

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

**UNCTAD**



**External Evaluation of Development Account Project 0809AR-  
Strengthening Capacities for Policy-oriented Analysis of Key Global  
Development Challenges at Developing Country Universities\***

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## List of Acronyms

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DA	Development Account
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DFID	Department for International Development
EA	Expected Accomplishment
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Vi	UNCTAD Virtual Institute
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Executive Summary

This evaluation is of the UNCTAD Project entitled ‘Strengthening capacities for policy-oriented analysis of key global development challenges at developing country universities’ which has been funded from the UN Development Account 7th Tranche and ends on 31 December 2014 after three years. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of developing country academics to analyse the impact on poverty of trade and to foster cooperation between academics and policy makers. Among its special features are a commitment: to develop national research capacity and to connect national academics and policy makers; to foster networking between academics and policy makers from different regions; and to make extensive use of ICT tools for advanced postgraduate training and research.

The project has been implemented in three sequential phases. The first was post-graduate training of developing country researchers using a bespoke on-line course covering data sources, tools and analytical methods, as well as identification of potential research questions on trade and poverty in developing countries. This was followed by coaching of selected course graduates to undertake research on trade and poverty using the knowledge gained and by fostering interaction/cooperation with policy makers. The third phase has covered finalization of the research with the publication of the best studies as an academic book and of policy-focussed briefing papers. It has culminated in an international seminar in Geneva (at which all the research-based outputs were presented) with regional presentations planned before the project ends.

There are only two significant differences between the project as it has been implemented and what was proposed in the Project Document. One is the duration of the project, which was originally proposed as four years, was set at two years in the Project Document, and which was later agreed at three years. The evaluator’s judgement is that the extension from two to three years was highly desirable. The project was conceived as having sequential phases with the on-line course both ensuring that researchers possessed the required skills and helping select the researchers to go on to the next phase. In the evaluator’s experience it would have been impossible to complete the phases sequentially in two years, and in his judgment the use of the on-line course for training/selection has been instrumental in achieving the project’s outputs.

The second difference is that the activities funded by the Development Account have been very closely associated with the ‘Trust Fund for the UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development’ supported by the Government of Finland. This has contributed to core staff costs for the Development Account project and funded professional inputs that have been instrumental in achieving the project’s outputs.

The project (which is on track to be fully completed by the end of its three years) has met or exceeded all numeric targets set out in the Project Document as indicators of success in meeting the Expected Achievements. It has involved 163 researchers and policy makers. The Vi has been able to offer two intakes of the course developed and initially delivered in Phase 1. If only the first intake is taken into consideration participants were drawn from 45 developing and transition countries, including 15 LDCs. If account is also taken of the second intake the figures increase to 56 developing and transition countries, including 19 LDCs.

The evaluation judges the project to have been very relevant. The project aimed to enhance the capacity of developing country researchers to assess the impact of trade on poverty in their country and to link them with policy makers to better identify policies that would harness the power of trade to reduce poverty. The MDGs attest to the consensus that trade has an impact on poverty and that trade policy can alter this impact (for the better if it is well designed). There is also a growing understanding that more ‘bottom-up’ original research is needed to improve the design of poverty reducing trade policies. The advanced micro-economics skills and data analysis techniques taught under the project (through the course and the ‘learning-by-doing’ offered in the phase 2 research) address areas where original research is required. Linking directly the supported researchers to policy makers addressed the issue that research too often is left on the bookshelf as it does not appear to policy makers to address their most pressing challenges in an accessible way.

The evaluation also judges the project to have been effective in both narrow terms (of whether the project’s objectives as set out in the project proposal log frame have been achieved) and more broadly (of whether the stated objectives were set at an appropriate level given the resources deployed and the prior skills of the course and research participants). An attempt has been made to judge effectiveness in relative terms through comparative analysis, benchmarking the project against the support given to research training by other

organisations. This has proved difficult because several comparators which appeared at first sight to be very relevant fell out of contention as they differed from the DA project on one or more of its key features: direct teaching/research support (rather than, for example, indirect support through universities), a focus on academics, and strong mentoring. It is the combination of these three features that has allowed the Vi to operate very effectively in a niche market; the loss of any one of them would have put it into a much more crowded marketplace without obvious competitive advantages compared to other actors.

Efficiency has been judged on two counts: narrowly to compare implementation with commitments made in the Project Document, and more broadly in relation to the resources utilized to achieve the project's value added. On all counts efficiency has been particularly high in relation to: hitting targets, the absolute resources (human and financial) available to do this, and the positive and negative indicators of participant satisfaction.

Within the context that academic research invariably needs public or private support, the project has contributed to sustainability as it has supported Vi's achievement of 'critical mass'. The second delivery of the course at marginal resource cost was an early indicator of sustainability which has now been reinforced by the development of new trade course jointly by Vi and other divisions within UNCTAD. But the context is important: the key question on sustainability falls outside the remit of this evaluation as it addresses the priority that UNCTAD can give to supporting the Vi's 'unique selling point'.

Gender impact has been assessed in relation narrowly to project implementation and more broadly to its impact on the gendered distributional poverty effects of trade policy. Apart from a gender imbalance in the applications for the course there is no evidence of any bias in implementation and some evidence (from participant communication with the evaluator) of effective action by the Vi team in addressing gender-specific problems experienced by participants. There was a significant imbalance in applications for the course (partly moderated during the selection process) but it is hard to see how this could be overcome without a radically different – and significantly more costly – method of soliciting applications involving Vi being more proactive in contacting and encouraging under-represented categories of applicant. In terms of content, all phases of the project have pointed to the fact that the distributional impact of trade is often gendered and have equipped participants with the tools to investigate such effects in cases where the required data are available.

Among the key lessons learned are that the use of the Vi's university network to complement the other ways in which UNCTAD interacts with universities works well. The project has provided a particularly valuable catalyst for creative interaction between UNCTAD professionals, and the link between academics and policy makers in the Vi network has been useful in making the research outputs policy relevant. The strategy of sequential teaching and research phases is a good one and establishes the minimum viable length of the supported activities which needs to be taken into account in future project design. Indeed, there appears to be scope and strong support for 'the Development Account package' of teaching and research to be extended to new topics.

The evaluation supports previous recommendations that UNCTAD should encourage and strengthen Vi and that the core team be expanded to include at least one professional economist with teaching and research experience. UNCTAD needs to seek additional external funders for Vi both to assure funding stability and to reassure the established donors that their support is not 'being taken for granted'. And it needs to give serious attention to issues of succession for the core team.

## 1. Introduction

### a) Background and context

The UNCTAD Project entitled ‘Strengthening capacities for policy-oriented analysis of key global development challenges at developing country universities’ funded from the UN Development Account 7th Tranche ends on 31 December 2014 after three years. The terms for all Development Account projects call for an external terminal evaluation. Accordingly, this evaluation was commissioned in April 2014 to be completed by end October 2014.

### b) Project Summary

The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of developing country academics to conduct policy-oriented analysis of key developmental challenges. The special focus is on those challenges related to the potential contribution of trade to poverty reduction, and on fostering cooperation between academics and policy makers. The purpose of this special focus is to facilitate the use of the analysis conducted by academics in the formulation of policies that would help developing countries address the challenges they face, particularly in the area of trade and poverty.

The project focussed on developing and least developed countries in selecting participants for the course and research phases. As explained below, the Virtual Institute (Vi) was able to run twice a central element of the project (the course). Depending on whether this second intake is considered to be a follow-on activity (indicating sustainability) or an over-achievement of the DA project outputs, the participants were drawn respectively from 45 (or 56) developing and transition countries, including 15 (or 19) LDCs. The question of how the second intake should be recorded is discussed in more detail below.

Key data on the project is set out in Table 1.

**Table 1: Key data on the project**

<b>Project title:</b>	Strengthening capacities for policy-oriented analysis of key global development challenges at developing country universities
<b>Duration:</b>	Initially 2 years (2012-2013) extended to 3 years (2012-2014)
<b>Location:</b>	Global
<b>Executing agency:</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>Cooperating agencies:</b>	World Trade Organization, UN regional commissions as appropriate
<b>Beneficiaries:</b>	Academics from developing and transition countries - members of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute
<b>Funding from Development Account:</b>	US\$ 493,000

There are four particular features of the project. These are:

1. the development of national capacities to conduct research, as well as national connections between academics and policy makers;
2. networking between academics from different regions, academics and their coaches/peer reviewers, and academics and policy makers;
3. cooperation at a global and a national level largely using the expertise of developing country academics/policy makers;
4. extensive use of ICT tools for training (including a specific online e-learning platform developed for this purpose), coaching/e-mentoring, and communication between participants as well as between participants and coaches (including through an online forum developed for this purpose).

Implementation has been undertaken in three sequential phases of capacity building.

1. **Phase 1.** Post-graduate training of researchers using a bespoke on-line course covering data sources, tools and analytical methods, as well as identification of potential research questions on trade and poverty in developing countries.
2. **Phase 2.** Coaching of developing country researchers and fostering their interaction/cooperation with policy makers. This aimed to provide a ‘learning by doing’ opportunity for participating academics to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the online course to specific trade and poverty-related research questions of policy relevance to their countries.
3. **Phase 3.** Finalization of collaborative projects between academics and policy makers, with the best studies published as an academic book plus a set of policy-focussed briefing papers. All these outputs to be presented to the policymaking community at an international seminar in Geneva.

The justification for organising the project in these three phases was that it would provide a sequenced process of sifting and structured support.

- The first phase included an initial evaluation of applicants (intended to identify those most likely to be able to benefit from the course) and the subsequent training of those considered able to complete the course. The aim of the course was:
  - both to provide participants with the theoretical knowledge and technical skills required to assess the distributional and poverty impact of trade events,
  - and to offer the organisers the opportunity to identify those students best able to undertake original research in this area.
- The second phase was intended to enable the organisers:
  - first, to select from this group of best students able and willing to conduct original research those proposals judged to offer the best combination of academic merit and policy relevance,
  - and, then, to support the selected researchers both academically and practically (in terms, for example, of establishing strong working links with policy makers).
- Finally, the third phase was intended to provide the opportunity to select the best of the research papers for inclusion in a book and to provide the authors with the editorial support to result in a published volume of sufficient academic quality and relevance to be launched at an international seminar.

The indicators of achievement for each of the three phases as set out in the Project Document are as follows. In Phase One the target was for 50 academics to have acquired, through an online course and the use of other ICT tools, knowledge on the data sources, tools, methods and policy relevant research questions required for the analysis of trade and poverty. Evidence of whether or not this knowledge has been acquired is to be derived from course participants’ scores in the various activities required for the completion of the online course.

The target for Phase Two is that 10 academics will have applied their knowledge of trade and poverty to collaborative projects of policy relevance to their countries, with support through coaching (including use of ICT tools, face-to-face workshop and interaction/cooperation with policy makers). This is to be measured/evidenced by the successful completion of the collaborative papers using the acquired knowledge that are judged to be of academic merit through external peer review.

For Phase Three the target set in the Project Document was for up to 10 collaborative projects between academics and policy makers to be completed and presented at an international seminar in Geneva involving Permanent Missions of UNCTAD Member States. A commitment was also made to publish the best papers in a peer reviewed, edited volume.

### c) Evaluation scope

The purpose of the evaluation (as set out in Annex 2) includes:

- highlighting what has been successful and can be replicated elsewhere, including the synergies generated through collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions and WTO;
- indicating shortcomings and constraints in the project design and implementation while, at the same time, identifying the remaining challenges, gaps and needs for future courses of action; and
- making pragmatic recommendations to suggest how UNCTAD's work for the academia can be strengthened.

In so doing it must assess the project design and implementation against the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and gender aspects.

Relevance is assessed in relation both to the specific context of the project and to UNCTAD's overall mission. The former provides the basis on which it was decided to make a grant from the Development Account to the Vi from UN funds; the latter provides the reason for UNCTAD accepting this grant.

Effectiveness and efficiency relate to the internal operations of the project and the critical metric in both cases links the volume of inputs and outputs, the quality of outputs and the contribution of the project team to achieving these quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Sustainability is assessed in relation to two criteria.

1. Has the project resulted in a stock of 'capital' (in UNCTAD and the beneficiary states) that will allow similar (or successor) activities to be achieved at lower resource cost than would have been the case in the project's absence?
2. How well aligned are the requirements for this type of activity and the mandate/work programme of UNCTAD and will the current institutional setting and resources support sustainability beyond the end of the project being evaluated?

The gender aspect has been assessed on two fronts. The first is in relation to the gender balance of participants. The second concerns the coverage of gender in the course materials, the research topics selected for the second phase and the use of household surveys in this research.

#### **d) Evaluation methodology**

The evaluator used a combination of methods during the conduct of this evaluation: desk research, interviews (mainly face-to-face supplemented by Skype) and two sets of questionnaires. Three notable features of this methodology are as follows.

- In addition to covering relevant project documents (such as the project proposal, progress reports and the responses to questionnaires drafted and circulated by Vi), the desk review also covered the tangible outputs of the project given that these are in written form (course materials and research papers), as well as benchmarking against other similar products.
- The interviews (see Annex 3) covered the course developers and trainers, research participants (who were also course graduates), mentors, policy makers who worked with the researchers, and donor/international agency officials who have worked on related projects.
- Because the only course participants covered by the interviews were also researchers (and, hence, by definition deemed to be very strong academically) two questionnaires were drafted and circulated to obtain the views, respectively, of a wider range of successful course participants and of unsuccessful ones. The questionnaire was sent to all 77 successful completers of the first course delivery. Of these, 19 responded to the questionnaire and nine of the non-responders attended the September 2014 seminar and were asked the same questions in personal interviews; the combined response rate is 36%. All 25 non-completers were also sent a questionnaire and nine submitted a reply, a response rate also of 36%.

## **2. Project context and planning**

### **a) Intervention logic**

The logic underpinning the project is that it can contribute to the achievement of two Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The principal link is with MDG Goal 1 (to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), in particular its targets 1 and 2 (on poverty reduction and productive employment). It is also linked to MDG Goal 8 (on global partnership for development), in particular its target 2 (on the international trading and financial system). The project is also relevant to the objectives of the Istanbul Programme of Action adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in May 2011, in particular those relating to the need to integrate trade and trade capacity-building policies into national development strategies of these countries, and to support their efforts to strengthen their human, institutional and regulatory capacities in trade policy and trade negotiations.

Whilst international trade can play a positive role facilitating pro-poor growth and sustainable human development in developing countries, in support of MDG Goal 1, this positive relationship is not automatic and

does not necessarily work in all countries and contexts. Trade can create employment, enhance access to technology and knowledge, raise productivity, increase the variety and quality of goods available to consumers, stimulate capital inflows, increase foreign exchange earnings, and generate resources for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

But, to maximize a positive impact on the poor, action is required at both national and international levels to create an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system and also to ensure that the distributional effects of trade (and trade shocks) are pro-poor. The design of such policies and assessment of their impact needs to be grounded in thorough analysis of data, trends and past experiences in which academia plays an important role.

### **b) Project identification and formulation**

UNCTAD reinforced its role as a knowledge-based institution when it established the Vi in 2004 as a special programme of cooperation with academia. The Vi works with universities and research centres in developing countries to enhance their capacity to educate the next generation of decision-makers on trade and development issues, strengthen analytical skills and expertise of academics in this area, and promote and facilitate the use of analysis produced by local academia in policymaking. As of 16 October 2014 it has an institutional membership of 107 universities (core and affiliate members) and think tanks plus 4,174 individuals from academia and government currently registered on the Vi web site.

The Development Account project combines UNCTAD's expertise on trade and poverty with the experience of Vi in research-related capacity building and the links between research and policymaking. The stated aim has been to increase developing countries' capacity to analyse the impact of trade on vulnerable groups in a form that policy makers can absorb. The project, which has involved 163 researchers and policy makers from 67 countries<sup>1</sup>, was identified as a way systematically to use Vi's global membership and the often close association between policy makers and members (who act as advisers to their governments on national policies and international negotiations) to address development challenges using the skills acquired through Vi services. Through Vi's support in linking research with policymaking, the project foresaw that participating academics would learn about the importance of working with policy makers and how to communicate better with policy makers.

### **c) Positioning**

The Accra Accord (setting out the UNCTAD 2008-12 work programme) frequently refers to poverty reduction (at the core of development for UNCTAD and the UN) and specifically mentions the need to strengthen research capacities at developing country academic institutions. The Project Document noted the potential contributions of the project to achieving several expected accomplishments of the Proposed UNCTAD programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011. These include:

- Part IV: International cooperation for development, Section 12: Trade and development,
- Programme 10 (Trade and Development), sub programme 4 (Technology and logistics); accomplishments (a), (b) and (c) of sub programme 3 (International trade), and accomplishments (a) (i) and (b) (ii) of sub programme 5 (Africa, least developed countries and special programmes), and
- given its links with issues addressed by other sub programmes, the Project Document also suggested that it might contribute to accomplishments (a) and (c) of sub programme 1 (Globalization, interdependence and development) as well as to the implementation of §162 of the Accra Accord.

The Development Account project has been very closely associated with the 'Trust Fund for the UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development' supported by the Government of Finland. This has contributed to staff costs for the Development Account project which, as noted below, has been instrumental in achieving the project's outputs.

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*1 These figures include researchers who enrolled on the course but did not complete it. If only graduates are included the figures would fall to 125 individuals in 56 countries.*

### 3. Project Implementation

#### a. Amendments

The implementation of project activities by the UNCTAD Vi started on 1 January 2012. One significant amendment to what is described in the Project Document concerns the duration of the project, which was a point of discussion during the project formulation process. The project as originally formulated by Vi was scheduled for 4 years. Following a request of the funder before its approval, this was reduced to 2 years in the final project document, but on the understanding that an extension of the project would be necessary given the sequential nature of project activities. Twenty months after the start of the project (in August 2013) a request was submitted for an extension of the project's duration from two to three years which was approved in October 2013. According to the first annual progress report:

we had to make a considerable effort to squeeze the activities originally planned for 4 years into a shorter period of time because they were conceived as sequential - i.e. one activity cannot start before the previous one is completed. However, we managed to gain some time and hope to be able to complete the project in 3 years.<sup>2</sup>

As explained in this progress report, the justification for the extension is that project had been designed to be implemented in three sequential phases with the minimum length of each determined by the task to be performed. Hence, phase 1 design of a post-graduate level course and its completion by participants had to be completed before the start of phase 2 (design and completion of a research project by participants working with policy makers) because the research could not be completed without the knowledge and skills acquired in the course. By the same token, phase 3 (editing, publication and presentation of the research outputs) had to follow the completion of the research phase.

The only other major difference between the project as implemented and as described in the Project Document arose from the funding obtained from the Government of Finland for a related project. In particular, this funded the temporary employment of a full-time research economist to join the core Vi team. Among other things, the economist contributed substantially to the development of the course, provided day-to-day support to the course participants as well as substantive comments and support to the authors of the research papers developed under the project.

Both of these amendments are discussed in more detail in Section 4 as they have a significant bearing on the issues of effectiveness and sustainability.

#### b. Budgets and Expenditure

The project had not been completed at the time of this external evaluation but the evaluator was informed that at mid-October 2014 it had disbursed almost 90 % of its budget. The evaluator has also been informed that a small revision to the budget was requested at the end of February 2014 (the only budget revision request made) and was approved in March 2014. Although the project is not due for formal conclusion until 31 December 2014 the principal outputs identified in the Project Document have been completed with the international seminar to launch the 'phase 3 book' held on September 8-10, 2014. It is planned to organize regional launches of the book and short courses on the methodology in November (Latin America) and December (Asia).

#### c. Management

The human resources required to implement the project have been funded from three main sources: UNCTAD, the Development Account project and the Government of Finland.

The UNCTAD contribution has been the cost of staff (both in Vi and professionals in other units) and general administrative costs. The Vi team has changed in size and location during the project's history and it is important to be clear on the sequence of events. At the time the project was conceptualised and then submitted to DESA (in September 2010), the Vi team (which was located within the Knowledge Sharing, Training and Capacity Development Branch of the Division on Trade and Logistics) included 'a regular budget professional who could manage and backstop the project, both substantively and logistically.'<sup>3</sup> But in November 2010 this P2 post was transferred out of Vi (which a year later was itself transferred to the Division on Globalisation and Development Strategies). Hence, at the time the project started, the Vi core team consisted of 2 permanent staff (P5, G6) later increased from October 2013 by a shared G5 post.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Annual Development Account Progress Report 2012' p 4

<sup>3</sup> 'Annual Development Account Progress Report 2013' p 5

From the outset it was intended that the project would draw on the broad range of professional expertise available in UNCTAD. The Project Document indicated that the core staff would draw on the specific expertise on trade and poverty issues that is available in individual UNCTAD divisions for contributions to the design and implementation of its activities, such as the substantive content of the online course, coaching of participants (online and at a face-to-face workshop) and the preparation for publication of the research papers produced by the project. UNCTAD economists (six of whom have been interviewed for this evaluation) have given their time to these tasks without any budgetary considerations, as has a senior economist who, at the time, was in the WTO Secretariat (and who has also been interviewed).

Also as planned, the Development Account project has funded *inter alia* the time-intensive demands of designing and writing the course materials and of editing the book. These tasks have been performed by consultants funded under the project, who have also contributed to implementation broadly defined through mentoring of participants. Both have been consulted as part of this evaluation. The project also funded temporary support for the organization of meetings - the mid-way workshop in 2013 and the international seminar in 2014.

What was not planned was that Vi would be without a full-time professional economist in its core team. Despite their major contribution, the collaborating UNCTAD professionals and the consultants could not have been expected to offer continuous and timely day-to-day academic support to the course participants. Nor could this be provided by the Vi core team as it existed when the project began.

This gap was filled when the Government of Finland funded a full-time in-house consultant with the relevant economics and econometrics skills. An approach to Finland was made in mid-2011 (through UNCTAD's technical cooperation service) to seek co-funding of the project and make it possible to hire the economist. The Development Account project was approved by DESA on 5 October 2011 and the Government of Finland sent an official communication to UNCTAD supporting co-funding on 23 November 2011. The co-funding continues until end 2014.

#### d) Outputs

The outputs from each of the three phases of the project are summarised in Tables 2-4 below. Each table identifies the type and volume of outputs to which a commitment was made in the Project Document, the outputs actually delivered, and a comparison of the two.

Phase 1 provided the 'foundation' for the project (table 2). It was broadest in terms of the number of participants and in the content. The on-line course provided a very sophisticated training in the micro-economic skills required to assess rigorously the distributional effects of a trade or trade policy shock as well as the technical and practical skills needed to identify and manipulate the data needed for such analysis.

As noted above, it turned out to be possible to run the course twice but it is unclear whether the second intake should be considered as an output from the Development Account project or as a separate exercise which could be used as evidence of sustainability. On the one hand, the second course used the teaching materials that had been developed under the Development Account project. On the other, the academic tutoring was wholly funded by the Finnish project. The first run of the course had two tutors: the consultant funded under the Development Account project who also developed the teaching materials and the Finland-funded in-house economist. The second course was smaller and it was possible to use just one tutor – the Finland-funded in-house economist.

The judgement of the evaluator is that the second course is best seen not as a direct output of the Development Account project but as a separate activity made possible by the investment (in the course and training materials) of the Development Account project. For that reason, the evaluation returns to the second course in Section 4.

At the same time, this judgement may not be shared by all and, moreover, table 2 offers a neat vehicle for recording the key statistics of both courses. For that reason, information on the outputs from the second running of the course is included in the table (in italics) after the data on the first run. When focussing on just the first run of the course all the committed outputs were delivered and numeric targets either met or exceeded; if account is taken of the second run of the course the numeric targets were greatly exceeded.

**Table 2: Outputs from Phase 1- Development and delivery of online training**

Outputs committed	Outputs delivered	Comment
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<p><i>Development of an online course on data sources, tools and methods related to trade and poverty analysis comprising:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an introductory module,</li> <li>• six specialized modules,</li> <li>• a final hands-on exercise involving the use of data and econometric tools, and</li> <li>• a final essay.</li> </ul> <p>Each module to be supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an online handbook for each module (including data and tools for hands-on exercises),</li> <li>• multimedia presentations (filmed expert lectures integrated into PowerPoint.)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Online course developed as per commitments.</i></p>	<p>Commitment achieved.</p>
<p><i>Development of an online Vi e-learning platform for the course and a DVD with course material together with an online forum where participants posted their questions, received answers and discussed with the course tutors and among themselves.</i></p>	<p><i>e-learning platform</i> The Vi e-learning platform developed (<a href="http://vi.unctad.org/e-learning">http://vi.unctad.org/e-learning</a>), and DVD distributed to course participants, and on-line forum developed and moderated.</p>	<p>Commitment achieved</p>
<p><i>Delivery of the online course on trade and poverty</i> with a target of 50 academics to complete the course and thus acquired knowledge on data sources, tools, methods and policy relevant research questions required for the analysis of trade and poverty.</p>	<p><i>Online course <b>first</b> delivery</i> Course prospectus circulated In June 2012 to: Vi members, other academic contacts, partners in other international organizations, and the permanent missions of UNCTAD member states in Geneva.</p> <p>377 applications received from 76 countries.</p> <p>Selection committee chose 102 participants from 54 countries, including 28 participants from 15 LDCs.</p> <p>Course run from 10 September to 30 November 2012 which 77 participants successfully completed.</p> <p><i>Online course <b>second</b> delivery</i> Course prospectus circulated in October 2013 to: Vi members, other academic contacts, partners in other international organizations, and the permanent missions of UNCTAD member states in Geneva.</p>	<p>Commitment exceeded</p>

	<p><i>235 applications received from 39 countries.</i></p> <p><i>Selection committee chose 45 participants from 38 countries, including 23 participants from 15 LDCs.</i></p> <p><i>Course run from 3 February to 20 April, with 31 participants successfully completing it.</i></p>	
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Phase 2 built on these foundations by selecting, and then coaching, a small group of course graduates who expressed a willingness to undertake original research on the distributional effects of trade policy, whose proposals were considered to be the most relevant to poverty reduction through informed academic-policy maker dialogue, and who were judged to have the strongest academic credentials. The numeric target set in the Project Document for the first step of this phase (research proposal selection) was exceeded in that 14 proposals were selected for coaching and financial support (see Table 3). Although three of those selected failed to complete a paper, it was still possible to exceed the final numeric target of the Phase (on the number of completed papers). Issues associated with dropouts from the research phase (as well as from the course) are discussed in Section 4.

**Table 3: Outputs from Phase 2 - Coaching to academics working on collaborative projects papers addressing policy-relevant trade and poverty research questions**

<b>Outputs committed</b>	<b>Outputs delivered</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<i>Research proposal selection</i> through structured application form submitted by up to 30 of the top graduates indicating inter alia the policy makers who had agreed to cooperate with them on the project, as well as the intended use of research findings by the government. Project Document commits that up to 10 of the best proposals will be selected for implementation.	The 27 top graduates of the course invited in December 2012 to submit research proposals. 14 proposals (representing 13 developing and transition countries) selected in February 2013 for coaching and financial support.	Commitment exceeded.
<i>Mentor assignment</i> to each selected researcher to provide advice and support (e-mentoring) in the development of the paper.	<i>Mentoring:</i> International expert mentors selected from UNCTAD, the WTO, and the co-author and tutor of the online course.	Commitment achieved
<i>Research workshop</i> in Geneva for participating researchers to present their draft work and receive feedback from mentors, other international experts, workshop participants and policy makers from their countries' permanent missions in Geneva.	<i>Research workshop</i> held in June 2013.	Commitment achieved

<i>External peer review</i> of revised drafts and subsequent integration of all the comments received.	<i>External review</i> 11 out of the 14 researchers had submitted first drafts of their papers by September 2013 and these were sent for external peer review to renowned international experts in the areas covered.	Commitment achieved
<i>Finalization and professional editing</i> of 10 papers as evidence of successful completion of the collaborative research using the acquired knowledge. Target of 10 completed papers.	<i>Final editing</i> of 11 completed research papers between fourth quarter 2013 and third quarter 2014.	Commitment exceeded

The final phase of the project involved publication of the completed research papers and their presentation at an international seminar in Geneva. All 11 research papers went through the same process of peer review, editing and professional layout. The 8 best papers completed in sufficient time were included in an externally edited book, and all 11 were published on the website of the project (<http://vi.unctad.org/tap>). The likelihood is that some may also form the basis for academic journal articles as may the papers in the book. Each of the 11 papers also formed the basis for a Briefing Paper drawing policy conclusions from the research undertaken.

The Project Document does not include numerical indicators for the number of papers to be published in a book. But the publication commitment is recorded in Table 4 as having been exceeded given that the Briefing Papers are an additional output not promised in the proposal (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Outputs from Phase 3 - Publication of best papers and presentation at international seminar**

<b>Outputs committed</b>	<b>Outputs delivered</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<i>External editing and publication of book</i> containing the best completed research papers	<i>Book published</i> (with 8 of the research papers) in August 2014 by UN entitled ‘Trade policies, household welfare and poverty alleviation: Case studies from the Virtual Institute academic network’ and externally edited by Professor Nina Pavcnik, Dartmouth College.  On-line publication of all 11 research papers.  Publication of 11 Briefing Papers based upon each of the research papers.	Commitment exceeded
<i>International seminar to launch the book</i> and to facilitate discussion of all the completed research papers between participants, international experts, representatives of the Permanent Missions of UNCTAD member States and national policy makers.	<i>International seminar</i> held in September 2014.	Commitment achieved.

## 4. Assessment

### a) Relevance

As noted in Section 1 project relevance should be assessed in two areas. How relevant have the project activities been in enhancing developing country capacity to analyse trade impact? And how relevant are they to delivering UNCTAD's mission and making best use of its relative capacity endowments?

Answering the first question requires a judgement on four sequential sub-questions:

1. does trade have an impact on poverty and can trade *policy* alter that impact;
2. can original research provide empirical evidence (at a national and international level) that could improve the design of trade policies to enhance the poverty reducing impact of trade;
3. do the skills and techniques provided under the project (though the course and reinforced by the phase 2 research) address areas where original research is required;
4. can the policy impact of such research be improved by involving policy makers from the outset in the design and execution of the work by academics and researchers?

There is a broad consensus that the answer to the first two questions is 'yes'. Sub-question 1 has been accepted in the affirmative in the MDGs. There are many information gaps on the link between trade and poverty both generally and, in particular, in specific country/issue contexts. As long ago as 2001 an influential book by eminent academics (and funded by the Department for International Development) noted 'not only the paucity of evidence on trade and poverty but also the absence of any kind of framework for thinking about the issue.'<sup>4</sup> In her introduction to the book published under the project, Professor Nina Pavcnik, points out that:

economists agree that economic growth is potentially the most important channel to reduce poverty and that international trade might play an important role in this process. ... [but also that] theoretically, the relationship between international trade and growth is ambiguous, especially for lower-income countries that might not have comparative advantage in sectors that generate dynamic gains from trade.<sup>5</sup>

She continues that:

Overall, the literature concludes that the effects of trade liberalization on poverty operating through these channels are case-specific. They depend on the nature of the trade policy change, exposure of the poor to trade-induced price fluctuations as consumers, producers and wage earners, sensitivity of wages to price changes, and the magnitude of the price changes.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, 'general lessons' on trade and poverty are rather few and limited. Assessing the poverty effects of a specific trade flow or trade policy change requires specific analysis of the particularities of the case. This message was strongly reinforced by Professor Marcelo Olarreaga (University of Geneva) in his speech to the launch of the project book on 8 September 2014. The inference to be drawn is that knowledge on the impact of specific trade changes/policies on poverty can only be increased through numerous case studies which, in turn, depend on increasing the supply of researchers with the skills to undertake rigorously such empirical analysis. In Professor Olarreaga's words:

What technical co-operation is about is what is being done here in the Virtual Institute. You need to put researchers in developing countries in the driver's seat. They are the ones who know what are the important policy questions in their countries.

Were the skills imparted by the project relevant to empowering such researchers? The course was designed to inform participants about techniques, some of them developed very recently, to enable analysts to look more closely at the distributional effects of specific trade issues. The new analytical techniques are increasingly seen as offering insights that go beyond more traditional trade analysis, which has tended to be macro-economic, identifying the overall effects of any trade shock on the economy as a whole and on broad socio-economic groups within it. Rigorous analysis of distributional effects has been facilitated by recent developments in micro-economics. It is these that were the focus for the course (and which have been used in the subsequent research phase).

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<sup>4</sup> McCulloch, Winters and Cirera (2001) 'Trade Liberalisation and Poverty: A Handbook' p xix

<sup>5</sup> Pavcnik (ed) 'Trade Policies, Household Welfare and Poverty Alleviation' 2014 p 5

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* p 9

This view was echoed by several of the research paper writers interviewed for this evaluation. A university academic from Skopje, FYR of Macedonia interviewed explained that ‘I am more macro-economist than micro-economist, but my main interest in the course was the econometric part. I learned a lot of new techniques which I could find application in macro phenomena’.

A similar view was expressed by a participating academic at the University of Asia and the Pacific, the Philippines. ‘My research interest,’ he explained, ‘is in trade but the ordinary trade issues, so it’s new learning, new technique and new literature - interesting from the point of view of not only self-development, but also in terms of expanded capacity to teach and future research potentials.’

He also made the following important point: ‘considering the demand and supply, perhaps there are not so many people in the Philippines who had exposure to this so perhaps you [sic] can contribute more.’ This indication that the course covered cutting-edge material, not generally known in developing countries, was underlined by other interviewees. One course graduate/research paper writer who is currently a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky reported that ‘even after I finished my 3rd year in the graduate school, we still hadn’t learned these methods...I think the methods they teach us are very advanced and it was really interesting.’

If the answer to the first three sub-questions seems clearly to be ‘yes’, how about the link with policy makers? Making original research ‘policy-relevant’ is a major challenge in most countries. The time scale of academics and policy makers is often very different: a structural problem is that the latter may need at short notice ‘answers’ that take months or longer to research (and are no longer considered critical by the time the research is completed). And academics may not be aware of, or have access to, data that is within the policy makers’ realm.

There is no single ‘solution’ to such problems which are the most pressing where the research community is relatively small i.e. in many poor countries. Other things being equal, a large, vibrant research community engaged in global debate on theory and strongly aware of data sources is more likely to be producing outputs that are ‘on hand’ when policy makers need them. In the many developing, transition and least developed countries not characterized in this way, special efforts are needed to reduce as far as practical the barriers to a fruitful academic-policy maker relationship.

Phases 2 and 3 of the project made explicit efforts to foster such a relationship. The approved research topics were selected partly on the basis of their policy relevance. Researchers were required to link to one or more policy makers in both the design and execution of their research. And some of these policy makers were involved in the Geneva international seminar.

Interviews were held with five of the seven policy makers who worked with the researchers and attended the international seminar. The consensus seems to be that the project research was unusually accessible. All were asked the question: ‘in terms of the design of the study, is it more relevant to the formulation of policy than what would normally be the case with university researchers?’ When asked, one interviewee (a senior adviser in a government ministry) responded:

I think so because the study is on the true effect, or simulating policies (which you don't see much ... very few research studies simulate policies) and it is partly maybe related to the whole level of knowledge in the government or government institutions... I think that this is what distinguishes this study.... You can go to the policy makers and say “see, this shows that if you increase the subsidy by this, this would be the effect” and this is very important.

The relationship was also two way, with policy makers able to help the researchers understand the policy context and obtain relevant data. One policy maker, for example, explained that:

I gave her all the information she needed on where to find things, how to find them.... I told her about how the wheat market in Argentina works and in the world and more or less what she had to do.... I said you can get good information here, here and here but don't waste your time there. Because you can get words anywhere but good information is not easy to find.

***The evaluation concludes, therefore, that the project activities have been relevant to enhancing developing countries’ capacity to analyses trade impact and to design policies that protect the interests of poor people.***

The second part of the relevance question concerns the link with delivering UNCTAD’s mission and making best use of its relative capacity endowments.

UNCTAD interacts in many ways with the subject of the project (enhancing the poverty reducing impact of trade) and with the partners in the project (developing country universities, research centres and policy makers). The UNCTAD professionals who acted as mentors, for example, often have strong links with academics in various forms.

Vi with the support of the Development Account project has added to this capacity – and has done so in a way that, as far as is known by the evaluator, is unique within UNCTAD. The project has directly focused resources mainly on developing country academics/researchers near the start of their careers rather than on those that are already ‘known’ to the international community. This direct investment in human capital formation has required a greater ‘input’ from the project than would have been the case had it collaborated with established academics or indirectly via support to universities who would select/teach/mentor the beneficiaries.

This approach has involved risks of under-performance that might not have been so great with established academics. It has required careful attention in the project design and execution to minimize the risk (such as careful participant selection and strong academic and personal support to participants).

But there are also significant benefits that would not have accrued to a more conventional approach. Most notable is that the participants have a large part of their career ahead of them to contribute to the research and teaching of their institutions and to policy-relevant analysis on trade and poverty. Several of those interviewed stated that they had already incorporated the new techniques imparted by the course into their teaching and research.

**The project therefore scores positively on this second aspect of ‘relevance’. Although it is only one (small) example of UNCTAD’s role in identifying pro-poor trade policies and interacting with academics, Vi has a niche that might otherwise go unfilled.**

The Development Account project has enabled Vi to become more involved than previously in using its on-line skills and university contacts to support very sophisticated postgraduate economics training and high-level original research.

#### e) Effectiveness

An important part of ‘effectiveness’ evaluation is straightforwardly quantifiable: to what extent have the project’s objectives as set out in the project proposal log frame been achieved? The Project Document sets out in Section 4.2 the following Expected Accomplishments (EA1 – 3).

- EA1: Knowledge of participating academics enhanced on data sources, tools, methods and policy relevant research questions on trade and poverty.
- EA2: Capacity of participating academics strengthened on the application of knowledge on data sources, tools, methods and research questions on trade and poverty to specific policy-oriented research projects relevant to their countries.
- EA 3: Interaction/collaboration enhanced between academics and policymakers.

Each of these relates to one of the three phases of the project, and the specified Indicators of Achievement (Section 4.3) provide three corresponding numerical targets as the benchmarks to establish whether or not the expected accomplishments have been achieved. These numerical benchmarks are the ones reproduced in column 1 of tables 2-4 (with the level of achievement indicated in column 2).

**On the basis of the metrics set out in the Project Document, the project has been highly effective having met or exceeded all of the targets against which success in meeting the Expected Achievements was to be measured.**

But the evaluation has been extended beyond this in two ways. The first has been to question whether the stated objectives were set at an appropriate level given:

- the resources deployed and
- the prior skills of the course and research participants.

This has required a comparative analysis, benchmarking the project against the support given to research training by other organisations. The metrics for this benchmarking need to be established in relative as well as absolute terms for the Phase 1 course and for the Phase 2/3 research and publication. But identifying appropriate comparators is not straightforward and requires a close understanding of the project's aims and modalities.

The second extension of the evaluation's scope has been to form a qualitative view of whether the knowledge of participants has been enhanced (EA1), whether their capacity has been increased to apply this knowledge to specific policy oriented research questions (EA2) and whether there has been enhanced interaction with policymakers (EA3). This part of the evaluation has relied heavily on the evaluator's questionnaires, his interviews, reading the research outputs and the feedback obtained from participants through the Vi's regular monitoring questionnaires.

### *The Phase 1 course*

The course had ambitious objectives. It was not only 'to provide participants with the empirical tools needed to assess the impact of trade and trade-related policies on poverty and income distribution.'<sup>7</sup> It also aimed to do so at a standard at which 'after completion of this course, the participants will be able to contribute to' a growing literature on 'developing new methods, investigating the different channels of effect from trade to poverty, and analysing the effects in different countries.'<sup>8</sup> This involved ensuring that 'the topics and techniques covered in this course are currently an active research area in economics'.

It also required that participants be assessed rigorously on the basis of active understanding of the material. This gave confidence that 'graduates' had sufficiently internalised the theory and techniques taught to be able 'to contribute' to 'developing new methods'. The three stylised strategies to achieve this would have been: to expect a very high rate of attrition (so that only the ablest candidates were left participating by the end of the course); or to select from the outset only the ablest candidates who had demonstrated through objective tests that they were very likely to succeed on the course; or to offer substantial high-level mentoring.

Since it was the third of these stylised strategies that was adopted in the project it is appropriate to consider in the evaluation whether this was the most effective approach given all the circumstances. There are costs and benefits to all three approaches.

Had the first strategy been adopted it would have required a much larger initial intake than was actually the case in order to give assurance of achieving the stated output targets of the project. Unless combined with zero or very minimal admissions administration (let alone mentoring) it would have involved additional management costs roughly proportional to the size of the intake. It would also have tended to favour participants based in an environment where they could obtain support from peers or more senior colleagues. The evaluator's questionnaire completed by successful course graduates attests to a widespread view that parts of the course were tough – notably the statistics and the volume of teaching materials to be mastered (see Annex 4). Many students required some support – had it not been available from the course tutors it would have had to be obtained from elsewhere.

Unless the project had included an adequately funded component to conduct pre-course tests, the second strategy would have given preference to better established candidates based in countries with globally-recognised testing organisations. Candidates who had already obtained globally recognised qualifications would have tended to be given preference over candidates who were 'unknown quantities' either because they were more junior and/or because they were located in less well favoured countries.

On either the first or the second strategy the 'value added' of the project's Phase 1 would have been primarily the course materials. There would have been little (strategy 2) or no (strategy 1) value added in terms of fostering the development of human potential. And the market for course materials is a crowded one. MIT, for example, offers a wide range of relevant postgraduate materials on-line. Both written and audio-visual materials are available free of charge over the internet. The numbers of self-learners who use the site (even in poorer regions such as Africa) vastly exceeds anything that could have been expected from the Development Account project. Good though it might be, it is hard to envisage that a project to add one more trade-related micro-economics course to this crowded field would have been an effective use of resources.

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<sup>7</sup> *Online Course on Trade and Poverty 10 September – 30 November 2012 'Prospectus' p1*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid p 2*

**The evaluation concludes that the ‘close mentoring’ approach chosen for the Development Account project was the most appropriate.**

But one consequence of the choice is that identifying the correct comparators is not easy. Many potential candidates are similar to the project’s Phase 1 but also have significant differences. Given that the project adopted the third strategy (of closely mentored learning) an appropriate effectiveness comparator would need to offer academic teaching that is both conveyed through distance-learning and is highly facilitated.

Some comparators that appear at first sight to be very relevant fall out of contention on one or more of these criteria. Specific aid-funded training projects, for example, tend to be residential or at least in-country. The WTO’s facilitated training courses also tend to be residential or in-country; whilst it has an e-campus (<https://ecampus.wto.org>), monitoring of participants is provided only for beneficiaries of its technical assistance programmes. Moreover, the focus of the ‘vast majority of activities’ is to ‘specifically address WTO Agreements’ rather than the academic focus of the Development Account project.<sup>9</sup>

By contrast the facilitated courses offered by the World Bank’s e-Institute are relevant in a number of respects. They are provided on-line and they include expert feedback to participants as well as facilitated on-line discussion. However, whilst the e-Institute offers courses in the area of trade and regional integration it does not currently cover the curriculum of the Development Account project and so there has been no duplication of subject matter (although that could change in future).

A more fundamental difference is with the objective and the key target group for the training. The key challenge that the e-Institute addresses is that ‘many development practitioners around the world do not have easy access to cutting-edge learning’ and its response is to ‘offer development practitioners a virtual learning classroom to share high quality learning and knowledge resources [which] will draw heavily on the expertise of the World Bank and its partners, and the practical experiences of practitioners themselves.’<sup>10</sup> Although academics are listed among the potential participants, the orientation is policy makers and policy rather than the more academic focus of the Development Account project.

There remains the question of whether the Vi course graduates acquired new knowledge and skills effectively? The course aimed to teach participants how to:

- estimate or simulate the welfare and poverty impact of trade policy or trade shocks caused by changes in international prices and the volume of international trade on different segments of the population;
- run ex-post analysis, i.e. analyse episodes of trade reform and compare the ‘before’ and ‘after’ for some key outcome variables (poverty rates, per capita consumption, wages, etc.) as well as ex-ante analysis, i.e. simulate the effect on outcome variables of potential/possible policies available to policymakers;
- apply the techniques learnt to produce policy research reports (that could be used by national policymakers) and academic papers empirically assessing the impact of trade policy and trade shocks on poverty and income distribution.

The success rate in terms of the proportion of participants who graduated was high at 75%, but as the marking was not externally moderated (as it would have been, say, at a UK university) it would be helpful to identify some supplementary indicators (even though many universities organised according to different academic traditions do not have external moderation of tests). The evidence from the results of Phase 2 demonstrate objectively that some participants held the skills described above *after* the course, and their testimony during the interviews indicates that they acquired these skills *during* the course. Although this sub-group was selected specifically to include the most able, their testimony complements similar evidence in the course evaluations undertaken by the project for a larger number of participants and recorded in the annual progress reports. It is also confirmed by the responses to the questionnaire distributed by the evaluator to all successful participants.

What about the 25% of the participants accepted onto the first course delivery who did not complete; is there more that the project could have done to increase its effectiveness by increasing the success rate? The evaluator’s questionnaire of course non-completers was designed to identify whether or not any shortcomings on the part of the course staff contributed to their failure. The questionnaire was designed both to suggest some ‘pre-formed’ areas in which more support might have been given and to allow respondents free expression to identify other possibilities (Annex 4).

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/devel\\_e/teccop\\_e/ta\\_factsheet\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/teccop_e/ta_factsheet_e.htm)

<sup>10</sup> <http://einstitute.worldbank.org/ei/content/vision>

Of the nine respondents, two indicated that there was nothing the Vi team could have done differently to improve the chances of success, and the only change suggested by a further four was that more time or flexibility be allowed for completing the course. This reflects the most common response that failure to finish the course was due to lack of time (in some case linked to health problems) followed by poor internet. Only three respondents identified in the free form answers other specific things that could have helped them to complete (in one case together with 'more time').

The type of action suggested was reflected in responses to the pre-set answers. There was one positive response to the suggestion 'provide more on-line mentoring' and one to the answer 'provide more face-to-face tuition'. Two respondents also responded positively to the pre-set answer 'provide course materials in my language'. These suggestions are taken up in Section 4f below on efficiency given that they have significant resource implications.

The drop-out rate was not surprisingly large given the selection method used and the very brisk pace of the course. The responses received to the questionnaire of non-completers suggest that in a majority of cases the main reason was due to factors outside the project's control. Taken together, these two pieces of information lead the evaluator to judge that the effectiveness of the project was not significantly reduced by non-completion.

**The conclusion is that the project has been effective in achieving EA1 'Knowledge of participating academics enhanced on data sources, tools, methods and policy relevant research questions on trade and poverty'.**

This is based on the qualitative feedback of course participants and the evidence provided by the Phase 2 outputs.

#### *The Phase 2 - 3 research and editing*

If it is hard to find an appropriate point of comparison for Phase 1 it is even more difficult to do so for Phase 2. The evaluator is not aware of other systematic, multi-country exercises to fund and mentor directly younger academics/researchers to apply the skills they have been taught to original research of publishable quality. It is common for masters' level courses to include an extended dissertation, but these do not often attain a publishable quality. Collaborative books such as the output from Phase 3 are more often associated with doctoral research programmes. The Phase 2-3 research falls between these two levels. The completed research papers do not reach doctoral level in their breadth or theoretical insight – but that is not to be expected given the resources (of money and time) devoted to their production. But, whilst the quality varies, they mostly reach a scholarly level appropriate to academics within the limits of their subject matter and the resources deployed.

Examples have been found of links with universities that seek both to train younger scholars and to support their research. One case is the UNCTAD project (funded by DFID) 'University Link Initiative for Trade Related Research Capacity Building of Academic Institutions in India'. This provides a valuable menu of trade-related training and research supports and lessons that can be learned. But it is not a direct comparator for the Development Account supported activities of Vi for several reasons. It has focused on just four universities in one country,<sup>11</sup> the relationship is primarily with the universities rather than directly with students, and it is understood to be part of a much more substantially funded programme than is the project being evaluated.

Another example, external to UNCTAD, is the WTO's Chairs Programme launched in 2010. This provides financial support of up to CHF 50,000 (US\$ 52,500) per year to selected developing country institutions for a maximum of four years. This has a narrower geographic focus than the Vi programme<sup>12</sup> but a broader pallet of activities (including support for the development and delivery of courses on trade policy and WTO-related matters in academic institutions, fostering research in trade-related matters, and encouraging outreach and communication).

The critical difference for comparison purposes is that the Chairs Programme makes its grants to developing country universities which have the responsibility for administering the project, selecting the activities to be

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Economics of Jadavpur University, Mizoram University, University of Allahabad and Centre for Development Studies, India.

<sup>12</sup> Fourteen institutions were selected in 2009 and an additional seven for Phase 2 in 2014.

supported (within approved guidelines) and the individuals to be assisted. The Chairs themselves are established scholars. Unlike the Vi project the programme does not aim *directly* to nurture new research talent though one of the criteria for selecting the supported institutions is the ‘development of young scholars’.<sup>13</sup> Partly because the activities are varied and differ between institutions there is no clear point of ‘input-output’ comparison of which the evaluator is aware to benchmark the Development Account project.

In the absence of a useful ‘external’ point of comparison on effectiveness, the metric used in this evaluation is to form a view on the value-added of the project by comparing ‘before’ and ‘after’. The ‘before’ evidence is provided by the research proposals prepared by the applicants for Phase 2, while the ‘after’ evidence is provided by the published papers. The evaluator has studied the original research proposals submitted by the researchers who completed outputs for the 2014 seminar. He has also interviewed with respect to their mentoring all but one of the research phase mentors.

The initial research proposals are broadly in the same relationship to the final product as is typical of ‘good doctoral students’. The initial proposals indicate grasp of a good, researchable idea which needs further development in terms of focus, practicality and implementation. This refining process is one that mentors with significant academic experience can provide. The final papers mainly indicate that it was both provided and absorbed.

This is confirmed by the impressions formed by the mentors interviewed. During the interviews, the mentors were asked to place their mentee in one of these three categories:

1. very talented and knowledgeable individuals who, though a joy to work with, do not actually need mentoring as they are capable of completing the research without support;
2. individuals at the other end of the spectrum who, whilst they may work hard, need so much support that the mentor is effectively the joint author of the research paper;
3. those in between who have the intellectual potential to undertake the research but can benefit in a variety of ways from mentoring.

Answers that had placed the mentees in one of the alternative categories would have suggested either limited value-added from the project (category 1) or too much (category 2) in the sense that young, local talent was not being nurtured but was merely fronting for what was effectively UNCTAD research.

The response in most cases was that the mentees fell into category 3, which indicates that there has been value-added. Of the six mentors who were asked the question (in relation to seven completing researchers) only one placed a mentee in the category of students not really needing assistance and none said that their mentee had to be given so much support as to bring into question authorship of the final output.

**The conclusion is that the project met EA 2 Capacity of participating academics strengthened on the application of knowledge on data sources, tools, methods and research questions on trade and poverty to specific policy-oriented research projects relevant to their countries’.**

This conclusion is derived from the qualitative evaluation which confirms the finding from the quantitative comparison of Indicators of Achievement with actual outcomes.

**The interviews with the policymakers associated with Phase 2 (see Section 4a above) also suggest that the project met EA3 ‘Interaction/collaboration enhanced between academics and policymakers’.**

#### **f) Efficiency**

Efficiency has been judged on two counts: narrowly to compare implementation with commitments made in the Project Document, and more broadly in relation to the resources utilized to achieve the level of value added described in Section 4b above.

In terms of the narrow definition of efficiency, were the targets, commitments and milestones set out in the Project Document met? The answer is that they have.

**All numeric targets have been met or exceeded (see Tables 2-4 above) – some to a substantial degree if the second run of the course is defined as a project output (as explained in Section 3d).**

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.wto.org/english/news\\_e/pres10\\_e/pr593\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres10_e/pr593_e.htm)

And in budget terms the project appears likely to be completed with neither significant cost overruns nor shortfalls.

In relation to the timetable, the project has taken three years to implement rather than the two years indicated in the version of the Project Document approved by DESA. But this was a matter for discussion between UNCTAD and DESA during the final approval process as well as the first and second year of implementation. In the evaluator's view, the decision taken to increase the project length to three years was the correct one since two years was not a realistic time period. The critical path dates are:

- 5 October 2011 - DESA approved project;
- 1 January 2012 – project starts;
- 10 September 2012 – first course starts;
- 30 November 2012 – first course ends;
- February 2013 – research projects approved;
- September 2013 – draft research papers submitted;
- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2013 – editing starts on the first papers to be completed;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014 – book published.

It is hard to see any way in which the project could have been implemented in two years given that its design required Phase 1 to be completed before Phase 2 (both to ensure researchers possessed the required skills and to serve as a 'selection forum'). Eleven months is a tight timescale to move from project approval to hiring consultants, preparing training materials for a three month course on a cutting edge subject, soliciting applications and selecting those applicants deemed to have appropriate prior knowledge. Implementation of the course was also brisk – and several successful participants have remarked (in the questionnaire and interviews) that they found the fast pace of teaching to be tough as did some non-completers (see below). Course graduates were allowed only two months to prepare research proposals, and about seven months to undertake the research and submit draft papers, which is tight given that the project's target was researchers near the start of their careers.

**The evaluator concludes that running the project over three years was the efficient choice.**

Two years would have been insufficient to run the three phases sequentially. Four years might have given the extra time requested by some course non-completers, but equally it might have led to a loss of 'momentum' by the successful completers of all three phases.

How efficient has the project been on the broader measure of efficiency in relation to value added outputs relative to inputs?

As determined in Section 3c above, the human resources available to implement the project have been 2 (rising to 2.5) core staff responsible also for all concurrent Vi activities, two main consultants hired under the Development Account project, and one economist post funded by the Government of Finland together with freely given inputs by UNCTAD professionals and policy maker counterparts.

How does this compare with the inputs required by other programmes? One point of comparison is with the WTO Chairs Programme in which implementation is largely managed by the universities obtaining financial support. It is understood that the WTO Secretariat has generally had a full-time staff of 1.5 professionals administering the programme which, because of the intermediation of the beneficiary universities, does not involve capacity building (commenting on research proposals and papers, providing training, etc.) which has been the most time-consuming activities for the Vi team. Given this difference in responsibilities (and the other concurrent Vi-related demands) this narrow comparison suggests that the Vi is very 'lean'.

A broader comparison with the WTO or the World Bank, which were considered potential comparators in Section 4e, is not possible because neither publish data on the specific cost of developing and implementing individual courses. The most appropriate efficiency comparators for the project Phase 1 are those bodies that provide distance academic teaching offering strong mentoring as well as course materials – in other words, primarily universities offering specific modules at a postgraduate level. They also show in their fees a stylised indication of the costs of delivering given levels of output - with the serious caveat that almost all of them receive some form of subsidy whether from the state or from privately subscribed endowments. This subsidy

means that the fees they charge students do not necessarily reflect the full cost of provision. Consequently, the comparison of their costs with those incurred in delivering the project's Phase 1 can be only very broad brush.

Despite the difficulties in making a precise comparison, it seems probable that the Development Account project was highly efficient on a relative comparison of outputs with inputs. The UK Open University, for example, specialises in distance education and, though it receives some direct state funding, this is relatively low by European standards so that student fees tend to cover a relatively high share of total costs. It charges fees of £1316 (US\$ 2116) for a 30 credit course (with most students taking 60 credits a year). Given that the first run of the Phase 1 course involved 102 participants, its comparable 'fee cost' would have been \$215,832. This compares to the Development Account contribution to Phase 1 of \$55,000. Bearing in mind that this includes the full cost of developing the training materials (that a university would tend to amortize over several deliveries) it is clear that even when the cost of the UNCTAD and Finnish contributions are taken into account the financial cost of the Vi project compares very favourably to the Open University.

**In relative terms, therefore, the Development Account project appears to have been highly efficient in delivering a given number of outputs (graduates) for a given volume of inputs.**

Has the Vi's lean implementation had a cost in terms of the quality of outcomes? As noted in Section 4e one-quarter of those enrolling on the first delivery of the course failed to complete. Among the suggestions made by the non-completers were increased face-to-face tuition and translation of the course materials. A number of mentors also referred to the advantages of having some face-to-face meetings during Phase 1 and a larger number of such meetings in Phase 2 (for which there was just one mid-phase workshop). Making course materials available in languages other than those in which they have been written or already translated would also greatly widen potential access (though the practical problems could be severe in relation to recently written, cutting-edge articles).

Both innovations would have had substantial cost implications which ruled them out of the Development Account project under evaluation. They could be considered, though, in any future project. The effect on the efficiency of the project would need to be taken into account. Given the likely cost one would expect the outlay to be recovered over a much larger number of participants than would have been helped to complete in this project.

As in the case of the selection procedure for course participants (see Section 4h below), there is a range of innovations that could be considered for the future and which might be efficient if the scale of activities were increased substantially. Given the limited scale of the Development Account project, though, whilst some outcomes (e.g. in terms of the course completion rate) *might* have been slightly more-favourable with different implementation choices this would have had an 'opportunity cost'. Given the resource constraint, the offsetting changes needed to remain within budget *could* have resulted in a deterioration of other outcomes.

**Taking into account all these factors, the evaluation concludes that the implementation choices made by Vi were the most efficient ones.**

In addition to the 25 course non-completers there were three non-completers out of the 14 graduates who embarked on the research phase of the project. This did not result in any under-achievement of the stated target (10 completed research papers) because a larger number of proposals (14) were selected. The Project Document assumed 100% completion: section 4.4 proposed that 'up to 10 best proposals' would be selected for implementation; and section 4.3 committed to 10 completed papers. This is an unrealistic assumption – some level of attrition is highly likely.

**The lesson to be learned is that the practice actually adopted is the correct one and that future proposals should make allowance for some non-completers in a research phase.**

Whilst moderate non-completion does not in itself detract from the efficiency of the project, it might reflect a structural issue if there were a pattern in the profile of the non-completers. It has not been possible within the evaluation to contact the three non-completers of the Phase 2 research, but their mentors have been consulted (each of whom also mentored one or more participant who successfully completed the research phase). In one case the researcher based in Myanmar was not able to access the data (held by government) required to complete their proposed research. In a second case the participant was reluctant to use the new techniques imparted during the course in the research, which would have breached the internal project integrity, and also had insufficient time. And in the third case the participant turned out not to have sufficient time. Although it has

not been possible to triangulate these explanations the reasons given appear very plausible for the level of drop-out experienced.

### **g) Sustainability**

Academic research in most (if not all) countries is supported by public funds or by private endowments, often to a substantial degree. Hence, ‘sustainability’ cannot be assessed for an academic support project in the same way that it might be, for example, in relation to a farmer support pilot project where activity could plausibly continue autonomously after the end of the project. Since there is no possibility that academic research in developing countries (let alone LDCs) can be mainly self-financing the judgement on ‘sustainability’ takes the form of answers to four sequential questions (some of which fall largely outside the ambit of this evaluation):

1. has the Development Account project made a continuation of such activities more sustainable (in the sense of needing fewer external resources to continue) than would otherwise have been the case;
2. how well aligned are the requirements for this type of activity and the mandate/work programme of UNCTAD;
3. partly in the light of the answer to questions 1 and 2, what priority should UNCTAD give to direct support to academia in developing countries:
  - when allocating its internal resources (financial and human) and
  - seeking external funding;
4. and, finally, what level of priority should a source of financial and technical support (which will always have finite resources) give to assisting this type of activity compared to all the other activities that fall within its portfolio?

The first question boils down to whether the project resulted in a stock of ‘capital’ (in UNCTAD and the beneficiary states) that will allow similar (or successor) activities to be achieved at lower resource cost than would have been the case in the project’s absence. The answer is that it has. This is evident not only from the second delivery of the course noted in Section 3 but also from other high-level teaching work that builds on the expertise and resources developed during the Development Account project.

The second delivery of the course had 45 participants from 38 countries, including 23 participants from 15 LDCs, and was run without additional funding from the Development Account project. It required parallel funding from the Government of Finland to deliver, but most of the other resources were in the form of capital (human and physical) that had already been invested during the Development Account project and other Vi activities.

Over time this capital will need to be regenerated, but there exists scope to use it for a wider range of training schemes provided the incremental additional costs of updating and/or re-focusing can be found. Already, with support from the Government of Finland, the invested resources have been used in two follow-on projects on trade and gender. The first has been to develop and publish generic Vi teaching materials on trade and gender (part of which will be translated into French and Spanish).

The second follow-on project mirrors to an extent the structure of the Development Account project in a way that indicates the model is considered to be a valuable one. Run jointly by Vi and the UNCTAD Trade, Gender and Development Section it is a capacity-building project on trade and gender for academic institutions. The initial activities are the development and delivery of a six-week online course based on the Vi teaching materials on trade and gender followed by a regional professional development workshop on trade and gender for academics from least developed and lower-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This is to be followed by a research phase in which participants will be invited to submit proposals for research papers on relevant trade and gender analysis for their countries, the best of which will be supported financially and through mentoring by UNCTAD and other international experts.

**The Vi appears to have entered a virtuous circle with past activities supporting current ones which, in turn, add to critical mass.**

As noted in Section 2b the Development Account project was predicated on Vi being able to utilize its extensive university network and it has, in turn, helped to extend that network and facilitate future projects. Seven universities have become members of the Vi after their staff participated in the online course. They are in Bangladesh (Jagannath University), Botswana (University of Botswana), Burundi (University of Burundi), China (Central University of Economics and Finance), Ghana (University of Cape Coast), Togo (Université de Lomé) and Zimbabwe (the University of Zimbabwe). In addition, two universities with a similar relationship to

the project are discussing membership. They are in Myanmar (Yangon Institute of Economics) and the Philippines (University of Asia and the Pacific).

The first of the four sequential questions posed above has a developing country dimension as well as an UNCTAD one: has the project increased the likelihood that participants will be able to pass on the knowledge obtained and undertake more trade policy-relevant empirical research? The information supplied by participants in the questionnaire and interviews indicates that some are already using the course materials in their teaching and research. Whether the participants in Phase 2/3 are better placed (in terms of national and international exposure) to do follow on research remains to be seen, but it seems probable that authoring a chapter in an academic book will help.

If the Development Account project has made Vi activities more sustainable than they otherwise would have been, how well are the Vi's activities aligned with the mandate/work programme of UNCTAD? This question takes us outside the competence and remit of the evaluator to answer fully. However, there are three pieces of guidance available to the evaluator which suggest a close alignment.

One is that the project was able to draw on UNCTAD professionals to give their time voluntarily as mentors. Vi is based in the Division on Globalisation and Development Strategies but the mentors are also drawn from several other Divisions. This 'cross-departmental collaboration' is an 'attractive feature' of the project according to Kent Wilska, Commercial Counsellor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in his speech to the launch of the project book on 8 September 2014.

Another is the link that has been established for developing and running the trade and gender work. These are joint activities with the Trade, Gender and Development Section in the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities.

The third piece of guidance is provided by the 2012 report of the Joint Inspection Unit on UNCTAD.<sup>14</sup> This concluded that 'Vi has proven to be very useful and instrumental in connecting UNCTAD research and analysis with sustainable capacity-building activities' (para 8).

This leads on to the next question of whether or not the activities supported by the Development Account project are sustainable for UNCTAD in terms of the internal resources it devotes to them and the priority it accords to them when seeking external funding. Given that some level of continuing support is always needed for academic research, in the final analysis it is the answer to this question that will determine the sustainability of Vi work as exemplified by the Development Account project.

Although a full answer to this question clearly involves matters that fall well outside the evaluator's remit, the evaluation can contribute something. Implementation of the Development Account project as it has been evaluated was made possible only because of joint funding from the Government of Finland. This was necessary to fill a gap in the Vi core team that had emerged after the project was first proposed to DESA. Without the co-funding it would still have been possible to implement *in some form* a project to provide training and support to researchers in developing countries (as is evident from the number of potential comparators considered above that fell short on the count of facilitation). Most activities can be pared down or scaled-up according to the funding available (with consequent costs and benefits). But it would not have been the project as it has been evaluated (and as it was originally conceived). The actual outputs and achievements recorded above are for a project that did have co-funding. Had the co-funding been absent, the volume and quality of outputs would have been different and almost certainly smaller, quite possibly to a marked degree.

Fortunately the co-funding was available and the co-funder appears willing to act in a way that Kent Wilska described in his speech at the book launch 'as a long-term committed partner' to Vi. But the need to fund from external sources a role that could be considered by some observers as appropriate for the core team raises an issue of logistics and one of longer-term strategy.

The logistical issue arises from the fact that if co-funding donor timetables differ problems of co-ordination could arise. This did occur in 2011 when there was a gap of just over a month between the approval of the Development Account project and the first formal indication from the Government of Finland that it would

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<sup>14</sup> *'Review of Management and Administration in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)' Joint Inspection Unit United Nations, JIU/REP/2012/1 Geneva 2012*

provide the co-funding needed to establish the full team. In this case, since the co-funding was confirmed, the potential problem was avoided but the issue is raised in this evaluation because the same fortunate outcome might not always occur in future.

The strategic issue is linked to the longer-term perceptions of co-funders about which organisation should be supporting such core functions. In his speech to the book launch in September 2014, Kent Wilska likened the Finnish aid to Vi to 'supporting a start-up business venture', a useful analogy to which this report returns in Section 5. The start-up has done well. But a common issue with start-ups is what happens when they have outgrown the informal relationships focussed on specific people that were instrumental in their early success? Might funders start to feel that a 'Virtual Institute' created with the task of forging strong links between UNCTAD and academia should have as part of its core team professionals with appropriate academic experience? The JIU 2012 review has already expressed criticism of the reduction in Vi's professional staff (para 84), and an issue for the medium-term is whether donors might start to express similar views.

#### **h) Gender impact**

Gender impact has been assessed both narrowly in relation to project implementation and more broadly in relation to the impact of the activities supported by the Development Account on the gendered distributional poverty effects of trade policy. The former focusses on the extent to which gender issues were taken into account when the project was designed and implemented. The latter assesses the extent to which the project has empowered participants better to understand trade and gender issues, undertake research that shines a light on gender as a factor influencing the distribution of trade shocks, and make policy recommendations that address differential gender effects.

Only 30% of the participants admitted to the first delivery of the course were female. But this was heavily influenced by the gender balance of applicants. Females accounted for only 23% of the 377 people who responded to the invitation circulated via the Vi network and applied. Without independently re-assessing the selection process (which has not been possible within this evaluation) it is not possible to judge whether or not there was any gender bias when selecting from this group the 102 applicants who appeared able (from the documentary evidence submitted) to complete the course successfully.

**To the extent that the headline statistics available to the evaluation provide an accurate picture, though, the fact that the proportion of females selected was higher than their share of applicants (by seven percentage points) suggests that some consideration was given to the desirability of gender balance.**

Moreover, the gender statistics for implementation of the course show a much higher success rate for female than male participants: the success rate was 94% for females and 67% for males. Only 8% of non-completers were female and 38% of the successful students were female. The responses of participants (by questionnaire and interview) also suggest that course delivery was sensitive to gender concerns.

The Development Account project was designed to involve selection through study of documentary evidence submitted by applicants. As such it included no opportunity to assess any gender bias prior to the project which might have contributed to the imbalance in applicants. No provision was made in the project for face-to-face interviews or independent evaluation of applicants' skills and intellectual capacity. Without something of this kind, the project's capacity to influence the composition of applicants was very limited; any gender bias in-built into the population from which applications were solicited would necessarily be carried forward to some degree into the class intake for the course. But any such independent assessment would be costly to be implemented to the degree necessary to be effective.

The gender balance of participants in the research phase of the project was more equal. 40% of those selected for this phase were female.<sup>15</sup> Two of the 3 non-completers for this phase were also female, but as noted above, there appear to be valid case-specific explanations in each case.

**In broader terms, the project focussed on gender as an important explanatory element for differentiated effects of trade changes, taught techniques to identify and measure such effects, and emphasised the need for policymakers to take gender into account when designing policies.**

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*15 The absolute figures are 6 female researchers out of 15 (because only 14 research proposals were accepted one proposal was a joint one by two course graduates).*

For instance, the final exercise studied the gender disparities on the assessment of possible trade liberalization in Cape Verde. It reinforced the gender focus of the course which was taken into consideration by researchers in Phase 2. It is perhaps no surprise that among the ‘follow-on courses’ developed on the foundations of the Development Account course is one on trade and gender (see Section 4g).

The final research papers mainly examined short term first-order effects of price changes on household welfare operating through household consumption and production using a common methodology based on cross-sectional household-level data. While most identify the household effects of the trade shocks analysed few flag specific gender effects. However, given the household data sets with which the researchers had to work it is not clear what more could have been done. The fact that the Vi’s current training/research project (making use of the course materials created in the Development Account project) is on trade and gender suggests that the skills imparted are relevant to gendered distributional analysis in cases where the issues selected for analysis and the household data available make this possible.

## 5. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

### a) Conclusions

The Development Account project has been highly relevant both to the mission of UNCTAD and to the needs of beneficiary countries. It has been effective, administered efficiently and provided developing country researchers with the tools to identify the distributional effects of trade, including those related to gender, and to design pro-poor policies to alter these effects.

As explained in Section 2b a rationale for the project was that it would reinforce UNCTAD’s role as a knowledge-based institution and build on Vi’s network of cooperation with academia. It has done both of these. The project has contributed to the sustainability of UNCTAD’s direct links with universities and scholars in developing countries. It has done this by helping Vi invest in its intellectual capital, building on its established network and ICT skills to create a product that serves a niche market in which there are few obvious competitors and little evidence of duplication by other UNCTAD activities.

The Vi network has grown substantially in both breadth (the number of participating institutions) and depth (the range of activities). The Development Account project has contributed significantly to this deepening. It has benefited not only UNCTAD (by helping it to engage in new ways with developing country scholars) but also, arguably, the co-funder (by extending the jointly funded activities to universities in middle income countries thereby supporting peer-learning by participants from countries with less well-developed university networks).

But, as with the well-used analogy of riding a bicycle, sustainability requires the process to continue. Building on the Development Account project requires funding in the shorter-term to cover the marginal costs of applying the capital created to new tasks (such as the Trade and Gender project under development) and, in the medium-term, to reinvest in the capital stock. This has implications for UNCTAD both in terms of its strategy for seeking external funds and for the use of its core budget.

A representative of the co-funder for the Development Account supported activities used the analogy of a business start up to describe its assistance over a number of years to Vi. This is a helpful analogy in several respects, not least because it focusses attention on ‘the succession crisis’ that often has to be overcome by successful start-ups.

The fact that the Vi outputs have been achieved by a tiny core team reflects very well both on the efficiency of the operation and on the collegial support provided by UNCTAD colleagues, but it raises similar questions on future viability that are familiar in the literature on business start-ups. One of the recommendations in the evaluation of the previous Development Account project for Vi was that ‘a minimum requirement is that at least one of the Vi staff members holds a research degree and that one has some postgraduate university teaching experience’ given the tasks to be performed.<sup>16</sup> UNCTAD felt unable to adopt this recommendation and on this occasion the gap has been filled by external funding. This approach will continue to be viable for as long as donors are willing to support what could be considered core expenses. But should this willingness decline at

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*16 ‘Evaluation of UNCTAD Virtual Institute Development Account Project 2006-9’ p 35*

some point the critical determinant for the sustainability of the activities supported by the Development Account project will be the response of UNCTAD.

### b) Recommendations

These conclusions support five key recommendations.

1. UNCTAD should continue to apply the JIU recommendation that ‘projects such as the one undertaken and implemented by the Virtual Institute of UNCTAD should be further encouraged, supported and strengthened’ (para 85).
2. In particular, there appears to be scope and strong support for ‘the Development Account package’ of teaching and research to be extended to new topics and this should be embraced by UNCTAD. Some suggestions for the focus of the ‘next course/research area’ were made by internationally recognised academics at the launch of the project book
3. UNCTAD needs to seek additional external funders given that the financial support for Vi is from a narrow set of donors. This is needed both to assure funding stability and to reassure the established donors that their support is not ‘being taken for granted’. It is very important that among the donors are some that are able to support work undertaken in middle-income country universities in order to support ‘peer-learning’ among participants and, by increasing the base of qualified applicants, to ensure that sufficient able participants are selected to ensure that high-level research outputs are completed.
4. UNCTAD must also give serious thought to expanding the core team to include at least one professional economist with teaching and research experience when, whichever is the sooner, the current Finnish project (that is funding an in-house consultant with these skills) is completed or when a follow-on project similar to that of the Development Account is approved.
5. Regardless of the response to recommendation 4, the Vi is very dependent for its successful growth on a couple of staff members and UNCTAD needs to give attention to issues of succession.

### c) Lessons learned

Among the lessons recorded in the sections above, six seem to be particularly relevant.

1. Because of the wealth of academic expertise spread across UNCTAD, the strategy of using the Vi’s university network to find new ways of interacting with academia works well. It complements the other ways in which UNCTAD interacts with universities both as an organisation and through individual staff members.
2. The Development Account supported extension of Vi activities into the direct creation of teaching materials, teaching and research support has provided a particularly valuable catalyst for creative interaction between UNCTAD professionals. It has offered professionals a challenge and excitement similar to postgraduate university teaching. To work, though, the subject matter needs to be cutting edge and the students of high academic quality. Otherwise, colleagues will no doubt continue to be supportive out of a sense of solidarity but not with enthusiasm.
3. The Vi’s network that links academics to policy makers has been useful in making the research completed under the Development Account project policy relevant.
4. The mixing in the project of scholars based at universities in middle income and rich countries as well as in poorer countries was an important ingredient in the successful outcomes.
5. The strategy adopted in the Development Account project of sequential teaching and research phases is a good one. As this establishes the minimum viable length of the supported activities (in this case three years) it needs to be taken into account in future project design.
6. The project as evaluated could not have been run without the core Vi team including a full-time professional with research and teaching experience. No doubt a project with the same main activities would have been possible but the outputs (including the encouragement of intra-UNCTAD collaboration) would not have been the same as those assessed in this evaluation.

## Annex 1 Evaluation Matrix showing findings

Criteria	TOR Questions	Sub questions and findings	Data sources used	Data collection methods used
Relevance and project design	Have the project design and choice of activities and deliverables	Is the policy objective (increasing developing countries’ capacity to analyse the impact on	Project documents Interviews with project staff, UNCTAD staff,	Desk reviews telephone and skype interviews.

	<p>properly reflected and addressed the needs of the beneficiaries, taking into account UNCTAD's mandates, and alignment with the objectives of the Development Account?</p> <p>Are the actual activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goals and intended outcomes?</p>	<p>vulnerable groups) relevant to achieving the MDG goal of enhancing the pro-poor impact on trade? <b>Yes – case specific analysis on the distributional impact of trade and policy is in short supply and more is needed to inform good policy design.</b></p> <p>Is the project design appropriate to achieving this policy objective? <b>Yes – the skills taught in the course and through research mentoring are not yet widely known in many developing countries and by training younger scholars the project's impact on the wider use of these skills in teaching and research will be enhanced.</b></p>	<p>course and research students, policy makers in beneficiary states, and co-funders.</p>	
Effectiveness	<p>Have the activities undertaken achieved the planned objectives as enunciated in the project's logframe? How effectively have the challenges of interaction and collaboration between academics and policy makers been addressed by this project? What were the main factors influencing the outcomes of this project, either negatively or positively? What are the lessons to be learned or best practices to be promoted for other similar projects?</p>	<p>What outcomes did the project intend to achieve?</p> <p><b>Knowledge of participating academics on data sources, tools, methods and policy relevant research questions on trade and poverty to be enhanced (EA1).</b></p> <p><b>Capacity of participating academics to apply knowledge on data sources, tools, methods and research questions on trade and poverty to specific policy-oriented research projects relevant to their countries to be strengthened (EA2).</b></p> <p><b>Interaction/collaboration between academics and policymakers to be enhanced (EA3).</b></p> <p>To what extent has the project achieved these outcomes? <b>All three EAs have been achieved to a substantial degree.</b></p>	<p>Work plans, Progress reports Interviews with project staff, UNCTAD staff, course and research students, policy makers in beneficiary states, and co-funders, analyses of the post-graduate trade teaching and research provided by other institutions.</p>	<p>Desk reviews telephone and skype interviews. Face to face interviews with key staff and beneficiaries. Questionnaire surveys of course participants.</p>

		<p>Have the volume or type of outputs changed during the course of the project and has the timeline changed?  <b>Timeline has changed.</b>  Have these changes contributed to the outcomes of the project?  <b>Yes – timeline in project as approved was unrealistic; timeline subsequently agreed was more appropriate to delivering the desired outputs.</b>  Were the stated objectives set at an appropriate level? <b>They were set at an ambitious level which has been achieved or exceeded in numerical terms and broadly achieved in quality terms.</b>  Did the project initiate changes and processes leading towards the long-term outcomes?  <b>Yes in the sense that policy relevant research has been done and welcomed by policy makers and the new skills have been incorporated into graduate teaching.</b>  What measures have been taken by the beneficiaries to build on the outputs of the project? <b>Project not yet complete, but some new teaching and discussion within the universities of the participants has begun or is planned.</b></p>		
Efficiency	<p>Have resources and funds been used efficiently, leveraging in-house expertise, existing databases and other resources to optimize the project outcomes?  Have the project activities been delivered in a timely</p>	<p>Have there been delays in implementing the project? <b>No – apart from the agreed timeline change.</b>  What were the causes and circumstances giving rise to delays?  <b>n/a</b>  Has there been over-expenditure or under-expenditure on the</p>	<p>Progress reports of the project and related projects.  Project staff and mentors.  Course materials.  Research papers of the project research students.  Analyses of the post-graduate trade teaching and</p>	<p>Desk reviews  Interviews with project staff  UNCTAD mentors and beneficiaries.</p>

	manner?	<p>project? <b>No</b></p> <p>What mechanisms did UNCTAD have in place to monitor implementation?</p> <p><b>Regular progress reports to both donor and co-funder. Peer review of research papers and public discussion of final published outputs.</b></p> <p>Have prompt actions been taken to solve implementation issues?</p> <p><b>Yes – the co-funding necessary to achieve the level/quality of outputs was sought in a timely fashion while the project was under detailed discussion with DESA and was approved shortly after the DA project was accepted by UNCTAD.</b></p> <p>Was there any identified synergy with other initiatives that contributed to reducing costs while supporting results? <b>Yes – very close synergies with previous Vi activities (that have built a global academic network) and very close links with the Vi activities funded by the Government of Finland.</b></p>	research provided by other institutions.	
Sustainability	Have the activities been designed and implemented in such a way to ensure maximum sustainability of their impact, for instance, were the beneficiary country stakeholders were involved in the initiation, design and implementation of the project and how was this done?	<p>Has the project resulted in a stock of ‘capital’ (in UNCTAD and the beneficiary states) that will allow similar (or successor) activities to be achieved at lower resource cost than would have been the case in the project’s absence? <b>Yes – three identical or ‘evolved’ courses have been run or are in preparation using the ‘capital’ accumulated through the DA project so as to reduce costs.</b></p> <p>Do these activities fall centrally within UNCTAD’s mission?</p>	Interviews with project staff, UNCTAD staff, course and research students, policy makers in beneficiary states, and co-funders; Review of course materials and research papers written under the project.	Desk reviews telephone and skype interviews Face to face interviews with key staff and beneficiaries. Questionnaire surveys of course participants.

		<p><b>Yes</b>  Are the networks created under the project active and replicating the initiatives beyond the project? <b>Yes – a number of universities have joined the Vi network (or are in discussions about joining) because members of their staff have been associated with the DA project.</b></p>		
Gender aspect	To what extent did the design and implementation of the project incorporate gender concerns, and can outcomes be identified in this regard?	<p>Is there an appropriate gender balance among participants in both phases of the project and what steps were taken by the project team to ensure an appropriate outcome  <b>Not during the course in which the gender split was 70% to 30%. The balance in the research phase was better. In order to achieve a better balance in acceptances onto the course it is probably necessary to invest more heavily in the recruitment process (including proactive – and probably in-country – participation by Vi in the initial process of encouraging applicants than was possible under the DA project.</b>  Is there adequate coverage of gender in the course materials, the research topics selected for the second phase and the use of household surveys in this research. <b>Yes, although the research papers did not on the whole include detailed analysis of gendered distributional effects of trade shocks.</b></p>	Interviews with project staff, course and research students. Analysis of course materials and research papers	Desk reviews Face to face interviews with key staff and beneficiaries. Questionnaire surveys of course participants.

## Annex 2 Terms of Reference

CONFÉRENCE DES NATIONS UNIES SUR  
LE COMMERCE ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT



UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE  
ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

### Terms of Reference (TOR)

#### **External Evaluation of UNCTAD's Development Account 7<sup>th</sup> Tranche Project — Strengthening capacities for policy-oriented analysis of key global development challenges at developing country universities**

#### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

The project implemented by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), entitled: “Strengthening capacities for policy-oriented analysis of key global development challenges at developing country universities”, will finish in late 2014. In compliance with the requirements of the United Nations Development Account, which supports this project, the project will need to undergo an external evaluation.

This evaluation should assess, systematically and objectively, the project framework and design, project management, and project performance. The evaluation should provide information that is credible, useful, and practical, and make constructive and forward-looking recommendations in order to strengthen the work of UNCTAD in this area.

The primary audiences of the evaluation report are UNCTAD management and programme officers, the Capacity Development Office/Development Account of DESA project stakeholders, UNCTAD's member States, and other stakeholders.

#### **2. Background**

Ten years after the world's leaders set the ambitious Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for improving human welfare by 2015, many countries are still behind target, despite the fast growth of some of the largest developing economies. In some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, extreme poverty rate remains above 50 per cent and the number of people living in poverty has even increased in absolute terms since 1990. MDG Goal 1's second target relates to full and productive employment and decent work for all. Less satisfactory results have been achieved for MDG Goal 1's second target, than for its first target, which is poverty reduction.

It is recognized that international trade can play a positive role in pro-poor growth and sustainable human development in developing countries, in support of MDG Goal 1. However, both national and international actions need to be adopted and implemented to maximize the positive impact of trade on the poor.

The design of such national policies, as well as the formulation of negotiation positions for international fora dealing with trade issues, need to be grounded in thorough analysis of data, trends and past experiences, and based on a careful assessment of possible impacts of various

policy options and negotiations outcomes. In this respect, academia plays an important role in the generation of the analysis critical to inform policymaking.

The goal of this Development Account project is to help strengthen the capacity of developing country academics to conduct policy-oriented analysis of key developmental challenges, in particular the challenge related to the potential contribution of trade to poverty reduction, and foster their cooperation with policy makers. It will do so by: (a) providing training/coaching and knowledge sharing/networking on policy-relevant trade and poverty research to participating academics, including through the use of ICT tools, and (b) encouraging and facilitating their interaction with national policymakers throughout the entire research process from the identification of a policy relevant research question for the country to the completion and presentation of the outcomes of the project.

The main activities of this project include the following: development and delivery of online training on data sources, tools, methods and research questions on trade and poverty; Provision of coaching to academics working on collaborative projects papers addressing policy-relevant trade and poverty research questions; Finalization, publication and presentation of collaborative projects at an international seminar for the policymaking community in Geneva.

The project started in 2012 and is expected to finish towards the end of 2014.

### **3. Scope of the Evaluation**

The evaluation will consider all activities that have been implemented under this project that were financed from the Development Account. It should examine primarily the project design and its logical framework, with the analysis of project management and the achieved results. More specifically, the evaluation should address the following issues:

#### ***a) Relevance***

- Whether the project design and choice of activities and deliverables have properly reflected and addressed the needs of the beneficiaries, taking into account UNCTAD's mandates, and alignment with the objectives of the Development Account;
- Whether the actual activities and outputs of the project were consistent with the overall goals and intended outcomes;

#### ***b) Effectiveness***

- Whether the activities have achieved, or are likely to achieve planned objectives as enunciated in the project's logframe;
- How effectively have the challenges of interaction and collaboration between academics and policymakers been addressed by this project?
- What were the main factors influencing the outcomes of this project, either negatively or positively; what are the lessons to be learned or best practices to be promoted for other similar projects;

#### ***c) Efficiency***

- Have resources and funds been used efficiently, leveraging in-house expertise, existing databases and other resources to optimize the project outcomes;
- Have the project activities been delivered in a timely manner;

#### ***d) Sustainability***

- Whether the activities have been designed and implemented in such a way to ensure maximum sustainability of their impact, for instance, whether and how the beneficiary country stakeholders were involved in the initiation, design and implementation of the project;

*e) Gender aspect*

- To what extent the design and implementation of the project incorporated gender concerns, and can outcomes be identified in this regard?

#### **4. Deliverables and Expected Output**

The evaluation, on the basis of its findings and assessments made on the above criteria, should draw conclusions, make recommendations and identify lessons learned from the implementation of this project.

More specifically, the evaluation should:

- Highlight what has been successful and can be replicated elsewhere, including the synergies generated through collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions and WTO;
- Indicate shortcomings and constraints in the project design and implementation while, at the same time, identifying the remaining challenges, gaps and needs for future courses of action;
- Make pragmatic recommendations to suggest how UNCTAD's work for the academia can be strengthened. In particular, if appropriate, the evaluator should include recommendations on how the logframe could be improved for future similar projects;

Three deliverables are expected out of this evaluation:

- 1) An inception report;
- 2) A first draft evaluation report; and
- 3) The final evaluation report.

The inception report should outline the evaluator's understanding of the issues under evaluation including an evaluation framework, and a detailed work plan with the timeframe. The evaluation framework should include a matrix relating evaluation issues and questions to evaluation criteria, indicators, sources of information and methods of data collection.

The first draft report should be presented to the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and relevant stakeholders for quality assurance and factual corrections, if any.

The final output of the evaluation is a report that must compose below key elements:

- 1) Executive summary (maximum 2 pages);
- 2) Introduction of the evaluation background and a brief description of the project, the budget utilization and the project activities and outputs;
- 3) A clear description of the methodology used;
- 4) Findings and assessments according to the criteria listed in Section 3 of this ToR;
- 5) Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the assessments.

In the evaluation report, all the assessments made must be supported by facts and findings, direct or indirect evidence, and/or well-substantiated logic. It follows that all the recommendations made should be supported by the assessments made.

The evaluator is required to submit a separate final list of those interviewed or surveyed, for the record. If necessary, the report may be accompanied by a supplement including supporting

materials. If English is not the native language of the evaluator, he/ she is requested to ensure that the final report be copy edited before submission to UNCTAD.

## 5. Methodology

The evaluator must use a mixed-method approach to triangulate all available data sources to reach conclusions and findings. Such evaluation methodology may include but is not limited to the following:

- Review of relevant project documents and relevant materials designed for this project;
- Interviews with relevant UNCTAD staff, mentors and WTO staff involved in this project; \*
- Interviews and focus group discussion with participants selected for research projects and those who will attend the seminar in Geneva during 8-10 September, 2014, and conduct follow-up interviews or surveys as may be required;\*\*
- Surveys of participants of the online course, and other stakeholders, as may be required;
- Personal or Telephone interviews with representatives from Permanent Missions of UNCTAD member States in Geneva, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Analysis of the data collected.

Note:

\*: *The evaluator needs to make himself/ herself available for a kick-off meeting in May 2014 to start the project.*

\*\*.: *The evaluator needs to make himself / herself available for the period of 8-10 September to conduct interviews or focus group discussions with participants at the seminar, and conduct interviews with other stakeholders.*

All relevant materials will be provided to the evaluator including but not limited to:

Project documents and reports; progress reports; self-assessment questionnaires and reports; publications, documents and/or reports produced through the project; material used for activities; training materials; online database; budget and expenditure report; list of beneficiaries and workshop/ seminar participants, counterparts and resource persons; existing feedback (assessments, letters, surveys, etc.).

## 6. Description of Duties

The evaluator reports to the Chief of the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit. He or she will undertake the evaluation exercise under the guidance of the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and in coordination with the project manager. The evaluator will be responsible for the evaluation design, data collection, assessment and reporting. The evaluator must take full responsibility for the contents of the report generated and ensure its independence and accuracy.

The evaluator should observe the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines, standards<sup>17</sup>, and norms<sup>18</sup> for evaluations in the UN system, as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy<sup>19</sup>, in the conduct of this assignment.

## 7. Timetable

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<sup>17</sup> "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System" by UNEG, UNEG/FN/Standards (2005),

[http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc\\_id=22](http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=22);

<sup>18</sup> "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System" by UNEG, UNEG/FN/Norms (2005),

[http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc\\_id=21](http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=21);

<sup>19</sup> "Evaluation Policy" of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), December 2011, [http://unctad.org/Sections/edm\\_dir/docs/osg\\_EvaluationPolicy2011\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/Sections/edm_dir/docs/osg_EvaluationPolicy2011_en.pdf).

The total duration of the evaluation is equivalent to two work months and will take place between 10 May 2014 and 31 October 2014.

## **8. Monitoring and Progress Control**

The evaluator must keep the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit informed of the progress made in the evaluation on a regular basis. The evaluator will also present the draft report to the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and the project manager before the final submission, giving sufficient time for the verification of factual findings as well as its compliance with the ToR (approximately 1 week). To this end, a draft of the report must be presented by 17 October, 2014 for verification by the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and the project manager, before submission of the final report.

The deadline for submission of the final report will be 31 October, 2014.

## **9. Qualifications and Experience <sup>20</sup>**

- **Education:** Advanced university degree in economics, or related field.
- **Experience:** The consultant is required to have: a sound knowledge and an expertise in the subject area of the project to be evaluated. At least 10 years of professional experience in research and university level teaching in an international context is required. Demonstrated ability to methodically conduct independent research and evaluation is required. Previous experience in conducting gender-responsive evaluations is an advantage.
- **Language:** Demonstrated drafting and communication skills in English are required. Ability to communicate in other UN languages, or other official languages in developing countries, is considered an advantage.

## **10. Conditions of Service**

The evaluator will serve under a consultancy contract as detailed in the applicable United Nations rules and regulations. The evaluator will not be considered as staff member or official of the United Nations, but shall abide by the relevant standards of conduct. The United Nations is entitled to all intellectual property and other proprietary rights deriving from this exercise.

The evaluator needs to complete in advance the mandatory online trainings required for the mission to Geneva.

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<sup>20</sup> The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

## Annex 3 People consulted in person

**KEY:** red font = policymakers (including co-funder); blue font = ‘faculty’ (trainers/mentors/editor, including permanent UNCTAD staff); green font = participants (including research paper co-authors); black font = core Vi core team and other UNCTAD staff.

Name	Organisation
Epiphane Adjovi	Director, CAPOD, Benin
Didier Alia	University of Kentucky, USA
Senator Raul Auger	Technical Adviser, National Senate, Argentina
Rashmi Banga	UNCTAD, Geneva
Jerome Dimayaga Bunyi	Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the WTO, Geneva
Paula Calvo	Universidad de San Andrés & World Bank, Argentina
Nicolas Depetris	CEPII and University of Buenos Aires
Piergiuseppe Fortunato	UNCTAD, Geneva
Dahai Fu	Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China
Marco Fugazza	UNCTAD, Geneva
Yuen Ching Ho	Evaluation and Monitoring Unit, UNCTAD
Marion Jansen	International Trade Centre, Geneva
Olayinka Kareem	European University Institute, Italy
Hai Anh La	Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences
Shantong Li	Development Research Centre of the State Council of China
Vlasta Macku	Virtual Institute, UNCTAD, Geneva
George Manzano	University of Asia and the Pacific, Manila, Philippines
Charles Lusanda Matomina	National Co-ordinator of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, Democratic Republic of Congo
Carmen Matta Jara	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism, Peru
Nikica Mojsoska Blazevska	Adviser, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, FYR of Macedonia
Alessandro Nicita	UNCTAD, Geneva
Christian Otchia	Nagoya University, Japan
Professor Nina Pavcnik	Dartmouth College, USA
Marjan Petreski	American College, FYR of Macedonia
Ngoc Quang Pham	International Labour Organisation, Viet Nam
Amelia Santos-Paulino	UNCTAD, Geneva
Claudia Trentini	UNCTAD, Geneva
Maria P. Ramos	Universidad Argentina de la Empresa, Buenos Aires & CEPII, Paris
Cristian Ugarte	University of Lausanne and Virtual Institute, UNCTAD, Geneva
Carlos Umaña	Academia de Centroamérica, Costa Rica
Ana M. C. Vera Ganoza	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism, Peru
Kent Wilska	Commercial Counselor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
David Zavaleta	Virtual Institute, UNCTAD, Geneva

## Annex 4 Responses to questionnaires

### Questionnaire for course completers of Sept-Nov 2012 course

#### Question 1: What did you find particularly useful about the course?

1. I highly appreciated general structure and content of the course, reading, then exercises, evaluation system, discussion forum etc. everything was perfect.
2. What I found particularly useful about the course on Trade and Poverty is the provision of focused materials, access to the experience of colleagues from other countries, the combination of both empirical and theoretical aspects of the tackled questions and the specific stress on policy-making throughout the course. Most of the times it is easy to have access to theoretical knowledge but when it comes work on its empirical side it appears tricky. The fact of breaking this limit made the course very useful in allowing me to clearly see and appraise the policy implications resulting from different trade policies. The different questions and (indirect) exchange of experience from other trainees was very important because it help realizing that some of the issues I face in my country are also faced by others and, further, it help me think to other horizons.
3. What was very particular for me was the use of non-parametric analysis in order to assess the impact of trade liberalization on poverty. The fact that we were able to replicate some studies using the file and the data provided was very interesting
4. Very interesting course, especially from the technical side.
5. First of all, books on trade and other scientific papers course staff send me. Second, I learn much more about quantitative methods applied to trade research, particularly effect of trade policies on household's welfare.
6. theoretical and empirical analysis were useful even the use of stata.
7. Methodology and theories of Trade and Poverty
8. An excellent review on the relationship on trade liberalization and poverty.
9. The course was a good opportunity to catch up in a topic I was planning to work about. In this respect it fulfilled my expectations, especially with regard to the ex-ante analysis methodology, no so much in terms of the ex-post analysis.
10. The course was very useful from the very beginning. In particular, the material that we read in the course was novel for me and I found it very interesting. It also helped me to become familiar with a methodology that was previously unknown for me. In the end, it actually improved my econometric skills in the trade and poverty area. Besides, having the opportunity to present a proposal that finally became a paper was a very relevant experience for my professional career. It was my first paper by my own and the support of the UNCTAD VI was very important for the finalization of the paper. Besides, this opportunity helped me to familiarize more in deepness with some of the Argentina trade policies and also with the obstacles that you find when trying to collect data and make it relevant for an academic research paper, but that is also policy relevant.
11. The Trade and Poverty course was very useful in that I gained skills in evidence based policy analysis and linkages between trade, industrialisation, development and poverty reduction. I also had chance through the interaction with the course instructors (Messrs C. Ugarte, N. Chauvin, and Madam S. Olivares) and the lecturers to interrogate the impact of policy intervention e.g. tariff liberalisation on developing economies, particularly agro-based and rural sectors. I got skills on policy brief writing and trade negotiations. The course enabled me to interact with other researchers from other parts of the world and also case studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America. I got to refresh and

practice econometric modelling and interpretation of results for use in trade policy analysis. I improved my skills and efficiency at work. Apart from being a member of the UNCTAD VI, I got invaluable materials to study and apply as well econometric models, access to certain databases, the UNCTAD VI Library and use of STATA package.

12. The course provides an avenue to the nexus between trade and poverty using different combination of micro and macro-econometrics for both ex-ante and ex-post econometric analyses as well as general equilibrium analysis. Thus, the combination of micro and macro data in an econometric analysis is not only relevant to my research but also useful for my academic teaching and training of policy makers and other stakeholders in trade policy analysis. The course provides useful ex-ante and ex-post econometric methodologies that could be apply not only to the analysis of trade policy; but other areas of trade, trade policy and development. Besides, the exposure to relevant stata usage, survey data, useful do-files and hand-on exercises has really given me more than the fundamentals of doing a robust micro-econometric analysis. In addition, the instructional guides of the course online-instructor and his availability to attend to relevant question were things I found useful and enriched about the course. The continuous availability of the course online platform for recalls, vis a vis, the materials, hand-on exercises, etc., is very useful and commendable.

13. I found the course very useful because first, the various perspectives of trade liberalization and poverty we extensively covered. Second, I found the course very useful because of its hands-on approach. Third, the issues covered in the course were of policy relevance to my country. Finally, I enjoyed the audio bit of the course.

14. I find the all chapters of the course important but I think the econometrical aspect of the course is more useful.

15. The way the course was designed, particularly the practical part with real data and Stata code. The theoretical part of the course was easy to follow and with data and Stata code, I was able to replicate all the simulations and learn by doing.

16. the empirical aspect of the course.

17. It helps to understand more clearly the relation between Trade and Poverty (and wages) based on empirical and strong methodological analysis.

18. what was particularly interesting with this course is that it gave me a different perspective of the relationship between trade and development. Indeed, so far, I had a global approach in studying international trade issues related to development. concretely, I use to analyze the effects of trade (exports and imports) on economic growth. This training allowed me to look at other transmission channels, other levels of impact and other methods for evaluating the effects of international trade.

19. the combination between theory and practice, and hoy to use databases and surveys in order to study welfare effects from trade policies.

## **Question 2: What did you find hard about the course?**

1. Work with STATA was a little bit difficult for me.

2. What I found hard with course does not relate directly to the course per se but to step next to the course. It would be a good think to consider all the participants for the realization of their research proposals.

3. Although it is important, i think there were sometime a lot of things, especially readings to cover in few time period. In some cases it was possible to fully go through the reading before doing the exercises.

4. Surprisingly, doing some graphs in STATA was much difficult than I expected. Other than that

everything was great.

5. The course content was too much; each document is about 60-80 pages. It will be interesting to summarize course into a slides less than 30 pages and refer readers to the original books. Also, I did not get electronic statement of accomplishment. Only paper statement I got.

6. the empirical part was hard for me because I wasn't familiar with stata before the course.

7. It demands a large sample size to prove the link between trade and poverty: a large database for nonparametric regression and kernel distribution.

8. The hardest part was the one on estimation part using Stata, although it was very well explained.

9. The course, both in terms of topics and reference material, meant no great difficulty. Moreover, the evaluations were very easy, it looked like they were designed so almost no one would fail them, especially considering that there was an extra opportunity to do them a second time.

10. At the beginning, the methodology that most papers used was novel for me so I found it a bit hard, but as I made the catch up, I did not find inconvenient. Also, the support of all the UNCTAD VI staff was very valuable to solve my doubts and answer my questions.

11. The course required a solid understanding of the of econometrics and STATA package. The course itself was manageable for someone with background, only that it needed one to set aside adequate time to study reference materials in order to take the exams. The challenge was in applying and using the datasets on STATA and then interpretation of the results.

12. Sincerely, the course took care of different orientation of the participants in terms of its comprehensive definition and measurement of poverty, guide to the use of Stata and simplification of the empirical methodologies. However, the number of reading materials for each module should be reduced because of the office workload of some participants, since they would like to go through the materials before attempting the module's quiz.

13. I found some part of the modelling process a bit difficult. This was because there was not much time to really assimilate the processes. Secondly, even though I enjoyed the audio sessions, sometimes because of difficulties with internet connectivity I could not listen in to all of them.

14. Even if I find econometrical aspect more useful I find it also hard to do.

15. Nothing.

16. Combining many graphs in one place.

17. It is a bit difficult to follow the econometric analysis (and its programming) from the different study cases paper. (in a short period of time).

18. During the first week of classes I struggled to adapt myself because I did not understand the evaluation system. Although I spent the time needed to study, I had the impression to be disoriented when I do the evaluation quiz. Apart from that, there was nothing really difficult or hard.

19. I did not find anything hard about the course, I think it was very clear. You need an economic background to have a faster understanding of the concepts and the theory inside.

**Question 3: In what ways has the course benefitted you? For example, has it made you more effective in your job or allowed you to move to a new job?**

1. My field of work is International Economics and the course topic is the integral part of my subject of interest, additionally participation at the UNCTAD course was a valuable credit for my academic career.

Additionally, as a staff member of university's International Relations Office, this course helps me to understand international organization's teaching/learning courses essential idea and methods. This has a significant contribution for me during my involving in the university working group for drafting project for the WTO Chair Programme. (we prepared a project, describing planned activities in detail - subject, method, duration, evaluation, exploitation and sustainability of the courses of this WTO Chair at our university).

2. In addition to the provision of the literature, the course allowed me to increase my knowledge of STATA. I use some of the empirical materials I got from the course in my own course of Agricultural Policies and since I use them I have the impression that my students are more excited in discussing the course. Further, when I took the course I was writing the last chapter of my PhD thesis and one of the elements we learnt from the course allowed me to convince my supervisor on how to differentiate the effect of public policies (in that case it was education policy) on different categories of the population. I built on case of transportation cost in the case of Mexico that we had in the frame of the course and adapted the tools to the case I was dealing with. Eventually, I completed the chapter and submitted my Thesis for external assessment. Without having the material from the Vi TAP I think it would have required more time to find such an idea.

What I think is to be added the case is the amount of empirical cases based on Africa for Africans or papers dealing with issues related to Africa. I know there is a lack of empirical cases on African because of lack of appropriate surveys but still there exists some rare cases where good data are available and where something has been written. The alternative to this would be, for VI, to raise funds that can allow helping developing countries in general to collect microeconomic data on trade related issues.

3 I am still working in the area of research though my main focus is not trade. However i have learn a lot of empirical stuffs during this course. For instance as just mentioned early, i have learned to work with microeconomic data and to run non parametric analysis.

4. The course helped me improving my research papers and also helped me conducting econometric models much easier than before.

5. For the moment, I only use skills I learnt through the course to write scientific papers. I did not try to look for new job in trade area.

6. the course was useful for my Ph.D. thesis. I have learnt how to analyse data with stata and to do non parametric regression.

7. . In my teaching undergraduate and postgraduate, I found myself well equipped.

8. Certainly, it helped very much in my job. As a trade professor, I could improve my class materials, examples and ideas. It was a unique experience.

9. I'm actually using the methodologies I learned during the course in my current research.

10. The course was beneficial for me because it helped to obtain a new job in the World Bank. Since it was my research on my own, it helped to prove my research skills and I think it will be very useful for my applications for the Ph.D. during this year.

11. For me the course came as a blessing as it improved my skills particularly in analysis and policy

brief. I have since been promoted from Chief Economist and to substantive Deputy Director-International Trade responsible for among other things trade negotiations at regional, multilateral organisations and commodities. I am involved in evidence based policy analysis and trade policy reviews , writing policy briefs, preparing negotiations briefs. I some of the negotiations I am chief negotiator. I am applying what I learnt in the Trade and Poverty Course.

12 This course has really enhanced my research and academic capabilities and potentials. Now, I can proudly and technically say that researching on different issues relating to trade and poverty seems relatively easy and comfortable with the methods. With the knowledge acquired in this course, I have been able to secure three research grants. These grants were secured through the application of some of the methodologies I learnt in the course. Besides, I have written papers relating to the issues in trade and poverty, which have been accepted and presented in many conferences including the just concluded World Congress of the International Economics Association (WC-IEA). Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) annual conference, etc. In fact, it really helps me to win the 2014 Global Development Network first prize award on the Medals for Research on Development in the thematic division. In addition, it has provided me with the opportunity of working with different policy makers and other relevant stakeholders not only in Nigeria, but across other African countries and beyond. Further, the course has provided the platform to network with other participants and the resource persons, especially during the work-in-progress seminar.

13. I have benefitted immensely from the course because it has enhanced my appreciation and teaching of trade and poverty to my undergraduate students. And last year two of my students replicated some of the measures of openness in the course material to write a paper and they were invited to Oxford to present the papers at a conference. On a lighter note, I took opportunity of the course to apply for Vi membership and I am glad to say that my Department is a member of the Vi family and we have been receiving publications from Vi Library since last year. I am currently developing a proposal using the ideas I learned in the course and I will be submitting it to UNCTAD for an internship soon.

14. This course allowed me to move to a new job. When I enrolled to the course, I was working, as a civil servant, to the Ministry of Trade of Senegal. But now, since January 2014, Organisation International de la Francophonie has enrolled me in his project Hub and Spokes II as a Trade Policy Analyst to the Ministry of Trade of Gabon.

However, I have not yet done a research in the field of trade and poverty

15. I learned how to translate econometric results to policy analysis. This has helped me to increase the policy relevance of my PhD dissertation and to publish a paper in the Journal of Economic Structures.

16. The course has made me more effective in teaching, learning and research particularly at postgraduate level.

I have undertaken many workshop on trade, poverty and trade related issues.

17. Yes. In fact, the course gives good technical skills, conceptual and applied background to improve the understanding of Trade and Poverty. Even though our Ministry does not work directly with poverty issues, the impact of Trade liberalization (Trade Policies) on wages, employment, income distribution and poverty, are fundamental to better understand the implications of Chilean Trade Policies over such variables, improving report analysis.

18. The course benefitted me in several ways. First of all it has made me do a master's in international trade that I would soon be completed. Secondly, it gave me new topics for research and publication for the advancement of my career. Thirdly, some of my works are also being finalized for submission to publication.

19. I moved to a new job in which I do more research compared to my previous job. All the information I received from the course is very useful. I am completely satisfied with this course.

## 5. Questionnaire for course non-completers of Sept-Nov 2012 course (9 respondents)

### Question 1: Could you identify the main reasons for your failure to complete

#### Quantitative responses

Pre-set answer	Number of respondents
I did not have time	5
My internet connection was too slow or erratic	2
The course materials were not relevant to my work or interests	0
The work was too difficult	0
Language difficulties	1
Another reason <b>as well</b> as quantitative	2
Another reason instead of quantitative	2

#### Qualitative responses

I was pregnant and had a long travel, two things that made me very sick and unable to do the last essay (that's the only step remained incomplete). The coordinator gave me one more week but obviously I needed much more time as I was completely unfocused.

I fell ill and I had to admit in hospital for two weeks during course duration. This deprived me to continue this effective course.

I had family problem in that time. My new born baby was sick. We are living in foreign country, Laos. There are no family or relative who can help us. Therefore, I sent e-mail several times to explain my condition to drop the course.

At that particular time I ended up locked in a series of assignments that as a Director of a Research Centre I could not avoid to participate, ranging from trips to organizing conferences. By the time I had settled, the course had progressed beyond the point of my joining due to the quizzes that had been completed. However, I read most of the material and I actually use it for my students.

### Question 2: Was there anything the UNCTAD Virtual Institute could have done to help you complete the course?

Please tick all the types of assistance that you think would have helped you and add any other suggestions in the box below.

#### Quantitative responses

Pre-set answer	Number of respondents
Provide more on-line mentoring	1
Provide more face-to-face tuition	1
Provide course materials in my language	2
Offer a preparatory course in the subjects listed below that would have given me the skills needed to complete the course successfully	0

Subjects in which I needed preparatory courses: n/a

*Qualitative responses on other useful types of support*

More understanding and a possibility in exceptional situations to give more time.

I want self-study with your providing materials and ask question through bulletin board whenever I want to know.

Allow more flexibility for students who can follow the coursework away from the online interface by allowing them to complete multiple quizzes in a short period of time (can be in one go).