



Annual report 2018

**Unlocking the potential
of teachers and
school leaders
for SDG4**

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Introduction

Thankfully, everyone is on the same page: education is important. Quality education takes up a central role in the Sustainable Development Goals for good reason. Without it, sustainable development will not be achieved. Steadfast investments in education systems is key.

But what do we mean when we say 'quality education'? This question has led to many fierce debates. Should quality education promote excellence, or should it focus on learners from vulnerable backgrounds? For VVOB, this is a false dilemma. Quality education should support every learner in their development to their fullest and unique potential. That means that we need to acknowledge barriers to learning and banish them from education systems. Only then can all girls and boys however talented, all children from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, all children from minority groups etc. realise their full learning potential. If we fall short, we are not only committing an injustice with regards to children's basic human rights, we are also losing as a society. We do not have the luxury to waste talent. Concern for equity and equal opportunities in school is in VVOB's DNA.

VVOB contributes to an equitable world by empowering teachers and school leaders. Jointly with our partners in the field – first and foremost a country's ministry of education – we analyse and improve the education system to make sure the quality of the professional development opportunities offered to teachers and school leaders is strengthened. How we do this in practice, is laid out for you in this annual report.

Because every context is different, every context needs a different approach. We need to think innovatively. Only by consistent-

ly innovating can we be of any real service to our partners. That is why we are very proud to have been acknowledged by the African Union as a 'top education innovator'. This is a huge honour for us and above all an encouragement to keep on going.

All this would not be possible without the financial support of our donors. We are very glad that they value our work and continue their loyal support. We particularly want to thank the Belgian and Flemish governments for our ongoing partnership. The European Union's contributions too are steadily rising. And in 2018 we were happy to welcome a few new, very important donors: Mastercard Foundation and Dubai Cares.

We keep raising the bar for quality and push our ambitions ever further. Only then can VVOB prove its value as a partner for both the education institutions in the Global South as for our donors. Our staff's knowledge and expertise make sure of that. Their efforts and enthusiasm to ensure every learner's right to quality education is realised, is the reason why VVOB can realise its own mission.

We hope you enjoy reading our annual report,

Stefaan Van Mulders

Chairperson

Sven Rooms

General Director

Quality teachers and effective school leaders: agents of inclusive and equitable education

Teachers and school leaders are the two most critical sets of actors in raising the quality of learning and wellbeing of children and youth, and thus in achieving SDG 4. Especially for the most disadvantaged learners in society, quality teaching and school leadership can have a decisive influence. Strategies that strengthen and support school leadership, support and retain high quality teachers and promote effective classroom learning, can indeed mitigate the negative effects of a learner's vulnerable background on his or her education experience.

VVOB employs and adapts two general models of quality teaching and effective school leadership to fit each individual country's experience, challenges and needs.



Quality teachers

Teachers are crucial to achieving learning outcomes and learner wellbeing, especially in the context of providing equal opportunities. Studies show that several years of highly effective teaching can offset the learning deficits of vulnerable learners, and that such an impact is higher on learners from a lower socioeconomic background. Therefore, VVOB focuses on initial training, induction and continuous professional development of teachers. To this end, VVOB uses an evidence-based framework that describes seven components of quality teaching resulting in better learning outcomes and achievement, high expectations and wellbeing. In VVOB's model – based on literature and critical reflection with VVOB's partners – teacher quality encompasses both teaching practices and individual characteristics of the teacher.

The inner most circle of VVOB's model of quality teachers illustrates what should be the focus of a teacher's attention:

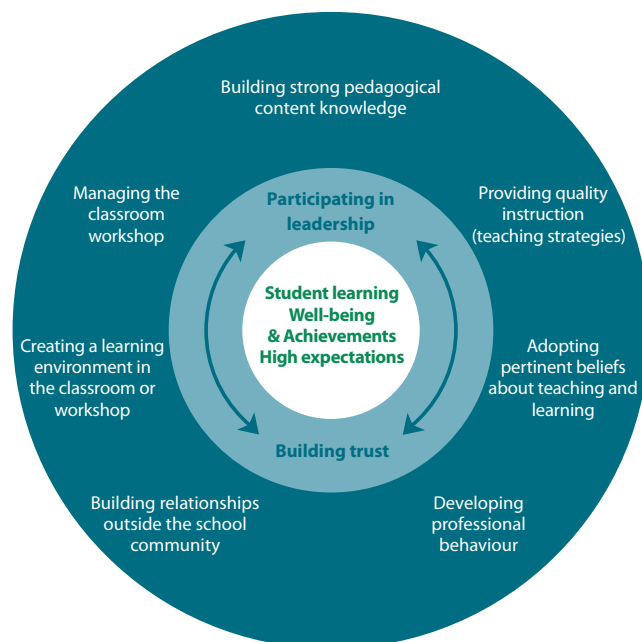
- children's learning resulting in outcomes and achievement
- high expectations
- learners' wellbeing

The main idea that a teacher's actions and efforts should focus on children's learning is grounded in the principles of outcome-based education. According to this take on teaching, what matters ultimately is not what is taught, but what is learnt. In other words: the quality of teaching should be judged by the quality of learning that takes place.

An important implication of this way of thinking about education is that a teacher's actions should focus on what is essential for all learners to know and to do successfully at the end of their learning experience, i.e. the desired learning outcomes. Learning outcomes thus become the starting point for organising the curriculum, drawing up lesson plans, using specific teaching strategies, managing the classroom in a certain way, etc. By diverting the attention to learning outcomes, the focus of all educational activities shifts from teaching to learning; from knowledge to the learner's thinking processes; and from a teacher's instruction to children demonstrating their learning. Teaching for learning outcomes is based on a belief that all individuals can learn and succeed, but maybe not all in the same way or at the same pace. In the end, all children can achieve reasonable standards if they are given appropriate opportunities. Consequently, teachers need to set high expectations for all learners.

Learner wellbeing is also at the core of a good teacher's attention. Indeed, powerful social, emotional and psychological factors – factors that can ensure children feel safe, supported and engaged

Model for quality teachers



in school – influence children's abilities to attend to learning, their ability to direct their learning, and their engagement in learning activities.

The second circle of the model describes two core strategies that are preconditions for the success of all other actions a teacher undertakes:

- Building trust. Developing positive relationships and trust between teachers and learners has a positive, significant, and long-lasting impact on the learners' lives, both academically and socially. A learner works better in class if they feel that their teacher values and cares for them. Learners feel valued if the teacher not only cares about their grades but also about their wellbeing and social life. Trust is also important in the relationship between a teacher and other teachers, the school leadership and staff and the broader community. Teachers need to talk to their colleagues and school leadership about how to improve, learn from what is working, observe other classes, and have discussions with parents and guardians.
- Participating in leadership. Teachers participate in leadership when they strive for excellence in their own teaching practices, contribute to improvement processes at school and empower others in the school community to achieve collective educational goals.

The **outer circle** of the model describes seven dimensions of teacher quality. These are seven qualities an effective teacher possesses:

- strong pedagogical content knowledge
- providing quality instruction (teaching strategies)
- managing the classroom or workshop and creating a learning environment in the classroom or workshop
- adopting pertinent beliefs about teaching and learning
- developing professional behaviour
- building relationships outside the school community

Addressing the concept of teacher quality from a holistic point of view – i.e. taking into account the central focus, the two core strategies and all seven dimensions of teacher quality – is fundamental to VVOB's educational portfolio. In the area of teacher professional development, the primary focus of VVOB is on capacity development of organisations and institutions that are responsible for teachers' pedagogical and didactical competences, their access to quality learning materials and their implementation of active pedagogies and didactics. This encompasses not only initial teacher education, but also professional growth at different stages in a teacher's career. Professional standards for teachers, teacher certification processes, initial teacher training curricula, mentoring programmes for new teachers, teacher networks, and monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are all important for quality teacher professional development.

VVOB has identified **eight characteristics of effective teacher professional development**, based on available research and successful practices in its programmes around the world. Effective teacher professional development:

1. is delivered in the context of the teachers' subject area(s), with the content they teach.
2. emphasises learning by doing and is oriented towards classroom implementation.
3. happens on a continuum. Links need to be made between initial teacher education, induction of new teachers and in-service teacher professional development systems.
4. stimulates deep reflections on teachers' own beliefs.
5. includes school-based activities.
6. is supported by school leaders.
7. is inclusive, differentiated and flexible.
8. is a process, not a one-off event.

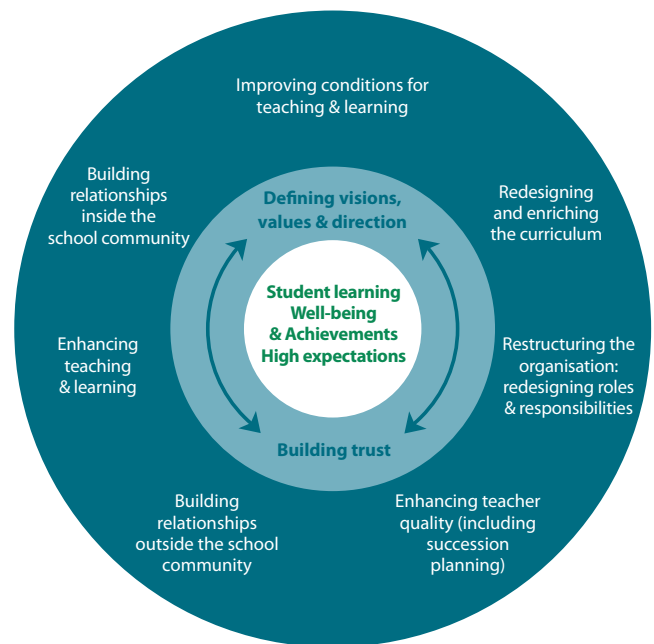
Effective school leaders

Professional development of teachers requires effective school leadership. School leaders who support, evaluate and develop teacher quality have a high impact on children's learning outcomes. School leaders also have a vital role in creating the broader conditions for effective teaching and learning. No school sustainably improves the quality of education in the absence of effective school leadership. Good leaders identify the aspects of their schools on which to focus in order to help children learn. They do this through a set of leadership behaviours that affect children's learning. From an equity perspective, effective school leaders are particularly important in transforming low performing and disadvantaged schools into successful schools, i.e. schools where all children learn and where their wellbeing is ensured. Successful school leadership has a positive impact on the entire school.

VVOB invests in the professional development of school leaders based on an evidence-based model that describes components of effective school leadership resulting in the goals described in **the inner most circle**:

- children's learning resulting in outcomes and achievement
- high expectations
- learners' wellbeing

The core of this model of effective school leaders is logically the same as the model for quality teachers: the sought-after end goals should be shared ones to ensure consistency between the different sets of important actors.



Model for effective school leaders

The second circle of the model shows that effective school leaders define their values and vision to raise expectations, set direction and build trust.

The outer circle of the model includes seven key dimensions of effective school leadership:

- structuring the organisation and assigning roles and responsibilities
- shaping conditions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning
- enhancing teacher quality
- enriching the curriculum
- enhancing teaching and learning
- building strong relationships inside the school community
- building relationships outside the school community

As with the teacher professional development model, VVOB adjusts this approach to a country's specific experience, challenges and needs. In practice, this means VVOB first assesses the context to identify who exactly needs support to improve school leadership. VVOB's education partners – primarily ministries of education and institutions responsible for the professional development of school leaders – may need support to empower school leaders to improve the quality of education. Professional development providers may need assistance from external experts. VVOB deploys a wide range of methodologies, from traditional training and workshops to mentoring, coaching and peer learning, as deemed appropriate in the different circumstances.

Developing school leadership capacity starts with building the capacity of those who provide professional development to school leaders. Initially, this means working to introduce the concept of school leadership in ministries of education and other institutions. Once the concept has been accepted, understood and tested by these partners, VVOB endeavours to institutionalise school leadership practices in a country's education system.

The professional development of school leaders throughout their careers is one of the linchpins of the VVOB approach to school leadership. Experience has shown that top-down strategies alone, such as building the capacity of those who provide professional development for head teachers, are ineffective and need to be complemented by strategies that involve school leaders themselves.

VVOB puts particular emphasis on the support and development school leaders provide to teachers, as an important pathway to influence learner achievement. When school leaders promote effective teacher professional learning (through pedagogical leadership) this has twice the impact on learning outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity. School leaders who support, evaluate and develop teacher quality are particularly important in the improvement of low performing and disadvantaged schools.



True ownership inspires school leaders to define tailor-made solutions

Imagine leading a school made up of children speaking different mother tongues, or a multi-grade school, or a school where over 50 children are learning together in one classroom but who need extra teachers and textbooks. This is a hard but daily reality for most primary school leaders in South Africa. And the consequences are dire: international research from 2017 reveals that 8 out of 10 grade 4 learners (usually 9 years old) cannot read for meaning in any language. Yet school leaders can make a difference.

Indeed, the impact of school leadership on learning outcomes is only second to the quality of teaching and learning. VVOB, decentralised government representatives called circuit managers and other partners support primary school leaders to effectively tackle these and other challenges with tailor-made solutions through professional learning communities and action research. With satisfying results according to those involved, who include circuit managers Morakabi Moletsane and Theko Mosea.



Circuit managers: first line of support

In South Africa, primary school leaders receive support through a decentralised support system set up by the national Department of Basic Education. An important component thereof is led by so-called circuit managers: they are the closest governmental point of contact for schools. As such, school leaders, and especially those in charge of disadvantaged and deprived schools, depend heavily on circuit managers for advice and support. But there are too many schools for too few circuit managers, which results in a heavy workload. Additionally, schools experience different needs and circuit managers have to travel far distances yet are limited in their mobility. As a logical result, circuit managers cannot meet school leaders' need for support to manage the daunting challenges they are facing.

Since neither the number of circuit managers nor the number of schools they have to assist can be changed, VVOB looks for other ways to improve support: setting up innovative methods such as professional learning communities, and training circuit managers through action research.

Relieving pressure with PLCs

Ownership is crucial for professional development; it is proven to be more effective when it is owned by the participants rather than driven by an external expert. Moreover, we learn best from our peers. This is exactly what happens in the professional learning communities (PLCs) for school leaders that VVOB promotes and supports in partnership with the Department of Basic Education in South Africa. School leaders from a certain area determine their learning needs collectively based on certain challenges, and then organise activities that drive their professional development by learning from each other's practices and experiences. An anonymous school leader said: "I am inspired to go and motivate my colleagues to form PLCs in all the different learning areas, especially in the foundation phase (*i.e. the first years of primary school*)."

The PLC approach has now been highlighted as a priority in the Department of Basic Education's strategic plans. In the context of a vast country like South Africa, PLCs are indeed an efficient approach to addressing the professional development needs of a large pool of school leaders. Of the school leaders reached by VVOB in this particular professional development programme, 48 per cent is now a member of a PLC, either within their own school or with school leaders from neighbouring schools. Promisingly, school leaders have indicated their motivation to continue exchanging with their peers, because it gives them a sense of support. And, importantly, school leaders feel empowered and look

for solutions from within rather than depending fully on support from circuit managers. While they are simply not able to address all school leaders' needs, circuit managers do play an important role in supporting school leaders to establish PLCs.

Action research boosts self-reflection

To guide these important actors, VVOB set up an action research process for circuit managers in Free State province. Action research empowers participants to critically review their own professional practice and consciously address the challenges by improving their practice in a continuous cycle of planning, acting, collecting evidence, reflecting, learning and redesigning. Put into practice in South Africa, circuit managers identify a challenge in their work with school leaders, undertake small actions together with school leaders to drive the resolution in a desirable direction, and evaluate the change once the actions have been taken.

Mr Moletsane, circuit manager in Free State province, aims to transform the schools under his jurisdiction into centres of excellence. He shares how he adapted his approach to meeting with school leaders after participating in the action research: "I assist the school leaders in my circuit with their professional development. I sent them an invitation with agenda items for a meeting, but during the meeting I deviated from the norm of going through the agenda items one by one. I moved away from being an external expert to a daily practitioner. I started with the AOBs – any other business. I asked the school leaders questions. I invited them to write up their frustrations about areas where they would like support from me as a circuit manager. I was amazed by the range of challenges that they highlighted: vacant posts in their

Mr Moletsane, circuit manager (right)



schools, using 'acting' staff for permanent posts, disciplinary problems in primary school classes, shortage of work- and textbooks. One of them commented on the support of the circuit manager being too limited. However, I was specifically struck by the fact that school leaders are so dependent on what their supervisors say, rather than being guided by the policy. They struggle to solve problems and don't trust their own professional judgement. I proceeded with asking the school leaders how they themselves could solve certain issues. And then most solutions came from the group of school leaders, not from me."

Voluntary participation is one of the critical factors for the success of action research. Officials from the Free State Department of Basic Education like Mr Moletsane engage in a one-year action, reflection, learning and planning cycle which also requires intensive documenting of their learnings. Commitment to this process is crucial to bringing about change. In 2018, only two participants of the 29 dropped out. The provincial education departments are even requesting VVOB to support more action research processes.

Shifts in attitude

Both PLCs and action research have provoked a paradigm shift in the way circuit managers approach school leaders. Instead of checking and instructing school leaders, their new approach is to empower people and to work collaboratively to address the many challenges they face. Through PLCs and action research, circuit managers learn to give constructive feedback, choose topics for professional development bottom-up, listen actively, express

appreciation and the list goes on. By developing these powerful skills, circuit managers now have healthier working relationships with their school leaders.

School leaders are now encouraged to solve their challenges, rather than to divert their problems. This has led to an important shift in attitudes among school leaders too, from perceiving children as the duty bearers of their own success or failure, towards taking on the responsibility as a school to adapt to learners' diverse needs. "Before, school leaders would mostly play the blame game, saying that learners are the cause of the challenges", Circuit Manager Mr Mosea says. "They were not looking at themselves. But now, after I applied my new approach, school leaders are reflecting on what they can do better and how they can go the extra mile for their learners." Mr Moletsane joins his colleague in this spirit of change: "We now have more a culture of helping each other. The school leaders feel more empowered. They feel they are leaders of their schools."

Critical mass

Looking forward, VVOB and its partners identify and communicate the good practices of PLCs and action research. In response to the growing demand from the Department of Basic Education, a next step involves making PLCs and action research part and parcel of the South African education system. VVOB can then create and support a critical mass of circuit managers and school leaders to identify, enact and share solutions to their challenges, which will contribute to improving learning outcomes through effective school leadership.



Maximising lifelong learning opportunities for school leaders

In 2017, VVOB set its five-year goal for the Rwandan education system: ‘Leading, Teaching and Learning Together’. In partnership with other valued education institutions in the country, such as the University of Rwanda – College of Education and Rwanda Education Board, VVOB offers relevant professional development opportunities to primary and secondary school leaders, mentor teachers and science teachers. They, in turn, then provide their learners with the best learning conditions.

To stimulate lifelong learning among teachers and school leaders, they partake in professional learning communities (PLCs) to exchange experiences about and solutions for shared challenges. Head teacher Father Theophile Harerimana and PLC facilitator Claudine Niyonagira share how VVOB’s support to their daily activities has transformed their leadership skills.



Vital involvement

International research agrees on the importance of quality leadership in schools. School leaders play a vital role in creating the conditions necessary for teachers to teach effectively, and for learners to learn deeply. A school can only improve the quality of its education if it is headed by a competent and responsible school leader. That's why VVOB invests heavily in their continuous professional development (CPD) in Rwanda.

Father Harerimana is the leader of a primary school in Eastern Province that caters to roughly 3,000 students and a teacher's staff of fifty. He is one of hundreds of school leaders to have successfully completed VVOB's diploma course in Effective School Leadership: "Even though I had been leading the school for a while already, I had never been trained in doing so. I am definitely more organised now, and have been incorporating some crucial aspects of school leadership in my daily work. For example, I used to organise workshops to develop a school improvement plan without involving important partners such as those of the school feeding programme. They need to be on board the planning meetings too if they are to really understand the school's challenges."

True participation

VVOB's ultimate goal of investing in CPD programmes is, of course, the improvement of learning outcomes. School leaders not only have to involve other partners, but their students too, in every step and aspect of school life. Father Harerimana already listened to students when they expressed their educational needs, but did not really give true student participation any thought. The course in Effective School Leadership taught him the importance of building relationships – both inside and outside of the school community:

"My meetings with students were already in place, but it was not until the course that I really understood their relevance. Students have very valuable ideas and feedback for the process of improving our school. I lead people who reason and who challenge me. Just like parents and teachers do. I would be apprehensive about my meetings with them: those meetings were the time and place for issues to be raised. I would plan my answers in advance. But now I consider those meetings as a platform for sharing ideas, discussing issues and identifying solutions together."

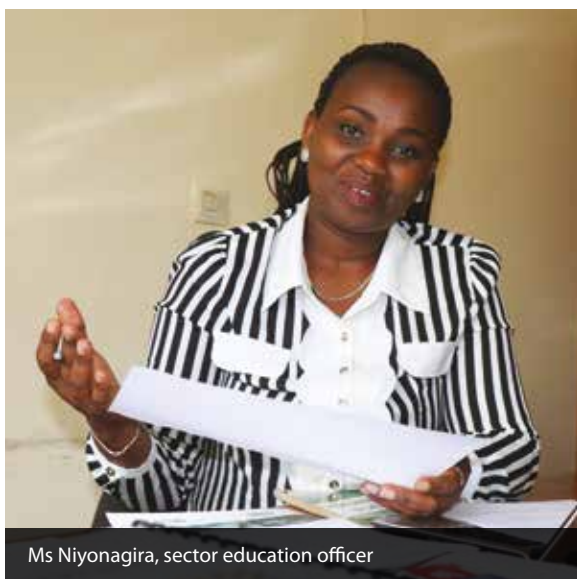


Mr Harerimana, school leader

Bridging the gap with PLCs

VVOB's experience has shown that CPD trainings alone are insufficient for real and sustainable change to occur. Even effective trainings need to be complemented by strategies that provide continuous support after they have finished, and that involve the trainees themselves. Professional learning communities are a proven effective instrument that bridge the gap between the theory of a CPD training and putting that theory into practice. They provide the opportunity for participants to break out of their professional isolation, create a forum for sharing and even increase the levels of job satisfaction and motivation.

VVOB works with local government staff called sector education officers (SEOs) to organise PLCs for school leaders in their jurisdictions. SEOs benefit from a training in Educational Mentorship and Coaching that enables them to support their participants in leading their schools effectively. Ms Claudine Niyonagira has been an SEO in Eastern Province since 2012, but she did not learn about PLCs until she enrolled in the certificate course in 2018: "I already had meetings with school leaders, but PLCs are something different. They are more focussed and interactive. You meet, discuss issues and identify a way forward together."



Ms Niyonagira, sector education officer

Listening, not imposing

The training opened Ms Niyonagira's eyes about her attitude towards and relationship with school leaders: "SEOs are supposed to mentor and coach school leaders, but I started to understand that that was not what I was doing. I was coaching them in a rather disorganised way. That did not help school leaders to find a solution to the problems they were facing – at all. We, SEOs, were giving out instructions: 'You did this wrong, you should do it this way...'. That is how I would talk to a school leader. That is not coaching. I learnt how I can facilitate school leaders to identify their own solutions to problems, without necessarily imposing mine."

"Our old approach was affecting schools' improvement processes. We imposed measures and instructions on school leaders and asked them to implement them without their input. Now, I listen to school leaders. Oftentimes, school leaders already have the solutions to the problems they face, but someone just needs to guide him or her through the process of understanding and analysing the situation until the solution is identified. I used to be like a policewoman. But now I understand that educational coaching is the best approach to improving school leadership overall."

School leaders inspire

Ms Niyonagira believes that PLCs have increased collaboration with and among school leaders. They share good practices and lessons learnt in the PLC, so their peers can use similar approach-

Evidence-based programming

VVOB and partners developed a diploma course 'Effective School Leadership' and regularly organise professional learning communities (PLCs) with facilitation from sector education officers (SEOs). The aim is to support (deputy) school leaders to develop and/or strengthen the competences needed to create a stimulating and supportive school environment that enables effective teaching and facilitates deep learning.

To assess the delivery, relevance, impact and sustainability of the diploma course and complementary PLCs, VVOB has set up a large-scale mixed methods study together with The Research Base. Key questions include: (1) What, if any, is the impact of the diploma course and/or PLCs on (deputy) school leaders' competencies in leading their schools effectively? (2) What, if any, is the impact of the course on SEOs' competencies in coaching school leaders in PLCs? (3) What are the challenges for implementation? How can they be addressed?

By mid-2019, a baseline study will have been conducted and analysed among a sample of approximately 265 schools, including 168 schools of which the school leader is currently enrolled in the diploma course and 97 unexposed schools. Throughout the course of the programme, this sample will be followed over time, and a mid- and end-line study conducted.

es to deal with the issues in their own schools. She shares a good example: "During one PLC in my sector, a school leader shared that the learning objectives were not being met in his school. The students were unable to read or write Kinyarwanda, the local language, after completing the first year of primary education. But this is a precondition to be able to follow the other subjects. Coincidentally, other school leaders had faced the same issue and gave advice about how to deal with it: identify the struggling students and organise additional classes so they can catch up. The first school leader was inspired and addressed the problem in a similar way."

"School leaders feel comfortable talking about the issues they face in PLCs. They trust me and see me as a collaborator whom they can rely on for support. Learning outcomes will increase as a result of more effective school leadership."

Observe, act, reflect: the basis of teacher professional development

In Vietnam, school enrolment and participation rates are very high, even in the most remote and disadvantaged areas. Nationwide, over 80 per cent of 3-to-5-year-old and almost 90 per cent of 5-to-6-year old children are in preschool. Learning outcomes, however, differ significantly between them. Especially children in Vietnam's most ethnically diverse areas experience various barriers to learning and participation when they are in school.

To mitigate these barriers, VVOB works with preschool teachers to overturn the one-size-fits-all approach they were initially trained in. A methodology called 'process-oriented child monitoring' and professional development of teachers rooted in reflection and collaboration are effective levers for changing classroom practices, as teacher Vo Thi My Phuong and school leader Nguyen Thi Hien share below. Ms Phuong and Ms Hien are members of the core group whom VVOB works with in Quang Nam, a province with many ethnic minorities.

Ms Hien, school leader and Ms Phuong, teacher



Wellbeing and involvement: core conditions for learning

The root causes for unequal learning outcomes of preschool children in remote areas in Vietnam are often linked to the environment, prevailing gender stereotypes and cultural and linguistic diversity, as school leader Ms Hien points out: “The main difficulty in our school is communication. Most children are from ethnic minorities. At home they speak a different language. They are shy to express themselves in Vietnamese.” Teachers however should be able to manage such social factors, as they define interactions and dynamics in the classroom.

VVOB supports preschool teachers to apply process-oriented child monitoring twice a year. This methodology, developed in Belgium and adapted to the Vietnamese context, determines levels of wellbeing and involvement of young learners. It encourages teachers to ask reflective questions like ‘Who is doing well?’ and ‘Who is at risk of not learning?’. Once they have formulated an answer to these questions, they can identify the reasons for poor learning outcomes. These reasons are the specific barriers to learning. The teachers go on, often collectively, to discuss concrete actions they can undertake to mitigate these barriers to learning and participation, all the while fostering equity and care in their classrooms.

Teacher Ms Phuong attests: “Since I started screening wellbeing and involvement in my learners, I have a much better understanding of their individual needs. I have adjusted my activities to address the interests of the children and to be child-centered. My relationship with them is much closer. Children are not shy anymore and are more confident.”

Gendered barriers to learning

In response to the findings of a field study, VVOB invested heavily in promoting gender-responsive pedagogy in 2018 to tackle gender-related barriers to learning specifically. The study revealed critically low levels of awareness in both parents and teachers about gender stereotypes and how these impact learning.

Based on these findings, VVOB is designing toolkits and trainings that will promote gender-responsive play-based learning, raise awareness and understanding about how gender stereotypes manifest themselves in everyday life, and how they are unconsciously transmitted to young children in the early years. Schools can be powerful environments to counter this harmful yet persistent phenomenon that is partly responsible for violence against women – still a very big problem in Vietnam.

Leading school leaders and teachers as a lever for positive change

Teachers in Vietnam are not mandated to drastically change their teaching practices or to experiment with innovative methods without the approval and support of their school leaders and the Ministry of Education and Training. These latter two actors hold the key to successful change. That is why VVOB sets up representative core groups of teachers, school leaders and education officers from the provincial and district education departments – responsible for teacher professional development – from the selected remote districts in Vietnam. VVOB’s expert team works directly with these core groups to ensure the suggested teaching methodologies are grounded in the reality of teachers in the remote districts. These core groups in turn train and support teachers in their districts in process-oriented child monitoring.

But first, VVOB develops the capacity of each core group’s members themselves in process-oriented child monitoring. The members also learn more about specific barriers to learning, such as barriers related to gender, environment and ethnic diversity. Secondly, core group members look at how they can make teacher professional development more effective in their districts, and how it can be more school-based. Ms Hien: “Teacher professional development must be based on teachers’ needs. They can raise a need. Or maybe they have new ideas or initiatives? They can demonstrate it to the other teachers.”

Catalyst for professional learning

As illustrated above, process-oriented child monitoring is a deeply reflective process for teachers to approach diversity among their learners in a new, positive way. However, working on this innovative methodology with the core groups has also changed how education officers organise professional development for the teachers in their districts. They now engage in deep reflection on the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities they offer to teachers, and take necessary steps to improve it.

VVOB equips the core groups with methods to offer the schools in their districts with continuous support in between the more traditional training sessions. Members of the core groups now regularly visit schools and coach teachers on the practical implementation of process-oriented child monitoring in the classroom. They encourage teachers to reflect on their learner observations and subsequent actions together to build collaborative expertise and better cater to the needs of all children.

Enabling environment

This change process is dependent on encouragement and nurturing by actors other than teachers. As discussed, education officers from the local governments support teachers with reflective professional development, but school leaders too play a crucial role. Quality teaching may well be the most important factor contributing to good learning outcomes, but without school leaders who create the conditions for effective teaching and learning, quality teaching cannot take place. School leaders create a conducive learning culture and develop systems that support teacher learning.

Core groups as a whole, but education officers specifically, stimulate school leaders to reflect on how they can best support teachers to apply innovative approaches. While school leaders reflect on their own important role, they take steps towards facilitating school-based professional learning in the process, as Ms Hien illustrates: "During meetings with teachers, I used to sit at the head of the table. I would do the talking while the teachers just sat in. That has changed. I now choose a seat anywhere, just like another participant would. I talk in a friendly way, no longer instructing them about what to do or how to fix a problem. It is much easier for teachers to share their challenges now. We try to find a solution together. I am their supporter."

Harvesting inspiration abroad and at home

VVOB is a firm believer of collaboration and creates as many opportunities as possible for exchange on education topics between peers. In that spirit, a delegation of the core groups in Vietnam visited Belgium in 2018. The delegation enjoyed rich interactions with their Belgian colleagues about teacher professional development and preschool teaching practices. They were also exposed to some of those inspiring teaching practices in action. The visitors incorporated the lessons learnt in their own work with schools in their provinces and districts – some sound teacher professional development, as Ms Phuong attests: "The education officer who visited Belgium explained how teachers there use symbols for classroom management. I thought it was a good idea. Children in my class now use their own symbols to select the corner they want to play in. I even demonstrated this tactic to other teachers in my school!"

Similar exposure visits are also organised nationally. At the end of 2018, core groups came together to share their stories of change. Districts and provinces reflected collectively on their progress and collected some lessons learnt. This peer learning process inspired future actions. Members of the core groups wasted no time in making plans for more national exposure visits to learn more from their peers in other parts of Vietnam.



Upgrading TVET teacher skills through widespread engagement

Only 38 per cent of young people in Ecuador is properly employed (INEC, 2019). 30 per cent does not enrol in secondary education at all (INEVAL, 2018) and, according to the International Labour Organization, young people in Ecuador are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (2018).

Ecuador wants to provide its youthful population with decent job and business opportunities. The Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) of Ecuador has identified the improvement of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector as a strategy to achieve this. VVOB does its part by working with universities, industry partners and pedagogical advisors, like Yesenia Rodríguez and Carlos Villavicencio, to provide quality professional development to teachers. Full attention is on strengthening their pedagogical skills on one side and their technical skills on the other. The TVET sector is enjoying a serious appreciation boost in Ecuador in the process.



Motivated to learn more

TVET students expect to receive an education that improves their opportunities at a good job, stimulates entrepreneurship or guides them towards higher education. Thankfully, Ecuador is full of teachers who are motivated to provide this to them. The problem lies in the limited capabilities of some to do so, as they say themselves. TVET teachers want to acquire the necessary pedagogical skills to put theory into classroom practice, and to teach students in vulnerable situations. TVET schools in Ecuador indeed cater to many vulnerable students. Teachers also want to gain the most recent technical knowledge, aligned with the (ecological) expectations and practices of the labour market.

VVOB joins forces with various education partners in Ecuador's society in response to the development needs put forward by TVET teachers. With a postgraduate at university-level and innovative initiatives through their schools, teachers upgrade both their pedagogical and technical skills.

New since 2018: postgrad for TVET teachers

For a long time, there was no training for TVET student teachers in Ecuador that also focused on pedagogical skills, next to the mandatory technical skills. Almost half of the TVET teacher force never enjoyed a pedagogical training. This has consequences not only for their teaching practice, but also for their salary. The latter is often dependent on a teacher's education level.

Taking into account both the needs put forward by TVET teachers and the competency profile for TVET teachers developed by MINEDUC, VVOB developed a macro-curriculum together with university staff for a pedagogical postgraduate for TVET teachers. Topics such as vocational pedagogy, instruction models, competence assessment and evaluation, education for sustainable development, gender and restorative practices are discussed.

After the macro-curriculum was officially approved by the Consejo de Educación Superior (the Council for Higher Education in English), the Universidad Nacional de Educación launched the postgraduate in September 2018. The Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador and the Universidad Técnica de Manabí will follow suit quickly once the necessary formalities have also been finalised. The universities also organise observation visits between them and collaborative subject planning for peer learning purposes.

Teachers who take up the postgraduate expand their pedagogical knowledge and can receive a salary increase of up to 50% - deservedly so seeing the important role MINEDUC assigns them in the development of Ecuador's youth.

Upskilling through RCCs

In principle, the postgraduate course is limited in time, but TVET teachers should receive every opportunity to continuously develop their skills throughout their career. Especially in technical education, it is important to keep up with all the technical advancements.

To this end, VVOB organises RCC projects. 'RCC' stands for 'Relación Colegio-Comunidad' in Spanish, or 'School-Community Partnership' in English. With these projects, VVOB encourages that: create partnerships between TVET schools on one side and (local) businesses on the other. Schools with certain specialised technical courses are matched up with businesses in the same field.

Different actors take up different responsibilities in those collaborative partnerships and each RCC is different, but there are two leading roles. First, the industry partners, who open their doors for schools. TVET teachers benefit from training in their field by the industry partner on-site. The partners can also offer learning materials to schools, so students can learn to work with the technical equipment. Industry partners also offer on-the-job learning experiences to students. RCCs create a win-win situation for all: students have more chances at acquiring a decent job, and the industry can depend on a properly skilled workforce.

Pedagogical ingredient of RCCs: asesores

The second leading role in RCCs is for *asesores*, or pedagogical advisors in English, like Ms Rodríguez. She is part of the RCC project that focuses on sustainable tourism, one of VVOB's biggest. The involved pedagogical advisors receive trainings from VVOB on project-based learning, student internship accompaniment and soon also the tracer study model. Ms Rodríguez explains how the following support of the pedagogical advisors to the teachers is organised:

"First, we work with the schools in general. We have discussions with the school authorities and board members, so they come to see of the pedagogical support as an opportunity for professional improvement. We want to embed this culture of reflection in educational institutions." Then, VVOB staff and pedagogical advisors come together and organise workshops to train teachers. Pedagogical skills are the main subject, but technical skills too are unavoidably discussed in a training for technical teachers. For example, 'project-based learning' is an important theme in an RCC.

"And then," Ms Rodríguez continues, "we guide the teachers on how to be a real mediator instead of just a knowledge transmitter for their students. That is an often-faced challenge in TVET classrooms."



Yesenia Rodríguez en Carlos Villavicencio, pedagogical advisors

To sum up: pedagogical advisors reflect alongside teachers about how their teaching practices can generate and provoke real knowledge-building in students. Pedagogical advisors thus encourage their teachers to apply their newly acquired knowledge in the classroom, but they also stimulate them to use peer learning as a platform for continuous development. “If teachers support each other in these processes of reflection and change, institutional autonomy can be achieved”, Ms Rodríguez adds.

Fuelling autonomy and motivation

The ultimate goal of the support of the pedagogical advisors is that TVET teachers and other school staff are capacitated to strengthen their educational knowledge and skills on their own account. That is the basis of education improvement in the long term. In Ms Rodríguez’ words: “The objective of the pedagogical advisor is to support the teacher to self-reflect through dialogue on his or her practices, to identify their own strengths and to decide for themselves what they can do to achieve better results. Not to tell teachers what their errors or strengths are, or what can be improved.”

“Pedagogical advisors do not want to generate dependency, but rather autonomy. We want to stimulate a process in which teachers reflect on their practices and are capable of generating their own mechanisms for professional growth”, Ms Rodríguez concludes.

Evidence-based programming

The powerful impact that competent teachers have on learners’ wellbeing, learning outcomes and future opportunities is well evidenced. But much less is known about what constitutes effective teacher professionalisation, particularly in TVET. To build that evidence, VVOB has teamed up with The Research Base. The focus is on VVOB’s sector-based approach to continuous professional development (CPD) in Ecuador. Zooming in on TVET teachers for tourism, the researchers study the benefits of combining relevant industry collaboration with pedagogical support.

VVOB opted for a rapid cycle evaluation that will yield multi-year evidence about the progressive effect of the intervention. Data collection includes surveys with 160 students across 8 schools, and interviews with 20 teachers and 5 industry representatives. Key questions include:

- What, if any, is the effect of the CPD on teachers’ competence to introduce active teaching and learning methods and organise meaningful workplace learning for students?
- How is this effect achieved?
- What are the challenges for implementation? What can be done to overcome these?

The first insights will be available in the first half of 2019.

Colleague pedagogical advisor Villavicencio agrees about the importance of autonomy, for students too: “When a student is autonomous, they start to act independently. They look for new information on their own account, design and develop their own products and ideas and work in team to obtain results. And for autonomy to take place, students need to be motivated. Motivation is crucial for lifelong learning.”

Scaling and VVOB: lessons learnt from 'Catch Up' in Zambia

Successful interventions ought to reach as many learners as possible. But how to scale up a programme all the while maintaining its effectiveness?

In 2016-2017, VVOB, J-PAL and UNICEF introduced Catch Up, a remedial teaching programme, to 80 schools in Zambia with the support of USAID. Persuaded by notable learning gains, Catch Up was scaled up to 470 schools in 2018. By 2020, nearly 1,800 schools will be involved. While VVOB and its partners keep an eye on the programme in its entirety, the school management and local education officials are responsible for daily monitoring and support. Embedding follow-up within the local education structures enables quality scaling and contributes to Catch Up's sustainability.

Proof of concept

Teething problems are inevitable to any new project. That is why all VVOB programmes are cyclical. Interventions are tested and evaluated on a small scale to address implementation challenges early on, and before the start of a new cycle. Once the efforts obtain 'proof of concept' – evidence that the approach works – and obstacles and caveats have been addressed, VVOB starts building towards scale.

Facing a nationwide learning crisis, Zambia decided in 2016 to experiment with Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in a project known as 'Catch Up'. The TaRL methodology had proven very successful in India in improving basic skills among underachieving primary school learners. Instead of grouping learners by age and using passive learning methods, TaRL differentiates by ability and focuses on active learning. To find out whether TaRL could work in the Zambian context as well, a pilot was designed and implemented in 80 schools across four districts in Zambia's Eastern and Southern provinces. An independent evaluation soon showed proof of concept in Zambia too.

Pathways to scale

A scale-up requires an increased capacity to provide training and monitor. To avoid overstretching the own capacities, VVOB invests, from the pilot on, in local capacity development. Rather than training teachers and school leaders on the methodology and practice of Catch Up, zonal in-service coordinators (ZICs) and district resource centre coordinators (DRCCs) – local education officials – were trained to become master trainers and take responsibility over teacher and school leader training. Their capacity to monitor Catch Up and collect and analyse data was also strengthened. This approach enables VVOB and its partners to build towards scale and ensure sustainability too.

Governmental buy-in is critical too when scaling up. Still, even if the scale-up is welcomed by education officials, it might fail because teachers and school leaders are not willing to take it up.

In Zambia, three models were tested in the pilot phase. In the first two models, grades 3 to 5 primary learners attended a four-week summer camp with three-hour sessions daily comprising of literacy and numeracy – the first camp model took place during



Catch Up session: literacy

term-time, the second during the school holidays. In the third model, learners alternately studied literacy and numeracy for one hour after school-hours during two terms. The first two models turned out to be particularly successful. Yet, the Zambian Ministry of General Education preferred to scale up the third model. Finding teachers willing to teach long extra hours was considered too challenging.

Monitoring mentors

In 2018, Catch Up was introduced in 470 primary schools in Zambia's Eastern and Southern province. In 2019, an additional 661 schools will start implementing Catch Up. On-site monitoring and support are provided to ensure that all learners receive quality Catch Up sessions.

Monitoring and data collection are inherent to quality scaling – and to Catch Up. At the start of Catch Up, children's learning levels in literacy and numeracy are assessed using a simple assessment tool. In the first place, the outcome is used to divide the learners into groups, ensuring level-appropriate instruction. But it is also used as a baseline score to track learners' progress and Catch Up success. ZICs and DRCCs also use the data to identify underperforming schools in need of extra support.

ZICs and DRCCs also monitor the day-to-day implementation of Catch Up, regularly visiting schools to observe whether teachers use active learning methods and use level-appropriate strategies. Beyond monitoring, they also provide mentoring. Before and after Catch Up sessions, they sit together with teachers to discuss challenges and provide feedback. Teachers also receive mentoring from specially trained mentor teachers (one per school) and, at times, from VVOB mentors or mentors from other Catch Up partner organisations.

The future of Catch Up

By 2020, nearly 1,800 schools will be implementing Catch Up. So far, results are notable. Therefore, VVOB and the Ministry of General Education in Zambia are already looking beyond 2020. The question is whether Catch Up can be implemented nationwide and with minimal involvement on behalf of VVOB and partners. To this end, VVOB and its partners aim to further embed Catch Up in the Zambian education structures and to make the monitoring process ever leaner.

VVOB's practice of building towards scale

Increasingly, VVOB programmes include and apply deliberate scaling strategies. In Ecuador, VVOB has set up two pilot programmes that bring together schools and the tourist sector to provide upper-secondary school learners in tourism-related technical studies with the necessary skills to find decent employment in that sector, and to contribute to its sustainability. The programme is aligned with the country's strategic plan to maximise Ecuador's tourist potential (*Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de Turismo Sostenible en el Ecuador 2020*). Now set in 21 schools in the provinces of Pichincha and Manabí, the aim is to integrate school-tourist sector collaboration in the national education system. To create the conditions for future scaling, the programme focuses on building the capacity of education officials to plan for scaling; on collecting evidence from the pilots; and on cultivating and maintaining stakeholder buy-in, among others, through stakeholder committees.

In Vietnam, VVOB developed a toolkit on gender-responsive play-based learning for early childhood education to challenge traditional gender norms in the country. In a first step, VVOB staff trained teachers and school leaders from 15 schools in 15 districts to get familiar with and use the toolkit, while being shadowed by local education officials. Once evaluated, the training and toolkit were revised. In the next cycle, teachers and school leaders of all 156 schools in the districts will receive training, not by VVOB staff, but by local education officials. And, ultimately, VVOB aims to make gender-responsive play-based learning part of the nationwide in-service curriculum. An advocacy campaign has already started.

Scaling strategies are also part of VVOB's programmes in Cambodia, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this way, the organisation hopes to reach a maximum of learners in the future.

International cooperation: a two-way street

VVOB is not alone in its mission to improve the quality of education in its partner countries. In addition to an actor, VVOB is also a witness of plenty of good practices. These education activities from different countries are a source of inspiration for battling similar challenges in Belgium. VVOB documents them and brings them back home.

Thinking of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, VVOB facilitates (international) exchanges between education practitioners and aims to be an incubator for possible solutions. This is done with three programmes aimed primarily at beneficiaries in Belgium: eNSPIRED, SchoolLinks and Educaid.be. What follows are just a few of many highlights in 2018, with testimonies from participants.



Equal partnerships

VVOB's philosophy of international cooperation is one characterised by respect, equality and an eagerness to learn. "VVOB breaks away from the traditional view of international cooperation being solely a global North-to-South movement. We build partnerships based on equality and reciprocity", said Soetkin Bauwens, education advisor for VVOB, at the Flemish government's biannual high-level policy event for development cooperation. She was invited to speak about cocreation in education and equal partnerships with the Global South. "Education challenges are global and education practitioners in Belgium can learn a lot from their peers in the South. As an organisation, we go further than information exchange. We choose partnerships of dialogue and interactive exchange, where all partners are stimulated to reflect critically and act accordingly."

VVOB puts this philosophy into practice with three big activities that are aimed, in the first place, at Belgian actors in the fields of education and development. 'Learning from and with each other' is a central element in eNSPIRED, SchoolLinks and Educaid.be.

eNSPIRED: international inspiration an asset

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. 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, pedagogical counsellors, (student) teachers and school leaders are exposed to the fresh views of international education experts.

For the 2017-2018 academic year, eNSPIRED and partners decided to focus on 'vulnerable learners' as the central theme. In April 2018, eNSPIRED's first international learning week took place. For five days education experts from Zambia and Suriname entered into a meaningful dialogue with Belgian education experts to exchange ways to include the most vulnerable learners in quality education. They shared their daily education experiences.

On 18 and 19 April, the eNSPIRED team opened its doors for the wider public. Participants signed up for a variety of workshops that introduced good practices for working with vulnerable learners. The visitors from Zambia focused on the early years and shared how teacher training colleges prepare their students for dealing with vulnerability in the classroom. A lot of attention was also dedicated to parental involvement and connecting with the home environment. The experts from Suriname focused more on the older students and how to work with vulnerable youths in a context of diversity.

The enthusiastic reactions and testimonies from participants showed that the eNSPIRED year was a hit: "I was already using a lot of the theoretical frameworks we saw in my classroom. But now they are enriched with the added dimension of diversity. That makes them more colourful. That inspires me", an anonymous evaluation told. In other words, eNSPIRED fulfils a need of Belgian educators to complement their existing professional development opportunities with an international perspective.

Strengthened in her mission, the eNSPIRED working group started its preparations for the academic year of 2018-2019. Gender was chosen as the common thread, with an international guest lecture to kickstart the year on 13 November. Madeleine Kennedy-Macfoy (Education International), Wendelien Vantiegheem (University of Brussels) and moderator Wim Slabbinck engaged with participants and came up with ways to ban harmful gender stereotypes from the classroom through an interactive debate and five practice-oriented workshops.

GENE award puts eNSPIRED on the European map

In 2018, Global Education Network Europe (GENE) acknowledged eNSPIRED with a feature in its GENE 2018 Global Education Innovation Award Brochure. With this initiative, GENE sheds light on some promising European activities working on global citizenship education. The award looks for projects that bring about positive change and open people's minds to the world. The network not only praises successes in those endeavours, but also innovation.

SchoolLinks deepens partnerships between Belgian and international schools

eNSPIRED focuses on the motivation of (student) teachers, teacher trainers, pedagogical counsellors and school leaders to become more international-minded, while SchoolLinks mostly (but not exclusively) turns its attention to the development of global citizenship skills in Belgium's 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. With extra funding for the stimulation of solidary world citizenship from Brussels International, 2018 turned out to be an exceptionally rewarding year for the schoollinks of three secondary schools in the larger Brussels area.

During a joint city game for secondary students from the fifth grade of the three schools, the students were introduced to the concept of the SDGs in general. Later in the year, the schools concentrated on the SDG themes that are central to their school-link. For example, the two students and teachers that visited their partner school in Kinshasa, DR Congo, exchanged on issues of migration and child soldiers among other things. One of the other schools focused on (the consumption of) water in the world with their partner school in India during their visit. In turn, the third school in Brussels received two teachers and two students from India and organised activities on all sorts of societal, social and ecological themes.

Lisa De Greef, a student at one of the beneficiary schools in Brussels, captured the value of their schoollink in these words: "Very often we're focused on our own culture, and we forget to show interest in others. Some of us even make quick judgments about people they don't even know, for example based on how they're dressed. I think every school should have a partner school in a different country, so they can really get to know them and put a stop to prejudices."

Thanks to this opportunity offered by Brussels International and the deepening of the exchanges on the SDGs, the attention of the youngsters for shared global interests has indeed grown substantially.

Students Juliette Coppens and Elise Vande Vliet from another beneficiary school share about their experiences from India: "The SDGs are goals that countries have set to make the world a better place, like 'no more poverty' or 'safe drinking-water'. We created a game to get familiarised with these goals. The students from India also prepared a presentation about water, and how to filter and reuse it. Water is an important subject for them, and they even showed us how they filter it at home."

To bring the project on solidary world citizenship to a close, SchoolLinks organised a 'global day' for the involved schools in Brussels. With the help of a local not-for-profit, the students reflected in a playful manner about the relationship between countries in the Global North and the Global South, challenged stereotypes and broadened their views of the world.





Educaid.be unites Belgian actors and attracts external expertise

2018 was also a fruitful year for Educaid.be. 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. For the 2018 edition, Educaid.be joined forces with the Belgian platform Be-cause Health to highlight the important linkages between education and health. At the conference, pointedly titled 'Health and Education: Stronger Together', an international panel considered the need for prioritisation and resources. In the afternoon, participants delved deeper into good practices and innovative solutions in one of the four break-out sessions. A VVOB colleague presented our programme in Suriname in a session about school-related gender-based violence with panellists from Plan International and UNESCO among others.

Another important responsibility of Educaid.be is supporting its member organisations (and the general public) with external expertise on education from a global perspective. For example, 2018 was ushered in with a presentation of the World Develop-

ment Report 2018 'LEARNING to Realize Education's Promise' by the World Bank. In March, a new subsite was launched called 'The contribution of TVET programmes to girls' empowerment', which is linked to a study by Plan International Belgium. On the occasion of a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in Brussels in June, Educaid.be highlighted the role and interaction of the European Union and Belgium with this multilateral organisation.

ICT in education was also featured prominently on Educaid.be's 2018 agenda. In October, the platform participated in a seminar about gender equality and digitalisation, and during an Educaid.be workshop in December, nine successful ICT practices and instruments in the field of development cooperation were illustrated. In other words, 2018 ended with innovating and inspiring practices for the future of education.

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

🤝 9 university colleges; 2 education networks; 2 universities; 1 adult education institution; RoSa; UNICEF (details: www.enspired.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; Brussels

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 Bas-Fleuve, Cataractes, Lukaya)

🤝 Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education; FAWE

🇧🇪 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 Sports; Ministry of Women's Affairs; Puthi Komar Organization; Kampuchean Action for Primary Education; Gender and Development for Cambodia; 5 local CSOs

🇧🇪 Belgium; EU

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).

📍 Siem Reap province (pilot)

🤝 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

🇧🇪 UNESCO



Legend

- Focus
- 📍 Region
- 🤝 Local partners
- 🏦 Funding partners

Logos: education expert partners from Belgium

Ecuador

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

- Increases the relevancy 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 relevancy 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

- 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

LT4Diversity (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; EU



Suriname

iGROW (initiative for gender-responsive education)

- Creates gender-responsive, safe and supportive lower secondary vocational schools through professional development of teachers (INSET) and school leaders.
- 📍 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; EU

PROGRESS LBO (increasing effectiveness of lower secondary vocational schools)

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



Vietnam

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
- 🇪🇺 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; Research Center for Gender, Family and Environment in Development
- 🇪🇺 Belgium; EU

KdG Karel de Grote Hogeschool

steunpunt diversiteit & leren

KATHOLIEK ONDERWIJS VLAANDEREN

Zambia

Catch Up

- Implements remedial teaching in primary education through professional development of teachers (INSET) on Teaching at the Right Level methodologies.
- 📍 Eastern province; Southern province
- 🤝 Ministry of General Education; Pratham; J-PAL Africa; Innovations for Poverty Action; UNICEF
- 🇺🇸 USAID

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

arteveldehogeschool

LUCA SCHOOL OF ARTS

On'ced

KATHOLIEK ONDERWIJS VLAANDEREN

rosa kenniscentrum voor gender en feminisme

THOMAS MORE

howest De Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen

HO GENT

Our expertise shared worldwide

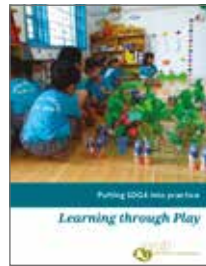
Over the years, VVOB has specialised in a number of educational sectors and themes based on international research. Basic education, secondary technical and vocational education and training and general secondary education make up our portfolio of expertise. Thematically speaking, we are a progressive organisation gender-wise. Diversity and vulnerability in the general sense drive our activities. Our commitment to teachers and school leaders remains unequivocal. We are happy to share our experiences and lessons learnt with like-minded institutions through various platforms. Just a few highlights of 2018:



A seat at the Teacher Task Force Steering Committee

For the next 2 years, VVOB will be part of the Steering Committee of UNESCO's Teacher Task Force. An important strategic driver of the Teacher Task Force, its Steering Committee provides guidance to reach its objectives and closely follows its progress. The Steering Committee members are also expected to advocate for teacher issues in the Teacher Task Force's name at global conferences and meetings. A responsibility VVOB is ready and proud to take up after more than two years of membership.

ance to reach its objectives and closely follows its progress. The Steering Committee members are also expected to advocate for teacher issues in the Teacher Task Force's name at global conferences and meetings. A responsibility VVOB is ready and proud to take up after more than two years of membership.



Technical brief #3: Learning through play

Learning through play has gained momentum in early childhood education and beyond. This third technical brief in our series 'Putting SDG4 into Practice' (1) zooms in on the proven positive effects of learning through play on a child's wellbeing and involvement in learning, (2) discusses characteristics and types of learning through play and (3) delves deeper into VVOB's approach to implementing learning through play, with case studies from partner countries.



European Development Days 2018

The #EDD18 zoomed in on a theme close to VVOB's heart: empowering and engaging women and girls in global sustainable development. VVOB was offered the unique opportunity to organise a debate at the international

EU event and invited eminent speakers from UNGEI, Education International, FAWE and Plan International to discuss 'Eliminating gender-based violence in and around schools and other educational settings'.



African Union recognition

VVOB was awarded the title of 'top education innovator in Africa' by none other than the African Union at their Innovating Education in Africa Expo. The multinational organisation praised VVOB specifically for our innovative approach towards effective school leadership in Rwanda, which we share with and contextualise for our programmes in other African countries.

approach towards effective school leadership in Rwanda, which we share with and contextualise for our programmes in other African countries.



Brookings' Girls Education Research and Policy Symposium

Research shows that gender stereotypes are fixed in children's mindsets by the age of 7. VVOB has been making a case for intervening in early childhood education to challenge gender stereotypes, most notably at the annual Girls Education Research and Policy symposium of Brookings in a panel alongside academics. We shared our own research from Vietnam that clearly showed that preschool teachers have their own gender biases to challenge first, before they can be proactive actors of change.



Comparative and International Education Society 2018 conference

The CIES 2018 conference was titled 'Re-mapping global education: South-North dialogue' and aimed to shift the starting point of research on education more towards the global South, not only enabling South-North dialogue, but also enhancing North-South dialogue and the expansion of South-South collaboration. VVOB participated in a panel about teacher motivation with experiences from Rwanda and Ecuador, and presented a paper on math pedagogical content knowledge with experiences from Vietnam.



Teaching at the Right Level Conference

Teaching at the Right Level is a remedial teaching approach that helps learners acquire basic reading and maths skills. It has been contextualised and implemented in many countries across Africa, including in Zambia by VVOB, J-PAL and other partners. At the global event, VVOB shared our insights and experiences from the implementation process in a panel discussion.



Publication in Childhood Education journal

VVOB co-authored an article for the special on Education Diplomacy of the international journal Childhood Education: 'Education diplomacy for improving learning of vulnerable children in community schools in Zambia'. Drawing on VVOB's and partners' experiences, the article explains how we use education diplomacy to bring communities and governments together to improve vulnerable children's learning outcomes.

Financial Report

Turnover VVOB

The total turnover of VVOB is 11,362,431 euro in 2018. This turnover is increasingly the result of investments made by various donors. It is a conscious choice of VVOB to diversify its sources of income.

DGD is the organisation's largest donor. In 2018, more than 7.5 million euro was financed by DGD. The vast majority – more than 6.9 million euro – was spent on direct costs.

The contribution of the Flemish government consists of a structural contribution for general working costs (270,000 euro) and specific contributions for the project SchoolLinks (137,000 euro).

In 2018, the European Commission finances 4 education programmes (Cambodia, Suriname, Vietnam and South Africa) for a total sum of 600,000 euro. The ELMA Foundation finances VVOB programmes in Rwanda and Zambia. USAID finances VVOB education interventions in both Zambia and South Africa. In 2018, Mastercard Foundation invests more than 1.5 million euro in an education programme in Rwanda. Mastercard Foundation thus became VVOB's second biggest donor.

Equity

The capacity to pre-fund programmes increased with 4% to 3,376,710 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.

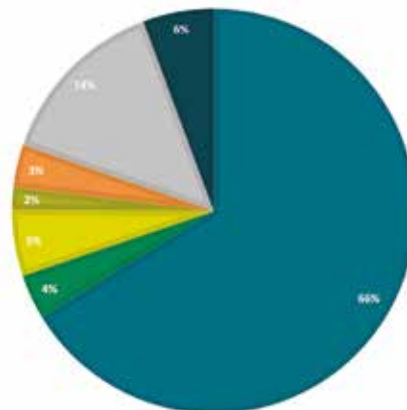
Results and balance

The profit of the financial year 2018 is 36,690 euro. The balance sheet total amounts to 8,648,605 euro compared to 9,064,322 euro in 2017. This difference is the result of an effort to compensate underspending in 2017.

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 2018, as well as of the results for the financial year then closed, in accordance with the accounting principles framework applicable in Belgium.

TURNOVER PER DONOR



Balance sheet

(all in euro)

	2018	2017	2016
Assets			
A. Fixed assets	105,598	119,774	154,351
B. Accounts receivable (due within 1 year)	512,478	804,233	406,161
C. Cash and investments	8,005,621	8,122,310	4,415,204
D. Prepaid expenses	24,907	18,005	8,002
Total Assets	8,648,605	9,064,322	4,983,718
Liabilities			
A. Reserves and accrued profit/loss	2,838,994	2,802,304	2,791,206
B. Provisions	537,716	443,690	363,507
C. Accounts payable (due within 1 year)	5,271,894	5,818,328	1,829,005
Total Liabilities	8,648,605	9,064,322	4,983,718

Profit and loss statement

(all in euro)

	2018	2017	2016
Kosten			
A. Structural costs	937,981	824,652	904,627
a. Services and diverse goods	358,304	279,438	357,340
b. Personnel costs	528,830	417,944	390,228
c. Depreciation	26,957	33,077	35,209
d. Other costs	23,890	94,193	121,849
B. Management costs	825,052	752,501	1,383,916
a. Personnel costs	740,856	691,707	1,013,743
b. Audit, monitoring and evaluation, learning processes	41,893	30,584	249,804
c. Other	42,303	30,210	120,369
C. Operational costs (programme costs)	9,599,398	7,195,592	10,094,151
a. DGD programme	6,135,364	5,931,616	9,260,561
b. SchoolLinks (Flemish government and Brussels)	165,638	119,425	139,935
c. Other programmes	3,298,396	1,144,552	693,655
Total costs	11,362,431	8,772,746	12,382,694
Income			
a. Subsidy	11,392,748	8,755,682	12,429,013
b. Financial income	6,373	165	1,335
c. Other income	0	27,997	0
Total income	11,399,121	8,783,844	12,430,349
Appropriations and withdrawing			
Result before use	36,690	11,098	47,654
Profits / losses transferred from previous financial year	218,604	157,193	0
Withdrawal of equity	0	0	0
	255,294	168,291	47,654
Use of result	-137,553	-50,313	-109,539
Deferral of fiscal year	392,847	218,604	157,193



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

**Statutory auditor's report
to the general meeting
on the annual accounts
for the year ended 31 December 2018**

*Free translation
The original text is in Dutch*

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 The original text is in Dutch*

Statutory auditor's report to the general meeting of members of the Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en technische Bijstand (VVOB) VZW on the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2018

In the context of the statutory audit of the annual accounts of VVOB VZW (the Organisation), we hereby present our statutory auditor's report. It includes our opinion on the audit of the annual accounts as well as our report on the other legal and regulatory requirements. These reports form part of an integrated whole and are indivisible.

We have been appointed as statutory auditor by the general meeting of members of 21 June 2017, following the proposal by the board of directors. Our statutory auditor's mandate will expire on the date of the general meeting of members which will deliberate on the annual accounts closed on 31 December 2019. We have performed the statutory audit of the annual accounts of VVOB VZW for 5 consecutive years.

Report on the audit of the annual accounts

Unqualified opinion

We have audited the annual accounts of the Organisation, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2018, the profit and loss account for the year then ended and the notes to the annual accounts, characterised by a balance sheet total of 8.648.604,79 EUR and a profit and loss account showing a profit for the year of 36.690,36 EUR.

In our opinion, the annual accounts give a true and fair view of the Organisation's net equity and financial position as at 31 December 2018, 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 board of directors and the officials of the Organisation 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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Responsibilities of the board of directors for the annual accounts

The board of directors 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 board of directors 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 board of directors is responsible for assessing the Organisation'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 board of directors either intends to liquidate the Organisation 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.

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 Organisation's internal control;
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the board of directors;
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the board of directors' 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 Organisation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to 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 Organisation 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.



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We communicate with the board of directors 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.

Statutory auditor's report on other legal and regulatory requirements

Responsibilities of the board of directors

The board of directors is responsible for the compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements regarding bookkeeping, as well as for compliance with the Law of 27 June 1921 on non-profit organisations, foundations, European political parties and European political foundations, and with the Organisation's by-laws.

Responsibilities of the statutory auditor

In the context of our mandate and in accordance with the Belgian standard (Revised in 2018) 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 Law of 27 June 1921 on non-profit organisations, foundations, European political parties and European political foundations and with the by-laws, as well as to report on these elements.

Statement related to independence

- Our audit firm did not provide services which are incompatible with the statutory audit of annual accounts and remained independent of the Company 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 17 of the Law of 27 June 1921 on non-profit organisations, foundations, European political parties and European political foundations, which refers to article 134 of the Company Code, 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.
- There are no transactions undertaken or decisions taken in breach of the by-laws or of the Law of 27 June 1921 on non-profit organisations, foundations, European political parties and European political foundations that we have to report to you.

Zaventem, 28 March 2019


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 2018 on 31 December.
The members of the Board of Directors are on top of the list.**

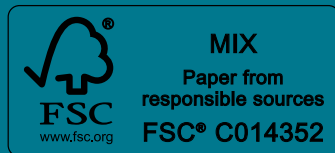
Chairperson: Mr Stefaan Van Mulders, Administrator General of Youth Welfare Agency
 Ms Heidi Vander Poorten, Team leader Equal Opportunities, Flemish Agency for Home Governance
 Mr Koen Verlaeck, Secretary General Flemish Interuniversity Council
 Ms Veerle Hendrickx, General Director of Karel de Grote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

Mr Lode De Geyter, General Director University College West-Vlaanderen
 Ms Gerda Bruneel, Educational Counselor *Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen*
 Mr Patriek Delbaere, General Director OVSG
 Mr Marc Vandewalle, General Director of Leuven University College
 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
 Ms Greta Ickx, Chairperson of V.I.W. Foundation
 Ms Raymonda Verdyck, Managing Director of GO!

Acknowledgements

VVOB is a Flemish development organisation specialised in increasing 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.

This report was printed alcohol-free with plant-based ink and on FSC-labelled paper.



The digital and the Dutch versions of this Annual Report can be downloaded at www.vvob.org.

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

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