

# Interuniversity Collaboration for Quality Graduate Education and Research in Ethiopia – IQ-GEAR



## IQ-GEAR in a nutshell

**Type of project:** VLIR-UOS Network

**Funding:** 5x 250,000 EUR

**Period:** September 2022 – August 2027 (Phase II)

**Partners:** 5+ international universities

**Coordinators:** Jimma University and Ghent University

**Long-term vision of Network:** transform both postgraduate education and research quality, and become a driver of sustainable and equitable development in Ethiopia

**Methodology:** institutional learning process for both South and North

## Background

### The change in the landscape of higher education institutes in Ethiopia requires more PhD holders

While there were only three public universities in the country at the beginning of 1990s, **there are currently 50 full-fledged universities** (only a minority are private universities). Moreover, **the Ethiopian public universities have been divided into four groups** based into research universities, comprehensive universities, universities of applied science and colleges. This change in landscape has made the need for PhD holders once more apparent. Indeed, while **the higher education sector needs 30% of their staff to be a PhD holder**, only 13% of those who currently teach at Ethiopian universities completed a PhD. As a response to this need, the Ethiopian government has established a home-grown PhD program.

### Home grown PhD trajectories are delayed / not completed

Despite ongoing efforts of the Ethiopia, the homegrown PhD trajectories are delayed or not completed. Key causes of this low or delayed PhD completion rate are **(i) absence of funding, (ii) poor PhD supervision, (iii) poor delivery of courses (iv) poor monitoring of PhD-trajectory, (v) poor research skills/mindset/exposure, (vi) no access to laboratory/equipment/reagents**, have been identified

### Strengthening home-grown PhD programs will also strengthen those at HEI in the North

In the academic year of 2020-2021 only, 1.4% of the newly enrolled PhD students were Ethiopian, with **Ethiopian PhD students accounting for 1.6% of all PhDs enrolled**. Their **PhD trajectory very distinct to the traditional PhD trajectories**. For example, while a traditional PhD student usually spends the entire PhD trajectory at the North HEI, these students alternate their research work in their home country with research stays in the North. Challenges that both students and supervisors are facing are **(i) ensure continued supervision, (ii) align the international travel with the program of the doctoral schools** (laboratory work is often prioritized over strengthening the soft-skills). Altogether, strengthening home-grown PhD programs will address the need in the South, but also the pressing need of HEIs in the North to continue support its staff in joint PhD-trajectories with HEIs in Ethiopia and in the Global South at large, benefiting students from the Global South.

## Planned activities

The project should be seen as an **institutional learning process**. In other words, we are creating enabling an environment to experiment on how to deliver of shared postgraduate programs and conduct interuniversity and interdisciplinary research, which may further trigger institutional investments. Among the different interventions we would like pilot / research are **(i) develop and validate E-portfolio** to monitor competence development, **(ii) establish an interuniversity research team**, **(iii) set-up a mentorship program for PhD supervisors** and **(iv) create funding opportunities** for both mobility and operational research.

## Contacts

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