

**External evaluation of UNCTAD Virtual Institute  
Development Account Project 2006-09**

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**Christopher Stevens**

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# Executive Summary

This evaluation is of the UN Development Account project which has supplied just over one-third of the funding for the Virtual Institute (Vi) over the period 2006-2009.<sup>1</sup> The Vi was created in June 2004 at UNCTAD XI in Sao Paulo, Brazil, to respond to the training and research needs of developing country policy makers and other relevant stakeholders in the area of trade and investment policy.

This decision was taken in the context of the declining ability of the university sector in many poorer developing countries to keep abreast of empirical and theoretical developments in these areas and to teach sufficient postgraduate students to serve both the needs of government (directly through recruitment into the civil service and indirectly through policy advisory work from the private sector - and/or the universities themselves) and to contribute to a high level of public discussion. Although some major players are already making partial contributions to reversing this trend, there is ample room for further initiatives in carefully chosen niches.

## The project being evaluated

### Goals

The niche identified by the Virtual Institute is partly functional, partly geographic/institutional and partly disciplinary. It exists to facilitate collaboration *between universities* (North-South and South-South) in order to improve *policy-oriented* postgraduate teaching and research. It uses its institutional/geographic location to facilitate communication between the staffs of the *Geneva-based international organisations* and academics. Using the phraseology of the Accra Accord, its focus is the “integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development.”

The project being evaluated in this report (of US\$560,000) has been funded from the UN Development Account. Although it is only one of the Vi’s funding sources, it is the largest single financial contribution and it has the broadest remit - it is, for example, the only funding source that covers all participating countries. It involves five activities that were selected in the light of the needs and demands expressed by the Vi member universities.

1. The development of up-to-date specialized teaching materials on topical issues of interest to participating universities.
2. The adaptation of such materials to local needs using original research conducted at universities.
3. The organisation of two professional development and networking workshops for the representatives of the participating universities.
4. The provision of an online platform for sharing and communication among the participants.
5. The organisation and implementation of joint projects among universities that would contribute to the objectives of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation has been undertaken by Dr Christopher Stevens, Senior Research Associate at the ODI, London, and formerly Head of Graduate Programmes at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, UK.

## *Outputs*

In quantitative terms the Vi has been able to exceed most of the targets set for the Development Account project. Four generic sets of teaching materials have been produced as well as 22 localisations (compared to the 10 foreseen in the Development Account Project document), most of which have been completed. Three professional development/networking workshops have been held, compared to the two envisaged in the project document. Eight joint projects have been completed (where the Development Account project document refers to 'up to ten').

In qualitative terms, too, the project has achieved its objectives. The evaluation has benefitted from responses to a questionnaire completed by a large proportion of members in early 2009 and from one-to-one interviews with individuals who are active in the network. The widely expressed view was that the Vi is a highly proactive organisation that strongly facilitates the flow of information between members (South-South and South-North as well as North-South) and from UNCTAD (and other Geneva-based institutions) to the members.

## **The evaluation**

The report sets up a number of over-arching questions to provide the context within which to answer the 'standard evaluation questions' on relevance, impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency.

1. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated more (and more effective) collaboration between universities to raise the level of postgraduate teaching and research?
2. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated communication between academics (especially in developing countries) and the experts based in UNCTAD, the WTO and other relevant Geneva-based organisations?
3. Has the quality and quantity of postgraduate policy-oriented teaching materials and research on trade and investment been increased?
4. Are all three of the above worthwhile achievements that fall within UNCTAD priorities?

It concludes that all four questions can be answered in the affirmative. The Vi has facilitated more collaborative research and teaching partly by using its own resources but also because these have been substantially 'leveraged' in one or more of several ways. Central to this leveraging is that the Vi provides its members with status and visibility both because it offers access to an international network (for peer review and, not least, for publishing research findings) and because it is seen as a gateway to UNCTAD expertise.

This communication (between members and with UNCTAD) has been central to all its operations. Internal resources and expertise have been managed very well and the Vi staff have played active intellectual as well as administrative role in supporting academic discourse.

The high quality of the teaching materials produced under the project has been assured through peer review. In due course the joint research projects should result in a larger number of published outputs than has so far been the case, and a system should be put in place to assess their quality (eg in terms of the number of peer reviewed articles and citations). The evidence so far is less systematic than this ideal, but it is encouraging.

The fourth over-arching question is one that it is more appropriate for UNCTAD to answer than the evaluator. It is necessary, though, to include in the report an 'outsider's view' since

the achievements of the evaluated project will be maintained only if they are built upon through continued support. Moreover, such an external assessment may be helpful to UNCTAD. It is in the nature of the tertiary education sector that in most countries it requires substantial and continuing public financial support. Without a continuation of funding, the outputs from the Development Account project will be eroded over time as they are overtaken by events and by work done elsewhere. Of course, the Vi is only one of many actors in this area, and the work done elsewhere is to be welcomed. But it means that, for example, unless updated at regular (and quite frequent) intervals the teaching materials already produced will become decreasingly useful and may even become ‘value-subtracting’ since they convey information and ideas that are no longer valid.

Because of this, the only ‘standard evaluation questions’ that have been difficult to answer in this report are those on sustainability and impact. The record shows clearly that the aims and operation of the Development Account project were relevant. The outputs have been effective and have been delivered with a high level of efficiency. But these achievements are ‘sustainable’ only if external funding continues for those parts of the Vi’s operations that cannot be achieved through low or zero cost actions (most of which use virtual communication). This finding is not a negative reflection on the project; it is something that must have been understood when the project was framed and approved since it is inherent to the activity.

If sustainability requires continued external funding so, too, will the ultimate impact of the project been determined by what happens next. The initial impact of the Development Account project has been good. But this will be eroded if it is not reinforced.

## **Recommendations**

Since the longer term success of the Virtual Institute project depends upon securing continuing *external* funding to the most critical activities and further strengthening *internal* support, the report’s recommendations focus on what it considers to be the ‘most critical’ areas in which support is needed. These are as follows.

1. **Ensuring that academics from both developing and least developed countries, regardless of region, can play an active role in the network.** Not only is this a desirable objective in its own right, but it appears also to be a critical factor in maintaining the interest in the network of the academically stronger members. For developed country universities (that must use scarce internal resources to support active membership) it is essential that the network include members that are plausible research partners and can identify talented students who would contribute to their specialist courses. This means that UNCTAD must ensure that active membership by middle-income countries remains viable by securing funding for them where this cannot be obtained from other sources. For the middle income countries, too, a broad global membership is central to the value of the Vi network since it allows collaboration with colleagues in other parts of the world besides their own region.
2. **Maintaining the ‘virtual’ network through face-to-face meetings.** Many of the Vi’s most valuable functions require little or no external funding. The web site, the intermediation and between members and the Geneva-based institutions, and the email-based collaboration between members can all continue so long as UNCTAD allocates staff to the Vi. But the network will atrophy without such virtual activities being supplemented through activities that require financial resources, such as attendance at meetings for which travel and subsistence costs are unavailable from the own resources of many members. It is the regular professional

development/networking workshops that have been organised under the Development Account project that are the most central of these. If possible, these should be extended to include an annual conference in Geneva for all members, perhaps supplemented by irregular, specialist meetings hosted by member universities.

3. **Ensuring that the Vi staff can continue to act as academic brokers.** In order to perform the function of ‘adding value’ to what the stronger university members could achieve on their own, the staff of the Vi need to be able to contribute intellectually to the dialogue and not to act merely as a central post office. This they have demonstrably achieved over the review period – despite the fact that none of the job descriptions for the unit include academic requirements that would be considered normal for such a role. Success has been achieved because of the qualities of the incumbents, but since this cannot be guaranteed in future it is important that efforts to seek external funding for activities (1) and (2) above be accompanied by internal change so that donors can have confidence their money will continue to be well spent. Given the tasks to be performed, 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. The desirable requirements would be publications in relevant academic journals, service as a journal referee (or editorial board member), and experience in the administration of postgraduate teaching.

# Part A: Introduction and description of the project

## 1. The context of the project

### The need

Recent years have seen a spate of trade negotiations involving developing countries (the Doha Development Round, the EU-ACP Economic Partnership Agreements and many more), a global financial crisis of unprecedented proportions that has led via trade to a more general economic downturn, and gathering concern about climate change including the realisation that many developing countries will be forced in future to rely on trade for a larger proportion of their basic food supply but in a more difficult trading environment. Equally evident has been the substantial absence in many developing countries of active, informed debate of the issues and the reliance of many governments when negotiating and planning on the assistance of foreign consultants rather than on domestic resources.<sup>2</sup>

The link between these two observations is the declining ability of the university sector in many poorer developing countries to keep abreast of empirical and theoretical developments in the areas of trade, finance and investment and to teach sufficient postgraduate students to serve both the needs of government (directly through recruitment into the civil service and indirectly through policy advisory work from the private sector - and/or the universities themselves) and to contribute to a high level of public discussion.

One illustrative set of examples for this trend is provided in a recent World Bank synthesis report drawing on 16 background studies of tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa and analyses of export diversification. It found that the supply of graduates was falling behind demand and that there had been a sharp fall in the quality of education. 'Despite strong enrolment growth,' it argues 'most African tertiary institutions are not generating enough graduates - and many of them lack the skills needed to support national economic development in the 21st century.' This is because the growth in supply (inadequate though it is) has been achieved partly by cutting resources per students. Whilst enrolments more than tripled between 1991 and 2005 tertiary public financing slumped. It averaged US\$6,800 per student annually in 1980 but by 2005 this had dropped to an average of just US\$981 in 33 low-income African countries. Educational quality and relevance both suffered as a result, the report concludes.

Likewise, research output faded as Africa devoted just 0.3 percent of GDP to research and development, and the number of professional researchers fell. Graduate students comprise a shrinking portion of total enrolments, reducing the next generation of tertiary instructors and researchers at a time when their numbers should be increasing. These trends make it increasingly difficult to provide the relevant knowledge and core skills needed for African nations to boost competitiveness and sustain growth.

It concluded that if the surge in GDP growth associated with the pre-global slump boom in commodity prices is to evolve into a virtuous spiral that stimulates even higher, sustained

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<sup>2</sup> See for example ECDPM/ODI *The interim Economic Partnership Agreements between the EU and African states: contents, challenges and prospects* Maastricht, June 2009

growth rates in a substantial number of African countries there is a need for a significant increase in investment in physical and, especially, human capital over an extended period.<sup>3</sup>

In some middle income (as well as developed) countries, by contrast, university research and postgraduate teaching on trade, finance and investment remain strong. Work in these institutions often has a more general relevance to a wider group of developing countries. The UK Department for International Development (DfID), for example, has supported the creation of a trade learning network, Comercio y Pobreza en Latino América (COPLA). Run by a consortium of five organisations (ODI, UK CIES, Peru, GNTP, Bolivia, Nitlapán, Nicaragua, CIPPEC, Argentina) and with the participation of two others (La Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Argentina, and Instituto Brasileiro de Administração Municipal (IBAM), Brazil), it explores the linkages between trade, poverty and social exclusion. Although there is an active debate in the region on the relationship between trade liberalisation and poverty, little attention has been paid to the different impacts on marginalised groups, whether they be women, youth, indigenous minorities or the rural poor. COPLA aims to develop an informed debate on these issues.

## The competition

The rationale of the Virtual Institute is to foster the generation (and, in some countries, regeneration) of university research and postgraduate teaching in the areas of trade, finance and investment but it is not alone in this field; in fact it is a very small player. Although some of the other agencies have broader remits, their resources are also much larger so that, even when spread widely, they may have more to spend in the Virtual Institute's area of focus. The World Bank Institute, for example, works with universities and local training institutes to foster analytical, technical, and networking skills (as well as with policymakers, civil servants, technical experts, business and community leaders, parliamentarians, and civil society stakeholders). In 2008 it reached some 39,500 participants with a budget of \$70.8 million (excluding funding for scholarships). Its 14 thematic programmes include trade, investment climate capacity enhancement, and the financial sector. Participants include academics and researchers as well as policy makers.

In francophone countries Agence universitaire de la francophonie (AUF) has provided a partnership to establishments for higher education and research since 1989. Since 2000 it has seen a 50% increase in the membership of its network which now numbers 686 establishments in 81 countries. Its 2007 initial budget was €40.5 million. Among its areas of networking are macro-economic policy and development, and growth and poverty reduction.

Some universities are also broadcasting their course materials on the web. MIT, for example, provides *OpenCourseWare* - teaching materials used in its undergraduate and graduate courses freely available on the web to any user anywhere in the world. It encourages educators to use these materials for curriculum development, and self-learners to draw on them for self-study or supplementary use. The materials include several courses on international trade and finance as well as aspects of development.

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<sup>3</sup> *Accelerating catch-up : tertiary education for growth in Sub-Saharan Africa* Working Paper 48332, World Bank, Washington, 1 October 2008

## The niche

In other words, the revival of research and graduate teaching in many poorer developing countries is a huge and pressing task, but there are already some major players with their own areas of focus making partial contributions. There is ample room for further initiatives, but the area of intervention needs to be carefully chosen to avoid overlap and duplication and to encourage synergies. This is particularly the case with a programme that is small by comparison to the illustrative examples given above.

The niche identified by the Virtual Institute is partly functional, partly geographic/institutional and partly disciplinary. It exists to facilitate collaboration *between universities* (North-South and South-South) in order to improve *policy-oriented* postgraduate teaching and research. It uses its institutional/geographic location to facilitate communication between the staffs of the *Geneva-based international organisations* and academics. It focuses on *trade, finance, investment and technology* policy. Put another way, using the phraseology of the Accra Accord, its focus is the “integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development.”

It is important for the parameters of this niche to be borne constantly in mind during the evaluation. Because it is relatively a small player, a failure to focus rigorously on the niche area could easily lead to a dissipation of effort. The ToR specify a set of evaluation questions for the Development Account project which has provided *a part* of the funding for the Vi. Answering these is obviously a critical task for this report (and the questions are set out in the relevant sections below together with a description of the relative contribution of the Development Account project). But however efficient and effective the Development Account project has been, its relevance and impact will be heavily influenced by the extent to which the Vi niche is an appropriate one. This suggests that there are four questions to ask in the evaluation, over-arching the specific points listed in the ToR. These are listed in Box 1.

### Box 1: Four over-arching questions for the evaluation

1. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated more (and more effective) collaboration between universities to raise the level of postgraduate teaching and research?
2. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated communication between academics (especially in developing countries) and the experts based in UNCTAD, the WTO and other relevant Geneva-based organisations?
3. Has the quality and quantity of postgraduate policy-oriented teaching materials and research on trade and investment been increased?
4. Are all three of the above worthwhile achievements that fall within UNCTAD priorities?

## 2. Implementation of the project

### The story of the project

#### *Origins*

It is in the context of this partial satisfaction of major needs that the Virtual Institute was created in June 2004 at UNCTAD XI in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Vi, one of several multi-

stakeholder partnerships endorsed by the conference, was established to respond to the training and research needs of developing country policy makers and other relevant stakeholders in the area of trade and investment policy. Its task has been to help create and then facilitate a network open to universities from both developing countries and developed countries with five main objectives (see Box 2).

**Box 2: The main objectives of the Virtual Institute**

1. To facilitate virtual and physical exchanges and mutual learning/professional development opportunities.
2. To support a community of practice in trade teaching and research.
3. To develop and share teaching materials, research and other resources.
4. To promote dialogue between the trade policy community and academia in order to enhance the practical impact of academic work.
5. To provide updated expert information, resources and advice that universities can use in their teaching and research.

The Virtual Institute spent its first year analyzing the needs of member universities. The focus took full account of previous UNCTAD experience with network-oriented projects. This showed that in order to sustain networks effectively it is vital to find common areas of interest, to invest substantial effort in the network (building, managing and supporting it), and to complement virtual communication with face-to-face contacts.

The first meeting of the Virtual Institute network (involving an initial group of 12 universities) took place in July 2005, a year after the Vi's creation. It followed a period of consultation with prospective partners and users through a needs analysis questionnaire, phone interviews and personal visits. The members discussed their needs and the activities that they were committed to undertaking together, and agreed on a priority list of areas for cooperation. These included, in particular, activities linked to the building of the network, development of shared teaching materials, collaborative research and enhancement of the impact of academic work on policies. The initial members showed strong interest in ensuring that their courses and research reflect the needs of the labour market, both in the public and private sector and to make their courses and methods of teaching practical and relevant for students and their future careers.

Given the clear need for the Virtual Institute, confirmed by member states and higher education institutions through the consultation process, the UN decided to provide financial support in the form of the project currently being evaluated. This support reflected the needs and demands expressed by the members. One of the member demands was to grow the membership gradually within the resources available to ensure high-quality support of the network. The aim was to reach between 15-20 members over 2-3 years. Another demand was to obtain better access to the knowledge and expertise of UNCTAD and other members of the network. The objective was to provide the opportunity for members to develop and improve their courses, share research and promote their activities.

*The Development Account project*

The project of US\$560,000 funded from the UN Development Account (with implementation initially set for the period 2006-2007, later extended to 2006-2009) aims to help developing country universities enhance their teaching and research of trade, investment and

development issues and hence better respond to the training and policy analysis needs of national decision makers. The project involves five activities which are listed in Box 3. They operationalise the goals of the Vi (as listed in Box 2).

**Box 3: The activities in the UN Development Project**

1. The development of up-to-date specialized teaching materials on topical issues of interest to participating universities.
2. The adaptation of such materials to local needs using original research conducted at universities.
3. The organisation of two professional development and networking workshops for the representatives of the participating universities.
4. The provision of an online platform for sharing and communication among the participants.
5. The organisation and implementation of joint projects among universities that would contribute to the objectives of the project.

The project foresees these activities being achieved through the active participation of partners. The most central and important set of partners are the university members of the Vi network, whose commitment and involvement are a necessary condition for building a sustainable and locally owned training and research capacity in participating countries. Other key partners are the professional divisions of UNCTAD, as well as other international organizations, in particular the WTO and ITC, and the UN regional commissions.

The relationship of the five activities listed in Box 3 to the expected accomplishments and the ultimate objective is shown in the logical framework (reproduced as Annex 1). The foreseen content of each activity described in the project document can be summarised as follows.

**Activity 1: Development of generic teaching materials**

Participating universities are to be surveyed through different means (questionnaires, phone and face-to-face interviews, online discussions) in order to identify the most pressing needs for materials to be developed to address the gaps in their curricula. These needs will be prioritized in the framework of the "national policy space" agreed on at UNCTAD XI. Subsequently, flexible modular materials (manuals, annotated reading lists, student activity workbooks, case studies, simulations, etc.) on the selected topics, suitable for use in the university context, would be developed. UNCTAD would coordinate and facilitate the process, including provision of relevant background documents, substantive supervision and pedagogic advice/support. Members would provide feedback on the materials, including using the online facility on the Vi website.

**Activity 2: Development of an online facility for communication among universities**

The pre-existing Virtual Institute site will be developed to make it graphically richer and more user- friendly with additional features to allow for enhanced ways of sharing and communicating among members. For example, more possibilities will be provided to give feedback on work in progress, and additional tools will be made available for online debates and discussions. This development will be accompanied by the production of a manual for users, and training and coaching for Vi members.

### Activity 3: Localization of teaching materials and their integration into the university curricula

The materials developed under Activity 1 will be adapted to the local context by including elements, information and data of relevance to the country in which they will be used. This will be achieved through local research (to supply the required information) and in-country adjustment to the generic materials which will, at the same time, help stimulate home-grown research. Translation of relevant parts of the generic materials into the local language will also be part of the localization process where required. Although it will be up to participating universities to decide which of the generic teaching materials to localize (make it clear where and how the end-product will be used and committing to do so), the project document assumed that 10 localized versions would be produced.

### Activity 4: Two professional development/networking workshops

The first workshop is intended to concentrate on the presentation and discussion of generic teaching materials developed under Activity 1, and on the preparation of implementation of Activities 3 and 5. The online facility for sharing and communication (Activity 2) will also be launched and initial training provided on its use. The second workshop is foreseen as being more of a stocktaking exercise, focussing on the experience and results of project activities aiming to enhance the teaching and research capacity in participating universities.

### Activity 5: Selection and implementation of joint projects among universities

This activity, which arose from the pre-Development Account project experience of the Virtual Institute and its first meeting (where a lot of learning and sharing took place), provides participating universities with the opportunity to prepare and submit proposals for joint projects. Such projects may take the form of a more advanced university (for instance, one that already has a graduate international trade programme) helping another university that is only beginning to develop such a programme, or a "partner" arrangement such as joint research, etc. The documentation makes provision for up to 10 projects (which can include travel to the partner university, including fellowships or staff exchange) to be supported, selected on the basis of the quality of the proposal, its expected impact on the university and the network, and its contribution to trade capacity building in each of the participants' countries.

## **Ranking the priorities**

These are major and substantial tasks given the resources available to the Vi. Each could easily absorb annually more than the total budget available for the Vi over four years – as is testified by the data on the scale of activities by other actors in this arena presented above. Moreover, they require the Vi staff to play a substantive, intellectual role (and not merely an administrative one) in facilitating both the collaboration, and the selection/preparation of outputs. Given that resource and staffing constraints prevent the Vi from doing everything, it has had to set priorities to identify the most valuable aspects of these tasks. Its priorities can be aggregated under three headings: access, networking and knowledge sharing. All three cut across the five activities listed above.

*Access* refers to outputs that provide academics from participating universities opportunities to tap into the resources (human and informational) available in the Geneva-based organisations, in other participating universities, and from their own country's mission in Geneva. It puts the Vi (and, hence, UNCTAD) at the centre of a learning network, facilitating the transfer of vastly more knowledge than would be possible just from the Institute's in-house resources. To play this role, the Vi staff must act as intellectual partners to the members.

This crucial facilitating function is achieved through *networking for capacity-building*. Through electronic and face-to-face communications, made possible by the meetings, fellowship programme and the web site, the Vi aims to make itself a ‘first port of call’ when academics in the participating universities need assistance of one kind or another. Such requests need not invariably be from universities in developing countries; by maintaining close links (intellectual as well as administrative) with active academics in all participating countries, the Vi is also able to assist members in the industrialised countries establish mutually advantageous research or teaching links with those in developing countries.

The principal purpose of this network-based access is to enhance *knowledge sharing* in the areas that are central to UNCTAD’s remit. The Vi aims both to help member institutions improve the quality of their postgraduate teaching but also, in the course of this, to present to them UNCTAD’s expertise in trade and investment policy. By keeping abreast of the issues that concern members, the Vi and its staff offer an additional window between UNCTAD and its member countries that is oriented specifically to the university sector at the postgraduate and research level.

Just as the evaluation must focus on questions related to the Vi’s ‘niche’, so it must also take account of the priorities that are an essential feature of such a small programme. This allows us to ‘operationalise’ the over-arching questions set out at the end of Section 1 which provide the framework for answering the specific questions on the Development Account Project posed in the ToR. These ‘key questions’ are set out in Box 4.

**Box 4: The key questions of detail for the evaluation**

This list has been developed by applying the over-arching questions listed in Box 1 to the practical details of the Development Account project.

1. Has the Vi increased the *access* of universities to the latest policy-oriented knowledge (theoretical as well as empirical) on trade and investment?
2. Has the Vi enhanced *networking* between universities in North and South and between these bodies and the Geneva-based institutions in a way that builds capacity?
3. Has knowledge been shared between the members in a way that has led to improvements in the quality and quantity of *postgraduate teaching materials and relevant research*?
4. Have these goals been achieved partly as a result of better use being made of *UNCTAD expertise*?
5. Is the improvement of research and postgraduate teaching partly through the dissemination of its expertise *a high priority to UNCTAD* given its mandate?

## Part B: Assessment of the project

### 3. Relevance

With the key questions now established, we move on to an assessment of what the project has achieved. Part B provides, first, a quantitative assessment of the outputs from the project. It then moves on to evaluate these in terms of relevance, impact and sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency.

The evaluative part of the report has benefitted from two important inputs. One is a questionnaire completed by the great majority of core members. This was drafted and administered by the Vi team but the evaluator was consulted during the design phase and his requests were incorporated. It was sent to the 28 co-ordinators in core members with an invitation for them to pass it on to others in their university and associate members. Altogether 61 questionnaires were completed, 25 of them by co-ordinators. The questionnaire responses have been sorted and tabulated by the Vi staff to provide interesting findings, some of which should lead to follow up action to probe with respondents the reasons for the views expressed.

The other input is a series of 32 interviews between the evaluator and representatives (current and former) of the core and affiliate members. In addition the evaluator has reviewed the teaching materials prepared under the project, the joint research papers presented at the 2009 Vi conference, and benefitted from discussions with UNCTAD professional staff.

#### The outputs

##### *The full range of Vi outputs*

The Development Account project is not the only funding that the Vi has received. It is the largest single financial contribution and it has the broadest remit. One could argue that it has provided the enabling framework that has attracted the other funding sources. In that sense, the success in attracting additional funding is a distinct ‘output’ from the project in its own right. But it also means that the list of outputs from ‘the Development Account project’ is not identical to the full range of outputs from the Vi; it is a (large) subset of these outputs.

Because of this it is important to put the different funding sources in context. Table 1 provides details of the funding received by Vi from six sources and the focus of each. The total for the period 2004-2010 is US\$ 1,673,451<sup>4</sup> of which the Development Account has supplied just over one-third. Apart from the contribution of Canada, which launched the Vi and preceded the Development Account project, it is the only funding source that covers all participating countries. The others are limited either by level of development (focussing exclusively on LDCs) or geography (Latin America).

The fact that the Development Account project is the only one that speaks to the full underlying concept of the Vi – to build a broad network of universities in the North and South – is a point to which we will return later. For the present, though, the key point to note is to be found in Table 1 column 5 which indicates the range of activities that have been funded by the Development Account project. These are as follows.

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<sup>4</sup> After deduction of UNCTAD's administration overhead charge.

- Advisory services on curricular development and the development of teaching materials;
- Their adaptation to local contexts of participating universities;
- Building of a global network of universities;
- Meetings/conferences of the network;
- Projects of South-South and North-South cooperation (joint research, development of teaching materials, professional development); and
- Enhancement of the programme's web platform.

**Table 1: Virtual Institute Funding: gross and, in brackets, net after deduction of UNCTAD overhead**

Donor	Amount	Year	Beneficiaries	Activities carried out so far (as of November 2008)
Canada	USD 173'693 (153'711)	2004-2006	Global	Launching of the Virtual Institute at UNCTAD XI in June (5 founding member universities) and the first meeting of the network in July 2005 (11 members); development of the programme's training resources web platform and its content; development of informational/promotional material for the programme
Japan	USD 219'506 (194'253)	2005-2006	LDCs in Africa and Asia	Development of teaching materials on Commodities and on Foreign Direct Investment; organization of professional development workshops for academics on Commodities (for LDCs in English-speaking Africa) and FDI (for LDCs in South-East Asia)
Finland	EUR 105'000 (92'920)	2006-2007	LDCs	Professional development <b>workshop</b> for academics on Commodities (for LDCs in French-speaking Africa); co-funding of the development of a teaching material on trade and poverty; co-funding of a professional development workshop for academics on trade and poverty (for LDCs in English-speaking Africa); Virtual Institute <b>fellowship programme for LDC academics</b> (16 academics so far); national professional development workshop for Tanzanian academics on the World Trade Integrated Solution; co-funding of a professional development workshop for academics on foreign direct investment (for LDCs in English-speaking Africa)
	EUR 100'000 (88'496)	2007-2008		
	EUR 90'000 (79'646)	2008-2009		
UN Development Account	USD 560'000	2006-2009	Global	Development of <b>teaching materials</b> (regional trade agreements, trade data analysis, transfer of technology...) and their adaptation to local contexts of participating universities; advisory services on <b>curricular development</b> ; building of a <b>global network</b> of universities (48 universities from 30 countries as of June 2009); <b>meetings/conferences</b> of the network; projects of South-South and North-South cooperation (joint research, development of teaching materials, professional development); enhancement of the programme's <b>web</b> platform
Norway	USD 70'000 (61'947)	2007	LDCs	Core funding for a professional development workshop for academics on trade and poverty (for LDCs in English-speaking Africa)
Spain	USD 500'000 (442'478)	2008-2010	Latin America; LDCs	Involvement of a Spanish university as a member of the Virtual Institute; increase in membership in Latin America; core funding for a professional development workshop for academics on foreign direct investment (for <b>LDCs</b> in English-speaking Africa); joint research projects on regional integration and cooperation, and on Corporate Social Responsibility in <b>Latin America</b> ; fellowships for Latin American academics at UNCTAD (4 fellows so far)

It is the outputs of these six activities that are reviewed in the rest of this section.

### *Curriculum development and the production of training materials*

The four generic teaching materials envisaged for funding from the project have all been completed. The topics were selected through consultations with member universities, taking into account their priority needs. Members were also able to influence the content of the materials through comments on the outlines and peer review of the draft materials.

The topics selected are:

- Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs);
- Trade and Poverty;
- Trade Data Analysis;
- Transfer of Technology.

Quality control was provided through peer reviews by staff from Vi and other UNCTAD divisions as well as by relevant experts from outside UNCTAD. The material on Trade Data Analysis has been developed as a joint project between UNCTAD and the WTO (which also contributed to the peer review).

### *Adaptation of teaching materials*

The localization process was discussed with members at the network workshop in October 2006 and a procedure was developed for the universities to apply for funding to support localization projects. Members then submitted proposals for localization (research to provide country/region specific data, case studies, exercises and/or translation into local language). Work has been done to develop 22 localisations (in two phases of 11 each) of the course materials based on proposals received from university members (see Annex II). All of the first phase projects, as well as nine from the second phase (launched in February 2008) have been completed. An additional second-phase project has been submitted as a first draft and another one is expected soon.

All except one have been funded from the Development Account project. Table 2 provides details of the localisations that are reported to have been used by those producing them. As can be seen, all have been used in Vi members' curricula; precise information on this (and the courses involved) was a Vi requirement in the proposal acceptance process. In addition to the information in the table, the localisations have been used in six 'downstream' outputs – either published articles or substantial inputs into a broader piece of research.

### *Building a global network*

The network facilitated by Vi began in 2004 with five members; it now has 48, covering five continents, and representing the full range of development experiences, from small island developing States and least developed countries to middle-income economies and developed countries (see Box 5). Of these, 30 are 'core members', some of which have created partnerships within their country to link Affiliate Members to the network. Core Member universities have been selected from amongst those that have expressed their interest in participating in this kind of network on the basis of the relevance of UNCTAD issues to their teaching and research. A flexible menu of services has been developed from which members can choose according to their needs and priorities. Usually, the universities that are less advanced in the trade and development area are more interested in capacity building services (professional development workshops, capacity building fellowships), whereas those that are more developed tend to use to a greater extent those services that build on the already existing capacity (research activities) or develop it further (staff exchanges, study tours and

**Table 2: Use of localized Vi materials as reported by member universities**  
(including localised versions of generic materials funded outside the Development Account project)

University	Material	Programme	Course	Material published?	
				University textbook/manual	Paper
FLACSO, Argentina	Commodities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual property</li> <li>• Economics</li> <li>• International trade</li> </ul>	Posted on the university website for students to download	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper titled "The political economy of high tech commodities- the successful and litigious case of the genetically modified soy in Argentina" was presented at several events, including the Second National Congress on Agro-Biotechnology, Intellectual Property and Public Policies (Cordoba, August 2008).</li> <li>• The material has been used as a platform for a broader research on IP, environment and trade.</li> </ul>
BSEU, Belarus	International Investment Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor in International Investment</li> <li>• Bachelor in Management of Foreign Economic Activities</li> <li>• Masters in International Economics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Investment Activity</li> <li>• Transnationalisation in the World Economy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Petrushkevich, A. Direct Foreign Investments Dynamics in CIS. Bankaysky Vestnik, October, N28 (429), 2008. <a href="http://www.nbrb.by/bv/narch/429/3.pdf">http://www.nbrb.by/bv/narch/429/3.pdf</a></li> <li>• Petrushkevich, A. The impact of FDI on the Development of Belarussian Economy. Bankaysky Vestnik, February, N4 (441), 2009. <a href="http://www.nbrb.by/bv/narch/441/4.pdf">http://www.nbrb.by/bv/narch/441/4.pdf</a></li> </ul>
University of Chile	RTAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diploma on Trade Policy (graduate programme)</li> </ul>	International Economics	Students receive electronic versions of the materials	
Cairo University, Egypt	RTAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third year undergraduate in Economics</li> <li>• Training courses for government officials on trade issues</li> </ul>	International Trade	Material distributed to students in hard copy, but without being a formal publication	
University of Jordan	Competitiveness and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergraduate programme in Business Economics</li> </ul>	Competitiveness	Funds already made available to publish as a university textbook; publication in process	Not a formal paper but it was used to build indicators of competitiveness of the Jordanian economy for the Economic Observatory at the Faculty of Business

	International Investment Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various undergraduate and graduate programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International trade</li> <li>• International finance</li> </ul>	Intention to publish as a university textbook	
University of Nairobi, Kenya	RTAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Arts in Economics</li> <li>• Master of Economics</li> <li>• Bachelor of Economics</li> <li>• Bachelor of Economics and statistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Trade (Bachelors students)</li> <li>• International Economics (Masters students)</li> </ul>	Intention to publish as a university textbook	
University of Mauritius	Commodities IIAs Trade and poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MBA</li> <li>• MSc in International Business</li> <li>• BSc in Management</li> <li>• MBA in Global Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Business and Strategy</li> <li>• Multinational Enterprises, International Trade and Finance</li> <li>• Multinational Enterprises</li> <li>• International Business Management</li> </ul>	The policy is to give soft copies to students as a part of student packs	"Determinants of FDI: Lessons from African Economies", Journal of Applied Business and Economics, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2009
MGIMO, Russia	ToT (planned use)	Masters in International Economics	International technology transfer		
University of Dakar, Senegal	Commodities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master en Economie Rurale</li> <li>• MBA en Gestion</li> <li>• Master en Economie</li> <li>• Licence en Technique de vente</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environnement économique international (Master)</li> <li>• Environnement économique de l'entreprise (Master)</li> <li>• Commerce international (Licence)</li> </ul>		Une présentation de ce travail a également été faite devant la Commission des Finances de l'Assemblée Nationale sénégalaise en mars 2008
MUBS, Uganda	RTAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MBA</li> <li>• Master of International Business</li> <li>• Bachelor of International Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration</li> <li>• Economics of International Trade</li> <li>• Globalization and Environment of International Business</li> </ul>		
Foreign Trade University, Vietnam	International Investment Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor in International Economics</li> <li>• Bachelor in Banking and Finance</li> <li>• Master in World Economy</li> <li>• Master in International Economic Relations</li> </ul>	International Investment	Published as an FTU university textbook titled "Economic and Legal Aspects of Foreign Direct Investment" (March 2009)	

**Box 5: Vi Member Universities (as at 1 May 2009)****Core members:**

1. Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Buenos Aires, Argentina
2. Belarus State Economic University (Minsk)
3. University of Campinas, Brazil
4. Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
5. University of Chile (Santiago de Chile)
6. University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China
7. EAFIT University, Medellín, Colombia
8. Cairo University, Egypt
9. Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France
10. University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany
11. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
12. School of International Relations, Tehran, Iran
13. Bocconi University, Milan, Italy
14. University of Jordan (Amman)
15. University of Nairobi, Kenya
16. University of Mauritius (Réduit)
17. Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico
18. Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique
19. Catholic University of Peru
20. State University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation
21. Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal
22. University of Pretoria, South Africa
23. University of Barcelona, Spain
24. World Trade Institute, University of Berne, Switzerland
25. University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania
26. Makerere University Business School, Uganda
27. Vadym Hetman Kiev National Economic University, Ukraine
28. University of the Republic, Montevideo, Uruguay
29. Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam
30. University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus, Barbados)

**Affiliate members:**

1. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina
2. Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
3. Federal University of Viçosa, Brazil
4. Fundación Universitaria Politécnico Grancolombiano, Colombia
5. Academia Diplomática de San Carlos, Colombia
6. Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Colombia
7. Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Colombia
8. Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia
9. Universidad de los Andes, Colombia
10. Universidad del Norte, Colombia
11. Universidad del Rosario, Colombia
12. Universidad del Valle, Colombia
13. Universidad Icesi, Colombia
14. Universidad Sergio Arboleda, Colombia
15. Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, Colombia
16. Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Russian Federation
17. St. Petersburg State University, Russian Federation
18. Stellenbosch University, South Africa

networking fellowships). Developed country Vi members also contribute to some of the services.

### *Meetings and conferences*

Two professional development/networking workshops (as foreseen in the project proposal) have been held (in October 2006 and February 2008). Both included two components:

- professional development (keynote speeches, presentations and discussions on topical international economic issues; presentations of members' own research) and
- networking (learning about each other's activities and plans; discussion of a work plan for the coming period and the inception of joint projects of the network).

They have also been used to finalise/present other elements in the Vi package (such as the localisation of teaching materials noted above and the unveiling of the online facility, see below).

An additional workshop not originally envisaged in the project was organized in May 2009, with a main focus on research and a strong component relating to the evaluation of the project and the discussion of ways forward.

### *South-South and North-South cooperation projects*

Under a procedure devised by UNCTAD and applied by the Vi staff, 8 joint projects were accepted for the provision of a grant to support cooperation projects. They cover joint research (4 projects), development of teaching material (1 project), and development of courses (3 projects). All of them are completed, except one research project that will be finalized before mid-2009.

The completed joint research projects have been on: "A comparative study of the impact of regional trade agreements" (Jordan, Mauritius and India); "An analysis of the impact of Chinese exports of textiles on Senegal" (Senegal and China) and "Coffee, cooperation and competition: A comparative study between Colombia and Vietnam". Colombia and India have collaborated on the production of a training material on trade and the environment. Carleton University, one of the early members of the Vi network, has provided training in trade law to academics from member universities in Mauritius and Colombia. It has also supported the University of Mauritius and the EAFIT University in Medellín, Colombia, in their academic and training programmes related to trade law. The research project that remains outstanding is on: "Comparative study of the impact of qualified industrial zones in Egypt and Jordan."

### *Web platform*

The Vi website forms a very important part of the network as it provides members with easy access to relevant documents and information, and allows them to communicate and gather feedback on their work. The website has evolved over the course of the project and a new, user-friendly version was presented at the February 2008 workshop (with member feedback being used in subsequent fine-tuning). It contains, among other things, a new version of the Virtual Institute's online library, containing approximately 500 resources - articles, papers, reports and briefs related to trade and development, which can be browsed according to thematic category, author, title and year of publication. Improvements to the library include a new engine that allows full-text searches by keyword of all documents, and an e-mail alert system to which members may subscribe according to their topics of interest. Recent additions include multimedia resources based on courses and expert meetings held in Geneva, which members use for teaching purposes, topics include the global food and energy security crisis, the emergence of the new

South and South-South trade, the global economic crisis, and a step-by-step course on the use of International Trade Centre (a Vi partner) market analysis tools. New on the site is also a special section on member presentations, which feature professors in the network presenting recent research and asking for feedback on their work. A discussion forum is also available, and the Vi has begun working with other UNCTAD divisions to provide opportunities for members to input their knowledge into multi-year expert groups through the use of the Vi forum facility.

## Relevance

The ToR define the criteria to establish relevance in the following terms:

- whether the decisions to develop and localize specific teaching materials and undertake specific joint projects and other project activities were based on appropriate criteria, taking into account the needs of beneficiaries and possible impact and effectiveness of such assistance;
- whether UNCTAD, and in particular the Virtual Institute, adequately assisted the beneficiary universities in view of its expertise, experience and contacts.

Underlying these questions, though, is the broader one of whether the objectives of the Vi project identified in Part A are relevant to UNCTAD's core purpose. This question establishes what could be called a "macro-relevance envelope" – the relevance of the project if perfectly implemented. We then move on to the questions listed in the ToR which establish how far the outputs described in the first part of Section 3 above approach 'perfect implementation'.

### *Macro-relevance*

The objectives of the project as established in Part A (boxes 2 and 3) are, in brief, to facilitate:

- more (and more effective) collaboration between universities to raise the level of postgraduate teaching and research;
- communication between academics (especially in developing countries) and the experts based in UNCTAD, the WTO and other relevant Geneva-based organisations; and
- an increase in the quality and quantity of postgraduate policy-oriented teaching materials and research on trade and investment.

Are these objectives relevant to UNCTAD's mission? On the front page of its web site UNCTAD describes itself in the following way (with three phrases italicised to focus attention on the implications of this position). UNCTAD is

an authoritative *knowledge-based* institution whose work aims to help shape *current* policy debates and *thinking on development*, with a particular focus on ensuring that *domestic policies and international action* are mutually supportive in bringing about sustainable development.

### A knowledge-based institution

It would be hard to justify any claim to being a knowledge-based institution if UNCTAD were not linked closely to global centres of excellence. Universities are not coterminous with 'centres of excellence' but they form an important part of this group. Some of the Vi members are globally acknowledged centres of excellence, some are regionally acknowledged and some need the network to build their capacity. In all cases, though, their unique characteristics set them apart from, and complementary to, think tanks, agency

research departments, and high-end consulting firms, each of which also has a role to play. Even in countries where the main function of the Vi network is capacity building, other bodies such as think tanks are also relatively weak, if only because they lack the depth offered by links to a strong hinterland of universities and are vulnerable to the movements of a very small number of key people. The issue for the Vi evaluation, therefore, is not whether linking to universities is part of UNCTAD's core purpose since it is hard to imagine how a justification could be framed for *not* being so linked. Rather it is whether Vi adds an extra dimension to the other links that UNCTAD staff have with the university sector.

The information obtained by the evaluator during interviews suggests strongly that the Vi does add an extra dimension. So far it has mainly been unidirectional, with the Vi providing a conduit through which UNCTAD knowledge and experience is made available to parts of the university network that it would not otherwise have reached. One respondent told of how their library on trade and finance issues had been obtained largely from Vi. Many of the interviewees (from universities in all parts of the world) referred to the way in which the Vi is able to act as an intermediary, linking them to the relevant professionals within UNCTAD and, to an extent, the Geneva-based organisations more generally.

A start is being made, too, in sending knowledge in the opposite direction. By informing UNCTAD professionals about high level, relevant work being undertaken in member universities, Vi has been able to foster collaborations. It is understood, for example, that analysis on coffee drawn from a joint Vi research project will be used in the World Investment Report and that research on services offshoring will be cited in the upcoming Information Economy Report..

#### Shaping current development thinking

The desire to shape current thinking on development means that the links with centres of excellence around the world must be very active since current policy debates are continuously evolving in the light of new issues, data and theory. It requires that empirical data drawn from numerous developing countries (including those in which 'excellence' is a relative term) is combined and linked to the theoretical insights that can emerge in any university. Consequently, it is important that links are broad and do not become focussed on universities in just one or two geographical regions.

It also requires some level of formalised, institutional interaction. Individual contacts by UNCTAD staff and within the context of specific activities will always be an important element in the learning relationship with universities. But, by themselves, these risk creating a fragmented and incoherent relationship, determined by the vagaries of staff interests and movement.

As the part of UNCTAD with a specific mandate to maintain close working relations with universities in all parts of the world, the Vi would appear to have an important role to play in maintaining this global institutional link in good working order. The success of joint research projects involving South-South as well as North-South collaboration illustrate the potential for the Vi network to create new insights by combining empirical data from different country experiences.

#### Linking the domestic and the international

Linking domestic and international actions is a two-way process. As a multilateral organisation, UNCTAD is well placed to contribute to framing international policies that

reflect domestic needs, which it can help to articulate. But ensuring that domestic policies take account of international challenges and opportunities is a much more diffuse undertaking. It requires action at multiple levels within each country. This, in turn, requires that the corps of individuals (in government, the private sector, civil society organisations, the media and elsewhere) able to link the domestic and the international is maintained at levels adequate for this task. As the primary producer of such trained individuals, a healthy university sector is an essential element in the fulfilment of this part of UNCTAD's mandate.

The interviews with the member universities illustrated the great variety between countries in the extent of informed analysis and debate on international trade and finance issues. The level and breadth of such debate is not to be found along a simple linear axis from rich to poor to very poor states. In some middle income states there are many academics (and many alumni from their universities) with a strong and sophisticated understanding of current policy debates. In other countries, even those with a well-established university system, there may be only a handful of academics and postgraduate courses that deal in depth with the major trade and finance policy issues of the day. By facilitating support of various kinds from the first group to the second group (as well as to those countries with very fragile postgraduate systems) the Vi has the potential to advance UNCTAD's mission of ensuring adequate domestic debate on global issues and the effective communication to the international arena of domestic views and concerns.

### *Realisation of the potential*

How well has this potential been realised by the Vi? The ToR set as the benchmarks whether the decisions taken on project outputs were based 'on appropriate criteria, taking into account the needs of beneficiaries and possible impact and effectiveness' and whether beneficiary universities were 'adequately assisted' given UNCTAD and the Vi's 'expertise, experience and contacts'.

All the member representatives interviewed for this evaluation confirmed that the project fully took account of their articulated needs. Indeed, a recurring theme when asked why a university chose to work with the Vi (rather than an alternative source of expertise and funding) was that the staff of the Virtual Institute were particularly proactive, taking pains to tailor support to the differing needs of each institution.

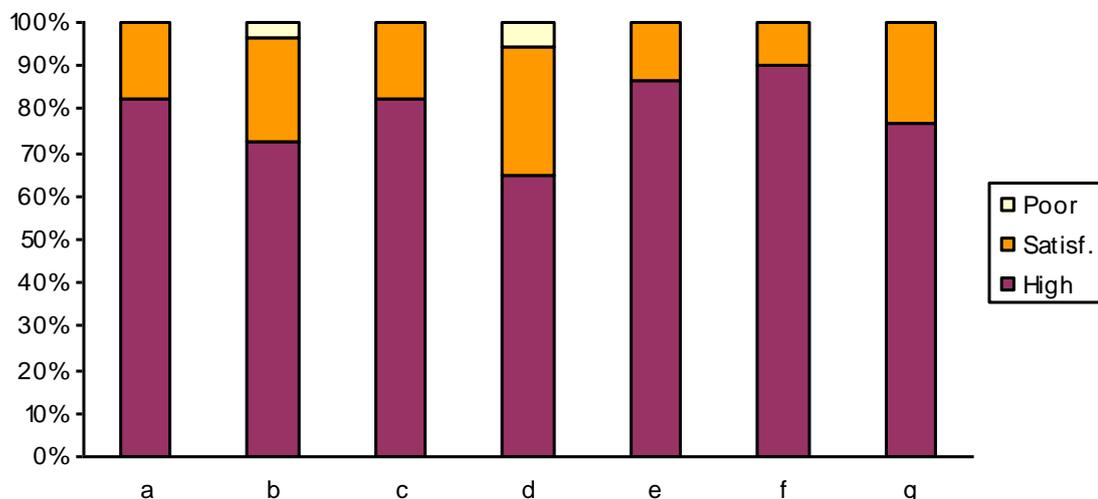
One consequence is that each institution has used a different combination of the resources available through the network. One interviewee told of how his university first came into contact with Vi in 2004 when it was experiencing difficulties in finding materials for its masters course on International Economy and Law. It approached Vi initially as a source of course materials but came to realize over time that the range of possible supports was much broader. It has since used the Fellowship programme to assist with further course development and is using the network to set up joint research.

All members interviewed indicated that they used several items on the Vi 'menu' but most had priorities within the menu. For some members (including those from the North), the network is the most useful Vi resource. For others it is the opportunity to acquire and localize teaching materials. For some it is the entry point into the knowledge of the Geneva-based organizations both through individual enquiries and for student study tours. And for yet others it is the opportunity to do joint research with academics in different countries, producing comparative findings that would not otherwise have emerged.

These anecdotal impressions are confirmed by the results from the questionnaire. Four-fifths of respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question ‘has long-term involvement in the Vi been beneficial to you or your institution’s teaching and research?’. Slightly more also responded ‘yes’ to the question ‘do you think the Vi has been successful in building partnerships with other international organizations and providing Vi members with access to these organizations?’

The teaching materials developed and localised under the Vi project are seen by developing country members as a particularly valuable resource. The selection of topics is initiated and executed by the members with Vi ensuring conformity with project priorities and quality control through peer review. The teaching materials are widely perceived to be of high quality (see Figure 1). Depending on the course, between 65% and 90% of respondents rated the materials as of high quality. (Should the course development work of Vi continue, the reasons for the one *relatively* low score should be ascertained through follow-up correspondence so that any lessons can be learned for the selection and design of new materials).

**Figure 1: Quality of teaching materials**



Notes: a) Economic and legal aspects of international investment agreements; b) Economics of commodities production and trade; c) Competitiveness and development; d) Trade and poverty; e) Regional trade agreements; f) Trade data analysis; g) Transfer of technology.

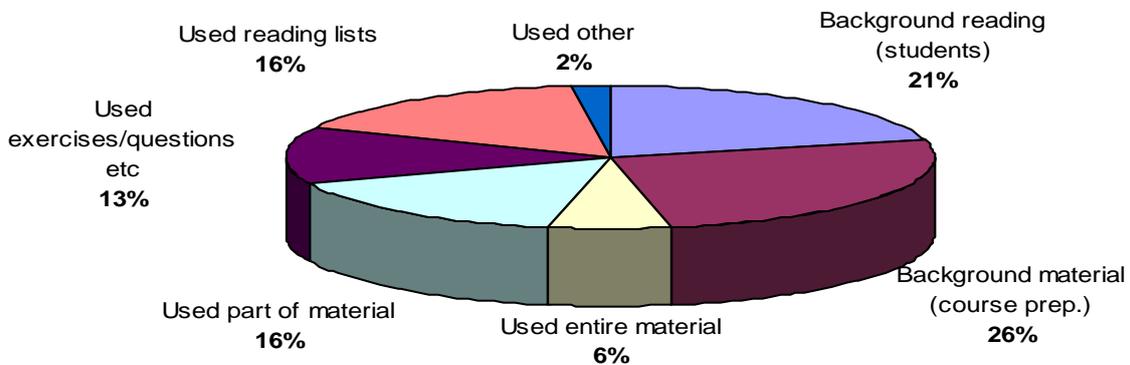
#### 4. Impact and sustainability

The ToR establish the measure of impact in the following terms: ‘to what extent [has] the project facilitated the enhancement of teaching and research of policy-relevant trade and development issues at beneficiary universities; [and] whether the geographical coverage of the project is adequate.’ Sustainability of the project is established in terms of whether ‘the project was designed and implemented in a way ensuring maximum sustainability of its impact in terms of enhanced teaching and research of trade and development issues at beneficiary universities.’

Established in these terms, impact is the more straightforward of the two to assess in quantitative terms. The data presented in Section 3 show an impressive over-achievement of

initial targets in terms of the numbers of universities in the network, courses localized, students trained and joint research projects completed. The questionnaire provides further information on the impact of these outputs. It includes several questions designed to elicit a response on whether the project outputs are being used. Figure 2 shows as an illustrative example the responses for training materials. Over half of respondents used all or part of the material as background reading for students or for course preparation.

**Figure 2: Use of teaching materials**



With its present membership, the Vi clearly has a broad geographical coverage. The issue of *how many* members there should be is an important one that is addressed in Section 5, but the Vi has at least one member in each of the main geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and North America. It has had a measurable impact in terms of research projects being undertaken that would not otherwise have occurred. This outcome has had several causes including the fact that the research projects were undertaken as part of fruitful collaborative relationships that were created through the Vi network and did not previously exist.

These indicators are of what could be termed ‘superficial impact’ – (good) things have happened that would not otherwise have occurred. For a project that is large relative to its target area one would also wish to investigate what might be called ‘deep impact’ – has the project produced a measurable change in the state of its target? This would be linked to an analysis of sustainability.

Both deep impact and sustainability are inherently difficult concepts in this case. A number of methodologies have been developed to support impact evaluations but none appears feasible for use in this particular case.<sup>5</sup> Precisely because Vi is a young, small, focused project which, moreover, tailors its inputs to the particular needs of its members it is not feasible to establish a plausible control group against which ‘impact’ can be measured. Nor are there baseline surveys to establish the *status quo ante* at the members.

Even if there had been baseline studies, establishing a causal relationship between any changes observed and the inputs of the Vi would require heroic assumptions given the difference in scale between the project inputs and the other forces operating on universities during the project period. The quotation from the World Bank metastudy in Section 1

<sup>5</sup> See for example *Conducting Quality Impact Evaluation Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints* The World Bank, Washington, 2006.

suggests that in some member countries universities have been moving backwards. External support will have had, at best, the effect of slowing the decline overall by providing some positive examples. But how many individual examples represent a significant effect, and how can one demonstrate causality in a more objective fashion than personal testimony by members or affiliates? One member reported that the supply of UNCTAD materials to their departmental library was the single most important catalyst enabling a doctoral student successfully to complete their research which had ground to a halt after six years of enrollment. The same informant attributed the major capacity-building success of Vi to the fact that its inputs were made *to the Department* whereas the (financially much larger) assignments offered by other external agencies were made to *individuals* within the university and so had a fragmenting rather than capacity-building impact.

If the work supported by the Development Account Project is continued, it would be very wise to build in from the outset some formal monitoring designed to show whether anecdotal examples such as the foregoing are isolated or more common, and to follow up in order to provide an independent (if necessarily subjective) assessment of causality. How strong is the link between the beneficiaries and the policy-making bodies in each member country? What role does the university, its faculty and its alumni play in advising their governments on trade/investment policies? Country-specific benchmarks will be essential given the huge heterogeneity of the members (from, say, Vietnam with around 200 lecturers on international trade in one university alone to South Africa with only a handful of professionals actively researching international trade *policy* at an academic level). So the exercise will be a substantial one. But it is necessary if deep impact is to be assessed more rigorously in future.

This point about the data needed to assess deep impact in the context of major country-specific trends affecting the universities is related to the difficulty in defining ‘sustainability’ in tertiary education which is a public good in most countries and, hence, the recipient of continuing public assistance. In few countries is it expected ever to become self-funded. This applies equally to developed country universities, many of which have very limited autonomous resources to maintain active research links.

The members interviewed for this evaluation were asked explicitly in an open-ended question whether they would continue to be active members of the network if funding from the Vi for developing and least developed country universities were to cease. This question is equally relevant to developed country members: although they do not receive funding from the project, their interest in the network derives from the opportunities it offers for collaboration with academics from developing and least developed states (an issue that is dealt with in Section 5).

Many said that they would maintain the contacts that had been made already and use the web site and email communication to develop further work together. But most also felt that, without the regular face-to-face contact made possible by the Vi conference, it was likely that the network would stagnate over time. Indeed, a common request among many interviewees was for the conference to become a regular annual event as it facilitated building relationships of trust not only between academics at different universities but also between them and UNCTAD professionals (and members of their national diplomatic missions in Geneva). Some two-thirds of the questionnaire respondents rated the meetings as ‘very useful’; a similar proportion had made one or more professional contact during the meetings with whom they maintained regular professional contact while the other one-third had actually undertaken work with one or more of the contacts that they had made.

## 5. Effectiveness

The ToR establish that effectiveness is to be determined in relation to:

- whether the project achieved planned objectives and produced expected results;
- whether the scope of the project was adequate in view of the existing resources and expertise;
- whether effective coordination of internal resources and expertise was demonstrated to optimize outcomes for beneficiary universities.

### Achieving planned objectives

In quantitative terms the Vi has been able to exceed most of the targets set for the Development Account project. Four generic sets of teaching materials have been produced as well as 22 localisations (compared to the 10 foreseen in the Development Account Project document), most of which have been completed. Three professional development/networking workshops have been held, compared to the two envisaged in the project document. Eight joint research projects have been completed (where the Development Account project document refers to ‘up to ten’). The Vi web site is much appreciated and well used. During the first five months of 2009 there were a monthly average 1,032,005 hits from 1,996 unique visitors reading 18,004 pages. Interviewees from universities in which the required technology was available found the video conferencing organised by Vi to be particularly useful.

During the one to one interviews with members, the evaluator posed the following question: given that the resources available from other sources of support (such as the World Bank) are so much larger, why do you bother with the Vi?<sup>6</sup> The two most frequent answers from developing country members (often combined) were:

- because the Vi is much more proactive and willing to respond to our needs;
- because we are particularly keen to obtain UNCTAD materials and perspectives.

Despite the distribution systems that appear to exist on paper, the reality in the case of several developing country members is that the supplies of UNCTAD materials sent via Vi represent a large proportion (in at least one case, 100%) of the trade and investment reference materials available to them.

The position of developed country members is somewhat different as they obtain no financial support from the Vi project. The reasons for their continued involvement (which is considered vital to the continuation of the project as designed) is considered further in

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<sup>6</sup> The members and affiliates interviewed during the May 2009 conference (listed in Annex 4) were asked four open-ended questions designed to provide a qualitative dimension to the quantitative information supplied in the questionnaire. Q1: ‘Given that its resources are very small compared to alternative funders, why do you bother with the Vi?’ This question was designed to identify the perceived relative attractions of the Vi compared with other externally-funded initiatives. Q2: ‘Are there many academics and active networks within your country/region working on trade *policy*?’ This was designed to identify the absolute need for an externally supported network and, in cases where a strong national/regional network existed, the relative value added of the Vi’s global network. Q3: ‘If funding for the Vi dries up – apart from the continued provision of the current staff by UNCTAD – would participation remain of interest to you?’ This was designed to identify the relative importance of external funding for the continued vigour of the Vi network now that it has been set up and is running well. Q4: ‘Assuming, more optimistically, that funding were to be increased modestly, what are the highest priorities for the additional funds?’ This was designed to identify the activities that members would most like to extend.

Section C. But even for these members, one reason cited for involvement with Vi was to improve access to UNCTAD resources. Whilst it might be supposed that developed country universities would already have good access to UNCTAD, it appears that Vi can ‘add value’ to existing channels for both developed and developing country members. Vi staff do this by engaging with a member to understand the question being asked and then putting it in direct contact with the appropriate section or individual within UNCTAD.

## **Scope of project**

Was the scope of the project adequate in view of the existing resources and expertise? This question can be answered in relation to the ‘existing resources and expertise’ of the member universities and of the Vi. The answer in both cases would seem to be ‘yes’.

A feature of the Vi network is that it is global in scope, both geographically and in the sense of including universities from developed, developing and least-developed states. Given the resource constraint and the need to focus, was it wise to decide on such a heterogeneous membership? The clear answer given by the members interviewed is that it is precisely because the Vi has such a broad spread that membership is of interest. One interviewee from Latin America explained that her department already belonged to several very active Latin American networks; the value added offered by the Vi was the opportunity to network with universities in other parts of the world, especially the BRIC countries. The need to learn from different national and regional perspectives is very important for university departments that focus on international trade, finance, investment and other global economic issues.

This inclusive approach is particularly important for the developed country members. They derive no financial support from the Vi; in fact, they must use internal resources (which are often limited) in order to play an active role. Since their involvement has had measurable benefits for other members of the network (from tuition free studentships to collaborative research) it is important to understand the nature of their interests. For them the Vi provides *inter alia* a way to identify good partners from the South (whether as postgraduate students or research collaborators). And if it is to play this role Vi must have a membership that covers all regions and middle income as well as least developed states. As the only part of the Vi’s funding that is untied to a particular region or income group, the Development Account project can take much of the credit for maintaining the global reach of the network both directly (by funding participation from non least developed developing countries) and indirectly (by making the network of interest to developed country members).

Where the Vi has been selective is in limiting core membership to one university per country (and encouraging the creation of sub-networks of affiliates within each country). This has been a prudent move in relation to the expertise both of the members and of the Vi staff. As noted in Section 3, there are wide national differences over the number of tertiary educational institutions with a strong research and postgraduate interest in international trade and related policy issues. In countries where there are several institutions it is common for some networks already to exist. The Vi approach helps to strengthen these domestic networks.

In relation to internal constraints, the approach that has been adopted limits the number of relationships that the small Vi staff have to manage. Given that these relationships have a high intellectual content, and are not purely administrative (see Section 2), it is important not to overload the capacity of the in-house staff, particularly since none of the posts require the qualifications that one would expect to be necessary (for at least one member of the team), namely a research degree and postgraduate teaching experience (see Part C).

### **Co-ordination of resources and expertise**

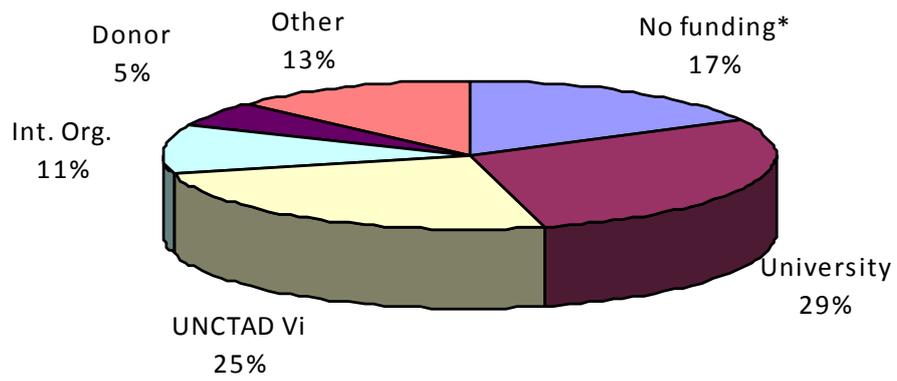
One reason why the Vi has resulted in such a large number of outputs given its limited resources is that the financial resources made available under the project have been substantially ‘leveraged’ in one or more of several ways. In developed country universities, for example, involvement in the Vi has often unlocked access to other funding. In middle income and transition countries where there exist relatively small and oversubscribed university funds, association with the Vi is regarded as a mark of approval – that the project has international recognition – and this has been instrumental in obtaining a favourable response for grant applications. The Vi provides status both because it offers access to an international network (for peer review and, not least, for publishing research findings) and because it is seen as a gateway to UNCTAD expertise.

In other cases, the Vi network has allowed a university in one region to secure research partners in another, which has made their project viable and opened the door to funding by an aid donor or research council. For example, under Activity 5 of the General Account Project the Vi contributed only 12% to the funding of one joint research project (the results of which were presented at the 2009 Workshop) but it helped bring together the two partners (one in Latin America and one in Asia). Not only did a very modest provision of funding support capacity-building to undertake trade policy research but also the networking functions of the Vi facilitated the contacts that brought forth the bulk of the funding (from other sources).

The relative importance of funding from the Vi and from other sources is shown in the responses to the questionnaire. These are reproduced graphically in Figure 3, which shows that 58% of respondents obtain research funding from sources other than Vi.

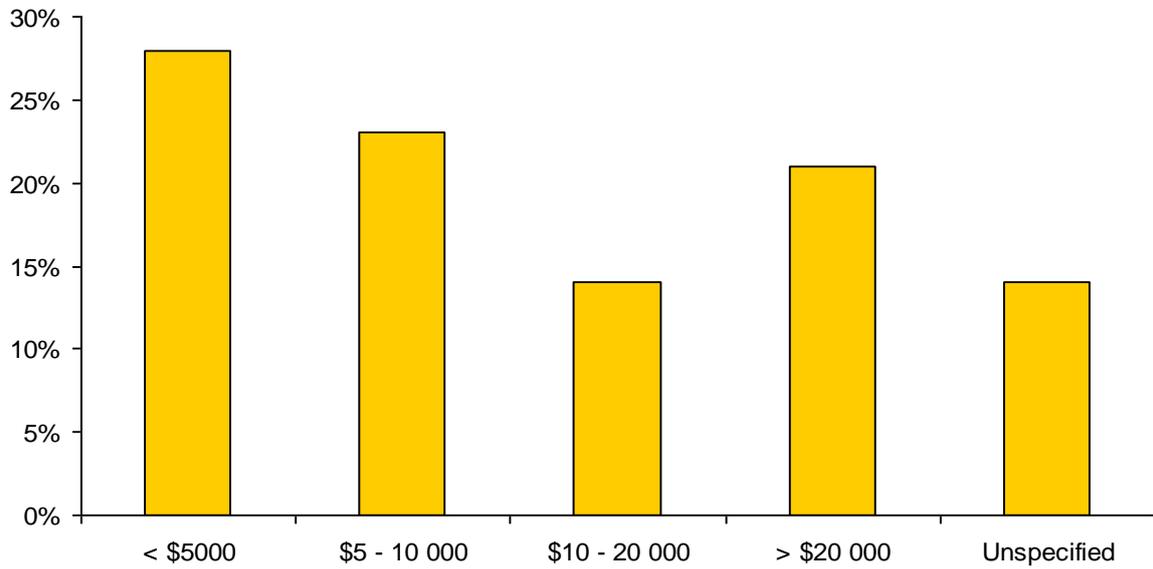
In many cases, funding is modest even with leveraging. Figure 4 suggests that many members do not have access to a wide range of substantial alternative sources of finance. About half of respondents had access to \$10 000 or less for their current research. There exists a reasonable probability, therefore, that much of the research undertaken within the Vi project would not otherwise have taken place.

**Figure 3: Sources of funding for current members' research**



\* blank entries in questionnaire attributed as no funding.

**Figure 4: Amount of funding received for current research**



## **6. Efficiency**

Efficiency is defined in the ToR in terms of whether the project used the most efficient means in delivering its activities (for example, through the use of local resources when appropriate); whether the project as a whole was managed efficiently, with proper accounting of associated costs, and with an effective management of internal resources and expertise; and whether project schedules were met or activities implemented within reasonable time parameters.

The answers to these questions are already apparent from the information conveyed in Sections 3-5, which does not need to be repeated. Apart from the preparation of the generic training materials, almost all of the outputs from the project have been created in the countries concerned. Output targets have been either met or exceeded. Internal resources and expertise have been managed very well. Given that none of the established Vi posts requires prior research or postgraduate teaching experience, the incumbents have actually exceeded reasonable expectations in terms of their demonstrated ability to dialogue at a professional level with the network members. The high level of outputs has been achieved by making substantial use of UNCTAD expertise (as well as by involving other donors). It is understood that the lengthening of the implementation period (from 2006-2007 to 2006- 2009) was a general change for Development Account projects and, in this particular case, it was a wise decision given the known time lags in developing a broad network of universities.

## Part C: Strategic and operational recommendations

### Answering the evaluation questions

Four overarching questions about the Vi were set up in Section 1 to establish the framework within which to view the specific evaluation points on the Development Account Project. Having dealt with the specifics in Sections 3 – 6, we now return the over-arching contextual questions.

1. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated more (and more effective) collaboration between universities to raise the level of postgraduate teaching and research?
2. Has the Virtual Institute facilitated communication between academics (especially in developing countries) and the experts based in UNCTAD, the WTO and other relevant Geneva-based organisations?
3. Has the quality and quantity of postgraduate policy-oriented teaching materials and research on trade and investment been increased?
4. Are all three of the above worthwhile achievements that fall within UNCTAD priorities?

Part C sets the answers provided in Part B within this broader framework to provide an overall picture of the success of the Virtual Institute and of the Development Account project's contribution to this outcome.

The four overarching questions were 'operationalised' in Section 2 by being recast as five more specific – and measurable – questions. The specific questions posed in Section 2 were as follows.

1. Has the Vi increased the *access* of universities to the latest policy-oriented knowledge (theoretical as well as empirical) on trade and investment?
2. Has the Vi enhanced *networking* between universities in North and South and between these bodies and the Geneva-based institutions in a way that builds capacity?
3. Has knowledge been shared between the members in a way that has led to improvements in the quality and quantity of *postgraduate teaching materials and relevant research*?
4. Have these goals been achieved partly as a result of better use being made of *UNCTAD expertise*?
5. Is the improvement of research and postgraduate teaching partly through the dissemination of its expertise *a high priority to UNCTAD* given its mandate?

As the dominant contributor (in qualitative as well as quantitative terms), the Development Account Project can reasonably be held to have been a major factor in achieving success on any of these five points. The quantitative record and the assessments made by university members of the network both demonstrate that the Vi project has enhanced the access of universities to the latest policy-oriented knowledge on trade and investment. As the source of about one-third of the Vi's funds, and the only source to cover both developed and developing countries and all geographic areas, the Development Account project can take credit for this achievement.

This outcome has been achieved largely by a constant emphasis on networking (between the Vi staff in Geneva and members, and between members) that has facilitated the two-way dissemination of knowledge between universities and the largely one-way (so far) dissemination of knowledge from the Geneva-based institutions (notably, but not exclusively, UNCTAD) and the members.

One of the results has been an increase in the quantity and enhancement of the quality of postgraduate teaching materials and relevant research. It is easier at this point in time to provide quantitative indicators on the quality of the teaching materials (which have been peer reviewed) than of the research, which is only just starting to be published in formats that allow the level of citations to be measured. If the funding of the Vi continues (see below), it would be sensible to set up a regular monitoring of research outputs to include, but not necessarily be limited to, citation analysis.

UNCTAD expertise has been an important ingredient in several ways. Professionals have contributed to written materials prepared under the project, they have peer reviewed research proposals and other written outputs by the staff of member universities, and they have provided some direct inputs to teaching in some of the members. According to the testimony of members, the Vi has succeeded in ensuring that more (sometimes, much more) UNCTAD documentation is available in member universities than was previously the case.

Although it is a question for UNCTAD rather than the evaluator, it has been necessary to speculate about the priority that the institution should give to fostering teaching and research on the subjects within its mandate. This is because support for the tertiary education sector is an inherently on-going commitment. The achievements of the Development Account project will be eroded over time if they are not reinforced through a continuation of similar activities. Teaching materials become out of date – especially those at the postgraduate level that are focussed upon *policy*, which is constantly evolving. New events require new research (which will also feed into updated teaching materials). So far, for example, for obvious reasons the Vi's outputs do not deal in any detail with the implications for member countries of the global economic crisis; they need to begin to do so to maintain relevancy. Many similar (if less prominent and pressing) examples could be given.

Within developed country (and some middle income country) universities, faculty are expected to keep abreast of events and disciplinary developments and update their own materials, which can then be used by other Vi members (if there exists a wish and a need to do so). But a pre-requisite for this to happen is that developed country members (and those middle income universities with the capacity to maintain teaching materials unaided) find it worthwhile to remain active network members. There is also the UNCTAD perspective to consider: the Vi has been evaluated as providing a good, additional vehicle for disseminating the organisation's perspectives, but this will continue to apply only for as long as it continues to supply knowledge of various kinds. If existing teaching materials are updated and new ones created without a Vi input there is no reason to suppose that they will give particular attention to the UNCTAD perspective rather than, say, those of other agencies better able to fund the dissemination of their views.

In other words, the Vi project is only 'sustainable' if UNCTAD and the external funders decide to sustain it. As must have been recognised when the project was launched, support for tertiary education is not a 'self-sustaining' activity. The 'outsider's view' given in this evaluation to the place of the Vi in UNCTAD priorities is that it would appear to be to be central. A knowledge based institution needs to work closely with all of the main centres for

creating knowledge, of which universities form an important part. Despite its relatively small size, the Virtual Institute has ‘added value’ because it has developed a niche that responds to the specific needs of member universities and offers them a range of support that only an UNCTAD-based operation can do.

## Recommendations

The Development Account project has made a central contribution to an activity that has institutionalised and extended professional links between UNCTAD and universities in all parts of the world. But if this achievement is to be maintained, it must be reinforced. The longer term success of the Virtual Institute project depends, therefore, upon securing continuing *external* funding to the most critical activities and further strengthening the *internal* support.

The ‘most critical’ activities are as follows.

1. **Ensuring that academics from both developing and least developed countries, regardless of region, can play an active role in the network.** Not only is this a desirable objective in its own right, but it appears also to be a critical factor in maintaining the interest in the network of the academically stronger members. For developed country universities (that must use scarce internal resources to support active membership) it is essential that the network include members that are plausible research partners and can identify talented students who would contribute to their specialist courses. This means that UNCTAD must ensure that active membership by middle-income countries remains viable by securing funding for them where this cannot be obtained from other sources. For the middle income countries, too, a broad global membership is central to the value of the Vi network since it allows collaboration with colleagues in other parts of the world besides their own region.
2. **Maintaining the ‘virtual’ network through face-to-face meetings.** Many of the Vi’s most valuable functions require little or no external funding. The web site, the intermediation and between members and the Geneva-based institutions, and the email-based collaboration between members can all continue so long as UNCTAD allocates staff to the Vi. But the network will atrophy without such virtual activities being supplemented through activities that require financial resources, such as attendance at meetings for which travel and subsistence costs are unavailable from the own resources of many members. It is the regular professional development and networking workshops that have been organised under the Development Account project that are the most central of these. If possible, these should be extended to include an annual conference in Geneva for all members, perhaps supplemented by irregular, specialist meetings hosted by member universities.
3. **Ensuring that the Vi staff can continue to act as academic brokers.** In order to perform the function of ‘adding value’ to what the stronger university members could achieve on their own, the staff of the Vi need to be able to contribute intellectually to the dialogue and not to act merely as a central post office. This they have demonstrably achieved over the review period – despite the fact that none of the job descriptions for the unit include academic requirements that would be considered normal for such a role. Success has been achieved because of the qualities of the incumbents, but since this cannot be guaranteed in future it is important that efforts to seek external funding for activities (1) and (2) above be accompanied by internal change so that donors can have confidence their money will continue to be well spent.

Given the tasks to be performed, 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. The desirable requirements would be publications in relevant academic journals, service as a journal referee (or editorial board member), and experience in the administration of postgraduate teaching.

## Annex 1: Simplified logical framework

Intervention logic	Objectively verifiable indicators	Source of verification	Risks/Assumptions
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>The project aims to help developing country universities enhance their teaching and research of trade, investment and development issues and hence better respond to the training and policy analysis needs of national decision makers. This should ultimately lead to the strengthening of national capacities to formulate and implement home-grown economic policies.</p>		<p>Final evaluation of the project</p>	<p>University members of the Virtual Institute committed to contributing actively to project activities and implementing project results. Qualified consultants available and delivering on time. UNCTAD divisions and partners from other international organizations prepared to contribute to the project.</p>
<p><b>Expected accomplishment 1</b></p> <p>The development of up-to-date specialized generic teaching materials on issues of priority interest to the participating universities</p>	<p>Quality and timely availability of generic teaching materials</p>	<p>UNCTAD, Vi members</p>	
<p><b>1. Main activity: Selection of topics and development of generic teaching materials</b></p> <p>Participating universities will be surveyed through different means (questionnaires, phone and face-to-face interviews, online discussions) in order to identify the most pressing needs for materials to be developed to address the gaps in their curricula. These needs will be prioritized to include possibly one topic within each of the following categories: (a) globalization challenges and development strategies; (b) international trade and trade policies; (c) transfer of technology and related investment and IP issues; and (d) trade and transport facilitation and the use of ICTs for development.</p> <p>Flexible modular materials on the selected topics will subsequently be developed, suitable for use in the university context. Such materials may consist of manuals, annotated reading lists, student activity workbooks, case studies, simulations, etc. depending on what the appropriate teaching method is for the specific topic. UNCTAD will coordinate and facilitate the process, including provision of relevant background documents, substantive supervision and pedagogic advice/support. Members will provide feedback on the materials using the online facility on the Vi website.</p>			
<p><b>2. Main activity: Development of an online facility for sharing and communication among universities</b></p> <p>Based on the experience with the current Virtual Institute site, additional conceptual and technical development work will be undertaken that will make the site graphically richer and more user-friendly. Additional features will also be developed to allow for enhanced ways of sharing and communicating among members. For example, more possibilities will be provided to give feedback on work in progress, and additional tools will be made available for online debates and discussions. This development will be accompanied by the production of a manual for users, and training and coaching for Vi members.</p>			
<p><b>Expected accomplishment 2</b></p> <p>An increased capacity of universities to develop their own localized material using the generic materials as well as their own original research that will help make the materials relevant for their country situations</p>	<p>Generic materials localized and integrated into curricula of Vi members</p>	<p>UNCTAD, Vi members</p>	
<p><b>3. Main activity: Localization of teaching materials and their integration into university curricula</b></p> <p>So that the materials are relevant and can serve to prepare qualified decision makers knowledgeable of the interrelations between the world economy and the situation in their own country, it is imperative that they be adapted to the local context and include elements, information and data of relevance to the country in which they will be used. For this purpose, local research will be conducted to supply the required information (data, case studies, etc.) and</p>			

adjust/complement the generic materials accordingly. This will, at the same time, help stimulate home-grown research. Translation of relevant parts of the generic materials into the local language will also be part of the localization process if required.

Universities will decide which of the generic teaching materials that have been produced are the most useful for the enrichment of their curricula and will subsequently localize them. It is expected that 10 localized versions of different generic materials will be produced. Before being selected for support to produce a locally relevant version of the material, the university will have to make it clear where and how the end-product will be used and make a commitment to integrating it into the curriculum. Experience with localization, including its methodological aspects, and with the use of the materials will be systematically surveyed and summarized in an analytical report.

4. Main activity: Professional development/networking workshops

Two professional development/networking workshops will be organized for the participating universities. The programme and thrust of the workshops will be defined so as to reflect the needs of the project, as well as to address the demands expressed by the members.

To underpin the activities of the project, the first workshop will concentrate on the presentation and discussion of generic teaching materials developed under Activity 1, and on the preparation of implementation of Activities 3 and 5. The online facility for sharing and communication (Activity 2) will also be launched and initial training provided on its use.

The workshop in the second year will be more of a stocktaking exercise and focus on the experience and results of project activities aiming to enhance the teaching and research capacity in participating universities. Have localized teaching materials been used in regular university courses and what was the experience? Has the localization helped generate original research and teaching materials in participating universities? Has S-S cooperation taken place via the joint projects? Lessons from this experience will be reflected in a report and fed back into the design of strategy and activities of the Virtual Institute for the coming years.

Expected accomplishment 3

Increased S-S cooperation and networking through meetings, online communication and the experience of formulating and conducting joint projects

Joint projects among Vi members conducted and contributed to project objectives.

UNCTAD, Vi members

5. Main activity: Selection and implementation of joint projects among universities

To-date experience of the Virtual Institute shows the potential for cooperation among the members of the network, in particular South-South cooperation. Members are involved in teaching and researching similar topics, they are more or less advanced in the same areas, possess specific country knowledge that is not readily accessible to outside the country, and hence have the interest to share and cooperate. This has been demonstrated during the first Virtual Institute meeting where a lot of learning and sharing was taking place and where the members also had the possibility to find institutional/personal affinities in terms of similar interests. The meeting concluded that cooperation among members is one of the areas that should receive priority attention.

Participating universities will therefore have the opportunity to prepare and submit proposals for joint projects. Such projects may take the form of a more advanced university (for instance, one that already has a graduate international trade programme) helping another university that is only beginning to develop such a programme, or a "partner" arrangement such as joint research, etc. The projects can include travel to the partner university, including fellowships or staff exchange. The latter will make it possible to utilize the knowledge that exists within the network so that members can familiarize themselves with the contexts in which other members work, the different perspectives and ways of teaching and researching in other countries, and contribute to each other's activities. Up to 10 projects for support will be selected based on the quality of the proposal, its expected impact on the university and the network, and its contribution to trade capacity building in each of the participants' countries. A report will be produced on completion of Activity 5 to draw lessons from this type of cooperation among universities.

## Annex II: Localizations of Virtual Institute teaching materials 2007-2009

(localizations not completed at end May 2009 shown in red)

	Material	University	Completed	Content
1	Commodities	Senegal (University of Dakar) <i>In French</i>	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new module on National policies, as well as international cooperation of Senegal in the commodity area (with data and bibliography)</li> <li>• A new module on Market access and market entry conditions for Senegalese agricultural products, and policies and options to overcome obstacles facing Senegalese exporters in this area, (including bibliography, data and discussion questions)</li> </ul>
2		Mauritius (University of Mauritius) <i>In English</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to Modules 1 and 5, with information/cases of Mauritius (e.g. on micro-finance and Islamic trade finance) and from other sub-Saharan African countries, with a particular focus on the SADC region</li> <li>• Creation of a second simulation exercise for SADC regional trade negotiations.</li> </ul>
3		Argentina (FLACSO) <i>In English</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A module on the political economy of “high-tech commodities, with a focus on genetically modified soy in Argentina, including a case study on the company Monsanto and its legal case with the Argentine government</li> </ul>
4	International Investment Agreements	Colombia (Universidad del Rosario) <i>In English and Spanish</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to modules 1-4 of the package, with examples, cases and data relating to Colombia (in English)</li> <li>• Translation of Modules 1-4 into Spanish</li> </ul>
5		Jordan (University of Jordan) <i>In Arabic</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation into Arabic of key concepts, definitions, illustration/boxes in Modules 1-4 of the generic material</li> <li>• Applied analysis of Module 1 on Economic aspects of FDI to the Middle East region</li> <li>• A new chapter on national FDI policies, agreements and performance of Jordan and a comparison with the region</li> <li>• Addition of readings pertaining to the region</li> </ul>
6		Mauritius (University of Mauritius) <i>In English</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to Modules 1, 2 and 4 with information on Mauritius, other individual countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in some instances on the region; on some issues own empirical analysis was undertaken.</li> </ul>
7		Belarus (Belarus State Economic University) <i>In Russian and English</i>	2008	<p>A new module on FDI in Belarus and neighbouring countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following issues are covered: (1) FDI stocks and flows in CIS countries; (2) Economic impact of FDI on Belarus and other economies in transition; (3) Economic determinants of resource-seeking, efficiency-seeking, market-seeking or assets-seeking investment in Belarus; (4) National FDI policy as a determinant for FDI inflows in Belarus; (5) International regulations in national FDI policies of Belarus and CIS</li> <li>• Addition of discussion questions and practical exercises related to the country and the region (on the impact of a foreign investor on Belarus; assessment of the business environment in Belarus, and regulations in Belarussian BITs regarding financial transfers out of the country)</li> <li>• Addition of nationally/regionally relevant readings and statistical information</li> </ul>
8		Vietnam (Foreign Trade University)	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to Module 1 with information about the definition of FDI and its forms in Vietnamese law, analysis of FDI trends and determinants in Vietnam in the context of the region, as well as evaluation of the impact of FDI data on the country; including examples and cases</li> </ul>

		<i>In Vietnamese</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to Module 2 with information about the attitude in Vietnam towards FDI, and information about relevant national legislation and international agreements concluded by the country</li> <li>• Translation of Modules 1 and 2 into Vietnamese</li> </ul>
9	Competitiveness and development	Belarus (Belarus State Economic University)  <i>In Russian and English</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of four new modules on: (1) Economic potential and competitiveness of the Republic of Belarus; (2) Competitiveness of Belarussian companies; (3) Belarus in international ratings and indices; and (4) Competitiveness of the Belarussian IT services sector</li> </ul>
10		Jordan (University of Jordan)  <i>In Arabic</i>	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of country-specific test questions</li> <li>• Translation into Arabic</li> </ul>
11		Russia (Higher School of Economics, Moscow)  <i>In Russian</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of exercises for Module 2 (Approaches to competitiveness): competitiveness of the tourism sector in Russia; conditions for increasing Russian competitiveness; determinants of competitiveness; schools of theories on competitiveness; competitiveness of pharmaceutical companies; competitiveness of less economically advanced countries</li> <li>• Addition of exercises for Module 3 (Assessment and measurement of competitiveness): labour productivity in Russia; real exchange rates; commodity structure of Russian trade and competitiveness; Global Competitiveness Index and Russia; comparison of different competitiveness indexes; competitiveness of Russian regions</li> <li>• Development of a simulation exercise on the competitiveness of the IT sector in Russia. The exercise simulates negotiations between the government, which has to decide on its policy with regard to the IT sector; a TNC investing in the sector; the association of Russian IT providers; trade unions; representatives of the agricultural sector; representatives of economically dynamic Russian regions; and an opposition party</li> </ul>
12	Regional trade agreements	Chile (University of Chile)  <i>In Spanish</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation of all five modules into Spanish</li> <li>• Addition of content to Module 1 (Regional integration and developing countries): introduction of an additional classification of RTAs and its application to Latin America</li> <li>• Addition of content to Module 4 (Negotiating an RTA: key issues and features): information about the Chile got organized to negotiate the FTA with the US)</li> <li>• Development of an additional module about regional integration initiatives/RTAs in Latin America: Latin American Free Trade Association; Central American Common Market; Andean Community; MERCOSUR; FTA for the Americas; Union of South American Nations (UNASUR); and the analysis of strategies of Chile and Mexico with regard to RTAs; list of FTAs signed by Chile; list of alliances for WTO negotiations with participation of Latin American countries; bibliography and web references</li> </ul>
13		Egypt (Cairo University)  <i>In English</i>	2009	<p>Additions to all modules; application of generic modules to Arab countries/Egypt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module 1 (Regional integration and developing countries): on typology, motivation, economic effects, historical classification and main Arab RTAs; checklist for evaluating RTAs</li> <li>• Module 2 (Economic theory and regional trade integration): on welfare effects of preferential and no-preferential trade liberalization; on regional integration, economic growth and development</li> <li>• Module 3 (Interface between RTAs and WTO): on WTO rules of RTAs, regulatory issues and RTAs</li> <li>• Module 4 (Negotiating an RTA: key issues and features): on negotiating North-South vs. South-South RTAs</li> <li>• Addition to Module 5 (RTA analysis using international databases): on Indices for assessing RTAs</li> </ul>

				Addition of questions/questions for discussion to the localized modules
14		Kenya (University of Nairobi) <i>In English</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of locally relevant data and analysis to Module 1 (Regional integration and developing countries): economic integration in Africa; East African Community (EAC): history and current state (trade flows, trade regimes); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA): history, objectives, institutions, achievements and benefits; challenges</li> <li>• Addition of locally relevant data and analysis to Module 2 (Economic theory and regional trade integration): impact of EAC on Kenyan trade; expected impact of Economic Partnership Agreements; Kenya's policy on regional integration</li> </ul>
15		Russia (St. Petersburg State University) <i>In English</i>	2009	<p>Development of three case studies of RTAs relevant for Russia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): general information about the project and its setting between the EU and Russia; analysis of CIS and Russian trade; measuring the degree of integration (using share of intraregional trade, mutual investments, migration); Free Trade Agreements in the CIS region; assessment of the scheme using the Sussex Framework</li> <li>• Eurasian Economic Community: history, political and institutional framework; provisions; measuring the degree of integration (trade, investment, migration/remittances); shallow and deep integration; assessment of the scheme using the Sussex Framework</li> <li>• Belarus-Russia Union State: legal and political framework of mutual cooperation; structure of the union state; trade, investment, migration; WTO accession, assessment using the Sussex Framework</li> </ul>
16		Russia (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) <i>In Russian</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation of Modules 1-4 into Russian</li> <li>• Development of an additional module on RTAs in the CIS region: economic and political context; development of trade flows (commodity structure; geographical structure); stages in the development of economic integration in the CIS; the Commonwealth of Independent States; the Eurasian Union; the Belarus-Russia Union State; conclusions (factors impeding integration...)</li> </ul>
17		Uganda (Makerere University Business School) <i>In English</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition to Module 1 (RTAs and developing countries): elements on regional integration in sub-Saharan Africa (East African Community)</li> <li>• Addition to Module 2 (Economic theory and RTAs): Case study - Assessment of Trade and welfare Effects for Uganda under the East African Community</li> <li>• Addition of exercises (data analysis of gains from North-South and South-South integration; assessment of the EAC treaty; calculation of a period for an RTA to generate net gains), questions for discussion (policies for Uganda to maximize benefits from the EAC CU), and readings</li> </ul>
18	Trade and poverty	Mauritius (University of Mauritius) <i>In English</i>	2008	<p>Additions to Modules 1, 2 and 3 of the material as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A case study on trade, trade liberalization and poverty in Mauritius</li> <li>• A case study using an econometric model on economic growth and poverty reduction in Mauritius: the effects of sectoral components of growth</li> <li>• Data about the contribution of domestic demand expansion, import substitution and export expansion to economic growth in Mauritius</li> <li>• A case study on Mauritius in the global value chain for textiles and clothing</li> <li>• References/readings regarding the situation of Mauritius with regard to the above</li> </ul>
19	Trade data analysis	Chile (University of Chile)	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation of modules 1 - 3 into Spanish</li> <li>• Addition of Latin American examples, cases and data</li> </ul>

		<i>In Spanish</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of readings relevant to the Latin American context</li> </ul>
20		Jordan (University of Jordan)  <i>In English</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The addition of a separate module providing an extended case study on Jordan, analysing Jordan's trade and trade performance.</li> <li>• The addition of exercises and questions relating to the added module</li> </ul>
21	Transfer of technology	Russia (Moscow State Institute of International Relations)  <i>In English</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additions to Module 1 (Key issues in the transfer of technology) on Russia's innovation system, Industrial Technology Alliances, measures to facilitate technology transfer (including technological parks and technology transfer through trade in IT)</li> <li>• Addition to Module 2 (The technology transfer process) on Russia's participation in International Scientific and Technological Projects</li> <li>• Addition to Module 3 (IPRs and technology transfer) on IPRs in FTAs and their links with technology transfer (case of IT and biotechnology)</li> </ul>
22		West Indies (University of West Indies)  <i>In English</i>	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 technology-oriented case studies of relevance to the diversification and export expansion in the Caribbean economy (Grenada: nutmeg; Barbados: solar heating system; Guyana: rum)</li> <li>• Addition of Caribbean relevant information about competition policies in relevant modules</li> </ul>

## **Annex III: Terms of Reference**

### *Description of Duties*

The evaluation will assess the work of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute's UN Development Account project regarding capacity building on trade and development for universities in developing and transition countries, in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, performance and impact in the context of the project's objectives. The evaluation should take into account the results of monitoring exercises conducted during the implementation of the project, as well as any additional assessments undertaken by the evaluator, as appropriate.

### *Modalities of evaluation*

The evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator who is familiar with trade and development issues and has relevant university teaching/research experience. The final report is the sole responsibility of the evaluator. The evaluator will work under the methodological guidance of the Evaluation and Planning Unit (EPU), Office of the Secretary-General, UNCTAD.

Evaluation activities will be composed of:

- (i) Study of relevant materials available
- (ii) Collection and analysis of evidence
- (iii) Interviews with direct beneficiaries
- (iv) Interviews with representatives of member States in Geneva as necessary
- (v) Interviews with relevant UNCTAD staff
- (vi) Questionnaires as required

### *Scope of evaluation*

The evaluation will cover the activities of the project during the period 2006-2009.

The evaluation should first examine the performance of the project in accordance with the logical framework in the project document. Based on the outcomes of such examination, as well as other relevant materials and research, the evaluation should address the following issues and any other issue that the evaluator finds pertinent:

### *Evaluation criteria*

The evaluation should examine the following elements:

- (a) Relevance
  - Whether the decisions to develop and localize specific teaching materials and undertake specific joint projects and other project activities were based on appropriate criteria, taking into account the needs of beneficiaries and possible impact and effectiveness of such assistance;
  - Whether UNCTAD, and in particular the Virtual Institute, adequately assisted the beneficiary universities in view of its expertise, experience and contacts.
- (b) Impact
  - To what extent the project facilitated the enhancement of teaching and research of policy-relevant trade and development issues at beneficiary universities;
  - Whether the geographical coverage of the project is adequate.
- (c) Sustainability
  - Whether the project was designed and implemented in a way ensuring maximum sustainability of its impact in terms of enhanced teaching and research of trade and development issues at beneficiary universities.
- (d) Effectiveness
  - Whether the project achieved planned objectives and produced expected results;
  - Whether the scope of the project was adequate in view of the existing resources and expertise;
  - Whether effective coordination of internal resources and expertise was demonstrated to optimize outcomes for beneficiary universities.
- (e) Efficiency
  - Whether the project used the most efficient means in delivering the activities, for example, through the use of local resources when appropriate;

- Whether the project as a whole was managed efficiently, with proper accounting of associated costs, and with an effective management of internal resources and expertise;
- Whether project schedules were met or activities implemented within reasonable time parameters.

### *Monitoring/Progress control*

The consultant must keep the Evaluation and Planning Unit of UNCTAD informed of the progress made in the evaluation. The consultant will also present a draft report to the Evaluation and Planning Unit before the final submission, giving sufficient time for the verification of factual findings (approximately one week).

### *Expected Output*

The final output of the evaluation is a report comprising the following elements: (a) introduction and a brief description of the project; (b) assessments according to the criteria listed above; and (c) strategic and operational recommendations drawn from the assessments. In the report, all the assessments made by the evaluator must be supported by factual evidence, and/or well-substantiated logic. It follows that all the recommendations made by the evaluator should be supported by the assessments made. The evaluator is required to submit a separate list of those interviewed for the record. More detailed background of the findings, and/or supporting materials should be annexed in a supplement. The length of the report should be between 20 and 30 pages (10'000-12'000 words), excluding the annexes.

The deadline for the submission of the final report is 15 June 2009.

**Annex IV: List of people consulted**  
(in chronological order of interview)

<b>People Consulted</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Vlasta Macku	Chief, Virtual Institute
Joseph Clements	Virtual Institute
Susana Olivares	Virtual Institute
Fleur Claessens	Virtual Institute
Anthony Miller	Division on Investment & Enterprise, UNCTAD
Michael Herrmann	Division on Globalization and Development Strategies, UNCTAD
Raúl Javaloyes	Evaluation and Planning Unit, UNCTAD
Yuen Ching Ho	Evaluation and Planning Unit, UNCTAD
Marco Fugazza	Trade Analysis Branch, Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, UNCTAD
Olle Östenson	Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, UNCTAD
Ralf Krüger	Division on Investment & Enterprise, UNCTAD
Sawkut Rojid	University of Mauritius
Pamela Coke Hamilton	Inter American Development Bank
Sanoussi Bilal	European Centre of Development Policy Management, Netherlands
Olga Trofimenko	St Petersburg State University, Russia
Serguei Sutyryn	St Petersburg State University, Russia
Tabitha Kiriti – Nganga	University of Nairobi, Kenya
Valentina Delich	Latin American School of Social Sciences, Argentina
Ahmed Ghoneim	Cairo University, Egypt
Li Yang	University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China
Zhao Zhongxiu	University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China
Sascha Furst	EAFIT University, Medellín, Colombia
Catherina Pereira Villa	Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia
Roubina Juwaheer	University of Mauritius
Felipe Munoz	University of Chile, Santiago de Chile
Geoffrey Bakunda	Makerere University Business School, Uganda
Jan Priewe	University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany
Pierre Sauvé	World Trade Institute, Switzerland
Ramon Torrent	University of Barcelona, Spain
Marcel Vaillant	Universidad de la República, Uruguay
Andre Jordaan	University of Pretoria, South Africa
Talib Awad	University of Jordan
Antonio Carlos Macedo e Silva	University of Campinas, Brazil
Anna Abramova	Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Russia
Aderito Notico	Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique
Mehdi Fakheri	School of International Relations, Tehran, Iran
Oleg Savelyev	Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia
Dao Ngoc Tien	Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam,
Alokesh Barua	Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
Michele Barbieri	Bocconi University, Milan, Italy
Alena Petrushkevich	Belarus State Economic University, Minsk
Neil Paul	University of West Indies, Barbados
George Gandye	University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Ibrahima Thione Diop	Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal