

UNCTAD Vi Workshop on Trade Empirics Using STATA: University of Nairobi

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Using STATA at the University of Nairobi, in Kenya from the 6th to the 9th of August 2013. The workshop brought together 25 researchers from the University of Nairobi, Moi University and Strathmore University.

The training was done by the Vi economist, Cristian Ugarte, and it took place at the Chiromo Conference Centre at the University of Nairobi. It was requested and funded by the University of Nairobi and the workshop also opened its doors to researchers (12 members of staff) and 13 postgraduate students (PhDs and Masters Students) at the University of Nairobi which is the core member and Moi University drawn mainly from the Schools of Economics and Agricultural Economics. The Workshop was opened by Prof. Mutoro: the Deputy vice chancellor Academic Affairs who thanked UNCTAD Vi for helping in building capacity building in the University. He also thanked the UNCTAD Coordinator and the School of Economics for facilitating the workshop.

The workshop aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of participating academics in the use of the STATA statistical software package for trade analysis. The course was an introductory to the empirics of trade using the STATA econometric software. The theoretical framework was based on the gravity model which the academics and students can use in their research in the evaluation of impacts on trade. The workshop involved both theoretical and hands on exercises.

Participants had the following expectations with regard to the workshop:

- To enhance their knowledge of STATA, its features and functionalities, and be able to effectively use it for the analysis of trade-related issues (e.g. model estimations, commands)

- To learn about panel data analysis and about the gravity models (e.g. how to construct datasets for the gravity model, how to use the gravity approach in bilateral trade)
- To learn more on quantitative methods specific to international trade; to improve their knowledge of trade methodologies
- To learn about data sources, how to select, manipulate and interpret trade data
- To learn more/update their knowledge about the WTO, regional trade agreements and trade
- To network

The participants were asked to rate (on a scale from 5 ó expectations considerably exceeded ó to 1 ó expectations not at all met) the extent to which the workshop has met their expectations.

The average rating was 4.5, meaning that the event has exceeded or considerably exceeded participants' expectations

All the participants reported that the workshop had exceeded their expectations. For example, some participants indicated the following in their evaluation of the course:

“I have never been in a Stata class before and this was just fantastic. I would love to do it again for other models and new packages. Another said: “My expectations were met even beyond my limits. The instructor deeply covered the intended areas and went far ahead to engage us in a lot of practical exercises, which facilitated the understanding of the concepts. While another indicated: “My expectations exceeded 5 because the trainer did an excellent work. He has trained us on how to use the Stata software and even the interpretation of the results.”

The participants were asked to rate (on a scale from 5 ó considerably added to the knowledge ó to 1 ó did not at all add to the knowledge) the extent to which the workshop had added to their knowledge of trade empirics and STATA.

The average rating of 4.6 showed that the workshop had more than added to the participants' knowledge. For example, some of the participants gave the following in their evaluation of the knowledge aspect of the course:

“The knowledge obtained is how to apply Stata in trade (the gravity model). I found it interesting that Stata can even give me the diagrammatic representation of my data, mean, variance and standard deviations. This is of great help since it can be tiresome to look for these statistics manually if the data is large. Another said: “I got to know the shortcut commands. Basically all that we learnt was interesting in the sense that it was all new to me; while another said: “I learnt how to analyze data from a large data set without necessarily using all the data while at the same time making the results replicable. This was very interesting. Another commented that “The most interesting part of Stata is how the commands do the analysis and that the analysis can be done by a click. I can now do my research work perfectly.”

The following information/knowledge was considered for potential use in research: theoretical foundations of the gravity model; panel data analysis; and basic model estimation using STATA.

Most of the students said they would use the research tool in the PhD or Masters theses while the members of staff said they would use it together with other tools to analyse data. They also indicated that the tool would help them in drawing policy conclusions from the research findings.

However, the main comment by participants relating to the workshop was that the time was too short. They suggested that the duration should be extended from 4 days to 1 or even 2 weeks and to have more than one resource person.

In conclusion, one of the participants commented: "I thank all those who planned for this important training. Many thanks go to Prof. Tabitha Kiriti-Nganga, Mr. Cristian Ugarte and the UNCTAD Virtual Institute, for such a wonderful training."