



UNCTAD Virtual Institute

10 years of support to academia

Building capacity for trade and development

“Harnessing trade for inclusive and sustainable development requires evidence-based policies that adapt to the structural challenges facing developing countries. Through the Virtual Institute, UNCTAD equips academia to provide decision makers with policy-relevant research and expertise necessary to pursue successful integration into the global economy.”

MUKHISA KITUYI, Secretary-General of UNCTAD



UNITED NATIONS



I feel that the Virtual Institute represents a model for capacity building which is unparalleled. It is not only a mechanism, it's not only a channel, but it is a forum where people get together and learn. I think the Virtual Institute is the United Nations at its best."

FREDRIK ARTHUR, Gender Equality Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway

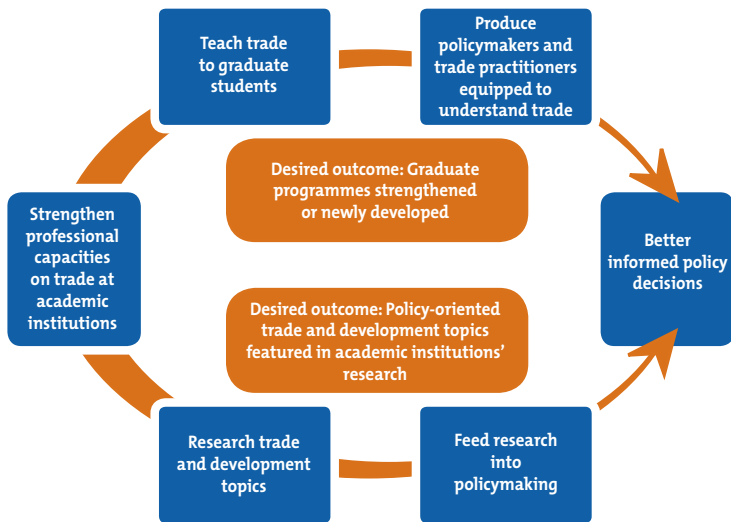
Vi@10: Our objective



The Virtual Institute (Vi) is UNCTAD's programme of support to academia. Launched in June 2004 with universities representing five countries, by June 2014 the Vi had grown into a true global network of 101 universities and research centres in 52 countries.

The ultimate objective of the Vi is to help developing countries design evidence-based policies that result in inclusive and sustainable development. To this end, the Vi enables academic institutions to prepare qualified decision-makers and provide analyses to underpin the formulation of economic policies in their countries.





The first track of the process focuses on building a critical mass of qualified practitioners at the national level by helping universities develop or upgrade their academic offer, and enhancing the capacity of academic staff to teach trade and development topics.

The second track links research with policy by equipping academics with subject-matter knowledge and the analytical tools necessary to undertake policy-relevant research for their countries, and facilitating the exchange between researchers and national decision-makers.

June
2004
June
2014



Vi@10: *vi membership*

Vi institutional membership is open to universities and research centres involved in the teaching and research of trade and development topics. Associate membership is open to students, government officials, trade practitioners and other stakeholders.

Benefits

The Vi offers a palette of capacity-building and networking activities aimed at strengthening teaching and research on trade topics. These include: curricular advice, teaching materials and trade publications, local teaching material adaptations, study tours, professional development workshops and courses, fellowships, videoconference presentations, and information technology-enabled services.



ARGENTINA	CANADA	INDIA	PERU	UNITED KINGDOM
AZERBAIJAN	CHILE	ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
BANGLADESH	CHINA	ITALY	SENEGAL	URUGUAY
BARBADOS	COLOMBIA	JORDAN	SLOVENIA	VIET NAM
BELARUS	CZECH REPUBLIC	KENYA	SOUTH AFRICA	ZAMBIA
BELGIUM	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	MAURITIUS	SPAIN	ZIMBABWE
BENIN	EGYPT	MEXICO	SWITZERLAND	
BOTSWANA	ETHIOPIA	MOROCCO	THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	
BRAZIL	FRANCE	MOZAMBIQUE	TOGO	
BULGARIA	GAMBIA	NEPAL	UGANDA	
BURUNDI	GERMANY	NIGERIA	UKRAINE	
CAMEROON	GHANA			

For members in developing countries, support from the Vi has generated new programmes and courses, scholarships to study abroad, consultancy assignments from the government, enriched university libraries, wider publication opportunities and improved career paths, among other benefits.

101
members
52
countries

“The Vi is a space where a lot of opportunities and support for professional development arise. We found intellectual partners in the development debate, we participated in the localization of teaching materials, contributed our research to regional projects on integration and corporate social responsibility, and benefited from fellowships for two of our young professors.”

Valentina Delich, Vi member coordinator, FLACSO, Argentina





The Vi linked me with academics from other countries, provided academic and research possibilities which I know I could not have gotten on my own, boosted my academic career and placed me on a higher and faster track, and made people from other countries take note of our institution.”

ANDRÉ JORDAAN, Vi member coordinator, University of Pretoria, South Africa



For members in developed countries, the global scope of the network and its direct link to UNCTAD contributes to raising the standing of their programmes, and has been a catalyst to obtain funding from external sources for academic projects, enrich their student bodies, contribute to international publications, and add a development perspective to their course offer.



“With the Vi we managed to secure funds from the German Academic Exchange Service for a project which has helped us support three Vi member universities to launch new Master’s programmes and to bring several dozen researchers and lecturers to Berlin and to participating partner universities.”

Sebastian Dullien, Vi member coordinator, HTW Berlin, Germany

“Joint scholarships with the Vi made possible the participation of two great students from Ethiopia in the Universitat de Barcelona’s Master in International Economic Law and Policy (IELPO LL.M.). They have later been accepted and granted scholarships to one of the more internationally recognized and prestigious PhD programmes, that of Vi Italian member, Bocconi University. It is very rewarding to help progressively build a critical mass of high-level experts in developing countries like Ethiopia.”

Ramon Torrent, Vi member coordinator, Universitat de Barcelona, Spain



Key players in the network are international organizations, which partner with the Vi to share their expertise with academia. By leveraging contributions from its partners and developed country members, the Vi has been at the centre of a learning network, facilitating the transfer of vastly more knowledge than would be possible just from the programme's in-house resources.

“The support of the Vi to our TRADE team’s knowledge, skills and exposure over the last three years played a key role in the success of our application to the WTO Chairs Programme.”

Wilma Viviers, Vi member coordinator, North-West University, South Africa

“Partnering with the Virtual Institute has helped us reach out to academic circles efficiently and effectively. The Virtual Institute has an excellent established network of academic institutions and capacity building framework to which we can contribute with content on market analysis and online tools. Partnering with the Virtual Institute has enabled us to reach more beneficiaries and use our resources most efficiently.”

Helen Lassen, Manager, Capacity Building Programmes, International Trade Centre





It is hard to imagine how we could have managed to launch our professional Master of International Trade degree programme without support from the Vi, in terms of teaching material, and actual involvement in teaching.”

FRANCIS MATAMBALYA, former Vi member coordinator, University of Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania

Vi@10: Support to teaching

Curricular advice

The Vi enables universities to update their existing courses or develop new programmes in the trade and development fields by providing curricular advice on their design, structure and content. In its first 10 years, the Vi witnessed the launch of new Master's in Benin, Belarus, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam, and contributed to the development and/or upgrade of courses at universities in Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, France, Kenya, Nepal, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo and Uganda. Vi support continues, as universities in the Gambia, Kenya, the Russian Federation and Uruguay plan new programmes in the near future.

Teaching materials and localizations

To address the lack of university-level learning resources focusing on the experience of developing countries, the Vi develops teaching material that is accessible, up-to-date and policy-oriented. The material is used in whole or in part for course preparation or as background reading. Based on recent feedback from the network's teachers, 90 per cent of the respondents used the Vi teaching materials with an average of 540 students.

To make the material more relevant to their countries' realities, the Vi supports universities in adapting – or “localizing” – the material to their specific needs, by adding local case studies and data or by translating

13
teaching materials
33,000
students
29
countries



the material into their own languages. Since 2004, the Vi has produced 13 sets of teaching materials, which have generated 30 adaptations to the contexts of 16 countries, as well as translations into Arabic, Chinese, French, Nepali, Persian, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

“In our country, gender disparity is very high and women’s participation in decision-making is not satisfactory. The Vi is supporting our adaptation and translation of the teaching material on Trade and Gender, which will serve to anchor the topic in our Master in International Cooperation and Development.”

Prakash Sharma, Vi member coordinator, Mid-Western University, Nepal

Since 2007, the Vi has also been contributing to the enrichment of members’ libraries with semi-annual shipments of UNCTAD publications and Vi teaching materials and resources. So far, the Vi has distributed 21,700 books, research reports and CDs to the membership.

“Before we joined UNCTAD Vi, our graduate library did not have enough resource material but now we have a lot thanks to the hard copies that we usually receive from UNCTAD Vi. There are now also more members of staff and students who are involved in research work using the material received.”

Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga, Vi member coordinator, University of Nairobi, Kenya





Study tour participants get direct exposure to current international trade topics and benefit from the knowledge and expertise of global specialists in international organizations while in a privileged educational setting in which real decisions affecting world dynamics take place.”

MARIA ALEJANDRA GONZALEZ-PEREZ, Vi member coordinator, Universidad EAFIT, Colombia

48
study tours
1,300
students

Study tours

Training successful policymakers, negotiators and practitioners cannot be done in the classroom alone. Vi study tours offer students and teachers tailored learning programmes in Geneva that translate theory to real-life trade policymaking situations, and engage participants with the international experts and government representatives involved in trade and development. Ranging from half-day to two weeks, the Vi has hosted more than 1,300 students through 48 study tours and visits since its inception.





"The world economy and globalization are moving rapidly, and China is getting closer to the other countries of the world. But there are still lots of issues for us to learn and practice to better compete in the global market."

Participant of a study tour for China

"The first and most important thing I learned is that if you go abroad, you should come back to your country with the knowledge you acquire. That is because the development of our country is in our hands - no one else can do anything."

Participant of a study tour for Colombia





Vi@10: Support to policy-relevant research

Professional development and mentored research

37
workshops

865
participants

60
countries



16
mentored
research projects

15
countries

Vi workshops and online courses equip academics with subject-matter knowledge, help them identify policy-relevant research questions and methodologies, and facilitate an exchange between participating researchers and policymakers.

“With the help of the material from the workshop, my students got more interested in international issues. The thing that delighted them was the practical and relevant examples of LDCs given in the materials. This made them to be aware of where their country is in terms of poverty and think very hard on the strategies to be adopted in order to alleviate poverty in the country. I found this very useful because these are the people who are about to join the work force, and they will join it with positive mind of alleviating poverty in their country.”

Reginah Thetsane, National University of Lesotho

The Vi believes that the measure of success of its professional development activities lies in the extent to which the graduates apply the new knowledge in their work. Therefore, the Vi provides funding and mentoring to the learners so that they can use their new skills in the development of research aimed at informing national policies. This approach has allowed researchers from 15 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe to produce national case studies dealing with foreign direct investment, extractive industries, and trade and poverty, among others.



After completing my course, I am eager to do policy research on trade and poverty, such as on the impact of exchange rates, trade facilitation measures and transport infrastructure, because our country, Myanmar, is just opening the doors, changing a lot and needing right policies to get growth and reduce poverty.”

THIDA KYU, Yangon Institute of Economics, Myanmar

In 2012, the Vi offered its first online course, with the purpose of training researchers on the empirical analysis of the impact of trade on poverty. The course was a resounding success, graduating 77 researchers from 45 developing and transition countries and generating 11 mentored research projects developed in cooperation with national policymakers. To respond to the high demand for this mode of capacity building, the Vi delivered a second edition of the course and works with UNCTAD divisions to develop new courses on topics such as trade and gender and non-tariff measures.

2
online courses
146
participants
67
countries

In addition to enhancing the capacity of participating academics, professional development activities have attracted new members for the network, kick-started new academic offers at participants’ institutions, produced research projects and publications, and contributed to building a relationship of trust between academia and government.



“I learned that we need to understand the development plans of the government in order to address issues which can guide policy decisions. We also need to involve policymakers, especially at the inception and at critical stages of the research, so that they ‘buy in’ and feel ownership of the results and facilitate implementation.”

Isaac Shinyekwa, Economic Policy Research Centre, Uganda





This research (impact of a trade agreement between Morocco and the West African Economic and Monetary Union) is very concrete and of great interest to policymakers. Such evaluations should precede the conclusion of all agreements the country may sign.”

MAMOUR NIANG, First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Senegal

61
academics
19
countries



Fellowships

To enhance the skills of individual researchers and facilitate their access to experts and resources available at UNCTAD and other international organizations, the Vi offers fellowships to academics from developing and transition countries, either on a sponsored or self-funded basis.

“During my fellowship at the Vi, I developed the curriculum for my university’s upcoming Master of International Economics and Trade. The interaction with the Vi experts helped me expand the breadth of the course content from the narrow area of international economics and commodity trade, to other critical subject areas – globalization, investment, facilitation and logistics, trade in services, and financial systems, among others – which are critical to international trade.”

Mark Korir, Vi member coordinator, Moi University, Kenya



The fellows come to Geneva to work on concrete teaching or research projects of priority interest to their countries, and benefit from mentoring and coaching from UNCTAD and other Geneva-based experts, as well as from access to libraries and information resources at UNCTAD and Vi partner organizations. As with all Vi activities, results of the fellowships are systematically shared with Geneva-based country representatives to facilitate use of the research findings in policymaking or to secure support for the projects developed.

“Development is a series of good decisions. Such decisions need to be supported by forward-looking analyses, and it is important to inspire researchers to undertake research in this field.”

Paul Batibonak, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Cameroon

“The Vi fellowship programme is very beneficial both at the individual and the collective level and it is imperative to continue it. At the individual level, by putting at their disposal academic resources, it allows lecturers/researchers from African countries to implement research projects, which helps them advance in their academic careers. At the collective level, the outcomes of these projects can help formulate economic policies in general and trade policies in particular that would be susceptible to improve the level of development of these countries.”

Mouhamadou Lamine Dial, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal





Vi@10: *Support to academic cooperation and networking*

4

Vi meetings

86

participants

29

countries

As well as directly supporting academia in developing countries, the Vi encourages exchanges among its academic institutions in the North and the South. To generate and facilitate cooperation among its members, the Vi membership comes together in Geneva to share their research in progress, establish working relationships and generate ideas for joint activities between network members. Such activities cover many areas, including research projects, cooperation on the production of teaching materials, professional development, staff exchanges and curricular advice.



The Vi also leverages support from universities in developed and middle-income developing countries, which offer study and research opportunities as well as teaching assistance to other members of the network. These academic offers, and those available from the Vi's extended network of partners are disseminated regularly through e-mail alerts.



The Vi helped our university launch the country's first Master's degree programme in International Economics and Trade Policy in English, providing professional development for our staff, teaching materials and advice on the courses and topics to be included. Vi networking further strengthened the programme by facilitating our association with the Vi German member, HTW Berlin, which sponsored eminent visiting professors and granted fellowships for our teachers to pursue their studies at HTW and upgrade their teaching skills there."

ALENA PETRUSHKEVICH, Vi member coordinator, Belarus State Economic University

Cooperation within the network has generated regional research projects and workshops in Latin America, as well as studies and teaching materials developed between academics in Jordan and Egypt, Viet Nam and Colombia, China and Senegal, and India and the Russian Federation. Joint projects also benefited many institutions in the South, as members from Germany, Spain and Switzerland found partners in the Vi network for capacity-building projects funded by their government agencies or the European Union.

"We have developed a project with a Chinese Vi member that is still going on. Thanks to the Vi, our academic cooperation with China, which would probably have been non-existent, is now expanding."

Aly Mbaye, former Vi member coordinator, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal

"We at the Centre for International Trade and Development have participated in joint research projects with other developing country universities. This creates a link which so far has been missing in traditional networks."

Manoj Pant, former Vi member coordinator, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

3
joint research
workshops
170
participants
10
countries



15
joint projects
21
countries



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FIRST NIGERIAN VI FELLOW LOOKS AT OIL PRICES-AGRICULTURE-WELFARE EFFECTS

Contributed by Vlasta MACKU
Monday, 25 November 2013 00:00



Moses Oduh (pictured, second from right), of Vi core member, the University of Nigeria, was granted a six-week Vi fellowship to work on a paper titled "The welfare effects of oil price transmission to domestic agricultural commodities in Nigeria." Sponsored by the Government of Finland, Oduh's fellowship took place October 14 to November 22.

"The Vi fellowship surpassed my expectations," Oduh said. "It was an opportunity for me to have a broader and deeper understanding of international trade flows, commodity prices and the domestic economic realities."

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Last Updated on Thursday, 12 December 2013 13:31

FIFTH COLOMBIAN STUDY TOUR HIGHLIGHTS TRADE IN SERVICES

User Rating: / 2

Poor Best [Rate](#)

Contributed by Evelina Kauppinen
Monday, 25 November 2013 00:00

FEATURED MEMBER



VIDEO HIGHLIGHT



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Vi@10: Access to knowledge through IT-enabled services

3,800
users

7.5
million annual hits

Although many of the Vi's activities require face-to-face interaction, the virtual element is essential in sustaining the network. From the very beginning, the Vi has taken advantage of the cost-effectiveness and immediacy of IT-based services to "connect" its more than 3,800 members, and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge.

Website

At the core of the Vi website is a digital library containing more than 1,300 publications and learning resources from members, UNCTAD, and Vi content partners, such as the WTO, the World Bank and UN regional commissions. Members can upload their own research, and subscribe to receive e-mail alerts when new publications in their area of interest are added. The site is also a gate to 70 curricula shared by the membership, 70 multimedia teaching packages and more than 80 document sets derived from Vi study tours and workshops. Ever-growing in popularity with academic, governmental and civil society stakeholders, website users have grown from about 250 in 2008, to more than 3,800 in 2014.



Vi has proven to be very useful and instrumental in connecting UNCTAD research and analysis with sustainable capacity-building activities.”

UN JOINT INSPECTION UNIT, 2012 Review of management and administration in UNCTAD

Multimedia teaching resources

The Vi delivers the latest economic thinking from Geneva directly to the screens of the membership by developing audio-visual learning materials based on presentations by international experts from UNCTAD and other international organizations. Some members use the materials to enrich and upgrade their lectures, while others play the videos in class to encourage student debate on current economic issues. Since 2008, the Vi has developed 70 multimedia teaching resources featuring Geneva-based international experts and Vi academics.

70
multimedia
resources
135,000
total hits

Comprehensiveness

Challenges:

- All trade-related regulations of a country must be identified
- Each country has a different institutional framework
- Country-expertise is indispensable

Centralized sources/publications
All laws, regulations, acts, decrees, etc. across all government institutions in one centralized publication

Decentralized sources
Regulations published by various ministries and institutions that regulate trade

Other sources can help

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http://vi.unctad.org

SLIDE 15 OF 37 PAUSED 00:03 / 01:38



Videoconferences

64
videoconferences
2,500
participants
12
countries

Vi videoconferences facilitate the integration of UNCTAD's research into the programmes of its member institutions, and create a mutually beneficial link between the organization's experts and academia. Often including Geneva-based policymakers in the discussion, the videoconferences provide lecturers and students with up-to-date information and an opportunity to debate the implications of UNCTAD flagship publication findings for their countries. Since 2008, more than 2,500 teachers and students have participated in 64 videoconferences organized by the Vi.





This (dialogue) allows for a direct exchange that is of central importance to the process of economic development.”

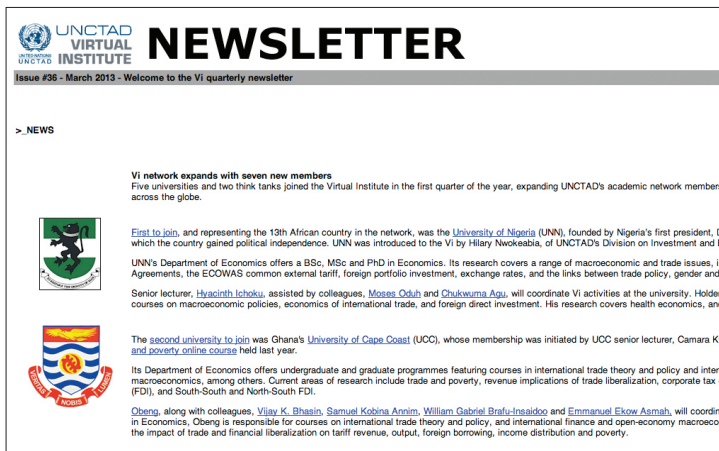
H.E. SAMEH SHOUKRY, former Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Quarterly digital newsletter

The Vi publishes quarterly newsletters to keep member institutions and individuals up to date on network activities, research and teaching opportunities, and newly available resources, web links and publications. Greatly appreciated by the membership and other stakeholders, the newsletter provides essential transparency to the programme’s activities. Forty editions have been published since the programme’s inception.

40
quarterly
digital newsletters
5,600
recipients

Available on the Vi website, the newsletter is currently distributed to more than 5,600 individuals.





Overall the Inspector was impressed by the state-of-the-art standard and the relevance of Vi services, as well as their impact on capacity-building in the developing countries concerned. The Inspector is of the view that projects such as the one undertaken and implemented by the Virtual Institute of UNCTAD should be further encouraged, supported and strengthened.”

UN JOINT INSPECTION UNIT, 2012 Review of management and administration in UNCTAD

Vi@10: Features of the Vi

1

The Vi is a cost-effective way of building sustainable local capacity on trade

The Vi has a strong multiplier effect in participating countries because it invests in local lecturers and researchers who subsequently deliver courses and undertake analysis in their countries. By providing support over a sustained period of time and focusing on the development of local capacity – as opposed to relying on outside expertise – and supporting departments and institutionalized academic programmes – as opposed to individuals – the Vi ensures the sustainability of its activities.

2

The Vi is a partnership programme

The Vi maximizes its effectiveness and impact by partnering with other trade-related international organizations and through the support of its own member institutions in the North, resulting in a larger array of services for its beneficiaries.



Finland has been supporting the Virtual Institute since 2006. The Virtual Institute is one concrete step in encouraging partnerships between developed and developing countries. Supporting the Virtual Institute is, in our view, a good investment.”

HELI HAUTALA, former First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Finland

3 The Vi makes the most of information technologies

Making effective use of IT to connect its global academic network helps the Vi maintain its low costs, extend its reach and maximize its impact. Vi IT-based services provide easy access to training, publications, teaching materials, and lectures from international experts, as well as facilitate exchange and cooperation among the members.

4 The Vi is “owned” by its beneficiaries

The Vi takes into account members’ needs in designing customized services and activities. It ensures that it remains demand-driven through continuous monitoring and assessment of its services and regular evaluation of its events and materials.

Vi@10

2004 – 2014

As we celebrate our first decade, our gratitude goes to the Governments of Canada, Finland, Japan, Norway and Spain, as well as the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the One UN Fund for Tanzania, whose trust and financial contributions allowed us to make the Vi a success.



UNCTAD
VIRTUAL
INSTITUTE

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