

Joep van Mierlo holds a MSc Degree in Tropical Animal Husbandry (with a minor in Natural Resource Management) from the Agricultural University of Wageningen (WUR), The Netherlands. He has gathered close to 20 years of community development experience in about 20 different countries in Africa and Central Eastern Europe, all centered around the idea that livestock is an important asset in the livelihoods and plays an important role in the nutrition and self-development of the people living in poverty.



He started his work as Heifer International Program Coordinator for a Small Scale Dairy Development program in the Northwest Province of Cameroon. The idea was to raise the standard of living through a sustainable integrated dairy farming system. After 5 years of field work, Van Mierlo returned to the Netherlands where he founded Heifer Nederland. Here he continued for about 12 years to assist and finance development programs where livestock (ranging from cattle to snails) contributed durably to the development of the communities and their natural, social and economical environment.

Van Mierlo is currently Executive Director of Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Belgium (VSF-B), based in Brussels. This organization works from the same principle where livestock forms an important asset to assist the people living in fragile areas to improve their livelihoods. The operational areas of VSF-B are mostly the Arid and Semi-Arid areas of West and East Africa, and the Great Lakes Region (only RDCongo and Rwanda). VSF-B has a great deal of expertise – combining academic and endogenous knowledge – in veterinary medicine, animal husbandry and marketing, microfinance, water and land resource management, community development and peace keeping. This expertise is shared with our operational partners in the South to support the communities of livestock keepers in their own change processes. In the North, VSF-B implements a program for education to development and advocacy. VSF-B works – where and when possible – with its sister organizations of the international network called Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF) Europa.