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- Virtual Institute
- Training Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda
- TrainForTrade
- E-Tourism Initiative (January-July 2008)

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DIVISION ON TECHNOLOGY AND LOGISTICS

KNOWLEDGE SHARING, TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT BRANCH

**TRADE-RELATED CAPACITY-BUILDING
THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCES
DEVELOPMENT**

**TRAINING
AND
CAPACITY-
BUILDING**

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In 2008, the global economy began a retrenchment as a result of the international financial crisis, and as several economies witnessed a slowdown in growth and the possibility of recession. The effects of economic contraction on budgetary expenditures in developed countries may affect the level of development support they provide. These same effects will also heighten the need for knowledge and local expertise in developing countries to steer themselves through the crisis, to lay down foundations for sustainable economic growth and development, and to protect themselves against future crises. In this regard, the availability of locally grounded training, education and research in the areas of trade, economics and development will further gain in importance.

UNCTAD's twelfth quadrennial conference (UNCTAD XII) held in Accra, Ghana, in April 2008 had two positive impacts on the work and activities of the Knowledge Sharing, Training and Capacity Development Branch (KSTCD). First, the Accra Accord, which establishes the UNCTAD's mandate for the next four years, reaffirmed the value of training, education and research for economic development, and granted the Virtual Institute, the Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda and TrainForTrade a consolidated mandate to continue and expand their activities in the above fields. Second, the e-Tourism programme was moved into another division to strengthen the work on small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, allowing the KSTCD Branch to focus exclusively on training and capacity-building. Whilst this document contains information about the e-Tourism activities for the first half of 2008, its focus and perspective are on the programmes of the Virtual Institute, the Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda and TrainForTrade.

The three capacity-building programmes of the KSTCD Branch address challenges in developing country training and research institutions through different and complementary activities, tailored to the needs of their specific target audiences. The UNCTAD Virtual Institute on Trade and Development works mainly with academia and to some extent research institutes in developing countries; the Course on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda (so-called Paragraph 166 course) is UNCTAD's flagship training course for policymakers on trade and development; and TrainForTrade works with trade practitioners, trade officials and private enterprise.

The three programmes have existed for several years and are now well embedded both in the work of UNCTAD and at the national level in many participating institutions. Their usefulness has been consistently highlighted by both beneficiary and donor countries at intergovernmental meetings of UNCTAD, and in external evaluations and reports of advisory groups on the KSTCD Branch's activities. Experts participating in these groups have repeatedly praised the work of the three programmes, especially for their focus not just on training, but on capacity development at the local level.

UNCTAD believes that access to external technical expertise alone is not enough to develop the skill and knowledge capacities of developing countries. The KSTCD Branch therefore emphasizes the need to develop and support local institutions to ensure the long-term sustainability of its capacity-building efforts. To this end, the three programmes of the KSTCD Branch have integrated various tools and methods into their work, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs) and networking arrangements, as well as drawing on their pedagogical advantages in the creation of high-quality materials and the delivery of training. The KSTCD Branch also leverages various partnerships, both across divisions within UNCTAD and with partner institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and United Nations regional commissions.

This document summarises the main achievements and best practices in the course of the KSTCD Branch's activities in 2008.

2. THE VIRTUAL INSTITUTE

The UNCTAD Virtual Institute (Vi) works with academia in developing and transition countries to strengthen their teaching and research of trade and development, and facilitates cooperation between the members of its university network in both “the North” and “the South”.

In 2008, the network grew from 23 members to 28⁽¹⁾, including the addition of three northern institutions to diversify the Vi's support to universities in the South and encourage greater networking and cooperation. The network also admitted two new members in Latin America.

In the same period, the Vi has also:

- Provided professional development opportunities to developing country teachers and researchers at workshops and through fellowships;
- Supported joint research between member institutions and launched the concept of mentored research projects for universities from least developed countries (LDCs);
- Updated its teaching materials as well as supported their adaptation to suit members' local conditions;
- Provided advisory services to developing country universities on course development and delivery, as well as access to expertise in international organizations in Geneva through several study tours;
- Developed multimedia teaching resources for use in the classroom or online, including expert presentations and short films on relevant topics;
- Launched a new website, which now has almost 1,000 registered users, receives almost 1,300 individual hits a month and records over 1,700 monthly downloads of its online materials;
- Advocated for stronger links between researchers and policymakers and facilitated communication between the two groups through dialogue activities such as round tables;
- Created new promotional material, including a short film, to help promote the programme and increase its financial resources in line with the demand from the current and prospective beneficiary universities; and
- Thanks to the generous contribution from the Governments of Spain and Finland, expanded activities for Latin America and LDCs.

⁽¹⁾ Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Buenos Aires, Argentina; Belarus State Economic University (Minsk); University of Campinas, Brazil; Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada; University of Chile (Santiago de Chile); University of International Business and Economics, Beijing, China; EAFIT University, Medellín, Colombia; Cairo University, Egypt; Université Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble, France; University of Applied Sciences, Berlin, Germany; Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; School of International Relations, Tehran, Iran; L'Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi, Milan, Italy; University of Jordan (Amman); University of Nairobi, Kenya; University of Mauritius (Réduit); Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo, Mozambique; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (Lima); State University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation; Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal; University of Pretoria, South Africa; Universitat de Barcelona, Spain; University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Makerere University Business School, Uganda; Vadym Hetman Kiev National Economic University, Ukraine; Universidad de la República, Montevideo, Uruguay; Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam; University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus, Barbados)

Professional development: workshops and fellowships

Vi regional professional development workshops aim to enhance the knowledge and research skills of participating academics on specific topics covered by Vi teaching materials. The objective is to facilitate the use of these materials in regular teaching programmes at universities, and to encourage policy-oriented research on these topics. For this reason, as well as examining substantive issues such as investment or commodities, the workshops also cover methodological questions and data problems. Finally, in line with the Vi's emphasis on policy relevance in research, the workshops tackle questions of communication with policymakers and their involvement in the research process, and provide networking opportunities between the two groups.

This year's regional professional development workshop in Uganda focussed on the topic of foreign direct investment (FDI), covering both economic aspects and legal elements, in particular international investment agreements (IIAs). Twenty-four academics from 10 English-speaking African countries, mostly LDCs, attended the workshop, where they also had the opportunity to share their expertise, present their own research on the topic and get feedback from the resource persons and their peers. The workshop was co-funded by the Governments of Spain and Finland.

James Njuguna (Kenya) presents his research paper at the investment workshop in Uganda, November 2008



On the round table with policymakers

"My expectations were exceeded because it was very interesting to get the views of the policymakers. To me, the meeting was very fruitful because the two sides were able to say their views, as far as research is concerned."

Uganda workshop participant⁽²⁾

"I am thinking about writing a proposal for the Vi funding (Vi mentored research projects) and in this respect I want to contact the Ugandan Investment Authority to see in which area they would like someone to conduct policy relevant research."

Richard Sebaggala, Uganda

⁽²⁾ Comments given in the report are taken from feedback questionnaires where participants had the option of giving or not their names

On the workshop in general

"I have added to my knowledge in the sense that the country experiences, challenges and success are information I would have not read in text book. Learning from experts in the field has opened new possibilities of looking at the problems in FDI and finding possible solutions."

Victoria Ndzingo-Anderson, Botswana

"I got comments for improving my study on FDI and also materials that will enlighten my knowledge on FDI. A number of opportunities in terms of networking in research with some participants and the Vi were secured."

Charles Domician, Tanzania

The Vi has been concerned about the follow-up to its training workshops, with regard to the use of the knowledge and resources acquired, in participants' regular work. The Vi has worked hard to "embed" its training after the workshop has ended: this is partly achieved by the Vi's membership model, which offers long-term support. However, following feedback from previous workshops, this year the Vi launched a scheme of mentored research projects (MRPs) that will support workshop participants from LDCs in conducting research projects on the topics dealt with at the workshops. MRPs will be offered on a competitive basis, and successful applicants will have their project supported by an UNCTAD mentor, leading to submission of the final paper for publication or use in policymaking.



Madina Guloba (Uganda) and Martha Hailu (Ethiopia) at the investment workshop in Uganda

One year on... Impact of the trade and poverty workshop, Tanzania, 2007

"The question of Uganda signing the EPA brings in many questions on what this would mean for our environment, poverty reduction, employment, investment and food security. Hence, the workshop helped point out ways of how to capture some of these questions. Since I was new to the area of trade, the workshop made it easy for me to know more about the various research engines/databases and their usage, which has been useful in my other research work, say analysing the growth potential of Uganda, gender mainstreaming in cross-border trade in the Nile Basin, and during certain stakeholder workshops in the country."

Madina Guloba, Economic Policy Research Centre, Kampala, Uganda

The Vi also offers smaller scale national level professional development workshops. This year the Vi supported its member university in Viet Nam, the Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, by delivering, in cooperation with the UNCTAD's investment division, a two-day workshop on intellectual property rights and their developmental implications for teachers at the university, as well as other partner universities in the country.

Now in its third year, the Vi fellowship scheme also provides support to young academics seeking to develop their skills as researchers or prepare new teaching courses for their institution. This year, four fellows were accepted to work at UNCTAD for a period of four to six weeks. Three of the fellows, from LDCs in Africa (Uganda, Tanzania and Senegal) were supported by a grant from the Government of Finland and one fellow, from the Russian Federation, participated on a self-funded basis. All four fellows received support and guidance from the Vi secretariat as well as mentoring or advice from UNCTAD and other experts in their field of study.

The fellows worked on topics such as (a) the constraints facing the coffee exporting sector in Uganda; (b) the impact of financial liberalisation on the financial sector in Sub-Saharan Africa; (c) competitiveness of Senegalese enterprises and the use of ICTs: case study of call centres; and (d) e-commerce and international trade. During their time in Geneva, fellows also had the opportunity to make contacts and network with experts in various organisations as well as discuss some of the issues facing their countries in international negotiations, for instance the WTO, with the permanent missions in Geneva. At the end of their stay, the fellows presented their research to an invited audience from UNCTAD and their country missions.

On the impact of the fellowships

"I have a paper that I'm developing, and it's almost complete... That is quite a beautiful outcome! And secondly, I've gained more skills and more knowledge. That is something that I've gotten on very many aspects of the paper — How to write it, how to structure it, how to improve it, how to target it for the different people that I'm trying to speak to, and also the continuous appraisal that is here."

Francis Ejones, Vi fellow, 2008

The work of the membership: joint members' projects and the

local adaptation of training materials

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