' is a central element.

eNSPIRED: learning across borders for gender and multilingualism

Since its first activities in 2014, the eNSPIRED programme has become a fixed value in Belgium's education system. Together with her partners – i.e. university colleges and pedagogical counselling services – eNSPIRED integrates education practices from the South in the curriculum of teacher training colleges and the professional development trajectories for teachers and school leaders in Belgium. Less affluent countries in the global South often have a longer tradition of dealing with equity challenges in education, and there is plenty for Belgium to learn. eNSPIRED facilitates that reflective learning process with an annual guest lecture and learning week highlighting a central theme. Teacher trainers, (student) teachers and school leaders are exposed to the fresh views of international education experts.

For the 2018-2019 academic year, eNSPIRED and its partners decided to focus on 'gender'. In March, the international learning week took place. eNSPIRED gathered international expertise on education from VVOB partner countries Cambodia and Rwanda for an international exchange on the theme. As one of VVOB's areas of expertise, gender already plays an important role in many of its projects such as TIGER in Cambodia and Girls on Mars in Rwanda. To strengthen its expertise, VVOB works closely together with gender organisations Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) from Rwanda and Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC). And of course, VVOB's GRP4ECE toolkit ('gender-responsive pedagogy for early childhood education') was part of the programme.

On 20 and 21 March, the eNSPIRED team opened its doors for the wider public. Participants signed up for a variety of workshops that introduced good practices for tackling gender disparities in education and solutions to eliminate gender stereotypes. The visitors from Rwanda talked about the successful impact of the government to include more girls and young women in education. Yet despite their best efforts, the country seems to struggle with similar gender issues as Belgium. The experts from Cambodia shared good practices for placing gender on the agenda of education and creating a positive climate for change.

In September, the eNSPIRED working group started its preparations for the academic year of 2019-2020. Multilingualism was chosen as the common thread, with an international guest lecture to kickstart the year on 13 November. Kathleen Heugh (University of South Australia), Piet Van Avermaet (Centre for Diversity & Learning, Ghent University), Sven Gatz (Brussels Minister for Multilingualism), Ayse Isçi (Education Centre Ghent) and moderator Jill Surmont (VUB, Free University Brussels) engaged with participants and came up with solutions to positively integrate mother tongues in the classrooms.

Functional multilingual learning in the classroom is very useful. On the one hand, learners feel prioritised and included, on the other, it enriches the children who speak the dominant or official language. After all, one language contains different knowledge than the other language. This way children can learn a lot from each other."

Kathleen Heugh during the guest lecture





SchoolLinks: international partnerships

eNSPIRED focuses on the motivation of teacher trainers to become more international-minded, while SchoolLinks mostly (but not exclusively) focuses on the development of global citizenship skills of Belgian teachers and school leaders. In turn, those teachers and school leaders reach learners in preschool up to the last year of secondary education. SchoolLinks achieves this through the creation and facilitation of sustainable and meaningful partnerships between schools in Belgium and schools abroad. In 2019, these international partnerships were highlighted during two training sessions, as SchoolLinks had the pleasure to receive visitors from the Global South twice!

On 18 March, SchoolLinks organised an interactive activity where teachers and school leaders could exchange inspiration about their school link. First, they shared tips and tricks with each other about the implementation of a school link and the collaboration with the partner school. Furthermore, they talked about topics such as the most effective communication channel, fundraising or action plans - a successful exercise according to an anonymous reaction of one of the participants: "It is very inspiring to meet each other. It opens your mind and gives you new insights on how you can develop your school link."

Afterwards, the participants met education experts from Cambodia and Rwanda. They were in Belgium for the eNSPIRED learning week and told us everything about the education system and the gender challenges in their countries. After this introduction, SchoolLinks invited the international delegation for an exchange on approaching gender challenges at school. Participants found new ways to implement gender-responsive pedagogy in their schools and to ban gender stereotypes from their classrooms. "This exercise opened my eyes and made me realise how I subconsciously fall into stereotypical traps when I'm standing in front of my class", a teacher reflected afterwards in an anonymous evaluation. "From now on, I'll think twice before asking whether the "strong boys" can help me to move a desk!"

On 13 November, SchoolLinks organised its second activity. Fifteen teachers exchanged their ideas and tips on how to develop a creative activity with your partner school or how to host colleagues from your partner school.

eNSPIRED and SchoolLinks at the ANGEL Conference 2019

In May 2019, VVOB participated in the ANGEL Conference 2019. This conference, organised by the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning, invited academics, researchers, policymakers and experts from all over the world for an exchange on the challenges of global citizenship education. The colleagues of eNSPIRED and SchoolLinks gave a presentation on how VVOB facilitates the development of global citizenship skills of teachers. They focused on the importance of cross-cultural learning and the contact theory to achieve attitude change.



Educaid.be empowers Belgian development actors

As the platform for structural dialogue between Belgian development organisations active in education and training, Educaid.be supports the formulation and implementation of policies on education and development and improves the quality of Belgian education programmes in the Global South.

The annual summit of Educaid.be is the international conference. In 2019, the title of the conference was 'Education and Displacement. Challenges and approaches to providing quality education to refugees and displaced people in the Global South'. There are more refugees today than ever before: nearly 25.4 million. The challenges these people face are many, the education gap being one of the most pressing. The 2019 conference brought experts from across the world and academic spectrum to Brussels to consider the best ways forward for refugee children and their education. Those who

were unable to attend or would like to relive this inspiring day can watch the video report on the Educaid.be website.

Another important responsibility of Educaid.be is supporting its member organisations (and the general public) with external expertise on education from a global perspective. That is why Educaid.be organised, in addition to the annual conference, a few smaller activities. During a workshop in January, Educaid.be and Plan International Belgium paid attention to the development and education of young children in the Belgian development sector. In March, Joséphine Kobusingye talked about the work on gender and education of the Rwanda chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). In November, Kathleen Heugh of the University of South Australia focused on multilingualism in education. Finally, two international experts, Annelore Verhagen (OECD) and Kevin Hempel (Prospera Consulting), elaborated on existing labour market assessment methods and tools for the identification of skills, trades and promising sectors.

Furthermore, the members of the platform worked on two publications in 2019. The publication 'Digital for Education' focuses on the opportunities, challenges and risks of digitalisation in education. The methodological sheet 'How to better integrate environmental and climate issues into education and training programmes' provides a framework for integrating environmental and climate issues into education and training programmes. Both publications can be consulted on the Educaid.be website.

Educaid.be provided a lot of new insights in the field of education in 2019.

2019 GEM Report: official launch

The conference was the perfect opportunity to launch the Global Education Monitoring Report 'Migration, displacement & education: Building bridges, not walls' in Belgium. Anna D'Addio, Senior Education Advisor in the GEM Report team, explained the most important findings. Sharing all seven action points that countries should adopt to achieve their commitments to educating refugees according to the GEM Report, Ms D'Addio especially emphasised the importance of acknowledging refugee children's existence and experiences, recognising their needs and potential, and supporting teachers to do so.



Overview of our network

Belgium



Educaid.be

- Provides a platform for exchange and collaboration for Belgian development actors to strengthen and defend the education sector in international cooperation.

📍 Belgium

🤝 APEFE; 48 member organisations (details: www.educaid.be)

🇧🇪 Belgium

eNSPIRED

- Facilitates a dialogue on equity challenges in education between international experts that inspires the teaching practices of Belgian (future) educators.

📍 Flemish community

🤝 10 university colleges; 2 education networks; 2 universities; 1 adult education institution; RoSa; UNICEF Belgium (details: www.inspired.net)

🇧🇪 Belgium

SchoolLinks

- Builds partnerships between schools in Belgium and schools in the Global South to foster global citizenship and exchanges on SDG topics.

📍 Flemish community

🤝 VIA Don Bosco; 96 schools (48 in Belgium, 48 in the Global South)

🇧🇪 Flanders

DR Congo

ETAGE (improving the quality of technical education and agricultural entrepreneurship)

- Integrates entrepreneurship education in secondary agricultural schools through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.

📍 Province of Kongo Central (educational provinces 1, 2 and 3)

🤝 Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education; Inspection Services

🇧🇪 Belgium



Cambodia



SMART (strengthening maths results and teaching)

- Improves math teaching and learning in primary education through improved initial teacher training.

📍 Provinces Phnom Penh, Battambang, Kandal and Kampong Cham

🤝 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

🇧🇪 Belgium

TIGER (teaching for improved gender equality and responsiveness)

- Implements gender-responsive pedagogy in primary and lower secondary education through professional development of teachers (PRESET and INSET) and school leaders, and through community engagement.

📍 Province of Battambang

🤝 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Women's Affairs; Puthi Komar Organization; Kampuchean Action for Primary Education; Gender and Development for Cambodia; 5 local CSOs

🇧🇪 Belgium; European Union

In-service training package for mathematics

- Improves maths teaching and learning in the first grade of primary school through professional development of teachers (newly qualified and INSET).





📍 Province of Siem Reap (pilot)

🤝 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

🇧🇪 UNESCO

Legend




Logos: Ministries of education and financial partners

-  Focus
-  Region
-  Local partners
-  Financial partners per project




Ecuador



F-EFTP (strengthening technical and professional education and training)

- Increases the relevance of secondary technical education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders for increased chances at decent work.
-  Provinces of Esmeraldas, Manabí, and Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas
-  Ministry of Education; Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador; Universidad Técnica de Manabí
-  Belgium




Skilling for Sustainable Tourism

- Strengthens the relevance and sustainability of tourism-related courses in secondary schools through professional development of teachers (INSET).
-  Province of Manabí and Cantón Quito
-  Ministry of Education; Ministry of Tourism
-  Belgium; Dubai Cares




Rwanda






Girls on MARS (mathematics achievements in Rwandan schools)

- Improves math teaching and learning in primary education (with a special focus on girls) through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
-  Eastern Province and Western Province
-  Ministry of Education; Rwanda Education Board; University of Rwanda – College of Education; FAWE; Rwanda Environmental Management Authority
-  Belgium

Induction system for newly qualified teachers

- Focuses on mentoring, monitoring and supervising new primary school teachers.
-  Eastern Province and Western Province
-  Ministry of Education; Rwanda Education Board; University of Rwanda – College of Education
-  Belgium; The ELMA Foundation

Leaders in Teaching

- Enhances professional development services for teachers (INSET) and school leaders through diploma courses and professional learning communities.
-  Eastern Province, Western Province, Northern Province and Southern Province
-  Ministry of Education; Rwanda Education Board; University of Rwanda – College of Education; FAWE
-  Mastercard Foundation

South Africa



Literacy Boost (reading skills)

- Improves reading skills in primary education through professional development of school leaders.
- Province of Free State
- Department of Basic Education; Save the Children South Africa
- USAID

Leadership and teaching for diversity

- Implements inclusive pedagogy in primary education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- Pretoria, and provinces of Free State and KwaZulu-Natal
- Department of Basic Education; South African Council of Educators (SACE); South African Principals Association
- Belgium

Teaching and Learning for Inclusive Education

- Mitigates barriers to learning in primary education through professional development of teachers (PRESET and INSET).
- Provinces of Free State, Northern Cape and North West
- Department of Basic Education; Inclusive Education South Africa; University of Witwatersrand; University of the Free State; North-West University
- Belgium; European Union

Keep it Cool (climate change education)

- Makes climate change education part of school and classroom practice through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders, and supports coherence of the theme at all policy levels.
- Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo
- GreenMatter, Department of Environmental Affairs, Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education and Training, Universities involved with Fundisa for Change
- Flanders

GRP4ECE (gender-responsiveness in the early years)

- Promotes gender-responsive pedagogy in early childhood education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- KwaZulu-Natal Province
- Department of Basic Education (DBE), Provincial KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDOE), South African Council of Educators (SACE)
- Belgium

Suriname



iGROW (initiative for gender-responsive education)

- Creates gender-responsive, safe and supportive lower secondary vocational schools through a whole school approach.
- Districts of Marowijne and Paramaribo
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture; Centre for in-service training; Institute for Graduate Studies and Research in Suriname; Stichting Lobi/YAM; Stichting YES
- Belgium; European Union

PROGRESS LBO (increasing effectiveness of lower secondary vocational schools)

- Strengthens the quality and relevance of lower secondary vocational education through professional development of teachers (PRESET and INSET) for increased chances at decent work for youth.
- Country-wide
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture; teacher training college for vocational education and training; Centre for in-service training
- Belgium

Uganda

From classroom to land: Teaching Agriculture Practically

- Ensures quality and relevant agricultural education and training through professional development of teachers (PRESET and INSET).
- Central Region, Northern Region
- Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES); NTC Mubende; NTC Unyama; National Instructors College Abilonino (NICA)
- Belgium



Vietnam



The LEGO Foundation

BaMi (mitigating preschool children's barriers to learning in disadvantaged and ethnically diverse districts)

- Identifies and mitigates barriers to learning in early childhood education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 Provinces of Kon Tum, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai
- 🤝 Ministry of Education and Training (MoET)
- 🇧🇪 Belgium

GENTLE (gender-responsive teaching and learning in the early years)

- Implements gender-responsive play-based learning in early childhood education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 Provinces of Quang Nam and Quang Ngai
- 🤝 Ministry of Education and Training (MoET); Research Center for Gender, Family and Environment in Development
- 🇪🇺 European Union; Belgium

CITIES (ECE in urban contexts)

- Identifies and then mitigates urban barriers to learning in early childhood education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 Da Nang (Son Tra district)
- 🤝 Ministry of Education and Training (MoET); Da Nang Department of Education and Training (DOET), University of Science and Education (University of Da Nang)
- 🇵🇹 Porticus

iPLAY (play-based primary education)

- Integrates pedagogies of learning through play in primary education through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 Provinces of Thai Nguyen, Hanoi, Quang Tri, Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Ho Chi Minh City, Lai Chau, Ha Giang
- 🤝 Ministry of Education and Training (MoET); National Women's Union (NWU); Hanoi (HNUE), Ho Chi Minh City (HCMCUE) and Da Nang (DNUE) University of Education
- 🇩🇪 The LEGO Foundation

Zambia



Catch Up (remedial teaching)

- Implements remedial teaching in primary education through professional development of teachers (INSET) on Teaching at the Right Level methodology.
- 📍 Eastern Province; Southern Province
- 🤝 Ministry of General Education; Pratham; J-PAL Africa; Innovations for Poverty Action; UNICEF; University of Cape Town; Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), TaRL Africa
- 🇺🇸 USAID; Co-impact

Effective early childhood education teaching practice systems II

- Capacitates teachers (INSET) and school leaders to provide quality mentorship to PRESET early childhood education students during their teaching practice.
- 📍 Central Province
- 🤝 Ministry of General Education; Examinations Council of Zambia; Malcom Moffat College of Education; Kitwe College of Education
- 🇧🇪 Belgium; The ELMA Foundation

STEEL (supporting teacher education for early learning)

- Supports the implementation of learning through play pedagogies in early childhood education through professional development of teachers (PRESET and INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 Central Province
- 🤝 Ministry of General Education; Examinations Council of Zambia; Malcom Moffat College of Education; Kitwe College of Education; Chalimbana University; FAWE
- 🇧🇪 Belgium

Sharing our expertise worldwide in 2019

In our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the fast-approaching deadline of 2030, we take up every opportunity – even creating our own – to share as much as we can about our experiences and lessons learnt with others. As is the case with people, no organisation is an island.

In 2019 too, VVOB stood shoulder-to-shoulder on multiple occasions with like-minded organisations to exchange about the best ways forward to achieve quality education and gender equality. What follows are a few of our favourite moments.

Integrity: a core value for VVOB



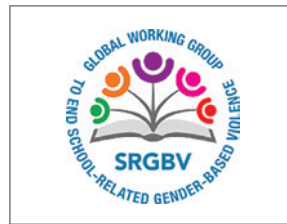
In 2018, VVOB was one of the first organisations to sign the **Integrity Charter** of Alexander De Croo, Belgium's Minister of Development Cooperation. In 2019, we took further steps: we renewed our own comprehensive **integrity policy** and had it validated by our Board of Directors. All VVOB employees received a copy of the integrity policy in a brochure and key staff – the focal person Integrity and country teams' programme managers among others – enrolled in workshops on addressing and dealing with integrity issues. In 2019, 4 cases of potential violations of the integrity policy were reported. The official procedure was initiated, which resulted in 3 terminations and 1 remedial trajectory.

Co-setting the global agenda



The **Dubai Declaration on 'The Futures of Teaching'** of the **Teacher Task Force** was the culmination of discussions at the four-day Policy Dialogue Forum of the Teacher Task Force about how

the realities of learning in the 21st century (should) have an impact on teacher education, training and practices. Having been elected to its Steering Committee for 2019-2020, VVOB used this platform to highlight the importance of induction programmes for the retention and motivation of new teachers and of gender-responsive education, among others.



As a recent member of the **Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence** (SRGBV), VVOB joined the members-only symposium for the first time in 2019. Alongside co-

hosts UN Girls' Education Initiative and UNESCO, and 30+ other international organisations promoting girls' education and gender equality, we engaged in meaningful dialogues about contextually relevant solutions to ending SRGBV and decided on next steps to ensure safe learning environments for all girls and boys.



In 2019, Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE), a network hosted by the World Bank, brought together its partners in-person for the first time at their invitation-only **S4YE Partner Summit 'Innovations in youth employment: solutions for sustainable impact'**. As

a prospective member at that time, VVOB presented its approach in Ecuador to bringing together partners from the TVET sector on one side and the tourism and travel sector on the other, to skill youth for employment in this key sector of the economy. Later in the year, VVOB was accepted into the S4YE Impact Portfolio.

#AdolescentsMatter: speaking up for the world's 1.2 billion youth



Our series of technical briefs, 'Putting SDG4 into practice', is now four publications strong. The latest is titled '**Enhancing adolescent wellbeing, learning and opportunities**' and zooms in on quality secondary education and the critical difference it can make for adolescents, especially for adolescent girls and other vulnerable groups. Focusing on (i) equity, (ii) safe and supportive school environments and (iii) smooth transitions to work and further learning, readers learn how VVOB puts this approach into practice in its partner countries. Our technical briefs are freely available on our website.



In Suriname, VVOB pilots a whole school approach to tackling school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and creating safe learning environments for the country's vulnerable student population in lower TVET. Results of the EU-co-funded project – dubbed iGROW – were presented at **the iGROW symposium**. Key findings included an increased number of students rejecting gender stereotypes and having the courage to report certain – but not all – forms of SRGBV and an increased awareness of school leaders.



At IIEP-UNESCO's **International Forum on TVET in Latin America**, colleagues from Ecuador delved into the importance of including the private sector in TVET policies for the sake of TVET students' chances at decent work. Speaking from experience, we made a case for meaningful partnerships between secondary TVET schools and private businesses: companies offer on-site professional development for teachers, learning materials to schools for practice and internships to students, while getting a skilled workforce of graduates in return.

Adding our two cents to international conferences



In 2019, the **UKFIET Education and Development Forum** dedicated its three inspirational days to 'Inclusive education systems: futures, fallacies and finance'. Inclusive education is an unequivocal must in VVOB's definition of quality education, and we gladly took on the opportunity to talk about our approach to inclusive education in South Africa and Rwanda.



The **Africa Play Conference 2019**, the first of its kind in Africa, explored how learning through play pedagogies benefit early childhood development and can become an integral part of education systems. VVOB introduced the GRP4ECE toolkit (which you can read more about in this annual report) and our approach to play-based learning in Vietnam.



At their two-day research conference 'Ensuring all children learn: lessons on inclusion and equity from the South', members of the **People's Action for Learning Network (PAL Network)** discussed evidence-based and contextually relevant solutions to ensure no child is left behind. Our Catch Up project fit that description: VVOB shared experiences from scaling the remedial teaching methodology Teaching at the Right Level in Zambia.

Financial report

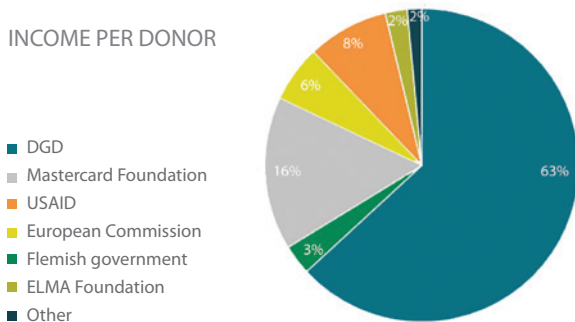
Turnover VVOB

2019 was a record-breaking year for our organisation. VVOB's 2019 income totalled 13,874,944 euro, 21% more than in 2018. Revenue in the previous 8 years has been 10,202,000 euro annually on average. Compared to that, VVOB's 2019 revenue has grown 36%. This growth is a consequence of a conscious strategy of donor diversification.

DGD is the organisation's largest donor. In 2019, more than 8.8 million euro was financed by DGD. The contribution of the Flemish Government consists of a structural contribution for general working costs (270,000 euro) and specific contributions for the SchoolLinks project (137,000 euro). Additionally, the Flemish Government also finances a project on climate change education in South Africa (45,000 euro in 2019).

In 2019, Mastercard Foundation invested more than 2.2 million euro for an education project in Rwanda. That makes Mastercard Foundation VVOB's second largest donor (16% of income). USAID finances VVOB education interventions in Zambia and South Africa and represents 8% of income. The European Commission finances 4 education projects in Cambodia, Suriname, Vietnam and South Africa, which makes up for 6% of income. VVOB is also supported financially by ELMA Foundation, Dubai Cares Foundation, the LEGO Foundation, Porticus and UNESCO, among others.

INCOME PER DONOR



Equity

The capacity to pre-fund programmes increased with 9% to 3,685,142 euro. These are resources that can be liquidated on short notice: association funds, allocated funds, accumulated results and provisions for liability. Seeing the growing number of donors involved, substantially higher provisions are set for risks within the programmes in the Global South.

Results and balance

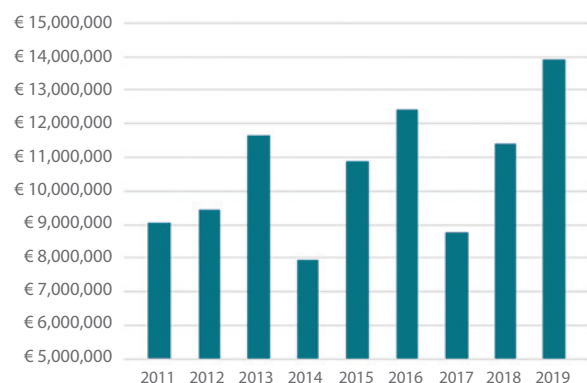
The profit of the financial year 2019 is 168,911 euro. This profit is used for provisions for risks in new projects and for the social liabilities. After use for provisions, profit is 0 euro.

The balance sheet total amounts to 9,807,155 euro compared to 8,648,605 euro in 2018.

Audit

The General Assembly of 23 June 2016 appointed BDO the company auditor for financial years 2017, 2018 and 2019. BDO concludes without reservation that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets and the financial situation of the association on 31 December 2019, as well as of the results for the financial year then closed, in accordance with the accounting principles framework applicable in Belgium.

INCOME



Balance sheet

(all in euro)

	2019	2018	2017
Assets			
A. Fixed assets	89,869	105,598	119,774
B. Accounts receivable (due within 1 year)	1,233,285	512,478	804,233
C. Cash and investments	8,474,092	8,005,621	8,122,310
D. Prepaid expenses	9,908	24,907	18,005
Total assets	9,807,155	8,648,605	9,064,322
Liabilities			
A. Reserves and accrued profit/loss	3,007,905	2,838,994	2,802,304
B. Provisions	677,237	537,716	443,690
C. Accounts payable (due within 1 year)	6,122,013	5,271,894	5,818,328
Total liabilities	9,807,155	8,648,605	9,064,322

Profit and loss statement

(all in euro)

	2019	2018	2017
Costs			
A. Structural costs	1,069,889	937,981	824,652
a. Services and diverse goods	397,613	358,304	279,438
b. Personnel costs	527,498	528,830	417,944
c. Depreciation	23,077	26,957	33,077
d. Other costs	121,701	23,890	94,193
B. Management costs	964,627	825,052	752,501
a. Personnel costs	827,952	740,856	691,707
b. Audit, monitoring and evaluation, learning processes	70,712	41,893	30,584
c. Other	65,963	42,303	30,210
C. Operational costs (programme costs)	11,671,518	9,599,398	7,195,592
a. DGD programme	6,886,932	6,135,364	5,931,616
b. SchoolLinks (Flemish government)	138,603	165,638	119,425
c. Other programmes	4,645,983	3,298,396	1,144,552
Total costs	13,706,034	11,362,431	8,772,746
Income			
a. Subsidy	13,872,775	11,392,748	8,755,682
b. Financial income	2,119	6,373	165
c. Other income	50	0	27,997
Total income	13,874,944	11,399,121	8,783,844
Appropriations and withdrawing			
Result before use	168,911	36,690	11,098
Profits / losses transferred from previous financial year	392,847	218,604	157,193
Withdrawal of equity	0	0	0
	561,758	255,294	168,291
Use of result	168,911	-137,553	-50,313
Deferral of fiscal year	392,847	392,847	218,604



Phone: +32 (0)2 778 01 00
Fax: +32 (0)2 771 56 56
www.bdo.be

The Corporate Village
Da Vincilaan 9, Box E.6
Elsinore Building
B-1930 Zaventem

**VLAAMSE VERENIGING VOOR
ONTWIKKELINGSSAMENWERKING EN TECHNISCHE
BIJSTAND (VVOB) VZW**

**Statutory auditor's report
to the general meeting
for the year ended 31 December 2019**

Free translation

**BDO Bedrijfsrevisoren CVBA / BTW BE 0431.088.289 / RPR Brussel
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 Fax: +32 (0)2 771 56 56
 www.bdo.be

The Corporate Village
 Da Vincilaan 9, Box E.6
 Elsinoor Building
 B-1930 Zaventem

Free translation

STATUTORY AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE VLAAMSE VERENIGING VOOR ONTWIKKELINGSSAMENWERKING EN TECHNISCHE BIJSTAND (VVOB) VZW FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

In the context of the statutory audit of the annual accounts of VVOB VZW ("the Association"), we hereby present our statutory auditor's report. It includes our report on the audit of the annual accounts and the other legal and regulatory requirements. This report is an integrated whole and is indivisible.

We have been appointed as statutory auditor by the general meeting of 21 June 2017, following the proposal formulated by the administrative body. Our statutory auditor's mandate expires on the date of the general meeting deliberating on the annual accounts closed on 31 December 2019. We have performed the statutory audit of the annual accounts of the Association for 6 consecutive years.

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Unqualified opinion

We have audited the annual accounts of the Association, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2019, the income statement for the year then ended and the notes to the annual accounts, characterised by a balance sheet total of 9.807.155,32 EUR and an income statement showing a positive result for the year of 168.910,58 EUR.

In our opinion, the annual accounts give a true and fair view of the Association's net equity and financial position as at 31 December 2019, as well as of its results for the year then ended, in accordance with the financial reporting framework applicable in Belgium.

Basis for unqualified opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as applicable in Belgium. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the 'Statutory auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the annual accounts' section in this report. We have complied with all the ethical requirements that are relevant to the audit of annual accounts in Belgium, including those concerning independence.

We have obtained from the administrative body and the officials of the Association the explanations and information necessary for performing our audit.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

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Free translation

Responsibilities of administrative body for the drafting of the annual accounts

The administrative body is responsible for the preparation of annual accounts that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework applicable in Belgium, and for such internal control as the administrative body determines is necessary to enable the preparation of annual accounts that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the annual accounts, the administrative body is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the administrative body either intends to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Statutory auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the annual accounts

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual accounts as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a statutory auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these annual accounts.

When executing our audit, we respect the legal, regulatory and normative framework applicable for the audit of annual accounts

in Belgium. However, a statutory audit does not guarantee the future viability of the Association, neither the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the Association by the administrative body.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the annual accounts, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control;
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the administrative body;
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the administrative body's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to



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draw attention in our statutory auditor's report to the related disclosures in the annual accounts or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our statutory auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern;

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the annual accounts and whether the annual accounts represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the administrative body regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identified during our audit.

OTHER LEGAL AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Responsibilities of the administrative body

The administrative body is responsible for the compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements regarding bookkeeping, with the Code of companies and associations and with the Association's by-laws.

Responsibilities of the statutory auditor

In the context of our mandate and in accordance with the Belgian standard (version revised in 2020) which is complementary to the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as applicable in Belgium, it is our responsibility to verify, in all material aspects, compliance

with certain provisions of the Code of Companies and Associations and of the Association's by-laws, as well as to report on these elements.

Statement related to independence

- Our audit firm and our network did not provide services which are incompatible with the statutory audit of annual accounts and our audit firm remained independent of the Association during the terms of our mandate.
- The fees related to additional services which are compatible with the statutory audit of annual accounts as referred to in article 3:65 of the Code of companies and associations, were duly itemised and valued in the notes to the annual accounts.

Other statements

- Without prejudice to certain formal aspects of minor importance, the accounting records are maintained in accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements applicable in Belgium.
- We do not have to report to you any transactions undertaken or decisions taken in breach of the by-laws or the law of June 27, 1921 with respect to not-for-profit associations, the foundations, and the European political parties and foundations, or from January 1, 2020 in breach of the Code of companies and associations.

Zaventem, 26 March 2020

BDO Réviseurs d'Entreprises SCRL
Statutory auditor
Represented by Bert Kegels

Management

Below is the list of the members of the General Assembly of VVOB in 2019 on 31 December.
The members of the Board of Directors are at the top of the list.

Board of Directors

- **Chairperson:** Mr Stefaan Van Mulders, Administrator General of Youth Welfare Agency
- Ms Heidi Vander Poorten, Team leader Equal Opportunities, Flemish Agency for Home Governance
- Mr Koen Verlaeck, Secretary General Flemish Interuniversity Council
- Dhr. Joris Rossie, General Director of Odisee College
- Ms Ann Brusseel, General Director Erasmus University College Brussels
- Mr Luc Lathouwers, Secretary General Department of Administration Affairs
- Ms Kristien Verbrugghen, Director of VLIR-UOS
- Dr Björn Possé, Institute for Agricultural and Fisheries Research
- Ms Judith Kerkhof, Development and Education Expert
- Mr Peter Van den Neucker, Department of Finance and Budget
- Ms Elisabeth Meuleman, Member of the Flemish parliament
- Mr Koen Van der Schaege, Director V.I.W. Foundation
- Ms Caroline Gennez, Member of the Flemish parliament
- Mr Lieven Viaene, Inspector General of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training
- Ms Ingeborg De Meulemeester, Member of the Flemish parliament
- Prof Paul Janssen, chairperson of VLIR-UOS, Hasselt University
- Mr Sigurd Vangermeersch, Deputy Chief of the Cabinet of Minister Sven Gatz
- Mr Jef Tavernier, Development and Education Expert
- Mr Jo De Ro, Member of the Flemish parliament
- Mr Joris Poschet, Member of the Flemish parliament
- Mr Guy Janssens, Administrator General of AgODi

General Assembly

- Ms Raymonda Verdyck, Managing Director of GO!
- Mr Lode De Geyter, General Director University College West-Vlaanderen
- Mr Patriek Delbaere, General Director OVSG
- Mr Marc Vandewalle, General Director of Leuven University College
- Ms Gerda Bruneel, Educational Counselor *Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen*
- Prof Herwig Leirs, Vice-president of VLIR-UOS, University of Antwerp
- Prof. S. Smis, member of VLIR-UOS
- Mr Rudi Schollaert, Development and Education Expert
- Mr Roger Standaert, Development and Education Expert
- Mr Eddy Bonne, Chairperson of V.I.W. Foundation

Acknowledgements

VVOB - education for development is an international development organisation specialised in strengthening the quality of education. We work in four continents in early, primary, general secondary education and technical and vocational education. In these four subsectors, we focus on strengthening local education actors to enable them to improve the professional development of teachers and school leaders. This capacity building is a means to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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This annual Report is the result of a joint effort of all VVOB staff members and partners all over the world.

Text

Emeline Lemmens, Etienne Ntawigira, Hans De Greve, Katelin Raw, Line Kuppens, Lisse Moons, Maartje Houbrechts, Maud Seghers, Soetkin Bauwens, Stefaan Van Mulders, Sven Rooms, Tom Vandenbosch

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Etienne Ntawigira, H. De La Fuente, Joz Senyondo, Leen Heylen, Lisse Moons, Outset Pictures, Rebecca Hearfield, Ronald Ddungu

Coordination and editing: Els Broothaers, Katelin Raw

Lay-out: Els Broothaers

Responsible editor:

Sven Rooms
VVOB vzw
Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A
1060 Brussels | Belgium



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partner in development



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Disclaimer

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 **VVOB vzw**

 **@VVOBvzw**

 **VVOB**

VVOB vzw | Julien Dillensplein 1 bus 2A | B-1060 Brussels | Belgium

T • +32 (0)2 209 07 99

E • info@vvob.org



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