

2020 ANNUAL EVALUATION SYNTHESIS REPORT

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC is the only international agency dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Formed in 1964, ITC is the focal point for trade related technical assistance within the United Nations system.

For all of ITC's interventions, evaluation is a key instrument to ensure accountability against expected results and to support organizational learning. Evaluations inform ITC's decision-making in policy, programme and project management, with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing ITC's contributions towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This is an independent publication by the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU), which established a team formed by the Head of the IEU (Mr. Miguel Jiménez Pont), one independent external consultant (Ms. Sara Vaca) and an outside evaluation reviewer (Mr. Wayne MacDonald) for overall quality assurance.

www.intracen.org/evaluation

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Trade Centre concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. This document has not been formally edited.

November 2020
Original: English

Joint Advisory Group on the International Trade Centre
Fifty-fourth session
Geneva, 25 November 2020

© International Trade Centre 2020

Visual Summary



2020 AESR learnings about ITC's interventions

RELEVANCE

Fosters trade via nimble, adaptable and innovative approaches

EFFECTIVENESS

Builds on technical excellence in purposeful project management

IMPACT

Demonstrates results when government and business support ecosystems play their pivotal role

EFFICIENCY

Creates high-value added with small resources

SUSTAINABILITY

Drives sustainable development when building on local ownership

GENDER & EQUITY

Achieves gender transformation, although on a limited scale



High level conclusions

- Projects are aligned with ITC's Results Framework, which is working
- Good practices observed in achieving gender and equity results through trade, to be further mainstreamed
- More detailed project theories of change could support project management, strengthen monitoring and facilitate collecting results evidence
- Sustainability is supported by in-country BSO partners, ownership and trust, fostered through longer-term engagement, detailed country knowledge, and good exit strategies
- Field project management and coordination is key
- Alignment with UN Reform at country level is happening but needs more structure
- ITC is a good investment, as viewed through the lens of evaluation



Recommendations

1. Mainstream sustainable development good practices
2. Increase capacity to utilize Theories of Change
3. Enhance simplification, harmonization and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system
4. Enhance project results sustainability
5. Build on good project field office performance and coordination
6. Implement corporate strategy to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	vii
Background	1
Introduction	1
Methodology	2
Findings	7
Relevance and Coherence.....	7
Effectiveness	10
Impact.....	12
Efficiency	18
Sustainability.....	21
Gender.....	25
Conclusions and Recommendations	28
Past Recommendations	34
Implementation Status	34
Transformative Effects	35
Annexes	38
Annex 1: Summary of Evaluated Reports	
Annex 2: 2019 AESR Management Response	
Annex 3: Status of 2018 AESR recommendations	
Annex 4: Case Studies on the Effect of Recommendations	
Annex 5: Implementation status of recommendations (2012 – 2020)	
Annex 6: List of documents reviewed	

Table of figures

Figure 1: 2020 AESR methodological design	2
Figure 2: ITC Results Framework	3
Figure 3: Types of evaluation used in 2020 AESR	4
Figure 4: List of evaluations and reports	5
Figure 5: ITC's Intermediate Outcomes: Expected change defined for categories of partner	13
Figure 6: Overview of recommendations implementation status of as of March 2020	35

Acronyms

AAT	Advancing Afghan Trade
AATP	Advancing Afghan Trade Project
AESR	Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report
AfT	Aid for Trade
AfTIAS	Aid for Trade Initiative in the Arab States
BSO	Business Support Organizations
CCITF	Consultative Committee of the ITC Trust Fund
CM	Country Managers
CTAP	Certified Trade Advisers Programme
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DaO	Deliver as One
DCP	Division of Country Programs
DFID	Department of International Development UK
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EIB	European Investment Bank
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HQ	Headquarters
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
IR	Inception Report
ITC	International Trade Centre
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
MARKUP	Market Access Upgrade Programme
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
NES	National Exports Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA	Non-Resident Agency
NTM	Non-Tariff Measures
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OIOS/IED	Office of International Oversight Services / Inspection and Evaluation Reports
PIGA	Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa
PCR	Project Completion Report
RESI	Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative
ROO	Rules of Origin
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SMEC	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Competitiveness (Framework)
T4SD	Trade for Sustainable Development
TA	Technical Assistance
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TFP	Trade Facilitation Program
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institution? (a type of BSO)
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRA	Trade-Related Assistance
TRTA	Trade-Related Technical Assistance
UN	United Nations
UN-CEB	United Nations Chief Executive Board
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDAP	United Nations Development Assistance Plan
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Framework
WOB	Women Owned Businesses
WTO	World Trade Organization
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project

Executive Summary

Background

- i. The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) has produced [Annual Evaluation Synthesis Reports](#) (AESR) since 2013. Compliant with ITC's [Evaluation Policy](#), the purpose of the IEU is to contribute to improving the performance and results of ITC in delivering trade-related technical assistance. The 2020 AESR is dedicated to this purpose.
- ii. For the 2020 AESR, evaluation reports carried out in 2019 are the main source of information. The scope of the AESR includes Independent Evaluations and reviews conducted by the IEU, self-evaluation carried out by ITC project managers, and external evaluations of ITC operations, commissioned by ITC funders (funder-led evaluations). They include final evaluations and midterm evaluations. The 2020 AESR has also analyzed previous AESRs since 2013. They have been used as a reference to this year's findings, to validate patterns and to enrich the lessons learned. As in previous years, the report includes messages emerging from Project Completion Reports (PCR).
- iii. Finally, the IEU took advantage of the occasion to conduct a survey on the utility of evaluation in the ITC with its evaluation stakeholders. The analysis and survey results are available in a separate document titled "Utility of Evaluation in ITC"¹, which is complementary to the 2020 AESR.

Key Findings

- iv. ***ITC's strategic and developmental relevance is high*** – This is evidenced by the important role played by ITC in national trade policy development, capacity building and networking. ITC positioning in Aid for Trade (AfT) is widely acknowledged and appreciated. ITC is viewed, as a nimble, adaptable and innovative strategic partner, dedicated to fostering inclusive trade.
- v. ***ITC has consistently demonstrated to be an effective partner*** – At outcome level, ITC brings changes linked to improving the enabling environment for trade, reinforcing Business Support Organizations (BSO) and boosting MSMEs competitiveness. Results were also reported in policy formulation and in poverty reduction, though these results are challenging to achieve and difficult to measure. These positive outcomes reflect the knowhow and technical expertise that ITC brings to address needs in collaboration with local partners and clients. Concerning sustainable development, ITC is on track to mainstream gender and equity (and other sustainable development dimensions) in its operations.
- vi. ***ITC value-added results have been both significant and impactful*** – ITC's interventions have had multiplier effects in terms of impact. These include supporting BSOs, which can have significant positive effects on return on investment, to the institutional and legal environment and for the MSMEs. National and Sectorial Export Strategies have also been critical in moving the needle to facilitate exports. However, the lack of detailed and effective project 'theories of change' can limit the outcome and impact focus of project management, by weakening the monitoring of intermediate changes and of the validity of assumed causal links.

¹ The document is available at: <https://www.intracen.org/itc/about/how-itc-works/evaluation-publications-and-synthesis/>

- vii. **Addressing complexity requires enhanced continuity and more scale** – The need for enhanced continuity and achieving more scale was observable at the country level and in successive, similar interventions that go beyond a single project cycle. ITC is on track for a more strategic participation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- viii. **ITC’s efficiency continues to be a good news story although challenges emerge** – While delays in implementing specific activities are not unusual, be it at the start or during the implementation of projects, these do not present major setbacks. ITC creates high-value added with small resources. However, despite proven flexibility, ITC operations sometimes face coordination and management bottlenecks. Other challenges linked to the structure and composition of field teams (often entailing short-term consultancies) can see core teams overstretched.
- ix. **ITC continues to make progress on sustainability** – Local ownership, including BSO partners, Export Strategies and national capacity are key factors that have contributed to sustaining results of ITC’s work. Nevertheless, it is an ongoing challenge to achieve this. An absence of explicit and updated exit strategies has weakened the likelihood of results sustainability for some projects.
- x. **ITC continues to actively follow-up on evaluation recommendations, resulting in continuous improvements in strategic planning, policy and programming** – Evaluation has demonstrated a transformative effect on projects, programmes and decision-making. Increasingly ITC relies on evaluation as strategic management function that brings considerable value-added.

High level Conclusions

- xi. The points below, synthesize a more detailed evaluation analysis presented in the Chapter on “conclusions”.
- xii. **ITC Intervention Model** – The technical excellence and strategic relevance of ITC interventions are confirmed. Aligned with countries’ priorities, ITC projects are also coherent with the ITC Results Framework, bringing consistency and convergence to the type of results sought and achieved. Projects evaluated were well aligned with the needs of the different categories of ITC beneficiaries (policymakers, BSOs and MSMEs). Evaluations generally confirm that the strategy is working. This is accomplished within the context of the entire ecosystem covered by the ITC Results Framework that involve active partnerships and significant changes for beneficiaries. ITC follows a pragmatic approach that suggests a rupture in previously observed silo behavior.
- xiii. **Mainstreaming of good practices** – Across different technical specialties, good practices are effective in achieving outcomes and intermediary outcomes in project-specific results chains. Building on experience and concrete achievements realized, corporate guidance could be developed to take advantage of these advancements across the entire project portfolio. The findings of this 2020 AESR indicate that there is particular scope for a transfer of best practice in pursuing gender and equity objectives. Evaluation observed that achieving gender balance is a first step, but not sufficient condition to ensure inclusiveness. The **SheTrades** programme uses trade actively and systematically to address the root causes of inequities, as a means for achieving transformative results for gender equity. Mainstreaming this good practice, when relevant, could add value to other projects. At a wider level, evaluation observes that, within different technical specialties, good practices are effective in achieving results and increasingly in measuring them. These too need to be more exhaustively identified and mainstreamed.

- xiv. **Project theories of change** – A theory of change is a results model, that shows the cause-effect chain through which development results are expected to happen. ITC has a corporate Results Framework, and Programme results models that are embedded in it. Each ITC project has a project logframe, which links through indicators to the corporate Results Framework. Based on its evaluation findings, IEU sees the need to enhance these high-level results chains with much more detailed and effective ‘theories of change’, especially at project level. Theories of change contribute to internal and external understanding and awareness of how individual interventions are meant to achieve outcome and impact level results. They reveal the conceptual model, including the causal relationships between and among intermediate and targeted, final outcomes, the relationships of activities to outcomes, and of outcomes to indicators. Developing this ‘hypothesis’ allows project teams and stakeholders to reflect on the intervention logic. It articulates a joint understanding of how interventions are supposed to work, and highlights the critical assumptions behind success. It also allows ongoing monitoring whether the ‘theory’ translates into reality. Building on the current Logframe practices, theories of change that are articulated in more detail, can be effective as an additional footing for project management, project team coordination, and performance measurement and evaluation.
- xv. **Project monitoring** – A strong project monitoring and performance measurement system permits the tracking and assessment of progress against agreed upon objectives, as well as of project risks. This implies the ability to provide good evidence for change, attributable to ITC interventions. Evaluations continue to highlight the deficiencies of ITC project monitoring systems in collecting and organizing sufficiently detailed performance information. Building on the current efforts to harmonize and standardize the measurement of attributable results, more advanced and effective monitoring plans could be developed and implemented in all projects to plan and assign project monitoring responsibilities within project teams, including in the field.
- xvi. **Project results sustainability** – ITC’s approach is progressively evolving from a project-focused approach, with a beginning and an end, to a longer-term engagement with the client and a process of constant adjustment and flexibility. From a sustainability perspective, many interventions cannot be considered as conclusive. Often, in addition to coming and successfully fixing a specified problem, they aim to pave the way to sustainability and impact rather than representing ends in themselves. When working with pilots, considerations of replicability (building on the project’s approach in other instances) and scaling-up (widening the number / range of beneficiaries reached) need to be embedded from the very beginning. Often, clear exit strategies were missing in the evaluated interventions. The lack of project exit strategies, even later in the project cycle, remains a concern. Although results’ sustainability depends on many factors, good exit strategies play an important role.²
- xvii. **Project management** – In recent years, ITC overall delivery has increased considerably, as well as the geographical and technical scope and average project size. Implementation is still facing challenges in the field. These are both predictable and unpredictable. Management teams have generally adapted with high motivation and technical innovation to these challenges. It exemplifies ITC’s flexibility to overcome design rigidity. Nevertheless, limitations in qualified and available human resources at the local level can create

² A key element in successful exits and ongoing sustainability is typically that there has been a comprehensive strengthening of the involved institutions, including producer led organizations like cooperatives and also institutions embedded in Ministries.

implementation constraints. Field staff structure and turnover,³ as well as overstretch at HQ level, have frequently affected delivery. Stronger and better-coordinated field management would facilitate project effectiveness and improve synergies. Time-intensive and complex HQ administrative processes are sometimes difficult to understand for field staff.

- xviii. **Countries' trust, ownership and partnership** – Most evaluated projects suggested the possibilities of long-lasting effects, even though this might require longer-term partnership and engagement. Change is a process that takes time to mature and materialize. ITC relies on extra-budgetary resources for its TRTA interventions. These are mainly project-focused, and relatively short-term in duration. Many challenges emerge that jeopardize interventions' sustainability and impact. Addressing the facets of complexity – policy coherence; partnership building' and coordination – implies long-term country engagement as well as local ownership and trust. ITC engagement and project horizons should be better matched to the change goals that countries pursue. Against this background, the evaluations indicated that ITC projects have generally operated with flexibility and adaptability to address the complex and generally weakly resourced environment in which they operate. However, from a sustainability and impact perspective, excellent country knowledge and longer country intervention time-frames are required to allow addressing complex and evolving goals. The work carried out to strengthen local BSOs, increasingly built into project design, will some go some way to supporting this.
- xix. **Alignment with UN Reform at country level** – Despite an increase in project size, and activities serving a wide range of developing and transition countries, ITC's worldwide programme footprint is relatively modest in terms of volumes at the country level. ITC is only one of the many actors in the ecosystems where it operates. Change processes entail long-term interaction with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders and other multilateral agencies. To achieve scale even as a small player, ITC has often carried out joint country interventions with other multilateral agencies. However, the degree of ITC's participation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework has been uneven and unsystematic. This has affected ITC's visibility at UNCT level and within the UNDS. ITC should have a clear and structured approach that guides participation.
- xx. **ITC is a good investment, as viewed through the lens of evaluation** – Across the entire ITC project portfolio, the work carried out on improving the performance of BSOs and their ecosystem, has had a positive impact. These results were felt in areas of policy, regulatory changes and institutional support, as well as on services provided to MSMEs. Similarly, when working on a NES with policymakers, inclusive partnerships with BSOs led to wealth creation at the MSME level through export diversification. Finally, the special attention to individuals and MSMEs enabled them to improve their confidence and ability to better connect with their business ecosystem and take advantage of new market opportunities. ITC's niche is relevant and clear. When put in practice, ITC's "Theory of Change" is all the more relevant, especially in a COVID World. Evaluation provides systematic evidence that ITC is relevant, agile and innovative. The bottom-line being that these attributes are indispensable to meet the challenges of the new (post?) COVID-19 reality.

³ With different types of short term and consultant contracts, and belonging to different divisions, hence having different reporting lines.

Recommendations:

- xxi. ***Mainstream Sustainable Development good practices*** – Building on the experience and concrete accomplishments in achieving sustainable development outcomes through trade development, (a) fully mainstream ITC expertise and good practices in the area of gender and equity into project planning and management arrangements for the entire portfolio, where applicable and (b) use the learnings, processes and tools acquired through the above-mentioned exercise, to mainstream expertise and good practices in other sustainable development dimensions.
- xxii. ***Enhance the capacity to utilize theories of change*** – Building on current Logframe practices, (a) Develop the ITC Results Framework into a more detailed Theory of Change for the next ITC Strategic Plan and, (b) increase Project Managers' capacity to utilize the 'Theory of Change' tool to be more results-focused and improve results monitoring and information collection about attributable changes in complex project environments.
- xxiii. ***Enhance simplification, harmonization and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system*** – Building on the ongoing efforts to improve the corporate M&E system, conduct an assessment of M&E practices across ITC's project portfolio to serve results-focused project management, learning and accountability and to enhance the simplification, harmonization and effectiveness of the corporate M&E system.
- xxiv. ***Enhance project results sustainability*** – Building on the need for long-term interaction with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders and other multilateral agencies, (a) identify in the project cycle, the potential for replication and scaling-up of the project, and (b) ensure the development and regular updating of exit strategies during project cycle, and their implementation.
- xxv. ***Build on good project field office performance and coordination*** – Building on the remote management experience resulting from COVID, (a) introduce an induction process in particular for project management staff in the field, to ensure they share a sufficient knowledge of ITC, and (b) identify and enforce protocols and good practices to work effectively through project field offices and to ensure good coordination among field personnel and among field and HQ personnel.
- xxvi. ***Implement corporate strategy to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks*** – Building on the management response to the "Delivery as One" evaluation, (a) Finalize and adopt a corporate strategy to engage more systematically in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and (b) enforce this strategy, including training requirements for ITC Country Officers about how and why to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

Background

Introduction

1. The ITC is a joint agency of the United Nations (UN) and World Trade Organization (WTO). It is based in Geneva. ITC's mission is to enable small business export success in developing and transition-economy countries. It provides, with partners, sustainable and inclusive development solutions to the private sector, Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) and policymakers.
2. This is the eight edition of the AESR. Its goal is to provide ITC management and staff, and ITC stakeholders, including member states and beneficiaries, with a synthesis of the key evaluation messages, for accountability and learning purposes. The AESR is a public document. It is presented at ITC's annual Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meeting to support a better-informed dialogue.
3. With this purpose, this AESR consolidates the findings of the evaluations of ITC's projects, programmes and policies conducted in 2019. Building on the analysis of previous AESRs, it puts the observed situation in perspective, to highlight trends, continuity and changes since 2013. It examines whether ITC interventions are making a difference (cause, affect, or contribute) to observed outcomes or impacts. It also tracks ITC's follow-up to previous years' recommendations.
4. The AESR focuses on a particular theme, highlighting progress registered by the organization in gender and equity issues, as well as the way to go for the mainstreaming of observed good practices in this area.
5. Similarly, the IEU reports quantitatively on the implementation of accepted or partially accepted recommendations of previous independent evaluations and analyses the qualitative effects of their implementation.
6. It is worth acknowledging that the 2020 AESR is describing a pre-pandemic COVID-19 reality as it covers evaluation conducted in 2019. The consequences of the pandemic for ITC's operations are still uncertain. However, as the 2020 AESR sub-title suggests, evaluation provides systematic evidence that ITC is relevant, agile and innovative. The bottom-line being that these attributes will be indispensable to meet the challenges of the new (post?) COVID-19 reality.

Methodology

7. **Approach** – The AESR leverages on the findings and learnings captured in the different 2019 evaluation reports and sources of information reviewed. Evaluation reports were analyzed as independent knowledge products. These were analyzed through the lens of transversal criteria that potentially cut across all of them, forming patterns that answer questions about ITC consolidated efforts.
8. The AESR used desk review as method, complemented by interviews with the IEU team members, and an online survey. The analysis triangulated and synthesized the results, which were commented upon by ITC management and then finalized into the AESR. The approach was based on a mix of analytical frameworks. The data was reviewed using these reference frameworks. Each piece of evidence was analyzed, capturing their main messages and examined against the learnings from AESRs since 2012:

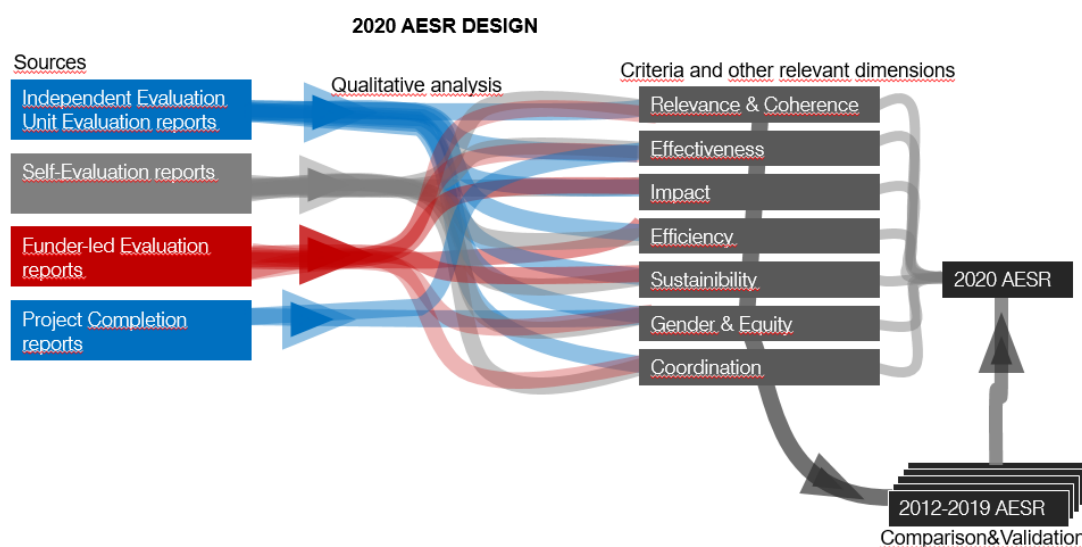


Figure 1: 2020 AESR methodological design

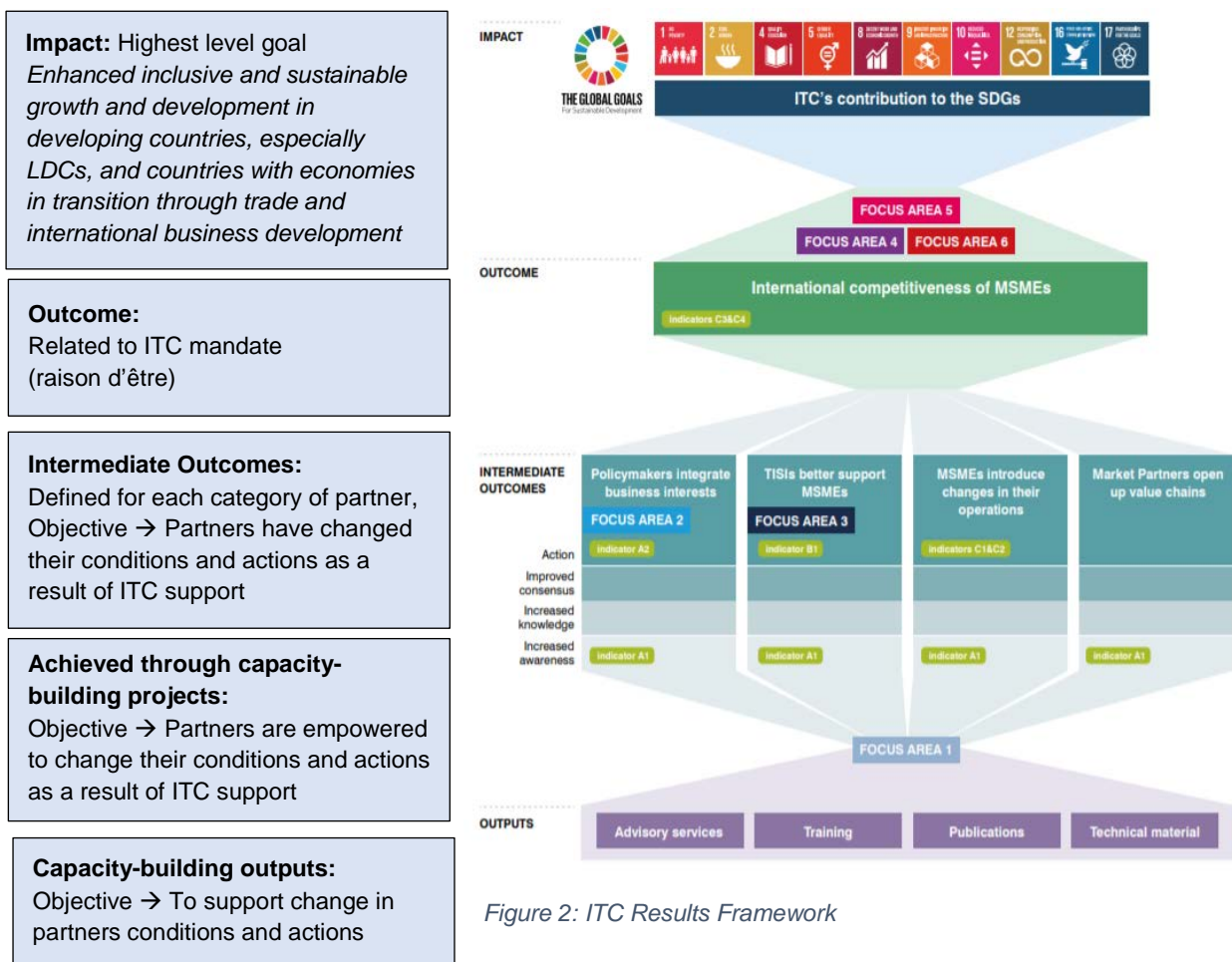
9. In terms of findings, 2019 evaluations were examined across three stages. The first level of analysis extracted their key messages. In the second stage, these messages were categorized using the DAC evaluation criteria and other relevant dimensions such as Coordination and Equity. In the third phase, all coded data was analyzed to find patterns and relevant messages, proceeding to synthesis and summary. Qualitative comparative analysis was conducted with all the pieces of evidence assessed, to identify commonalities, differences, patterns and trends. The overall approach captured achievements and facts that emerge organically. The analysis employed both inductive reasoning (based on predefined topics) as well as deductive reasoning (capturing emergent issues).
10. **DAC criteria** – Each evaluation criteria is described according to the updated definitions for the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria⁴ adding Coordination, Gender and Equity as supplementary analytical dimensions of relevance being examined within each of

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

the evaluation criteria, when applicable. Evaluation criteria have been customized to ITC's context and the ITC Evaluation Policy. Coherence was merged with Relevance as the reports were done using the former definitions. Excerpts from the reports and previous AESRs are reproduced for illustration to showcase the most relevant topics.

- Relevance – Is ITC doing the right thing to foster inclusive trade in a specific context?
- Coherence – How well does ITC interventions fit?
- Effectiveness – Is ITC's intervention achieving its objectives?
- Impact – What difference is ITC's intervention making?
- Efficiency – How well are ITC's resources used?
- Sustainability – Will changes triggered by ITC's intervention last?

11. **ITC Results Framework** – When analyzing ITC achievements, as they are captured by the evaluation reports, clear patterns emerge that correspond to the ITC Results Framework expected results (see figure below).



12. **Sources** – Evaluation reports carried out in 2019 are the main source of information. The scope of the AESR includes Independent Evaluations and reviews conducted by the IEU, self-evaluation carried out by ITC project managers, Project-completion Reports (PCRs), and external evaluations of ITC operations, commissioned by ITC funders (funder-led evaluations). They include final evaluations and midterm evaluations. Below is a recap of differences and commonalities (Figure 3) and the list of reports analyzed (Figure 4):

Types of evaluation reports

Dimensions	IEU evaluations	Self-evaluations	Donor-led evaluations
Evaluation commissioners	Independent Evaluation Unit	Project managers	Funders
Type	Centralized	Decentralized	Externalized
Evaluation manager	IEU	ITC Project Managers	Funders
Evaluation teams	IEU/external	External	Funders/external
Support (<i>when requested by the Project Manager</i>)		IEU (terms of reference, inception and final reports)	IEU support and coaching
Independence	Yes (internal)	Limited (internal)	Yes (external)
Evaluation object	Corporate, cross cutting issues, large projects and programmes	Projects	Projects
Approval/Quality checking	IEU	IEU	Funder
Guidelines	ITC	ITC	Funder
Number of 2019 reports	4	1	5

Figure 3: Types of evaluation used in 2020 AESR

13. Previous AESRs, since 2013 were used as a reference point for this year's report. As in previous years, the AESR includes messages emerging from PCR. These were summarized into the **2019 Synthesis of the PCRs** that covered projects that closed between 2017 and the first quarter of 2019⁵. The observations and recommendations found in the 2019 Board of Auditors Report were also taken into account.
14. Finally, the reports builds on the IEU follow-up mechanism to track the implementation of independent evaluation recommendations that were accepted or partially accepted and on a series of case studies conducted in consultation with project management teams to assess their effects.
15. **Limitations** – From a broad perspective, individual evaluation reports can be considered knowledge products. They serve a very clear purpose that includes among the many uses accountability and/or learning. They are conducted at a precise moment and for a concrete audience. However, they present inherent limitations when using them to answer how and why certain things happened and to assess the present status. These were not questions they were expected or able to answer when they were written.

⁵ PCRs were to be completed within a period of three months after the projects' end date.

List of evaluation and other reports

TYPE	REPORT	Referred in the text as:	GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE
Independent evaluations and products	Evaluation of ITC Participation and Performance in the UN Delivery as One System	Delivery as One Evaluation	Global
	Evaluation of the Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions' (TISI) Programme	TISI Evaluation	Global
	Midterm evaluation of Young Entrepreneurship Programme YEP project in Gambia	YEP Gambia Midterm Evaluation	The Gambia
	Evaluation of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme	Trade Facilitation Programme Evaluation	Global
	Synthesis of the Project Completion Reports (PCRs)	Synthesis of PCRs	Global
Self-evaluation	Final Self-Evaluation of Overcoming Trade Obstacles related to Non-Tariff Measures in the Arab countries (A538)	NTM MENA Self-evaluation	Arab Countries
Funder-led evaluations and reports	Mid-Term Review of the 'Advancing Afghan Trade' project implemented by the International Trade Centre (A764)	Afghanistan AAT Mid-term Evaluation	Afghanistan
	Narrative Report of Nigeria Food Africa, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) B449	Nigeria Food Africa Final Report	Nigeria
	Annual Review SheTrades Commonwealth, Department of International Development UK (DFID) B578	SheTrades Annual Review	Commonwealth countries, focus on Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Bangladesh
	Final Report Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (NRC) B571	Refugees RESI Report	Kenya
	Mid-term Review of Program for Support to Multilateral Aid for Trade Activities 2018-20 (Denmark)	Danish Mid-term Review	Global

Figure 4: List of evaluations and reports

16. As in previous years, the main limitation faced by the 2020 AESR is related to the heterogeneity of evaluations and their relatively small number. The 2019 evaluations present differences in multiple dimensions: different purposes, objects, scopes, and timing (midterm and final evaluations). Sources were also heterogeneous in terms of methodological frameworks.⁶ As a result, capturing common patterns is always challenging, even more when sometimes the findings of these evaluations do not converge.
17. The AESR represents a 'snapshot' in time. Comparison to findings from previous AESRs are limited. Nevertheless, it was possible to undertake a systematic analysis of the last seven years to establish trends in evaluation/review findings as well as actual follow-up to recommendations and the results forthcoming from management actions.

⁶ For example, the DFID-led SheTrades evaluation used SMART DFID guide, while the Netherlands-led Refugee evaluation used AAR After Action Review.

18. As reflected in previous AESRs, the evaluations provide limited evidence about the impact of ITC's work at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) level. This is mainly due, to that fact that the evaluations were conducted just at the end (or even mid-way) of project/intervention implementation, which is too early to see the contribution to the targeted high-level changes. While changes analyzed in the Impact sections were mostly at output and intermediate outcome levels,⁷ the evaluations were rather 'generalist' in content (i.e. asking every criteria).

19. The analysis relies on pre-COVID 19 findings. The AESR elaboration period started at the beginning of COVID19 pandemic, following the lockdown of ITC headquarters and offices and disrupted regular operations.

⁷ Such as strengthening policies, building capacities and procedures for accreditation, advancing Non-Tariff Measures and windows for facilitating knowledge exchange

Findings

Relevance and Coherence

20. The importance of exploring and customizing interventions to ITC stakeholders' specific needs cannot be stressed enough. Performance is founded on putting beneficiaries and partners at the very center of project/product design. It is important to maintain such awareness and due flexibility throughout the management of the project. Historically, relevance is the criterion that has shown the highest performance at ITC.⁸ In the main, 2019 evaluations confirm this trend.

Relevance

Doing the right thing to foster inclusive trade in a specific context

The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries / clients' inclusive trade-related needs, interests and priorities, at the global, regional, country, institution and beneficiary levels, and continue to do so when circumstances change.

21. **Strategic positioning** – Projects are aligned to ITC's strategic objectives. They build on ITC's comparative advantage in the field of trade and development. Consistency is high between project objectives and project approaches and designs. Funder-led evaluations positively assessed ITC's strategic positioning. Specifically, the **Danish Mid-term Review** considered that ITC interventions within **Aid for Trade (Aft)** are situated "at the cross section between traditional trade negotiations and the broader development agenda."

22. Evaluations generally established that projects conformed with National Development Plans and Strategies. They aimed at fostering competitiveness as a conduit to enable development. However, alignment is limited: it was neither reflected nor visible at the UN-wide level, especially to UN Reform coordination mechanisms at the country level.

"The analysis of interview-generated perceptions, internal processes and documentations concur that in overall DaO context, ITC is barely visible by national stakeholders, donors, UN Agencies and the UN DOCO. An overwhelming majority of ITC projects / achievements have been neither included in the UNDAF [Cooperation Framework], nor reported in the One UN Reports. In DaO analysis and reporting, these projects provide an image of useful but isolated operations, standing apart from UNDAF [Cooperation Framework] goals and initiatives, which support the national strategies. This permeates an inconsistent image of ITC on the totality of its initiatives and contributions to the national stakeholders, donors, UN Agencies and the UN DOCO."

(Delivery as One Evaluation)

23. The **Delivery as One** Evaluation documented that substantial progress was still needed in terms of aligning and integrating ITC interventions in joint UN country plans at the country level, within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (thereafter "Cooperation Framework"), which were formerly known as UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).⁹

The **Delivery as One** Evaluation insisted on the need to beef up ITC country intelligence –

⁸ Previous AESRs assessed that interventions proved being highly relevant when they were designed with full awareness and inclusiveness of the local environment and of the multilateral system.

⁹ In 2019 as part of the UN Reform, the UN General Assembly has elevated United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as "the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)." (General Assembly resolution 72/279). To avoid confusion over terminology, the term "Cooperation Framework" is used throughout this text.

primarily targeted at national stakeholders. Country intelligence would benefit from more systematically integrating the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) coordination machinery.

24. Although some evaluations conducted a retrospective assessment of how the intervention contributed to specific **SDG targets**,¹⁰ it appears that SDG were still not fully formally embedded into the design.
25. **Value proposal still relevant** – ITC’s value proposal was widely considered as relevant. Several evaluations¹¹ observed that projects were aligned to the needs of different categories of ITC beneficiaries (policymakers, BSOs and MSMEs). For example, in implementing the **WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)**, the **ITC TFA** Programme design corresponds to the needs explicitly expressed by national policymakers for better engagement with the private sector. This programme has on the one hand, successfully informed the private sector and strengthened advocacy in public-private dialogues to improve business compliance to cross-border procedural requirements, and on the other, it has stressed the need for BSOs to advocate for the business perspective in trade facilitation reforms.¹² This articulation of interests and planned changes is clearly aligned with ITC’s Results Framework change logic.
26. **Need for on-going adaptation to make results chains more effective** – The 2019 evaluations also highlighted some factors that may diminish relevance.¹³ For example, in the relatively new programming area of refugees, the intervention overlooked some basic needs,¹⁴ resulting in loss of time or loss of absorption and assimilation of messages. The **TISI** Evaluation highlighted the need for more attentiveness to specific and differentiated needs. It suggested that programme products and services should continue to be adapted along the way, for example in the implementation phase, to differentiate various levels of BSOs participating capacity. Evaluations also identified situations where the intervention demonstrate an adequate level of flexibility to address the specificities of individual BSOs. For example, the **SheTrades** Programme was able to adapt its workshops and events by incorporating attendees’ inputs and suggestions into consecutive deliverables.

The issue of flexibility

The 2019 AESR made the issue of flexibility its key topic. It recommended to systematically assess the level of complexity of interventions at the design stage to define their flexibility needs during project implementation and justification to adapt logframes and making results chains more effective, in case of major changes (the higher the complexity, the higher the uncertainty of major issues emerging).

¹⁰ The TISI evaluation considered the programme as strategically aligned to specific SDG targets such as enabling higher levels of economic productivity (SDG 8.2) in general, and specifically to small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3), and youth (SDG 4.4), among many others.

¹¹ TISI, Trade Facilitation, and Advancing Afghan Trade evaluations.

¹² As a result, ITC has been in the position to facilitate private-public dialogue led by 13 National Trade Facilitation Committees, paving the way for private-public consensus and joint plans, resulting in the implementation of several TFA measures, spread over seven countries.

¹³ These were already pointed out in the 2017 AESR, they include weak selection processes or poor training design, or insufficient on-going consideration to ITC beneficiaries’ situation.

¹⁴ Beneficiary refugees expected to have breakfast as part of their participation. For an un-aware observer, this might be a detail, but not having explored and addressed this need, or clarified in advance the intervention stance about this expectation, had consequences.

27. It is important to note that high performance in relevance enhanced sustainability prospects of several interventions. For example, The **Gambia Midterm** evaluation illustrated how the lack of national funding to pursue ITC's objectives in the field of tourism development, put relevance at risk at the end of the project. More targeted country-level intelligence would have enabled ITC to better anticipate national constraints and to mitigate sustainability risks.

28. To maintain the relevance of a complex intervention, stakeholders must commit to, and agree upon, objectives and best ways of achieving them and project teams need to be ready to adapt their strategy, based on changes in the environment and/or learning.¹⁵ Therefore, previous AESRs messages on the need of on-going flexibility remain valid.



A stronger coordination approach based in an enhanced country intelligence capability, strategy and performance could further increase ITC's relevance within the country, by taking in account a better informed assessment of the country's needs and resources, better incorporating a wider UNDS perspective and maximizing at the same time the sustainability of its interventions'

¹⁵ It is worth noting that the 2017 AESR illustrated not only good alignment to client countries', ITC's and funders' policies and priorities, but a practical and inclusive strategy in organizing resources and cooperating with partners for achieving the stated objectives.

Effectiveness

29. The findings on effectiveness and impact are organized according to the ITC Results Framework structure, starting from the bottom of the framework and working upwards:

30. **Satisfactory results** – Since inception in 2013, AESRs consistently reported ITC being effective in generating changes through its outputs (and some intermediary outcomes), despite the complex context where ITC operates. Achieving higher-level results (outcomes and impact) such as policy influence and poverty reduction has been traditionally more challenging. The 2019 evaluations confirm past assessments from previous years. Most evaluations reported *satisfactory* results. They all confirm that ITC is moving the needle in direction of the defined objectives. However, results achieved varied greatly depending on the different sectors and objectives set by ITC interventions.¹⁶

Effectiveness

Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

Results at capacity-building level

31. **High quality tools** – Training and mentoring activities are the most visible aspect of ITC delivery. In 2019, ITC trained thousands of people and MSMEs in many countries.¹⁷ Evaluations repeatedly confirmed that beneficiaries were satisfied with training. Institutions and business owners highly appreciated ITC tools and platforms, especially their immediate applicability to business issues.¹⁸ Satisfaction was highest when tools provide solutions to solve concrete issues.

“Participants were highly satisfied with the related activities (capacity building tailored to their organizations or national/regional workshops, assisted benchmarking and self-assessments, etc.) and benefit generated as they found them retrospectively useful, (...) even though the extent of results achieved was not as noticeable”

(TISI Evaluation).

32. **Three-stage change process** – The ITC Results Framework stipulates that Trade-Related Technical Assistance (TRTA) outputs be targeted. This is geared to empower beneficiaries to alter their conditions and actions as a result of ITC’s support. Three main steps represent this process of change: 1) awareness building; 2) increasing beneficiaries’ knowledge; and 3) improving their readiness to act.

- 1) *Awareness* – ITC uses a wide range of tools to foster awareness.¹⁹ They cover a broad range of beneficiaries’ interests extending from trade policy-related business

¹⁶ According to Project Managers’ self-assessment synthesized in the 2019 Synthesis of PCRs, factors that have led to underperformance were the complexity of the operating environment, natural disasters, limitation in project design, project management, and governance challenges, as well as excessive HQ and international costs and limited in-country expenditure.

¹⁷ According to ITC corporate monitoring system, ITC has trained a total of 29,442 individual or MSMEs in 2019. The Gambia YEP programme on its own, trained 1,835 individuals, supported 521 MSMEs and coached 2,424 entrepreneurs.

¹⁸ ITC tools evaluated in 2019 included inter alia, the benchmarking methodology, Rules of Origin, Trade Map, Market Access Map, Sustainability Map, SheTrades outlook, and the EuroMed Helpdesk website.

¹⁹ Outputs included in projects / programmes evaluated included organizing events, developing key messages, building websites, publishing newsletters and brochures in different languages.

issues to Micro, Small and Middle Enterprises (MSME) raising awareness on quality and food safety issues. The evaluations conducted in 2019 demonstrate that this type of activity was particularly effective. This includes raising private sector awareness about business implications of the TFA as well as beneficiaries starting to organize periodic awareness-raising events by themselves.

- 2) *Knowledge and skills* – The objective of this layer in the change process is to increase beneficiaries' self-confidence. Evaluation surveys that were conducted to assess the effectiveness of the different capacity building modalities (group trainings, advisory services, technical materials and publications) confirmed this tendency.²⁰
- 3) *Ability to act* – When beneficiaries are self-confident, they feel empowered to act and access new market and business opportunities. In the 2019 evaluations, this was particularly visible in the agro-food sector training curricula. Here the focus was on value chains, business development and cooperative management, combined with technical knowledge enhancement in the area of value addition and market linkages.²¹

33. With these positive results, evaluations also suggested complementary areas to reinforce and widen the scope of capacities supported by these tools (e.g. the ***Non-Tariff Measures Middle East and North Africa (NTM MENA)*** self-evaluation).²² The ***TISI Evaluation*** noted that some interventions could have been better tailored to beneficiaries' needs and absorption capacities.²³ In the same vein, the delivery of capacity-building tools needs to be designed to support long-term engagement of beneficiaries, as suggested in the ***2019 Synthesis of PCRs***.²⁴

²⁰ Ref. Mid-term evaluation of YEP project in The Gambia.

²¹ The ***Nigeria Food Africa evaluation*** described how farmers' capacities were built on savings and investment; safe use and handling of farm implements and agro-chemicals; and disease control addressing skill gaps based on needs assessments. In the case of the ***Refugees RESI project***, targeted at refugees in camps and host households, the evaluation revealed that multiple vocational skills trainings were delivered in addition to scheduled freelancing and home décor trainings. Increased recipients' knowledge resulted in new market linkages in markets for home décor. Freelance graduates were identified and organized to create a home décor Collective Agency, and graduates were enrolled onto the on-line platform Upwork.

²² ²² The evaluation urged for regular updating of policies and agreements on the platforms, and translating the agreements and policies into local languages. It insisted on the need for targeting training on private actors, as well as personnel from government administrations. It encouraged enhanced training and communication between exporters, national agencies and standardization bodies/laboratories in the field of standards and quality management.

²³ This evaluation reflected on how some organizations, supported by ITC, had not reached the minimum level of maturity (in terms of leadership and direction, resources and processes, service portfolio and results measurement) to fully optimize the benefits of the intervention.

²⁴ The 2019 PCR Synthesis indicated that, despite training being generally successful, a slowdown in the implementation of action plans was observed in participating institutions between missions. It is necessary to take full advantage of the benefits of face-to-face interaction to reinforce capacity-building. Long-term engagement is essential, especially keeping beneficiaries accountable for follow up.

Impact

Results at intermediate outcome level

34. ITC Results Framework organizes intermediate outcomes according to categories of beneficiaries: policymakers and regulators, BSOs and MSMEs. For each beneficiary category, the framework identifies a specific desired change. The objective is that beneficiaries have truly changed their conditions and actions. To measure impact, it entails observing positive changes and attributing these to the intervention. Some 2019 evaluations make indirect references to these higher-level outcomes, or hint at changes that could materialize. Unfortunately, no solid evidence is presented to support impact. Many of the claims are at the anticipatory or forecast level.

Impact

What difference is the intervention making?

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

35. These evaluations stated how ITC was expected or anticipated to achieve its ultimate goal of enhancing trade through realization of attaining a mix of the three main intermediate outcomes identified in the Results Framework. The main intervention may place an emphasis on direct business support, as in the case of many MSME projects, or where the main priority is improvement of the business environment, or where policy and regulatory changes, institutional support or key connectivity are emphasized.

36. **BSOs pivotal role** – ITC Results Framework attributes to BSOs (often referred to as a subset group of TISIs) a multiplier effect, designed to foster the achievements of the other intermediate outcomes. Almost all ITC projects work through BSOs. It is the key pillar of ITC's logic to foster sustainable and inclusive trade. The 2019 *TISI* evaluation identified the **Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions Programme** as the custodian of the BSOs strengthening function at corporate level. The evaluation demonstrated that it has achieved significant results using the Benchmarking tool among others. It also confirmed the crucial role of BSOs' technical and advocacy capacity to add value to ITC interventions, within the ITC Results Framework. This led to obtaining results at the policy and MSMEs levels as well as enhancing project sustainability. These findings were complemented by the **Afghanistan AAT Mid-term evaluation**. It highlighted how the improvement of BSOs' capacity proved to be decisive in delivering quality services, meeting industry standards and enhancing trade performance.

"The programme has generated strong results in terms of institutional strengthening, whether through: its own activities, indirect delivery for other ITC projects or paid services to institutions from prosperous countries. Institutions committed to the programme's interventions (e.g. the Benchmarking) will improve their overall performance and hence their support to members or client MSMEs."

(TISI evaluation)

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	Policymakers integrate business interests FOCUS AREA 2 Indicator A2	TISIs better support MSMEs FOCUS AREA 3 Indicator B1	MSMEs introduce changes in their operations Indicators C1&C2	Market Partners open up value chains
<p>Intermediate Outcomes:</p> <p>Defined for each category of partner</p> <p>Objective: Partners have changed their conditions and actions as a result of ITC support.</p>	<p><i>Policymakers and regulators introduce pro-competitive changes to the business environment and/ or succeed in negotiating improved market access. (A2)</i></p>	<p><i>TISIs and private trade/ business support providers extend and improve their offering, including advocacy for a pro-competitive business environment. (B1)</i></p>	<p><i>Female and male SME owners/ managers take and implement business decisions that improve international competitiveness, and take advantage of market opportunities. (C1 and C2)</i></p>	<p><i>External parties increase business opportunities for SMEs and business linkages between supply and destination markets.</i></p>

Figure 5: ITC's Intermediate Outcomes: Expected change defined for each category of partner

37. **NES catalytic role** – Several evaluations detailed progress achieved in supporting changes of the policy and legal framework that contributed to a friendlier business and trade environment. From a private sector coordination perspective – a key feature of ITC’s value-added proposal – **the National Export Strategy (NES)** has demonstrated tangible benefits. This is associated with enhancing the role of policymakers within ITC’s initiatives to support trade development at national and sector level. It was identified both in Sri Lanka²⁵ and Afghanistan where the NES process as such, was complemented with implementation management support. A comprehensive NES, with national buy-in and commitment at the highest level and strong private sector involvement, played a catalytic role in coordinating all ITC project interventions. Moreover, it also supported the identification and securing of more resources for NES implementation.
38. As exemplified in the **Afghanistan AAT Mid-term Evaluation**, ITC developed the NES in a highly participatory and inclusive manner. This is well suited for “sector strategies packaged as separate documents and in alignment with the main NES findings and strategic objectives.” When policymakers are empowered, ITC can play a pivotal role. This is not only limited to the drafting of strategies and supporting the development of policies. It enables ITC to play a deeper role. This includes kick-starting strategy implementation and supporting early signs of improvement.
39. **Focusing on individuals** – Evaluation evidence also corroborates that individuals and MSMEs became more empowered. They are better equipped to make decisions. Empowered individuals lead the way to competitiveness improvements. Multiple success stories refer to the micro level. Here, individuals or the MSMEs positioned ITC’s support to their own interests. There are many examples: a travel company in Kenya tripled in size since joining the programme; a Ghanaian shea products firm connected with 30 buyers at trade fairs; a Bangladeshi IT firm generated \$40,000 of new sales; and a textiles company in Nigeria secured a large order from a global brand, attributable to the intervention support.

²⁵ This message is aligned with the findings of the **Sri Lanka Midterm Self-evaluation** that was analyzed in the 2019 AESR. It described how the technical assistance, coaching and follow-on support for the implementation and the scaling up of the Sri Lanka “Export Management Plan” (EMP) was highly appreciated by recipients. This was despite relatively limited coverage

40. The attention to individuals was also observed in the **Refugees RESI project**. It enabled refugees to create their own personalized freelancer profile. This included what it takes to embody a successful freelancer.²⁶ Similarly, in the **Nigeria Food Africa project**, male and female lead farmers and market agents as well as food processors, improved their knowledge of financial services, markets and off-farm opportunities. This was clearly linked to attending ITC supported events and workshops. Entrepreneurs developed profitable business plans. This incentivized them to turn their small-scale farming practices into larger-scale agri-business.
41. **Activating the external party nexus** – Third parties play an essential role in the ITC Results Framework in cutting a path across business linkages. This allows beneficiaries to take advantage of trade opportunities. The 2019 evaluations analyzed ITC's ability to facilitate access to third parties. These can be gateways to appropriate value chains and business-enabling ecosystems. Nigeria and The Gambia were such examples. Relevant ecosystems were enabled at the local levels. While achievements in Nigeria were not entirely attributable to ITC, the way was cleared for establishing agreements between farmers and MSMEs. This contributed to increase farmers' sales (e.g. reaching tons of sales of produce like tomatoes and pepper). The **Nigeria Food Africa project** assisted beneficiaries in a farming area to access markets. This was achieved by assisting them to connect with micro, small and medium enterprises institutions. According to the evaluation, this strengthened business development and improved local agro-food value chains.²⁷ Similarly, in the **YEP Gambia project**, local TISIs supported farmers and coached them by visiting clients, one by one. It enabled them to develop a more fluid relationship with their client base.
42. In terms of accessing third parties in domestic and foreign export markets, the **Refugees RESI project** made available websites for isolated refugee graduates. The evaluation concluded that it harnessed on-line national and international market opportunities.²⁸ Finally, the **Self-evaluation NTM MENA** indicated that online Trade Facilitation Portals supported by the project were expected to help MSMEs complied with procedural requirements of cross-border transactions.²⁹

Focus on improving the business ecosystem

“Overall, the SheTrades programme has achieved good results in its first year. It has convened a broad range of stakeholders and worked with them effectively on a number of fronts to lay the foundations for meaningful improvements in the trade ecosystem for women owned businesses.”

(SheTrades Annual Review)

²⁶ This is a first step though, as the ultimate success would remain their ability to secure work.

²⁷ Farmers were stimulated with new ideas and expected to hold town hall meetings back home. They were expected to put in place activities to train others. Youths were encouraged to go back and restart the work on their farms. Unexpected changes in behavioral were also identified in this project. Farmers were reported to be eating more fresh vegetables following the sessions.

²⁸ Unplanned project successes were also identified. For example, country government showed extra interest in the project and engaged proactively with the Norwegian Refugee Council.

²⁹ Ref. Trade Facilitation Programme evaluation.

43. There is a common theme running throughout these evaluations. It suggests that effectiveness and impact build on partnerships at the relevant ecosystem level. ITC was more successful when it took diverse interests in consideration.³⁰ It facilitated a shared sense of opportunity. Self-confidence among beneficiaries increased. As a result, beneficiaries empowered themselves to actualize these opportunities into concrete and coordinated arrangements to generate new business and to sustain development.
44. Previous AESRs noted that strategic partnerships were another key element for achieving impact. The 2020 AESR findings did not replicate those of the 2018 AESR that stated “failure in gaining local buy-in and commitment / engagement was often due to insufficient oversight, the lack of locally committed resources and also in some cases, repeatedly changing counterparts at the local level.” If this trend were to continue, it could be of great significance. It is worth noting that high effectiveness may not be a synonym of impact and consequently, of sustainability. It requires local buy-in and commitments to local resources, in combination with the indispensable linkages to the right destination-market counterparts.

Strong local project oversight reflects local buy-in and capacity. It reinforces coordination, as the establishment of working groups structured around the expected results, including main stakeholders, has proved very effective.

Results at outcome and impact level

45. ***Detailing of Theories of Change and interaction between different project interventions to be strengthened in most projects*** – The main factors contributing to well-performing projects are good project design, country ownership, and high quality project management. The direct involvement of project teams is appreciated and constitutes a key success factor. For example, beneficiaries appreciated the project team’s presentation skills, in-depth **TFA** knowledge, and flexibility. There is much evidence about how ITC’s interventions bring about change in promoting trade, businesses and competitiveness. However, factors external to ITC’s sphere of control, such as low baseline capacities³¹ and fragile political systems, render project performance much more challenging. Impact-focused project management requires flexibility and continuous revision. This is especially true in response to ever-changing contextual factors and real-time findings about what is happening in the project.
46. A common evaluation finding revealed that project and programme design, including monitoring systems are generally not incorporated within a more detailed description of the intervention’s Theory of Change (ToC). Feedback from design function indicates that they are all linked to ITC’s Results Framework, the difficulty being that certain donors often do not allow changes to the logframes on which they agreed with governments in the action plan documents. Consequently, the link to the ITC Results Framework has to be done via the indicators and description of the intervention.

³⁰ It is worth noting that the NES’s participatory approach (multi-sector, multi-stakeholders) is critical as it analyses the ecosystem and considers diverse interests.

³¹ ***Nigeria Food Africa Final Report***. “The low level of literacy of the farmers was a challenge. The programme engaged the use of Hausa language interpreters in all the training sessions. This helped to enhance the understanding of the farmers in the subject matter as revealed in the evaluation carried out at the end of each training.”

47. Many evaluations observed that basic, visual representations of the ‘causal’ chains (or theories of change) were identified, but not in all. Comprehensive theories of change (where the pathways are clearly identified, including key intermediate steps and critical assumptions) were often missing. Developing a ToC at the design stage, and detailing it further at the implementation stage, is simply good project management and internal coordination practice. It enables project teams to reflect on an intervention’s causal logic and its critical assumptions. It articulates an understanding of how change is expected to occur at the intervention level.
48. Measuring (monitoring) change at each level of the project results chains is essential. It involves different technical officers. Project teams can see what is working. They can readily identify where expected results and changes may not be occurring. Corrective measures can be launched in real-time, where and when required. A project ToC can assist project teams to understand better project impact achievement. More than a simple description of the project context, the ToC provides more comprehensive information about expected changes to be triggered by the project’s activities and strategies.
49. This situation also leads to challenges in measuring attributable results. Hence, result-based management and monitoring systems currently in place are often not providing conclusive evidence at the end of the project to indicate the likelihood of results occurring at the intermediary and long-term outcome levels (e.g. **YEP Gambia Midterm evaluation**). As working pilots, many ITC interventions are breaking ground for the first time in the inclusive trade development field. As a result, replication and scaling-up brings with it numerous challenges.³²
- The impact and monitoring nexus**
“Programme documentation is fragmented preventing a comprehensive overall view, and monitoring is patchy although improvements have been made recently. Resolving these issues may also involve, to a certain extent, changes to ITC’s corporate reporting infrastructure.”
 (Trade Facilitation Program Evaluation)
50. **From project-focus to continuity** – With the introduction of “complexity” in the 2019 AESR, it was understood that ITC was evolving from a traditional project-focused approach, with a beginning and an end, to one best described as an on-going process of constant adjustment and long-term interaction with ITC stakeholders and beneficiaries.
51. Weaknesses in country level coordination have resulted in missed opportunities and potential synergies. On occasions, ITC’s non-permanent presence and field-based teams (represented by short-term consultancies, limited capacity of institutional authorities, and no clear mechanisms to collect and hand-over country intelligence information), did not facilitate proper engagement, high-level policy dialogue, or engagement
- “It is perceived that effectiveness of delivery of results and donor coordination could further be improved with sufficient staffing at the field offices in Kabul in addition to short-term TA experts.”*
 (Afghanistan AAT Mid-term Evaluation)

³² From an historical perspective, the 2016 AESR reminded us of the need to set up and better track SMART indicators to measure objectives. Building on that, the 2017 AESR pointed out that a cause for moderate scoring grades on project effectiveness, was due to overly ambitious, or misplaced and sometimes unrealistic objectives. The 2018 AESR reinforced the need to take more into account the limited time span and project resources when designing and sequencing activities.

with local actors and national MSMEs support schemes. This limited better seizing of opportunities to produce impact.

52. It is worth noting, that, according to feedback received, this assessment might not apply to countries where ITC has had a continuous project office presence, such as in Central Asia. At the same time, other feedback suggests that even in cases where a NES provided for active implementation structures (sector teams), it was only partially used by ITC project teams to coordinate the work on the ground, suggesting to fully utilize the NES and the structures it builds as an effective and efficient way of increasing country-level coordination.
53. This situation has potential, efficiency-related, impact consequences. The support that countries receive is mainly guided by the availability of TRTA funds. ITC is “a small, highly operational agency” as its modus operandi has historically been “to pragmatically broker a nexus of need, demand and funding”.³³ These structural settings are unique. They present well-recognized advantages. They force ITC to be a nimble, adaptable and innovative organization.³⁴ However, the ***Delivery as One evaluation*** clearly demonstrated that the country intelligence function needs to be enhanced.
54. This could drive ITC resources and value-added proposition, and not always in the direction, that optimizes impact. Given the persistent need for consolidating ITC’s leadership in long-term inclusive trade (including ITC’s contribution to the SDGs), and strengthen ITC’s actions scope, duration and scale, the continuing challenge is to frame ITC’s structural project-focus into a more long-term programme-based strategic thinking.

³³ ***ITC Recommendation Action Plan*** to the ***2015 OIOS Evaluation of the International Trade Centre***.

³⁴ ***ITC Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Trade Routes to Sustainable and Inclusive Development***. “ITC is capable of rapidly changing and adapting to the needs of its partners. We believe in constant innovation and creativity to respond to demand. We embed new technologies in our project solutions and business processes wherever this can add value to our clients.”

Efficiency

55. **Good performance is linked to costs** – The 2019 evaluations do not provide many insights related to cost-related efficiency.³⁵ However, over the past decades, high quality deliverables have been a key feature of ITC technical assistance, despite limited resources.³⁶ The 2019 **YEP Gambia Midterm Evaluation** confirms this message. It describes how the project managed to leverage efficiently implementing partners' inputs to achieve project outputs. It further reinforces beneficiaries' buy-in and engagement. It ultimately characterizes efficiency-related good sustainability practices.
- Efficiency**

How well were resources used

The extent to which the intervention delivered, or is likely to deliver, high quality results in an economic and timely way.
56. **Mixed messages on synergies** – At the internal coordination level, the **TISI Evaluation** highlighted how ITC synergies achieved by the **Institutional Strengthening Programme** contributed to rationalize and mainstream TISI- and BSO-related support. This advantaged efficiency aspects of other ITC interventions. At the country level, the **Afghanistan AAT Mid-term Evaluation** highlighted how the project had achieved financial efficiency by actively promoting synergies with other donors and among the various outputs.³⁷ Similarly, the **SheTrades Annual Review** observed: “spending has generally been good” due largely to the programme being “adaptable, constructive and flexible.” This Programme managed to start up quickly, work with Business BSOs active in the target sectors. It included women empowerment, as well as with market partners, in the role of buyers, investors and enablers. The 2017 AESR also pointed out the need for flexibility and adaptability. This is imperative in the complex and weakly resourced environment that ITC projects generally operate within.
57. Concerning synergies with other multilateral agencies at the country level, the **Delivery as One Evaluation** provided evidence of comprehensive and meaningful engagement of ITC participation in multi-agency interventions. ITC was viewed as a significant and complementary partner, playing an important role in contributing to the national agenda, according to the government and partners. At the same time, ITC did not fully capitalize on this engagement that might have entailed generating other efficiency opportunities at the UNCT level. As a result, ITC had marginal or no presence in strategic and relevant UN decision-making and coordination systems in these countries.
58. **Delays still an issue** – Some of the evaluated projects and programmes revealed implementation delays. Slow project starts, repeated delays in specific project components and coordination challenges were identified as interrelated causes of lower efficiency. For many projects, good management, fluid coordination and the mitigation of potential external

³⁵ Cost-efficiency corresponds to the question: “are high quality results achieved at the best cost?”

³⁶ Referring to the learnings of the **2014 external Independent Evaluation of ITC** the 2015 AESR stated: “Regarding the performance of ITC in the period of 2006–2013, a key message expressed was that, in spite of limited resources and heavy constraints, ITC continued to provide high-quality services in its specialized field.”

³⁷ However, these attempts were not always reflected in better results, due to the security situation.

delay risks, enables them to implement their activities according to plan.³⁸ However, other initiatives, such as the Refugees RESI and the Nigeria Food Africa, pointed to the persistence of multiple disruptive effects of both internal and external factors.³⁹ These observations largely echoed previous AESR findings where the issue of synergy- and coordination-related aspects of efficiency has been a recurring issue.⁴⁰

"The evaluations outlined often-interlinked factors related to project coordination and management, which can undermine performance on effectiveness with implications for sustainability: a common observation is the numerous calls for project extensions. This seems to be mainly due to delays and issues in project coordination, which can be deemed as efficiency problems with implication for effectiveness".

(2018 AESR)

59. **Project teams overstretched** – In the recent years, ITC overall delivery has increased considerably as well as the geographical scope and average size of its interventions. Management teams of the evaluated projects / programmes demonstrate high motivation and flexibility. However, considering ITC's Non-resident Agency (NRA) status, limited qualified and available local human resources, these have created difficulties in implementation. This is partly due to project funding constraints, and partly to an increased need for decentralized management. In countries experiencing high levels of instability, such as the **Afghanistan AAT project**, the evaluation observed difficulties in remote follow-up with local partners and selecting beneficiaries. This had efficiency-related consequences.⁴¹ The same applied to global programmes such as the **TISI programme**. Here, programming was not in a position to fully take into account the prevailing diversity in TISIs' capacity and maturity to absorb the facilitated knowledge and skills.

60. While the size and availability of project human resources should match project requirements for ensuring appropriate supervision and support at the local level, the 2019 evaluations observed an increased pattern of overstretching. This was due to travel agendas,

"It has become increasingly difficult to ensure that the size of the team and the availability of senior personnel are aligned with evolving external demand as well as with internal supervision and support needs (...). As delivery has increased in recent years, many have tight schedules and are travelling frequently. Since the programme must also adapt its implementation to client institutions' planning and implementation pace, these bottlenecks prevent it from being able to adapt to the phases and waves of demand".

(TISI evaluation)

³⁸ For example, the **YEP Gambia Mid-term Evaluation** observed that 65-70% of the trust fund proceeds had been used or committed. This is an expected and not an unreasonable finding for a mid-term evaluation to report.

³⁹ Internal factors included delays at the inception phase. These were attributable to: a lengthy beneficiary selection process (due to changes in focus from vulnerability to capacity assessment); budget and staff reductions; the relatively large number of implementation partners to be informed; time required to agree and learn how to work together in partnership; and even delays due to an excessive number of actions included in the defined timeframe. The departure of key government officials was also mentioned as a critical external factor. This contributed notable delays in decision making to advance planned activities and results, as well as the late releases of SDG funds.

⁴⁰ **2016 AESR**: "The slow start-up and delays in implementation were often related to insufficient coordination of in- country partners and among execution agencies."

2017 AESR: "The main factors accounting for less good performance in efficiency were slow project starts, repeated delays in implementation of specific components, and challenges in in-county coordination. These issues were found to be inter-related."

2019 AESR: "Implementation efficiency is a product of clarity of objective, strong and functioning partnerships and support networks. Coordinated efforts need to work synergistically in the management of complex relations and systems towards results and efficiency."

⁴¹ **Afghanistan AAT Midterm Evaluation**: "Whereas the project succeeded in facilitating the completion of the NES document, its implementation is not going as planned because of the low beneficiary-absorption of interventions and the institutional capacity of key stakeholders is still being developed, lack of clear division of activities/responsibilities in the mobilization/organization of national responsible offices in addition to the high staff turnover."

among other factors.⁴² This situation has resulted in a very heavy workload for the relatively small Geneva-based teams. These efficiency bottlenecks take place, despite essential expertise requirements needed on a growing range of technical subjects (e.g. Trade Facilitation). In addition, the high rotation of field teams and programme focal points increase the difficulties of implementing interventions smoothly.

⁴² Feedback received also suggests that endogenous factors such as a more effective project support at the corporate functions level, could also contribute to alleviate project teams being overstretched.

Sustainability

61. **Lack of exit strategies remains an issue** – Changes brought by the interventions continue depending on several internal and external factors.⁴³ These need to operate in tandem to ensure that attributable improvements are not lost. Most 2019 evaluations concluded that changes achieved were likely to continue once the interventions were completed. Success was explicitly linked to accomplished work.⁴⁴ In many cases, however, the project phase could be considered a pilot, aimed at paving the way for sustainability. Projects are not an ends in themselves. They are part of a longer-term sustainable development context. The lack of a clear exit strategy in many projects remains a concern. This observation was identified in both midterm evaluations as well as final evaluations.⁴⁵

Sustainability

Will the changes last?

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue

62. One example are projects aimed at supporting young people's capacity to become sustainably employed or engaged in business. The **YEP Gambia Midterm Evaluation** identified a substantial gap in MSMEs' baseline capacities that would require longer and deeper engagement, as well as hindering structural causes such as context unemployment rates. A wider scale approach, where a sufficient number of MSME owners may be hiring young people, would require significant improvements in business maturity and reasonable plans for expansion. These achievements go beyond the project's limited parameters, thus the need for exit strategies to provide for continuity.

The importance of continuity:

"For some respondents, in the longer term, being involved in a new cycle of benchmarking would be necessary to continue generating results; many times, the initial process produces strong visible changes in the institutions; however, as they continue to progress, further steps may be more demanding and do not always lead to major noticeable changes. In this context, regular follow-up can serve to boost morale and buy-in".

(TISI Evaluation)

63. Perhaps the core mechanism for sustainability are exit strategies where ITC establishes and identifies follow-up measures and mechanisms that maximize chances for long-lasting changes. As highlighted in the **TISI Evaluation**, the logics of capacity-building requires long-term partnerships rather than a one-time intervention, even though successful. Ensuring sustainability of achieved results consists in mainstreaming and scaling-up through continued capacity-building as well as linking initiatives with complementary activities. This is the very purpose of an exit strategy. Here, ITC acts as a facilitator for sustainable development. The term "exit" in "exit strategy" should not be equated to disengagement.

⁴³ Internal factors include: the intervention's initial relevance; its implementation modality and quality; its duration; and scope. External factors, which partly go beyond the intervention direct accountability ceiling, comprise: external economic; inter-institutional; and other context factors.

⁴⁴ Concrete achievements with good sustainability prospects included: an improved legal framework for trade; a TISI offering better services; individual MSMEs proving better business decisions and practices; and others.

⁴⁵ In the case of midterm evaluations, the project is still able in real-time to design and implement mechanisms before its closure. However, for projects subject to final evaluations, without follow up, sustainability would then depend entirely on external dynamics, not anymore influenced by them.

64. **Self-reinforcing factors for sustainability** – In terms of sustainability, the ultimate objective is where project goals and mission are well integrated into national, regional, or business strategies and plans. This should be achieved to the point where they meet with, or are mainstreamed into, beneficiaries’ efforts. This means that beneficiaries and partners view the new requirements or practices and procedures as their own because they see them as necessary, and in their own interest (2018 AESR).

The issue of ownership in previous AESRs

Back in 2016, the AESR outlined the required combination of interdependent factors that are partly within ITC’s control and that contribute to ensuring long lasting benefits: national and local ownership, building of institutional capacity, as well as skills and competencies transferred. While the 2019 AESR considered that partnerships happen when the project succeeds in having clear buy-in from stakeholders at a very high level, it concluded that long-term change highly depends on the attitude and capability of local institutions, and on ITC ability to stimulate ownership.

65. As highlighted in the **2019 Synthesis of PCRs**, ITC Project Managers emphasized that strong local ownership is the basis for partnerships for sustained synergies at the beneficiary level. These complemented initiatives with funders. This increased awareness has become tangible in the 2019 evaluations. Although some interventions have failed in reaching agreement on appropriate exit strategies, they nevertheless are progressing in gathering the essential pieces of the ownership puzzle. For example, the **Nigeria Food Africa Final Report** observed that the project implementation brought together partners, the State, local government and community leaders. This encouraged ownership. Likewise, ITC is increasingly co-managing its interventions with national counterparts. In The Gambia for example, the Project Steering Committee gathered key Ministries and local TISIs to discuss evaluation results and endorse its recommendations.

66. Building ownership is an on-going process. The **YEP Gambia Midterm Evaluation** noted that local counterparts’ ownership of the YEP model will be ascertained once partner counterparts “start to make a tangible in-kind or financial contribution”. This is further reinforced when “the government [will] recognize and plan to integrate the YEP modality in its national youth empowerment programme to ensure a smooth transition.” Interestingly, the **Refugees RESI report** also included a recommendation to increase ownership as a condition to ensure sustainability. Some evaluations, like the **Afghanistan AAT Mid-term Evaluation**, acknowledged a number of self-reinforcing factors that the project successfully used. These centered on the need for sharing responsibility and for delegating decision-making to local counterparts. This is the backbone of sustainability.⁴⁶

Sharing responsibilities

“Systematically foster country ownership by delegating decision-making to Transition Countries, supported by Implementation Support Agencies to ensure a strategic focus and coherence of country portfolios: Country ownership was central to achieve transformative and sustainable effects in the Fund”.

(2018 MENA Transition Fund Evaluation)

67. Initiating the project with a NES and subsequently channeling it into product-specific exports and commercialization is, in certain configurations, key to achieve impact and sustainability. In the case of Afghanistan, the project primary approach focused on assisting the Government in improving the conditions of taking advantage of trade by reinforcing capacities to design and implement trade policy actions. NES strategic relevance truly

⁴⁶ In the Sustainability section: “A higher form of engagement by stakeholders has been one of the characteristics of AAT. This strong sense of ownership is expected to contribute to the likely continuation of benefits of the action after phasing out. Stakeholders have been empowered and have proved capability in contributing to the trade policy design activities while improving their ability to receive Aid for Trade.”

materialized when complemented with a series of tangible private sector-driven pilots. These were used to test how best to promote and commercialize products with export potential⁴⁷ and ensured NES became operationalized. Since project completion, NES has been used as the sustainability-trigger for action-focused public-private dialogues to guide a path forward in achieving a lasting relationship among public and private stakeholders.

68. Another sustainability building-piece relates to ITC's staff continuity and engagement. This helps mitigate any misunderstandings, or non-recognition of local realities, where assumptions may be made about capacity or capability. This can result in inaccurate or over-ambitious objectives (2018 AESR). As spotted in the *TISI Evaluation*, staff turnover can negatively affect the likelihood of institutions continuing on the expected path with ITC support. Stronger field presence clearly facilitates ownership, capacity building and improves synergies (2019 AESR).

69. **Focus on the multilateral framework** – ITC is a multilateral agency. It has a joint mandate with the WTO and the UN. The sustainability of its activities is framed within a larger multilateral framework. The system-wide focus on Agenda 2030 and SDG reinforces the need for systemic coherence and coordinated resources. From a system-wide perspective, potential risks can undermine sustainability. These include fragmentation and competition over scarce technical assistance, something that can weaken the primacy of national ownership. As highlighted in the *Delivery as One Evaluation*, this might lead the multilateral system as a whole, to deliver its intended services and activities at a level considerably below their potential. This can limit achievement in terms of effectiveness, implying high transaction costs and contributing to a perception of inefficiency.

70. As demonstrated by the *YEP Gambia Midterm evaluation*, government agencies' weak institutional capacity and inadequate resources increased the need for supporting ownership beyond the project life span. National coordination is one of the three principles of the 2030 Agenda. It is a key sustainability piece that fosters local ownership and leadership.⁴⁸ It also implies collaborating and working within networks – including the UN Country Team. This, too, creates synergies with local actors⁴⁹ and supports stakeholders during extended periods to maximize country appropriation and to consolidate changes.

⁴⁷ In this case, mainly packed premium Afghan saffron, which was commercialized towards identified buyers in export markets.

⁴⁸ Three principles of the 2030 Agenda concerning development assistance captured in the UNSG document 2017. *Repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda – Ensuring a Better Future for All*. Report of the Secretary-General - Final draft 30 June 2017.

⁴⁹ *Delivery as One Evaluation* (page 32)

71. Continuity of ITC activities and the sustainability of its achievements are further ensured when framed within, and contributing to, multilateral framework efforts. The ***Delivery as One Evaluation*** recommended the development of “a pragmatic vision and clear strategy on how ITC proposes to position itself, to systematically engage in and derive benefits from, ongoing systemic initiatives and from new reform initiatives of United Nations Development System (UNDS).”⁵⁰ In this context, the need for continuing longer ITC interventions presents opportunities. Follow-up second and even third project phases were other common features that evaluations highlighted as enablers for sustainability success. Project sustainability, however, often relies on complementary or follow-up investments, engagement with other funder-supported initiatives, or on institutionalization within Governments and recipient entities.
72. ITC being the only organization within the multilateral framework, with an inclusive trade and business development focus for developing and transition economies, has, despite its modest size, a unique and essential role to play within the multilateral system.⁵¹

The importance of continuity:

“The support for youth empowerment in the Gambia needs to continue beyond 2021 (the project closure date) under the government’s leadership so that the efforts piloted under the YEP approach can be mainstreamed in the government programme”.

(YEP Gambia Mid-term Evaluation)

⁵⁰ This explicitly refers to the ***United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework*** (UNSDCF), an instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level. In the ITC context, the same applies to the ***World Bank-led Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies*** (DTIS), identifies priority actions in support of a country’s strategy to deliver broad-based growth through trade integration. DTIS is used within the Enhanced Integrated Framework, which is a strategic partner of ITC in Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

⁵¹ ***Danish Mid-term Review***. “For this trade to be inclusive there is a need to support the capacity of a broader range of stakeholders in the developing countries to benefit from a free and fair multilateral trade system.”



Gender

73. **A corporate commitment** – ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021 points to “inclusiveness” as one of the four drivers that bridges, through partnerships, clients and good trade products and services.⁵² Subsequently, the 2019 **Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) Framework** provides guidance for ensuring the continuous integration and improvement of GEWE practices in all ITC’s activities and in support of SDG 5.⁵³

Inclusive trade in ITC

Women, youth, displaced persons and people in marginalized communities need equal opportunities to find gainful employment and lead rewarding lives. ITC works with market partners, TISIs and enterprises, especially at the base of the pyramid, to increase their opportunities. Inclusive trade offers possibilities to help specific client groups benefit directly and immediately from trade. ITC will deepen its work on inclusiveness to expand opportunities for women and young entrepreneurs to connect to international value chains, and to connect displaced and underserved communities to markets.

(ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021)

74. Based on these commitments, inclusive trade interventions take into account vulnerable groups. They support them to mitigate perpetuating (or even exacerbating) discrimination or female exclusion from the benefits of development.⁵⁴ While trade development is generally intended to create unbiased positive outcomes for the economy, often there is a failure to not fully take into account the specific disadvantages faced by female workers and women entrepreneurs.⁵⁵ To respond to these constraints, graduated mitigation steps should be taken at all levels,⁵⁶ and along the following dimensions:

- **Gender balance** – As a first step, when targeting beneficiaries, interventions should be designed to ensure gender balance in participation. Disaggregated monitoring data is the backbone for analyzing and understanding how interventions affect differently women, men, and other groups.
- **Gender responsiveness** – Beyond targeting women as recipients, Gender Analysis is required to gain a solid understanding of the similarities and differences between women and men in addressing (or at least avoid worsening) imbalanced situations. This minimizes the risks of creating counterproductive effects.⁵⁷
- **Gender transformation** – This is when the inclusive-trade objectives use business and trade generation to explicitly focus on improving the situation of women, by addressing

⁵² The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 defines inclusiveness as “integrating businesses of poor communities, women and young entrepreneurs into international trade.”

⁵³ SDG 5: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.”

⁵⁴ Disadvantaged groups can be often identified through sociological variables such as gender orientation, wealth, faith, origin and ethnicity, age (among others), with women being the biggest demographic group. However, the equity and inclusiveness dimension requires project focus on other groups too, depending on the project context and objectives.

⁵⁵ As the **ITC Empowering Women to Trade Programme** Document (2016-2021) articulates, “policy and business environment discriminates against women entrepreneurs”.

⁵⁶ For instance at the macro level, export strategies should consider how they affect women, as **Women Informal Cross Border Traders** (WICBTs) face specific challenges in complying with cross border rules and standards. An equitable outcome requires therefore, the incorporation of gender lens in export policy dialogue, to embed gender-responsive solutions in legal frameworks.

⁵⁷ Similarities and differences include expected productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities, resource access and control, daily and yearly routines, social dynamics and norms, and in terms of priorities, needs and preferences. Experience demonstrates that these dimensions do not emerge spontaneously but require propositional elements such as a safe space to interrogate women where they can express themselves freely.

causal and systemic roots leading to discriminations or exclusions. These have been identified and analyzed through Gender Analysis.

75. The 2017 AESR observed progress in terms of projects demonstrating gender-sensitive components. These were mainly in the area of active partnerships with women's organizations, thus paving the way for potential positive impact in terms of income generation capacity and financial independence. The 2017 and 2018 AESR, also mentioned the need to further incorporate and strengthen a gender-sensitive approach. This reflects ITC's commitment to building adaptive and innovative capabilities to obtain better and more sustainable results.

Linking gender, effectiveness and impact

"While it is a difficult and complex challenge within an already difficult and complex development agenda, experience has shown that including women in the development process ensures greater probability of success (and sustainability)."

(2018 AESR)

76. **Gender balance** – Overall, evaluations observed that projects are paying attention to the gender balance dimension. This starts with internal considerations, such as gender balance in project staffing. It also includes better monitoring, as all projects should be collecting data on Male/Female ratios among project beneficiaries. Project logical frameworks (logframes) systematically include gender-disaggregated indicators and targets into corporate performance monitoring. This should apply to all situations, even when no project specific resources were allocated to address GEWE.
77. **Gender responsiveness** – Projects generally used some form of Gender Analysis in their approach, operations and service portfolio. For example, the **TISI programme** developed guidelines to address how they could integrate gender into their strategies, activities and projects. In practice however, these advancements within the programme scope were neither sustained nor mainstreamed.⁵⁸ Similarly, staff of the **Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP)** acknowledged the existence of gender differences,⁵⁹ although they were not considered as a key programme focus. In terms of its actualization, the gender dimension was mainly limited to the involvement of women in training activities.⁶⁰ Other project evaluations identified similar situations.⁶¹
78. **Gender transformation** – Against this background, the **SheTrades programme** stands out. It broke new ground in a more gender transformative approach. It examined the root causes of structural inequities, such as women's limited access to business. This approach was based on a continuously updated Gender Analysis. The evaluation describes how both

⁵⁸ When examining the entire TISI programme portfolio, the evaluation concluded that the Gender Equality dimension was neither systematically implanted nor encouraged across the entire portfolio. Indications from the TISI programme suggest that this is part of the new platform and upgraded model under construction. Green growth and SDGs will also be mainstreamed in the new model.

⁵⁹ Studies show that female exporters face more procedural obstacles than male exporters due to discriminatory behaviors on the borders by customs officials or clients. Therefore, automation of cross-border transactions may reduce this potential gender bias by reducing the number of face-to-face interactions and therefore encourage women to participate to trade activities.

⁶⁰ Furthermore, the evaluation identified blind spots in the design of the intervention. For example, important aspects of trade facilitation ignored in training materials, such as distributional impacts (including gender).

⁶¹ The level of women's involvement in **the YEP Gambia project** was modest. **The Refugees RESI Report** detected specific activities targeted at female refugee needs. It recognized that additional female-specific learning essentials could have been better satisfied, if identified at earlier stages of the project. While the **FAO-led Nigeria Food Africa project** made efforts to ensure gender equality was the targeted, cultural and religious considerations limited the number of enrolled young women. Nevertheless, the project was adjusted. It give clear priority to women in the training selection process, especially in productivity-focused gender-friendly farming and agro-inputs to reduce post-harvest losses.

female and male beneficiaries' needs were considered, and how this information was utilized in terms of capacity-building and implemented throughout the project.⁶² Another clear example of gender analysis use in the targeting process, was the focus on Women Owned Businesses seeking to promote changes in their business practices. This was identified in the *SheTrades Annual Review* in 29% of the cases.⁶³

79. From an overall corporate perspective, evaluations reported a positive trend in the integration of women's empowerment and equity-related dimensions throughout the project cycle. This was consistent with recent observations.⁶⁴ At the same time, these positive experiences, along with the wealth of knowledge accumulated through initiatives, such as the *SheTrades programme*, still need to be mainstreamed into most of the projects and generalized into a more-systematic gender-responsiveness and gender-transformative agenda.

Gender-related corporate commitments at the project level

- 1) collection of [sex-disaggregated data](#) related to the economic participation of women entrepreneurs, to ensure that women are identifiable and visible in the economy.
- 2) to [integrate gender awareness](#) and consideration of [gender into trade policies and agreements](#), in order to proactively include women and women-owned businesses in the global market.
- 3) to promote the [participation of women-owned businesses in public procurement markets](#) by adopting transparent and inclusive procurement policies with the aim of achieving wide-reaching results and impacting corporate supply chains.
- 4) to [make supply chains inclusive](#), and set a minimum 10% or more procurement target from businesses that are certified to a standard definition of ownership, management and control by one or more women.
- 5) to apply a [gender lens to addressing non-tariff measures](#) that affect, often disproportionately, the ability of women-owned businesses to benefit from full participation in trade.
- 6) to craft a legal and regulatory environment where [access to and control of financial services can be delivered effectively to women](#), including through the use of technology.
- 7) to undertake legislative and administrative [reforms to guarantee women's and girl's rights to full and equal access to ownership and control](#) over resources.

ITC Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Framework
(Executive Director's Bulletin, 23 December 2019)

80. To comply with the commitments stated in the 2019 GEWE Framework, efforts should be devoted to improving staff capacity to embed gender and equity into ITC's programme and project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is also a need to enhance the allocation of specific gender-specific resources into budgets, partnering with key stakeholders who have technical leadership on these issues (within and outside of the UN System).

⁶² For example, gender-friendly equipment and agro-inputs were distributed to both women and men. The intent was essentially to reduce drudgery and women's work burden. Both men and women benefited from differential / targeted skill improvement training. As well, the provision of certain agro-inputs was also highlighted, including jab planter, galvanized watering cans, knapsack sprayers, water pumps, wheelbarrow, head pan, vegetable & fruit plastic crates, tomato, pepper, chili pepper and okra.

⁶³ This refers to a specific project. Important to note, not the whole initiative.

⁶⁴ The **2019 AESR** described how some interventions had gone deeper than simply calculating a female/male ratio of participation at the end of the project. It had also included clear gender-disaggregated indicators and targets in their logical frameworks.

Conclusions and Recommendations

81. The following conclusions summarize and explore consequences and trends of the findings presented above. Although most conclusions could trigger the need for actions, given the particular transition moment that ITC navigates, a selection has been done to focus the top six recommendations among all the potential ones considered. These include suggestions where implementation could maximize the level of value-added vs overall efforts expended at the operational level.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The technical excellence and relevance of ITC interventions are confirmed.

82. Previous AESRs have consistently valued the relevance and coherence of ITC interventions as high. This is clearly confirmed in 2020 AESR. On a case-by-case basis, some interventions could have been better tailored to beneficiaries needs. Overall, ITC stakeholders have praised the technical quality of ITC activities. In particular, these tools pave the way in responding to the concrete needs of beneficiaries in taking advantage of business opportunities. Integrated ITC tools are effective mechanisms for achieving awareness, reinforcing skills and empowering clients. A strong product base contributes to project pipeline development and more predictable funding.⁶⁵ ITC's leadership in providing TRTA has built on the technical excellence of its tools.

Conclusion 2: ITC expertise in Aid for Trade (AfT) is widely acknowledged and appreciated. ITC is seen as an agile, adaptable and innovative strategic partner in fostering inclusive trade.

83. ITC stakeholders widely recognize and appreciate ITC as a key strategic partner in fostering inclusive trade, at the “cross section between traditional trade negotiations and the broader development agenda.” Projects evaluated were well aligned to the needs of the different categories of ITC beneficiaries (policymakers, BSOs and MSMEs). ITC follows a pragmatic approach. It is nimble, flexible and creative. When successful, ITC integrates the needs of different stakeholders in the business ecosystem, at the country level as well as within the relevant value chain, including clients in destination markets. Through domestic and international trade, ITC's comparative advantage in the TRTA arena relies on case-by-case support flexibility, inclusiveness, and sustained wealth creation within increasingly fragile settings.

Conclusion 3: Addressing complexity requires enhanced ITC continuity at the country level.

84. Most evaluated projects suggested the possibilities of long-lasting effects, even though this might require longer-term partnerships and engagement. ITC's niche is relevant and clear. At the same time, many challenges emerge that jeopardize interventions' sustainability and

⁶⁵ Ref. Statement by Switzerland, Informal Joint Advisory Group (JAG) Meeting; January 26th, 2015; https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/Working_with_ITC/JAG/Redesign/Switzerland.pdf

impact. As stated in the 2019 AESR, complexity is always present and requires better project control. Addressing the facets of complexity – policy coherence; partnership building’ and coordination – implies long-term engagement. Nevertheless, ITC also relies on extra-budgetary resources for its TRTA interventions. These are mainly project-focused, and relatively short-term in duration. Also, ITC’s relatively small size and lack of country presence throws up additional obstacles. Against this background, the evaluations indicated that ITC projects have generally operated with flexibility and adaptability to address the complex and generally weakly resourced environment in which it operates. However, from a sustainability and impact perspective, the need for enhanced continuity with partners and beneficiaries in the field remains.

Conclusion 4: Despite proven flexibility, operations are facing coordination and management bottlenecks.

85. In recent years, ITC overall delivery has increased considerably, as well as the geographical and technical scope and average project size. Implementation is still facing challenges in the field. These are both predictable and unpredictable. Management teams have generally adapted with high motivation and technical innovation to these challenges. It exemplifies ITC’s cultural flexibility to overcome design rigidity. Nevertheless, limitations in qualified and available human resources, in particular at the local level, is creating implementation constraints. Field staff structure and turnover,⁶⁶ as well as overstretch at HQ level, have frequently affected delivery. This has resulted in beneficiaries continuing to be directed on sometimes less than optimal paths with ITC support. Stronger and better-coordinated field presence would facilitate project effectiveness and improve synergies. To ensure sustainability and the likelihood of impact, ownership is a key factor to facilitating long lasting benefits.

Conclusion 5: Many ITC projects / interventions can be considered pilot initiatives, subject to replication and scaling-up, rather than being considered ends in themselves.

86. Despite an increase in project size, and because ITC’s worldwide programme footprint is relatively modest in terms of volumes at the country level, ITC is only one of the many actors in the ecosystems where it operates. ITC’s approach is progressively evolving from a project-focused approach, with a beginning and an end, to an on-going presence and process of constant adjustment and flexibility. This entails long-term interaction with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders and other multilateral agencies. Thus, many interventions can be considered as pilot projects. They aim to pave the way to sustainability and impact rather than representing ends in themselves. When working with pilots, the whole replication and scaling-up process needs to be embedded into the intervention from the very beginning, at the inception stage. Often exit strategies were missing in the evaluated interventions. They were not a mandatory requirement for intervention design approval. Although sustainability depends on many factors, the lack of project exit strategies remains a concern.

⁶⁶ With different types of short term and consultant contracts, and belonging to different divisions, hence having different reporting lines.

Conclusion 6: ITC projects are increasingly in alignment with the ITC Results Framework approach.

87. In 2015, ITC launched its programmatic strategy under the six focus areas. It encompassed a comprehensive ITC Results Framework aligned to corporate goals. This was viewed as a way to reach more efficiency of ITC's strategic results.⁶⁷ Evaluations generally confirm that the strategy is working. Interventions articulate solutions around the needs and interests of primary targeted population. This is accomplished within the context of the entire ecosystem covered by the ITC Results Framework that involve active partnerships and significant changes for beneficiaries.
88. Across the entire ITC project portfolio, the work carried out on improving BSO own performance has had a positive impact. These results were felt in areas of policy, regulatory changes and institutional support, as well as on services provided to MSMEs. Similarly, when working on a NES with policymakers, inclusive partnerships with BSOs led to wealth creation at the MSME level through export diversification. Finally, the special attention to individuals and MSMEs enabled them to improve their confidence and ability to better connect with their business ecosystem. It positioned them to take advantage of new market opportunities. This suggests that across different technical specialties, good practices are effective in achieving results within project-specific results chains, as well as avoiding silo behavior. Building on experience and concrete achievements realized, corporate guidance could be developed to take advantage of these advancements. This may entail further mainstreaming of good practices into a more efficient project planning and management arrangements, within the entire project portfolio.

Conclusion 7: The absence of effective project theory of change jeopardizes project management ability to frame and monitor change processes and carry out project coordination.

89. One paradox is that many interventions still lack an explicit theory of change.⁶⁸ It implies that each project is experimenting around unique solutions on a case-by-case basis. Efforts have been made to consciously work with ITC's Results Framework. This has had efficiency-related impact consequences. Theories of change contribute to internal and external understanding and awareness of how individual interventions are achieving higher-level results. Developing a theory of change at the design stage, and detailing it at the implementation stage, is good project management practice. It is goal-focused and evidenced based. Developing this 'hypothesis' allows project teams and stakeholders to reflect on the intervention logic. It articulates an understanding of how interventions are supposed to work. It highlights the critical assumptions behind success. Building on current Logframe practices, project theories of change that are effective, can serve as an additional footing for project management, project team coordination, and performance measurement and evaluation.

⁶⁷ ITC Results Framework organizes intermediate outcomes according to the categories of its beneficiaries: policymakers and regulators, TISIs and MSMEs. For each category of beneficiaries, it establishes a specific desired change.

⁶⁸ Theories of change complement planning tools like results frameworks and logframes by deeper and broader articulation of how change is expected to happen between the activities and the outputs and between the outputs and outcomes and impact within a given context.

Conclusion 8: Project monitoring is limited in generating evidence on attributable results, especially when it is not anchored to an effective project theory of change.

90. The basis of a monitoring and performance measurement system permits the tracking and assessment of progress against agreed upon objectives. Evaluations continue to highlight the deficiencies of ITC monitoring system in collecting and organizing sufficiently detailed performance information. Consequently, ITC's monitoring system is not fully capable of measuring attributable results (impact).

Conclusion 9: ITC is on track for a more strategic participation in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

91. ITC is a multilateral agency. It has a joint mandate with the WTO and the UN. Its activities take place within a broader multilateral framework. In terms of coordination with UNDS, ITC it is not fully visible at the UNCT level. ITC's participation in the Cooperation Framework is uneven and unsystematic. The paradox, however, is that ITC has carried out joint country interventions with other multilateral agencies. Its activities cover in a wide range of developing and transition countries, including where UNCT has been developed and agreed to a Coordination Framework with the host country. This state of affairs implies consequences related to ITC lack of visibility at UNCT level. One such is the perceived as a lack of relevance within UNDS. This situation has steered ITC to adopt a corporate strategy to more systematically and engage in Cooperation Frameworks currently under preparation. Once this strategy has been finalized and approved, it will be important to address the administrative and logistically implementations and capacity requirements.

Conclusion 10: ITC is on track to mainstream gender and equity (and other sustainable development dimensions?) in its operations.

92. Gender and equity are a corporate commitments. Integration within ITC interventions has been guided in 2019 by GEWE. Most evaluations have observed that although projects are generally ensuring gender balance in beneficiary participation, only some are truly gender responsive. They use Gender Analysis to address (or at least avoid worsening) imbalanced social justice situations. Gender balance is a first step, but not sufficient condition to ensure inclusiveness. In contrast with other interventions, evaluation has observed that the **SheTrades** programme is actively and systematically using trade to address the root causes of inequities, as a means for gender equity transformation. **SheTrades** is a flagship in gender responsiveness and transformation. Its good practices should be mainstreamed into other projects where relevant. In this respect, there seems to be broader on-going progress in 2019. ITC has issued Guidelines to mainstream sustainable and inclusive trade within its projects.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Mainstreaming sustainable and inclusive trade: Guidelines for International Trade Centre projects
https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/ITC_Mainstreaming%20Sustainability_web.pdf

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Mainstream Sustainable Development good practices

(a) Fully mainstream ITC expertise and good practices in the area of gender and equity into project planning and management arrangements for the entire portfolio, where applicable and,

(b) Use the learnings, processes and tools acquired through the above-mentioned exercise, to mainstream expertise and good practices in other Sustainable Development dimensions

Recommendation 2: Enhance the capacity to utilize theories of change:

(a) Develop the ITC Results Framework into a more detailed Theory of Change for the next ITC Strategic Plan and,

(b) Increase Project Managers' capacity to utilize the 'Theory of Change' tool to be more results-focused and improve results monitoring and information collection about attributable changes in complex project environments.

Recommendation 3: Enhance simplification, harmonization and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system:

Conduct an assessment of the M&E practices across ITC project portfolio to serve results-focused project management, learning and accountability and to enhance the simplification, harmonization and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system.

Recommendation 4: Enhancing project results sustainability:

(a) Identify in the project cycle, the potential for replication and scaling-up of the project, and

(b) Ensure the development and regular updating of exit strategies during project cycle, and their implementation.

Recommendation 5: Build on good project field office performance and coordination:

(a) Introduce an induction process in particular for project management staff in the field, to ensure they share a sufficient knowledge of ITC, and

(b) Identify and enforce protocols and good practices to work effectively through project field offices and to ensure good coordination among field personnel and among field and HQ personnel.

Recommendation 6: Implement corporate strategy to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks:

(a) Finalize and adopt a corporate strategy to engage more systematically in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and

(b) Enforce this strategy, including training requirements for ITC Country Officers about how and why to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

Past Recommendations

Implementation Status

93. In line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards suggest⁷⁰, and in line with the ITC Evaluation Guidelines,⁷¹ the IEU has put in place since 2013, a follow-up process to track the implementation status of evaluation recommendations. This monitors progress made on the recommendations and helps to ensure that they are used to contribute to ITC's organizational effectiveness, learning and accountability. It is worth noticing that IEU has no follow up system for self-evaluations and funder-led evaluations since it is not responsible for the issuance of recommendations in these cases.
94. As of 31 March, the IEU followed-up in 53 recommendations resulting from the following six independent evaluations carried out by the IEU:
- Final Evaluation: Promoting Intra-Regional Trade in Eastern Africa;
 - Final Evaluation of the Lesotho Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project;
 - Evaluation of the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Project;
 - Final Evaluation of the Pashmina Enhancement and Trade Support (PETS) Project in Nepal
 - Evaluation of the Non-tariff Measures (NTM) Programme;
 - Evaluation of the Certified Trade Advisers Programme (CTAP); and
 - Evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP).

⁷⁰ Norm 14 Evaluation use and follow up: (20) Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders. Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and/or management addressed by its recommendations that clearly states responsibilities and accountabilities. Management should integrate evaluation results and recommendations into its policies and programmes. (21) The implementation of evaluation recommendations should be systematically followed up. A periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations should be presented to the governing bodies and/or the head of the organization. Standard 1.4 Management response and follow up: The organization should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that management responds to evaluation recommendations. The mechanisms should outline concrete actions to be undertaken in the management response and in the follow-up to recommendation implementation. Source: United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG, p. 14 and 17, respectively.

⁷¹ International Trade Centre (2018). *ITC Evaluation Guidelines, Second Edition*. Geneva: ITC, p. 46

Evaluations	Recommendations				Implementation Status		
	Total	Accepted	Partially Accepted	Rejected	Not Started	Ongoing	Implemented
Eastern Africa 2017	10	4	6	--	--	1	9
Lesotho 2017	15	7	7	1	--	10	4
T4SD 2018	7	6	1	--	--	--	7
Nepal 2018	14	8	4	2	--	10	2
NTM 2018	6	6	--	--	--	2	4
CTAP 2018	5	5	--	--	--	5	--
TFP 2019	10	8	2	--	--	2	8
Total	67	44	20	3	0	30	34

Figure 6: Overview of recommendations implementation status of as of March 2020

95. As seen in the table above, all of the recommendations have been started, and as of the end of March 2020 over half (53%) have been implemented, and the remainder (47%) are ongoing. The follow-up process is useful to track the results of the evaluations, and to learn from the implementation of the recommendations. IEU follow-up work with Project Managers indicates that in the overall, they found the follow-up process to be a useful exercise in contributing to strengthening the current and future projects and programmes.

Transformative Effects

96. Good evaluations are those fulfilling the need of evaluation users. With this objective in mind, the IEU has developed a theory of change to determine its key results areas. All evaluations should contribute to four main results: (a) Strengthened culture of evaluation and learning; (b) Improved design, implementation and results of projects and programs; (c) Improved knowledge and information basis for organizational decision-making and management; and, (d) An indirect result is the sustained or increased trust and support of ITC funders. The analysis of the effects of implemented recommendations indicates they are consistent with these ultimate objectives. Specifically, they represented the following lines of improvement opportunities⁷²:

97. **Making the most of realized achievements** – The aim is to strengthen the implementation of existing new or related interventions. Specifically, recommendations point at coordination with, and use of, previously established networks and partners. They anticipate building further the newly acquired capacities of MSMEs: (a) When the evaluated project had no direct successor, projects of a similar nature implemented the recommendations. This was the case in Eastern Africa where achievements of the *Intra-Regional Trade in Eastern*

⁷² Case studies that were consulted by the IEU with project management teams, describing the effects of these recommendations are available in Annex 4.

Africa project were integrated into the **Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP)** in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and the **Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa (PIGA) project** in Zambia. (b) **The Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA)** in Nepal was recommended to improve its branding, labelling and marketing strategies. As a result, ITC provided it with regular access to its databases, tools and publications, to facilitate access to new fashion and designs for distribution to its wider membership. This is contributing to increase knowledge and capacities of enterprises through NPIA.

98. **Addressing sustainability shortcomings** – All evaluations provided recommendations for future project and programme design. These included increase use of needs assessments; strengthened M&E function; and ensured exit strategy plans were in place to ensure sustainability: (a) In Nepal, the evaluation recommended the Government to prepare a strategy and action plan for promoting and expanding Chyangra pashmina (CP) wool. As a result, the CP sector has been integrated into a successive ITC project “**Nepal Trade-Related Assistance**”, financed by the EU. (b) Similarly, the **NTM programme** evaluation recommended paving the way for sustainability at the beginning of an NTM Survey cycle by ensuring consistency with partner and beneficiary needs and priorities. As a result, the programme is now systematically organizing stakeholder consultations prior to survey launch. This was observed recently in Niger and Viet Nam. (c) To address a major sustainability concern highlighted by the evaluation, the project National Steering Committee agreed on a Sustainability Plan (exit strategy) involving Government of **Lesotho** enhanced governmental participation.
99. **Improved sustainable development results** – Inclusive and sustainable growth and development is ITC’s raison d’être. Logically, recommendations should encourage projects to maximize their development impact: (a) As a result of the recommendations, the **NTM programme** engaged and further supported local authorities and TISIs through in-depth consultations at survey launch, with an aim to build their capacities to undertake similar surveys. (b) Recommendations led the **TFP** to strengthen its focus on countries that are more in need of improved trade inclusiveness. Low-income countries now account for 65% of TFP delivery in terms of geographical coverage, including additional projects in LDCs such as Nepal, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. (c) In **Nepal**, the follow-on project introduced capacity-building as a value addition to goat farmers. Following the evaluation recommendation, the promotion of CP products made from Nepalese fiber incentivized that more attention put on local producers developmental needs, in particular in the Upper Mustang.
100. **Improved project management** – Strengthening project management also benefited from a number of evaluation recommendations. Areas highlighted included developing theories of change, updating programme policies, and enhancing internal and external communications and synergies: (a) Influenced by the evaluation, the **Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)** evaluation programme aligned its strategy to the ITC corporate objectives and results framework. (b) Similarly, the **TFP** evaluation recommended for an enhanced management of its activities at the corporate level. Within ITC, TFP is now actively engaging with country teams in the Division of Country Programmes (DCP) on a regular basis and has engaged other sections to ensure complementarity and to avoid overlaps. Moreover, TFP has developed a staffing plan in response to the evaluation, in order to address a quickly increasing delivery and staff overstretch at HQ level.

101. **Better-informed decision-making** – (a) The **Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)** Project was still in a pilot phase at the time of the evaluation. Recommendations paved the way for senior management to approve an upgraded T4SD strategy. (b) The objective of the **Certified Trade Advisers Programme (CTAP)** evaluation was to assess the performance and results of this service, to review training and coaching methods as they were applied in ITC projects, and to generate findings and recommendations for informing strategic decision-making on future operations of the service. Thus, many of the recommendations were related to scaling-up and further qualitative developments. Based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of the CTAP programme, as identified by the evaluation, senior management requested the project team to review programme structure, content, and delivery methodology.
102. **Sustained trust and support of ITC funders**– (a) **T4SD** recommendations have guided a long-term proposal with funders leading to a follow-up funding phase to consolidate public good services provided by the programme (T4SD database, T4SD Forum, and Sustainability Map). (b) In projects presenting shortcomings or delays, such as the **Lesotho Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project**, the evaluation helped to secure a no-cost extension and to enable the completion of project activities.

Annexes

Annex 1: Summary of evaluated reports

IEU evaluations in 2019 at a glance

1. Evaluation of the ITC Participation and Performance in the UN Delivering as One System

In 2006, the report of the United Nations Secretary General's (UNSG's) *High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence* included recommendations aimed at strengthening the work of the UN-system in partnership with host governments. The panel recommended that the UN-system should "Deliver as One" (DaO) at the country level, with one leader, one programme, one budget and, where appropriate, one office.

This corporate evaluation examined ITC's efforts to engage in DaO and its participation in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in selected countries. Main findings included that ITC's engagement in DaO was not systematic and that its limited participation partly undermined its visibility in countries. The report contained a number of recommendations to enhance ITC's engagement at the system-wide level, for example by developing a clear strategy on how the organization wants to position itself to systematically engage in and benefit from ongoing systemic initiatives like DaO or the reform of the United Nations Development System.

The evaluation covered ITC efforts and activities to engage in DaO between 2008 and 2016.

2. Evaluation of the ITC Programme 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions'

Institutions that support businesses to grow, innovate and improve competitiveness are important multipliers for ITC's interventions by expanding their reach and scale, and providing strong local partners for long-term results. The ITC Programme 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions' aims to improve the managerial and operational performance of these institutions so they can better assist MSMEs internationalize.

The evaluation of the programme found that it is achieving strong overall results in institutional strengthening and confirmed that these have positive effects that benefit ITC activities at large. The programme has gathered a wealth of insights into institutional practices and has developed a large toolbox of different training and services. This highly specialized expertise in institutional strengthening gives ITC a distinctive positioning in this area. However, there are differences in effectiveness depending on a number of factors (such as the commitment and absorption capacity of institutions). The evaluation made a number of recommendations, some of a strategic nature aimed to strengthen programme results through adjustments in its service offering, and others of a managerial nature, aimed at preserving the programme's ability to carry out its work as a core function of ITC.

Scope of the evaluation covered January 2014 to December 2019.

Total budget of the programme at the time of evaluation: \$6.7 million USD.

3. Midterm Evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Project in The Gambia

The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) was designed to tackle the root causes of irregular migration through increased job opportunities and income prospects for youth. YEP focuses on vocational training and support for micro and small-sized enterprises, and creates jobs in selected sectors through value addition and market linkages.

The midterm project evaluation found it to be performing well and that its stakeholders were satisfied with the support received. The sector roadmap-based value chain approach also proved to be promising. The project was found relevant for the Gambia in addressing one of the country's significant development challenges. However, the support for youth empowerment in the Gambia would need to continue beyond 2021 under the government's leadership so that the efforts piloted

under the YEP approach can be mainstreamed. The evaluation made a number of recommendations targeting the different actors involved: the government of The Gambia, the program itself, ITC and the EU Delegation.

Start and end dates of the project: January 2017 to December 2021.

Total budget of the project at the time of evaluation: \$15 million USD funded by EU DG DEVCO.

4. Evaluation of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme

The ITC Trade Facilitation Programme was created following the *2013 WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA)*, which created obligations for members such as improving the efficiency of cross-border procedures and strengthening regulatory coordination. The programme provided technical assistance to help countries ratify and apply the TFA. Its main activities and focus have evolved over time: from broad-based awareness raising about the WTO Agreement to in-depth country support relating to specific needs.

The evaluation of the programme found that it was delivering good, timely and relevant work, driven by a committed and resourceful team, whose work and close client relationship was much appreciated by partners, funders and beneficiaries. By doing so, the programme successfully established ITC as one of the key organizations offering support to implement the WTO Agreement. But with the programme's success and evolution also came growth that needs to be well-steered, managed and coordinated in house. The recommendations of the evaluation were geared towards these needs. They also suggested a stronger focus on low-income countries, especially LDCs and a stronger consideration of SDGs, such as gender equality and climate change adaptation, in the programme capacity building components.

Scope of the evaluation covered 2014 to 2018.

Total budget of the programme at the time of evaluation was approximately \$7 million USD.

Self-evaluations in 2019 at a glance

5. Evaluation of the project Overcoming Trade Obstacles related to Non-Tariff Measures in the Arab countries

The two-phase project "Overcoming Trade Obstacles related to Non-Tariff Measures in the Arab countries", initiated in 2014 and ended in 2018. It aimed to assess and evaluate the effects of non-tariff measures (NTM) by taking an alternative approach, based on information gathered through surveys that capture the perceptions of businesses involved in international trade, relying on perceptions from those that have to comply with these NTMs. The project represents a valuable complement to the information on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and WTO databases, through obtaining direct information on the relative importance of the different obstacles to trade covering all forms of trade costs and procedural obstacles, with potentially many not specific to government regulations (or private standards).

The project was commended for its overall design with well-identified deliverables. The project met, and most of the time, exceeded the objectives set out in the deliverables requested at the start. The report gives suggestions for future: to follow up on the recommendations made at a recent high-level workshop, to monitor closely the usage of the new platforms created under the project, to extend country coverage after scrutinizing the sampling methodology, and benchmarking MENA countries applying textual distance metrics to the newly available information on ITCs' platforms.

Start and end dates of the project: July 2017 to December 2018.

Total budget of the project: \$1.51 million USD funded by USAID.

Funder-evaluations in 2019 at a glance

6. Mid-Term Review of the 'Advancing Afghan Trade' project implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC)

Advancing Afghan Trade Project (AATP) was a three-year project that started in August 2016 assisting the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in improving the conditions to use trade as a lever for confidence building, enhanced regional cooperation, economic and human development and poverty reduction. The project aimed to strengthen human and institutional capacity on trade policy and strategy formulation and implementation with the active engagement of the private sector.

The Mid-Term Review assessed the project performance and results using the standard OECD-DAC criteria. AATP filled in an important void by creating the required policy framework that could be used as an effective springboard to launch further growth in trade. One of the key outputs of the action, the National Export Strategy (NES) of Afghanistan was developed and completed in a highly participatory and inclusive manner. Stakeholders confirmed the effectiveness of the NES document in being a comprehensive national guide to give directions of promoting exports in prioritized sectors and boosting earnings from international trade. The project, its objectives and components were rated as highly relevant by the stakeholders involved whereas they were in alignment with national priorities and EU strategies in the country and in the region.

Despite the strides achieved, the action also faced difficulties which affected the delivery of results in varying degrees among which are uncertainties in the security situation, low knowledge base and lack of absorption capacity of beneficiaries, high turn-over of staff, departure of key government officials and limited capacity of the public sector and the lack of more permanent project staff in Kabul apart from TAs.

The report concluded as recommendation a follow-up second phase to enhance ownership and sustainability possibilities of the AAT that also considers to support GoIRA to exploit the potentials of trade-in-services in Afghanistan as an additional lever for greater regional cooperation and economic and human development.

Start and end dates of the project: August 2016 to March 2020.

Total budget of the project: \$5.08 million USD funded by EU DG DEVCO.

7. Review of the FOOD AFRICA PROJECT- Empowering Youth and Promoting Innovative public-private partnership through More Efficient Agro-Food Value Chains in Nigeria

The joint programme “Empowering Youth and Promoting Innovative public-private partnership through More Efficient Agro-Food Value Chains in Nigeria” was an innovative partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to improve food security and nutrition and alleviate poverty by strengthening local value chains for farmers. UN System in Nigeria on the National Steering Committee, ensured alignment with UNDAF and national priorities. FAO, ILO and ITC were responsible for technical assistance in their core areas of expertise. ITC's specific role in the project included: designing farmer service delivery models, incorporating gender and youth approaches and based on evaluation of farmer needs and value chain structure; linking with the FAO Farmer Field School system, people at key points in the value chain were trained on effective methods of implementation; analysing the marketing value chain, incorporating buyer and market requirements for designing with ILO and FAO, market upgrading initiatives, demonstrations and trainings in areas of efficiency, quality and food standards.

The project was implemented in the second half of 2018 (duration 6 months, worth 535,000USD) and it focused on agro-food value chain development, food security and nutrition, youth employment and poverty alleviation in Kaduna State, Northwest Nigeria. The project's key outcomes were decent jobs for poverty alleviation, improving nutrition and the promotion of sustainable economic growth. The programme piloted activities in Kaduna State that supported public-private partnerships to create a business model to boost local agriculture and establish local

food processing facility. The programme aimed to improve the livelihoods of farmers by expanding their market access.

The Project's initial targets of reaching a thousand (1,000) local young women and men and 55,000 beneficiaries directly and indirectly over a period of three years were not achievable due to reduction in project duration and budget. The programme addressed the skills gaps in agricultural practices and agro-processing.

Start and end dates of the project: July 2017 to December 2018.

Total ITC budget of the project: \$57,000 USD, funded by ITC W1 (\$24,000), and SDG Fund (\$33,000).

8. Annual Review of the SheTrades Commonwealth Programme

The SheTrades Commonwealth Programme focused on economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries through the increased participation of women-owned businesses (WOBs) in trade, with a specific focus on Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Bangladesh. In each country, the programme concentrated on sectors with significant opportunities for delivering economic returns for women entrepreneurs and with high export potential: agriculture, services and textile and apparel.

The SheTrades Commonwealth Programme achieved good results in its first year. It met or exceeded expectations for the majority of its outputs. It convened a broad range of stakeholders and worked with them effectively on a number of fronts to lay the foundations for meaningful improvements in the trade ecosystem for women owned businesses. It has also provided a range of support to Business Support Organizations (BSOs), Private sector and Women-Owned Business (WOBs) alike, gaining good feedback from beneficiaries and achieving tangible outcomes in terms of potential business generated and capacity built. In addition to the good results reported in the logical framework, the programme generated a number of positive success stories. ITC did a good job in starting up the programme quickly, spending effectively, and being adaptable, constructive and flexible. Where there were issues, such as with mobilization or with financial management, they responded positively and decisively to resolve the issues.

The report recommends an extension of the programme, clearer strategies per sector to foster cross-sector connections and finalizing the indicators and separate sub-indicators.

Start and end dates of the project: April 2018 to March 2020, at the time of evaluation.

Total budget of the project: \$9.0 million USD, funded by DFID.

Note: This list of evaluation summaries does not include the Synthesis of the Project Completion Reports (PCRs) because this document was already a summary, the Final Report Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (NRC) B571, which was more of a descriptive report of results and the Mid-term Review of Program for Support to Multilateral Aid for Trade Activities 2018-20 (Denmark) because this document scope covered other AfT organizations. These three documents have been used to conduct the AESR analysis though, because of the relevance of the messages they conveyed.

Annex 2: 2019 AESR Management Response

Recommendation	Means of verification
<p>1. ITC management of project planning and implementation might want to include the assessment of the level of complexity of its interventions within its project risk management. This would be used to allow flexibility during project implementation and justification to adapt logframes and results chains, if necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During the project design phase, the review of the level of complexity of interventions and related-risks is part of the development of the risk management/monitoring plan and reviewed with project teams notably during the formal logframe design meeting. ▪ If complexity represents a risk for project results or implementation, project managers are advised to make it an element in their risk monitoring.
<p>2. ITC management of project planning and implementation should consider the achievement of synergies as a mandatory feature for its interventions, at design, implementation and reporting stages. This implies putting emphasis on strong partnerships and supportive networks coordinating their activities and leveraging their capabilities in a policy coherent fashion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project templates and project design team systematically request the identification and integration of synergies with internal and external partners. In particular, the project plan template requests projects to identify coherence with partners, governments policies, strategies and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF/UNDAF). It is also required to identify major, planned partners. ▪ Key institutional partnerships are part of ITC's Operational plan and CCITF reports. ▪ ITC's IATI reporting allows other development actors to easily identify ITC projects and potential synergies with their work. ▪ Work is ongoing to fully integrate ITC into the UNCT country-level reporting mechanisms. ▪ Regarding internal ITC synergies, the project design team requests evidence of coordination and consultation within ITC and alignment to ITC programmes, mainstreaming objectives and Strategic Plan (ref. Relevance tab in the Projects Portal).
<p>3. While achieving effective synergies with its partners, ITC management of project planning and implementation should agree with them on the intermediate steps within logframes that explain how, why and for whom, changes are occurring, and engage with partners in the performance monitoring and measurement system, for mutual accountability and impact purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Projects are designed in full coordination with partners (funders, implementing partners and beneficiaries). As such, project proposals integrate partners' inputs throughout the whole development process. ▪ Project Steering Committees have been established for all large projects, with stakeholder and partner representation. Progress on logframes, and detailing of intermediate steps in project workplans (as well as project risks) are part of the regular agenda of the PSC meetings. ▪ Theories of change with intermediate outcomes and related indicators were developed for the 15 ITC programmes. Project Managers are encouraged in the project design stages to align and integrate the related intermediate outcomes in their project logframes. ▪ All ITC projects have to develop a results chain and logical framework outlining the intermediate steps that will lead to the achievement of project outcome. ▪ MoU and project templates require the articulation of output and results objectives and specify the monitoring requirements. ▪ Work is ongoing to harmonize good monitoring practices across ITC's project portfolio.
<p>4. Throughout the stages of the project cycle, ITC management of project planning and implementation should focus its communication with partners and stakeholders to address challenges together and generate the trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on integration into UNCTs and UNSDCF/UNDAF. ▪ Operationalization of regular stakeholder communication through Project Steering Committees

<p>required to identify threats and opportunities and work with each other to address them.</p>	<p>and regular risk-focused communication (e.g, through sharing of risk updates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At the project design stage, teams are encouraged to engage early on in communication with partners and stakeholders to align on objectives, agree on best approaches to achieve the results and address key challenges.
<p>5. ITC should conduct a rigorous analysis and inventory of its tools and approaches that achieve effective mutual reinforcement between trade development linkages and sustainable development (SDGs). This will enable wide spreading their use in project portfolio and will position ITC with a distinctive trade and sustainable development constituent in Trade-related Technical Assistance (TRTA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationships between ITC programmes / results and contribution to SDG targets are established in the design phase, as are the other indicator layers (outcomes and output). Trainings on the contribution logic to SDGs to project teams are regularly provided in context of the RBM sessions. ▪ ITC's guidelines on mainstreaming inclusive and sustainable trade (<i>link in the title</i>) were published in 2019. The project design team ensures that all relevant mainstreaming focal points are consulted and provide inputs at the project design stage. All projects must rate the level of contribution to the four ITC mainstreaming markers (gender, youth, environment, social responsibility). ▪ Development of a comprehensive database of all individual ITC products and services is ongoing.

Annex 3: Status of 2018 AESR recommendations

Recommendation	2019 reporting	2020 reporting
<p>Recommendation 2: Consider a revamped sustainability-focused project monitoring and evaluation scheme to more effectively track the progress of local ownership. This could be done through: New indicators measuring the satisfactory appropriation of capacity, skills and competencies to beneficiaries and partners, using measurements such as: o - Local oversight; o - Local resources invested; and o - Outputs of local ownership</p>	<p>Local oversight in the field is ensured through the participation of local project partners in the corresponding project Steering Committees. This mechanism has been increasingly applied to projects and enables local stakeholders to periodically track and discuss performance, discuss risks and possible needs to adjust plans and coordinate actions. ITC project managers have been asked to report on contributions in kind made by partners to projects. In addition, ITC is in the process of expanding the on-line reporting template in the project portal to capture investments that were made as a result of projects. This can be investments by partners that provide additional support to project beneficiaries in the framework of the project, or investments that finance spin-off projects. It can also be investments by beneficiaries into removing obstacles identified through analysis undertaken in projects, or into implementing roadmaps, plans or strategies that were developed under projects. Current large ITC country/regional projects usually also foresee midterm evaluations, which provide an opportunity to qualitatively assess the satisfactory appropriation of capacity, skills and competencies by beneficiaries and partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The 2020 Monitoring framework allows for monitoring of intermediate outcomes within the ITC results framework. ▪ ITC also set up a new reporting mechanism on leveraging of resources. This provides options to monitor resources invested by the beneficiaries or third parties, and that contribute to the sustainability and broad ownership of ITC-supported initiatives. It also allows to monitor the uptakes of ITC's initiatives from other development partners (for example, through spin-off projects that may be funded and implemented by third party organizations. ▪ All ITC large projects (above 1 million) are required to formally outline their sustainability and local ownership strategy as well as their exit strategy at the project design phase.
<p>Recommendation 4: Consider the development of an innovation-enabling project development and management approach: (a) Integration of innovation in the project design template and guidelines,</p>	<p>This recommendation is accepted and partially implemented (a) The requirement for a participatory project design approach, in interaction with the beneficiaries, is already in place, as is the requirement for each project to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ITC's appetite for innovation is visible through an enabling Business development budget at the corporate level (around \$500 thousand a year). ITC's <u>risk appetite statement clearly expresses that the institutional appetite for</u>

<p>including project theory of change; a</p>	<p>have a logframe and description of the strategy of intervention. ITC will include text that explicitly encourages innovation in project design and intervention in the project management guidelines, and expand its template for project documents by a section that asks project developers to specify how the project intends to deal with innovation.</p>	<p><u>taking innovation risks is high.</u> There is no obstacle for innovation-related budget allocations in any project, outside those imposed by individual funders' appetite for potentially losing the funds if the innovation fails.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ITC has also integrated a new "COVID-19 updates" tab in the projects portal to encourage project managers to highlight the project's response to the COVID-19 crisis - in particular, what initiatives the project has put in place to support beneficiaries to manage and recover from issues related to COVID-19. ▪ ITC's Innovation Lab and the Project Design team contribute on several initiatives and will continue to reinforce the importance of innovation throughout ITC operations.
--	--	--

Annex 4: Case Studies on the Effect of Recommendations

1. Eastern Africa: Final Evaluation: Promoting Intra-Regional Trade in Eastern Africa

The evaluation resulted in 10 recommendations (four fully accepted and six partially). The high number of partially accepted recommendations was because the Eastern Africa project did not have a direct successor project while the recommendations were designed to ensure follow-up on what was accomplished, with an aim to maintain a level of sustainability of the results achieved. The management response addressed the substance of these recommendations, indicating they would be implemented through other similar value-chain projects that were at the time, in their design stages or already underway. As of March 2020, nine of the recommendations were implemented. As a result, the Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP) in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and the Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa (PIGA) project in Zambia have integrated the achievements of the Eastern Africa project that contribute towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Lesotho: Final Evaluation of the Lesotho Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project

The evaluation resulted in 15 recommendations (seven fully accepted and seven partially and one rejected⁷³). Three of the recommendations were to be addressed directly by project management, and 11 were designed for the funders and, in some cases, the beneficiary country, when designing future similar value chain development projects. The evaluation helped to secure a no-cost extension, and was instrumental in the acceleration of the project's Sustainability Plan that was agreed by the National Steering Committee involving governmental participation.

3. T4SD: Evaluation of the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Project

The seven recommendations of the 2017 evaluation of the T4SD Programme have been implemented. As a result, ITC senior management approved in 2018, an updated T4SD Strategy, which was aligned to ITC corporate objectives and results framework. In addition, long-term funding proposals were developed with funders in order to propose a follow-up phase to consolidate the public good services provided by the programme (T4SD database, T4SD Forum, Sustainability Map). Also in response to the evaluation, the T4SD project Advisory Committee was formed in 2018, which has taken on a prominent role, and the rules to the standard operating procedures for the Governance Committee have been updated.

4. Final Evaluation of the Pashmina Enhancement and Trade Support (PETS) Project in Nepal

The project evaluation provided recommendations primarily addressed to the implementing partners including the Nepal Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, the Nepal Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Nepal Trade and Export Promotion Centre, and the Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA). As of March 2020, two of the recommendations were implemented and 10 were ongoing. NPIA has regular access to ITC databases, tools and publications, which helps facilitate access to new fashion and designs for distribution to their wider membership; contributing to increased knowledge and capacities of enterprises through NPIA. The Chyangra Pashmina (CP) sector has been integrated into a new ITC project "Nepal Trade-Related

⁷³ The rejected recommendation was related to a vehicle purchased by the project to be made available to extension officers.

Assistance”, financed by the EU. The CP component of the programme addresses three key recommendations from the 2018 evaluation including CP strategy development, capacity building for value addition for goat farmers, and promotion of CP products made from Nepalese fibre.

5. *NTM: Evaluation of the Non-tariff Measures (NTM) Programme*

The evaluation provided six recommendations for the programme. As of March 2020, four of the recommendations were fully implemented, with two still ongoing. As recommended in the evaluation, in order to pave the way for sustainability and impact at the beginning of an NTM Survey cycle, and to ensure consistency with partner and beneficiary needs and priorities, the programme is systematically organizing stakeholder consultations prior to survey start, as seen most recently in Niger and Viet Nam (i.e. project B626). In the same vein, the programme has further engaged and supported local authorities and TISIs through in-depth consultations at survey start, with an aim to build their capacities to undertake similar surveys. In addition, the programme continues to engage and support relevant partners in their roles and responsibilities in the implementation and follow-up.

6. *CTAP: Evaluation of the Certified Trade Advisers Programme (CTAP)*

The CTAP evaluation was of a slightly different nature as CTAP was an ITC service that provided training. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the performance and results of this service, to review training and coaching methods as they were applied in ITC projects, and to generate findings and recommendations for informing strategic decision-making on future operations of the service. Thus, many of the recommendations were related to scaling-up and further qualitative developments. All five recommendations set out in the evaluation were fully accepted, and as of March 2020, they were still ongoing. To address the recommendations, a working group was established. It conducted a literature review with a focus on enterprise competitiveness, the links between competitiveness and business internationalization, and between competitiveness and business growth. Then, upon request of senior management, the working group initiated a peer review process to validate its research results, which is still underway. Based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of the CTAP programme, as identified by the evaluation, the project team is currently reviewing programme structure, content, and delivery methodology.

7. *TFP: Evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP)*

The evaluation of the TFP provided 10 recommendations designed to help the programme move into the right direction in a phase of growth. As of March 2020, eight of the recommendations were implemented. As recommended, the programme is actively engaging with country teams in the Division of Country Programmes (DCP), on a regular basis. Low-income countries now account for 65% of TFP delivery in terms of geographical coverage, including additional projects in LDCs such as Nepal, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Similarly, TFP has engaged with other sections to ensure complementarity and avoid overlaps. Finally, in response to the evaluation, TFP has developed a staffing plan to address a quickly increasing delivery, as well as the requirements for improved planning, reporting and communication.

Annex 5: Implementation status of recommendations (2012 – 2020)

Evaluations	Recommendations				Implementation Status			
	Total	Accepted	Partially Accepted	Rejected	Not Started	Ongoing	Partially Implemented	Implemented
Enact (2012)	9	9						9
WEDF (2012)	9	9						9
South-South (2012)	12	12					1	11
PCTP (2013)	21	21						21
NTF II (2013)	12	11	1					12
Export Strategy (2013)	12	11	1				3	9
EIF Gambia Midterm (2014)	14	11	3				3	11
EIF Lesotho Midterm (2015)	12	8	3	1			1	11
Trade and Environment (2015)	10	10						10
EIF Gambia Final (2016)	7	3	4				2	5
EIF Nepal Midterm (2016)	10	7	2	1				9
NTF II Impact (2016)	8	8					1	7
Women and Trade (2016)	5	4	1					5
Eastern Africa (2017)	10	4	6			1		9
Lesotho (2017)	15	7	7	1		10		4
T4SD (2018)	7	6	1					7
EIF Nepal Final (2018)	14	8	4	2		10		2
NTM (2018)	6	6				2		4
CTAP (2018)	5	5				5		-
Trade Facilitation (2019)	10	8	2			2		8
Totals	208	168	35	5	0	28	11	163

Annex 6: List of documents reviewed

- ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021
- ITC Evaluation Policy SECOND EDITION
- ITC Evaluation Guidelines SECOND EDITION
- OIOS Programme Evaluations of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Trade Centre (ITC) 24 July 2014
- OIOS Compendium of Good Evaluation Practice, 2016-17 Biennial Study on Strengthening Evaluation
- 2019-2020 ITC IEU EVALUATION WORK PROGRAMME
- 2020-2021 ITC IEU EVALUATION WORK PROGRAMME
- Synthesis analysis of the PCR
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2012
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2014
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2015
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2016
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2017
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2018
- ITC Annual Evaluation Synthesis Review 2019
- IEG Adapting evaluation designs in times of COVID-19 (coronavirus): four questions to guide decisions, Estelle Raimondo & Jos Vaessen & Mariana Branco - April 22, 2020
- Management responses



Street address
International Trade Centre
54-56 Rue de Montbrillant
1202 Geneva, Switzerland



P: +41 22 730 0111
F: +41 22 733 4439
E: itcreg@intracen.org
www.intracen.org

Postal address
International Trade Centre
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland