



**Evaluation of the**  
**Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Project**  
**(2013 – 2016)**

**Final report**

The Independent Evaluation Unit/SPPG  
December 2017



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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BSCI	Business Social Compliance Initiative
CAEC	China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center
DAC	Development Assistance Committee, OECD
DEI	Division of Enterprises and Institutions, ITC
EU/EC	European Union/ European Commission
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit, SPPG, ITC
ITC	International Trade Centre
FEFAC	European Feed Manufacturer's Federation
FMCG	Fast-moving consumer goods
FSA	Farmer Self-assessment Tool
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
FSI	Floriculture Sustainability Initiative
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labeling (Alliance)
MSMEs	Micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OED	Office of the Executive Director, ITC
OECD	Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation
SAI	Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (Platform)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SMC	Senior Management Committee, ITC
SMEs	Small- and medium-sized enterprises
SPPG	Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section, OED, ITC
SSCT	Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool
10YFP	10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns
TISI	Trade and investment support institution
TPO	Trade promotion offices
T4SD	Trade for Sustainable Development Project, ITC
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
VSS	Private and voluntary sustainability standards, codes of conduct and audit protocols
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

## Executive Summary

1. This report covers the evaluation of ITC's Trade for Sustainable Development project (T4SD). The evaluation was requested by the Division of Enterprises and Institution (DEI) to assess programme performance and results in the period of 2013 – 2016. This includes one complete funding cycle (2013 – 2015) for the project and the ongoing operations under the funding period 2016 – 2020. The project has been co-funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of Switzerland, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and European Commission (DG, Trade).
2. Apart from accountability purposes, the evaluation aimed at providing useful and evidence-based recommendations on T4SD's future operations. The evaluation applied a participatory approach seeking the views of all stakeholders to facilitate consensus building and organizational learning; the stakeholders participated actively in the evaluation process.
3. In ITC terminology, the T4SD operation had been termed a “project” until late 2016. Since then, T4SD has included two separate operations: the T4SD project and the newly merged Trade and Environment Programme.<sup>1</sup> This evaluation covers the operations of the T4SD project.
4. Since 2009, the T4SD project has been providing information services on voluntary sustainability standards (VSS). With a focus on building up a global public good on VSS, the operations of the project mainly follow four lines of activities: (i) the repository of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS Repository), (ii) the T4SD Forum and events, (iii) customized tools tailored to the needs of private firms, and (iv) technical assistance and cooperation projects in developing countries. Accordingly, the evaluation assessed the performance in these four operational areas.
5. The main evaluative tools applied by the evaluation included: desk review of documents, discussions and verification with the project team, consultations and communication with ITC management, major donors and colleagues at ITC, interviews with selected partners and clients, field visit to project sites, and a large-scale survey on clients of Sustainability Map. The detailed evaluation objectives, criteria and its core methodological approach are seen in the evaluation terms of reference (TOR).
6. **Evaluating a work in progress.** The fact that this is an evaluation for operations that have been and are still actively progressing is both a key characteristic and methodological limitation. As a pilot, T4SD project has primarily evolved through learning by doing rather than following an elaborate long-term strategy. The project team focused on developing innovative products and services that are yet to be fully realized. A vivid example of its ongoing feature is that the new Sustainability Map Platform ([www.sustainabilityxchange.info](http://www.sustainabilityxchange.info)), which replaced Standards Map ([www.standardsmap.org](http://www.standardsmap.org)), was launched on 27 September 2017, at the end of data collection for this evaluation.
7. Another aspect of the work in progress is the recently endeavored technical assistance in developing countries. The evaluation assessed T4SD's partnership model with Swisscontact Colombia, which served as a pilot for the project in deploying new operations in developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs). In close collaboration with a value chain project implemented by Swisscontact, T4SD designed and applied a customized self-assessment tool for cacao products. The tool is recently completed and tested among three selected cacao farmers' cooperatives in Tumaco region, a remote post-conflict area with a high poverty rate. As the tool has yet to be promoted by Swisscontact and Redcacaotera (an apex body of cooperatives) among hundreds of their member cooperatives, it is still too early to identify concrete results for producers on the ground. A case study on Colombia project is seen in annex III.
8. The constant evolution is also reflected in forming the project theory of change. In the process of exploring relevant services and innovative solutions, T4SD is still in the process of defining

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<sup>1</sup> The Trade and Environment Programme was evaluated in 2013-2014.

an articulate intervention logic. As the project has been growing dynamically, it has not yet formed a shared understanding among key stakeholders on defined results chains, such as how T4SD's support should translate into which wider benefits. For example, for donors, T4SD's main purpose is to increase transparency around VSS in order to allow small producers and MSMEs in developing countries to increase the value of their products, enable consumers, public procurement officers and globally sourcing companies to take well-informed buying decisions, and enable informed decision on VSS by all actors along the value chain.<sup>2</sup> While for some private sector partners, the main value added of T4SD services was strengthening their supply chain. In terms of defining clear objectives, the 2016 T4SD project results framework is a significant step forward, however its theory of change still leaves room for further clarification. An articulate project theory of change could also contribute to formulating an ITC organizational strategy with a view to better positioning the organization in the field of global VSS.

#### **Main conclusions on the project performance in the four operational areas:**

9. **VSS Repository.** The VSS repository primarily responds to the public interest of transparency on VSS and their requirements. It represents an innovative public good highly relevant to ITC's mission and related sustainable development goals (SDGs),<sup>3</sup> and ITC's impartiality and expertise are essential to the credibility of the repository. The global VSS Repository is T4SD's unique core product, and it has evolved into a brand of service which positions ITC as one of the key international public stakeholders in the VSS field.
10. In fact, transparency on VSS greatly complements World Trade Organization (WTO) rules relating to transparency of mandatory standards of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), and therefore potentially facilitates international trade. Comparable to the publication of mandatory standards under TBT/SPS rules, the publication of VSS is one among many, yet an important tool for international market access of developing countries including LDCs. Publicizing credible and neutral information on VSS increases their transparency and credibility.
11. Easily accessible, reliable and neutral information on VSS potentially contributes also to achieving a variety of widely acknowledged trade-related policy objectives. Better consumer information, improved market access information, and other elements of a sound market environment are examples that are relevant to most countries.
12. **T4SD Forum.** ITC's convening power has been growing in the VSS field. The T4SD Forum and related events have created a valuable global forum to discuss VSS-related topics among a wide range of stakeholders. It serves as an important networking and communication platform, which significantly improves the utility of the VSS Repository. In the past four years, the T4SD Forum, a three-day event held at ITC and WTO, has established itself as an influential global event among a wide range of VSS stakeholders, including international trade and standard organizations, policy makers of donor and client countries, the private sector, NGOs, consumer associations and research institutions. Today, the T4SD Forum has evolved into one of four ITC global events (besides WEDF, WTPO and She Trades Global).
13. As the Forum successfully connects the VSS stakeholders globally through annual events, and it raises the public awareness of VSS compliance in trade development, participants and partners expressed strong endorsement and appreciation on the inclusiveness of and participation in the annual global T4SD Forum. It should be noted that, unlike capacity building and customized tools,

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<sup>2</sup> As per comments from GIZ/BMZ, the purposes of the project also include supporting the harmonization of VSS which is a precondition to reach a higher coverage of certified products in the market and to avoid multiple audits on production side.

<sup>3</sup> Especially to SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; and SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum require longer term funding by one or several donors (pooling).<sup>4</sup>

14. **Customized tools.** The development of customized assessment tools for private and non-governmental sectors added value to the core T4SD services in terms of promoting the use of VSS Repository, networking, internal learning, and data collection for the VSS Repository. Private sector contributions to these activities were, although classified as funding sources, essentially a service fee for establishing customized tools.
15. Some activities of the private sector tools may have a development impact, but it is not a primary purpose of commercial businesses. Technically speaking, developing customized tools is a service of a commercial nature and not considered a public good. Looking forward, it is pivotal that partnerships with the private sector are not only for fund-raising purposes, but explicitly aligned to specific development objectives, such as SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production.
16. In line with ITC's project financial reporting practices, the project is not required to report separately on the costs of "public goods" and its services of a commercial nature, and it is uncertain whether the services to private firms are provided on a full-cost basis. However, the project team is and has to be cautious in balancing between the needs of private sector funding and the perception of its neutrality. For certain donors subsidizing commercial operations in developed countries in the framework of international aid could be problematic. Clear rules and transparency on the use of private sector contributions are important for future resource mobilization. ITC's future managerial accounting system may allow disaggregating costs related to private fund use.
17. **VSS-related technical assistance in developing countries.** T4SD's management recognized the importance of linking the VSS services to trade promotion activities in developing countries, and piloted activities to facilitate trade of micro, small and medium- sized enterprises (MSMEs) and small producers. Interviews and surveys confirmed the challenges of small producers in meeting VSS requirements and the high demand for capacity building in developing countries. In this regard, VSS-related technical assistance in developing countries is highly relevant to ITC's mission and potentially contributes to the broader socio-economic development objectives of SDGs.
18. T4SD is piloting a country assistance service to support small producers and MSMEs, and the in-country partnership led to the realization of a self-assessment tool. In Colombia, ITC's contribution to the value strengthening project in the cacao sector progressed in the right direction. T4SD worked with Swisscontact Colombia to design a customized self-assessment tool, which facilitated the assessment of small processors. The self-assessment tool facilitated a systematic assessment of producers against common key criteria of widely used VSS. This assessment tool was an important component of Swisscontact's value chain project, which addressed multiple challenges within the cacao value chain over years. The positive changes observed in the field, such as new export opportunities, were achieved through extensive support of the project, including but not limited to the self-assessment tool. The tool has so far not yet been used for other intended purposes (e.g. analysis of data that is collected, linking buyers to producers through publicizing their profiles). The SECO country office also considered that T4SD has managed to position its global tools in a development project, with the support of SECO, and these tools constitute a very good source of market access information.<sup>5</sup>
19. Anecdotal evidence also points out the prominent value of the cacao value chain project in terms of domestic peace building and poverty reduction, which is well recognized by the Colombian government, donor agencies, project partners and cacao producers in project areas,

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<sup>4</sup> In terms of future funding strategy, SECO requested better differentiation between the needed core funding from donors, private funding for customized tools, and ITC's regular funding.

<sup>5</sup> As per comments of SECO Colombia Office.



although the tool is relatively new in the Swisscontact value chain project. The technical assistance of T4SD in the framework of the value chain development project has been highly appreciated by all concerned in the country including the intended beneficiaries (SMEs and small producers).

20. Compliance with VSS is not a guarantee for market access; it is one among many specifications that producers must meet for gaining market access. In line with various compliance requirements, suppliers need to be able to deliver the right quality and quantity at a competitive price. If the assumption holds true that higher sales prices of sustainably produced products outweigh the costs of VSS compliance, technical assistance in implementing VSS would potentially contribute to increased revenue for farmers and local processors. Besides, many VSS require ensuring societal, health, environmental and other benefits for producers, which relate well to ITC's corporate objectives and SDGs as well.
21. VSS-related technical assistance has to be delivered within comprehensive value chain strengthening projects, so that it can lead to results for SMEs and producers. The initial evidence from Colombia indicates that partnering up with organizations and/or programmes implementing value chain projects could be a practical option for T4SD to achieve desired impact on the ground, as T4SD has neither the operational resources nor the experience to ensure upscaling in many countries. To ensure visibility of ITC and major donors, branding (corporate identity) is important if working with large partners in countries.
22. Another possible channel for scaling up is to mainstream T4SD's work into ITC's existing capacity building and advisory services to trade support institutions, country projects, and into ITC's policy advice. This would also be desirable in terms of building synergies among programmes within ITC and achieving common corporate goals and SDGs. Clearly less efficient are donor driven, one-off, ad hoc capacity building activities delivered through headquarter missions, which are also rather unlikely to lead to sustainable outcomes.
23. **Balancing potentially diverging interests of the North and the South.** As observed by some stakeholders working in the development sector, VSS have traditionally come from the global North; however the costs of compliance have been mostly shouldered by smallholders in the global South, the developing countries. In some cases, the expectations of smallholders that compliance with VSS would be rewarded by increased income did not materialize. These were clear concerns expressed by stakeholders in Colombia and some international partner NGOs, and the project has been treading a delicate but implicit balance on this matter.
24. Given the potentially diverging interests and long-lasting debates between the developed and developing countries on applying VSS and other compliance measures, it is necessary for T4SD to communicate explicitly on ITC's neutrality in this sensitive debate and clarify its position in bridging the two sides. Efforts may be taken to enhance the risk management and communication on the rules of selecting VSS and engaging with the private sector. Furthermore, to balance different concerns, attention may be paid to including VSS from developing countries into the VSS Repository.
25. **Potential impact.** It is certain that the project has made significant contribution to increasing transparency and comparison in the VSS field. Transparency on VSS contributes to ITC's trade facilitation objectives, including international market access for developing countries and LDCs. Without better transparency on VSS, significant challenges on market compliance remain for MSMEs<sup>6</sup> and small producers in developing countries and LDCs. Market access does require more than meeting mandatory standards and VSS required by international buyers. Products must be competitive, both in terms of price and quality, and better knowledge of VSS is one of the approaches to better price and quality. Beyond the envisaged objectives, easily accessible, reliable and neutral information on VSS potentially contributes also to achieving a variety of widely acknowledged trade-related policy objectives. Consumer protection, prevention of unfair

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<sup>6</sup> MSME = Micro, small and medium enterprises

competition and other elements of a sound market environment are some impact examples relevant to both developing and developed countries.

26. As T4SD has been in the process of creating an innovative public good and it has newly endeavored technical assistance projects in countries, an attempt to assess T4SD's impact on the ground would be premature. However, T4SD's potential contribution to wide ITC's objectives on trade-related impact and relevant SDGs goals are evident, especially to SDG 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
27. **Sustainability of initial results.** The initial results of the core products and customized services are promising, but their long-term development results are unlikely to be fully completed within the current funding cycle (2016–2020). In terms of financial sustainability, from today's perspective, it is likely that the project will be able to attract funding for the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum from donors and for customized tools from business partners and clients, and therefore be able to sustain the initial benefits in the longer term. Fund raising needs to differentiate between the different types of services provided by T4SD. The VSS Repository and the global T4SD Forum are permanent services responding to public needs. Unlike specific technical cooperation activities and tailor-made small projects, long-term funding is required and possibly available, depending on the value of the VSS Repository and the Forum to existing and potential donors. For services to the private sector that are likely to directly contribute to T4SD's development objectives, a clear business plan is needed, which should define the regulations about cooperation with the private sector and specific services to be offered and show the financial self-sustainability. The project also needs to differentiate costs related to public and private sector-funded activities.
28. **Innovation.** T4SD's global VSS Repository is a unique product, as explained above; the main innovation is that the project applies the concept of a freely accessible repository to the world of VSS as a public good, and the innovation value of the project is significant. It has created a niche service to meeting the demand of clients and beneficiaries, and it positioned ITC in the VSS field as a global forum convener. Another major innovation is the approach to promote the use of the VSS Repository through partnerships and technical cooperation activities (e.g. customized tools).
29. **Gender equality and human rights.** VSS are obviously relevant to gender equality and internationally recognized human right objectives (including labour rights). Gender objectives relating to the participation of women in project activities are reported against; however it is far-reaching at this stage to assess the gender-related outcomes (e.g. wider benefits generated for women and men). No performance indicators under the angle of human rights were defined.
30. **Need for a strategy on deploying T4SD's innovative tools.** A flexible design and an open formulation of objectives was the right approach to enable innovation in piloting VSS-related work. It allowed ITC to identify the key challenges relating to VSS, gradually select those to be addressed and then develop the necessary instruments in consideration of ITC's comparative advantage. Despite rather open operational planning, T4SD has been operationally well managed, thanks to a committed, dynamic and client-oriented team.
31. As T4SD is reaching a more mature stage, there is a need to sharpen T4SD's strategic focus and to implement an effective strategic steering mechanism, which should be agreed with SC member on rules of cooperation including a defined time frame that would allow SC members to review the proposals and documents before the SC meetings. T4SD has built the VSS Repository as an acknowledged core product and has been proliferating by adding new products and services. Today's ongoing work in consolidation and upscaling needs to follow a defined strategy.
32. Weighing potential contribution to the corporate objectives, T4SD needs to focus on consolidating and upgrading the work in progress (e.g. the integration of the Sustainability

Standards Comparison Tool) while exploring additional activities. As observed by certain stakeholders, the risk of a mission drift may be emerging, as some new fund-driven projects could negatively affect ITC's neutrality and impartiality, given the potentially diverging interests of stakeholders in developed and developing countries. Moreover, a rapid diversification of customized services could lead to overstretching a small core team, which may jeopardize the depth and quality of core products and services.

33. Ensuring T4SD's strategic focus also requires an effective steering mechanism that allows T4SD to respond to rapidly evolving context in the field of VSS and to ensure funding for strategic services. Benefited from long-term relationships with BMZ, SECO and EC, the project has been consistent in building up strategic products and services, such as the VSS database and related tools, which were endorsed by key donors. The strong partnerships have also allowed T4D to leverage the tools with new donors (Denmark and USAID). As the project has evolved into a stage of expanding services and customized tools and engaging with new partners, there is a strong need to reconsider the current steering mechanism. The T4SD's well-prepared Steering Committee meetings mainly served the purpose of regular information exchange and donor reporting, and the Technical Committee was mainly an expert group working on technical details of T4SD's tools. So far, the Advisory Committee has been marginally used to inform decision making by the Steering Committee. Strategic consultative inputs from members with voting power and other purposes of the Steering Committee meetings (such as information exchange, networking) need to be separated and specified.

### **Recommendations**

Key recommendations are provided based on evidences and analysis presented in the report. An evidence trail table illustrating the major logic trails between evidence/analysis - conclusions- recommendations is provided below.

### **Strategic recommendations on the future development of the project**

#### **To ITC Management and DEI Management**

#### **Implementation period: 2018-2019**

- i. To delegate the T4SD team with a task of developing an organizational strategy on positioning ITC in the international VSS field, for the endorsement of ITC Senior Management.
34. This VSS strategy should be aligned to ITC's corporate objectives and results framework, creating enabling conditions to consolidate an emerging brand of ITC's comparative advantages, and factoring in the value of complementing the WTO rules relating to transparency of mandatory standards (SPS, TBT).
35. The strategy should also explore the possibility of mainstreaming capacity building on VSS-related topics in relevant ITC services and projects, particularly in capacity building for TSIs, market intelligence for SME export, and technical cooperation activities working on enhancing SME competitiveness.
36. The strategy should also be specific on setting measurable objectives and related monitoring, measuring and reporting mechanisms to ensure the practicability and traceability of achieving results.

### **Technical recommendations on project management and operations**

#### **To T4SD Management and the Steering Committee of T4SD**

#### **Implementation period: within the remaining period of the current 2016-2020 project plan**

- ii. For longer term funding, provided agreement of SECO and BMZ in principle, to propose a follow-up phase to consolidate the public good services (VSS Repository, T4SD Forum and Sustainability Platform). The funding proposal should detail the costs of maintaining these public good services on a long-term basis.

- i. To enable the Advisory Committee members to provide consultative voice to the Steering Committee to shape the future strategic development of the project, and maintain a clear strategic consultation process on decision making by Steering Committee members with voting power.
- ii. To continue enhancing, updating and upgrading the VSS Repository. Improve its functionalities (features), check the accuracy of its contents, ensure a timely update of VSS included and gradually increase the number of VSS included, prioritizing those of high practical relevance to users.
- iii. To promote the use of the VSS Repository through public and private partnerships with potential key users of standard data. In doing so, providing customized applications specifically serving needs of users group should only be provided on a full-cost basis, which would address the concern of certain donors on possible cross financing between public and private goods. For better alignment to programme objectives, the Programme team should establish a business plan for customized services that shows the long-term financial, technical and institutional sustainability.
- iv. To thoroughly verify and enhance the features of the Sustainability Map platform. The team needs timely checks to fix technical errors (such as links, display of content, etc.), and based on satisfaction surveys among users, the Sustainability Map platform should be gradually upgraded and improved in terms of utility and user-friendliness.
- v. To further pilot the technical assistance model designed in Colombia case in other countries and other sectors, regularly assess the performance and results, and customize the model accordingly when replicating it. It is advisable to upscale technical cooperation activities through collaborating with development agencies and ITC's projects working in value-chain development, preferably with a record of accomplishment, to achieve and report concrete trade development results on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

### Evidence Trail Table

Recommendations	Related conclusions	Related evidence and analysis
<p><b>i. To delegate the T4SD team with the task of developing an organizational strategy on positioning ITC in the international VSS field:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alignment to ITC results framework</li> <li>- Mainstreaming in ITC's interventions</li> <li>- Setting objectives and evaluability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Today's VSS Repository represents an initial success in building a global public good. (Para. 98-100)</li> <li>- The T4SD forum has demonstrated global influence in the VSS field. (Para. 101-103)</li> <li>- Strong need for a strategy to deploy innovative tools, customized tools, technical assistance projects and balancing between the diverging interests of the North and the South. (Para. 104, 108, 114, 118-119)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness of the publicly accessible VSS Repository, the T4SD forum and the pilot technical assistance in Colombia (Para. 63) and the potential impact of public goods (Para. 82-86).</li> <li>- - Challenges and opportunities for achieving results within the 2016- 2020 plan (Para. 68-72) Challenges in sustainability (Para. 88) and defining a results chain derived from a long-term strategy (Para. 76-77).</li> </ul>
<p><b>ii. To consolidate the public good services</b></p>	<p>Para. 98-100, 101 Conclusions on public good nature of VSS Repository and the T4SD Forum, and the need for long-term core funding (in contrast to project-related activities and services to the private sector)</p>	<p>Para. 88: VSS Repository is a permanent service responding to an ongoing need that is in the public interest.</p> <p>Para. 89: For services to the private sector that are likely to contribute to</p>

<sup>7</sup> In the case of future Swiss-funded operations, close coordination with local offices, such as Swisscontact, SECO, Helvetas, may be leveraged.

		T4SD's development objectives, a clear business plan is needed.
<b>iii. To enable the Advisory Committee members to provide consultative voice to the Steering Committee, and maintain a clear strategic consultation process.</b>	Para. 117: Importance of an effective steering mechanism to maintain focus and ensure ongoing relevance in a rapidly evolving context.	Para. 77-78: Room for improvement in strengthening strategic management, including the role of the Steering Committee (decision making) and the Advisory Committee (consultative voice)
<b>iv. To continue enhancing, updating and upgrading the VSS Repository.</b>	Para. 98-100: Maintaining the key comparative advantages of the VSS Repository — credibility, completeness, data quality/accuracy — requires regular updating and enlarging the number of standards included.	Para. 43: Number of VSS included (not all most relevant ones; new VSS are developed)  Para. 44-45: Maintain key benefits highlighted by users (interviews, survey)
<b>v. To promote the use of the VSS Repository through public and private partnerships with potential key users of standard data.</b>	Para. 104-106: The need to separate public good services from services of a commercial nature (applications for companies that could potentially also be provided by private sector providers). These services need to be self-funded. Proper pricing requires knowing their full costs.	Para. 55: Tools developed and the positive feedback received by partners.  Para. 56: Customised tools are funded for individual private sector partners and there is a need to ensure alignment with strategic objectives of the project and ITC.
<b>vi. To verify and enhance the features of the T4SD Platform</b>  - Timely checking and fixing technical errors  - Focusing on users' satisfaction	No conclusion (too early to assess T4SD Platform, which was launched on the last day of the data collection period and well after the period to be evaluated)	Para. 52-53: T4SD platform newly launched; too early to assess usefulness for and satisfaction of users. Some technical errors identified.
<b>x. To further pilot the technical assistance model design in Colombia in other countries and other sectors.</b>  - Regularly assess the performance and results, and customize the technical assistance model used in Colombia	Para. 108: It would be premature to draw conclusions about the model.	Para 63-65: Initial evidence suggests that technical assistance model in Colombia, through contributing to TA projects implemented by partner organizations, is an effective way for ITC to reach out to the country level.

## Main report

### I. Evaluation background and methodology

#### i. Background and scope

1. This evaluation of the Trade for Sustainable Development Project (T4SD) was requested by the Division of Enterprises and Institution (DEI) to assess the performance and results of the programme operations in the period of 2013 – 2016.
2. T4SD is a continuous project which provides information services on voluntary sustainability standards (VSS), as global public goods, since 2009. It was co-financed by the Swiss government through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the German government through the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the European Commission (DG, Trade). Both SECO and BMZ considered this evaluation a priority in relation to the operations of the T4SD project.
3. In ITC terminology, the T4SD operation had been termed as a “project” until late 2016. Since then, the T4SD programme included two separate operations: the T4SD project and the newly merged Trade and Environment Programme.<sup>8</sup> This evaluation covers only the T4SD project.
4. **Evaluation Scope.** The evaluation covers the project’s implementation during the period 2013 to 2016. This includes one complete funding cycle (2013 – 2015) and the ongoing operations under the funding period 2016 – 2020. The initial funding cycle 2009 – 2012 has been covered by an evaluation commissioned by GIZ in 2011. Reportedly, the evaluation findings were integrated in designing operations in the following cycle.
5. **Evaluation objectives.** As agreed with the T4SD team and donors, the evaluation objectives are:
  - i. To assess the performance and results of T4SD in the period of 2013 – 2016, and if feasible, to identify the impact;
  - ii. To generate recommendations for the ongoing and future operations ;
  - iii. To facilitate an informed consensus building among stakeholders including ITC management, strategic funders, private sector and public clients, and key implementing partners<sup>9</sup> for future design and operations of the programme, based on the evaluation findings and analysis.
6. Particularly addressed should be the sustainability of T4SD in terms of long-term funding of the public good and the anchoring of the database and tools within the ITC structure. Possible scenarios beyond 2020, as part of evaluation recommendations, could be developed depending on the level of funding.
7. **Expected users of the evaluation.** The primary expected users of the evaluation are ITC management, the project team, and the core funders (Germany, Switzerland, EU) and the new founders (USAID, Denmark) of the project. Other expected users include the project partners and clients globally and the implementation partners in project countries.

#### ii. Methodology

8. The evaluation design is in line with the ITC’s Evaluation Policy 2015 and Evaluation Guidelines 2017 (draft), which are aligned to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and

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<sup>8</sup> An evaluation of the Trade and Environment Programme was conducted in 2013-2014.

<sup>9</sup> The key implementing partners include ISEAL, WWF, ISO, UNCTAD, GIZ, etc.

Standards. The UNEG methodological framework refers to OECD-DAC criteria and quality standards, particularly to their terminology.

9. **Evaluation criteria and rating.** T4SD was assessed against the evaluation criteria of: *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, innovation and gender equality*. Innovation and gender equality were looked at as crosscutting issues. Key evaluative questions could be seen in the evaluation TOR. In line with ITC's evaluation practice, a six-point rating system was used for each of the above-mentioned evaluation criterion and the overall performance.
10. **Participation.** The evaluation combined the need for organizational learning with the purpose of ensuring ITC's accountability towards its Member States. While maintaining independence in compliance with ITC's Evaluation Policy, the evaluation applied a highly participatory and inclusive approach, obtaining the views of all key stakeholders. Enrolling key stakeholders in the evaluation process and seeking alignment and validation on key findings, conclusions and recommendations will facilitate organizational learning.
11. The evaluation process itself was also geared towards facilitating "self-reflection" and contributing to continuous improvement. Open discussions around guiding questions enabled a free exchange of opinions. The team used an iterative approach, whereby new findings were integrated into evaluative questions and subsequently validated.
12. **Data collection, analysis and credibility.** The evaluation team applied a combination of data collection methods, including desk review, meetings with the project team and stakeholders, key informant interviews, a large-scale survey among users of [www.standardsmap.org](http://www.standardsmap.org), field visit to Colombia, and attendance at the T4SD Forum in September 2017. Data was triangulated and cross-validated to ensure credibility.
13. Timely consultations and communication with key stakeholders were ensured during the evaluation process, which resulted in a draft Inception Report prepared shortly before the country visit. Building on the main analysis presented in the draft Inception Report and additional evidence from the country visit, an Evaluation Debriefing Note was developed and shared with the project and each key stakeholder, focusing on the discussion and learning on six key issues and emerging findings. The constructive comments received on the Debriefing Note have greatly benefited the report drafting.
14. All conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on deductive reasoning. To ground the evaluation conclusions and recommendations in reliable data and findings, a clear line of findings–conclusions and recommendation was established. Each recommendation is based on relevant conclusions, and each conclusion on specific findings.
15. **Evaluation team.** The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU/SPPG) managed the evaluation and was responsible for the delivery and quality of the evaluation. The evaluation team, managed by a lead evaluator (IEU staff member)<sup>10</sup>, included an external Senior Evaluation Expert who was a specialist on the evaluation subject,<sup>11</sup> a research analyst in analyzing survey results,<sup>12</sup> a national consultant to conduct a case study in Colombia,<sup>13</sup> an evaluation intern supporting data collection, review and meeting arrangements,<sup>14</sup> and a senior programme assistant providing administrative support.<sup>15</sup>
16. **Methodological limits.** One main characteristic, also a methodological limitation of the evaluation methodology, was that T4SD's operations are to a large degree a work in progress. T4SD is a pilot project, which has organically evolved through learning by doing rather than following an elaborate long-term strategy. The project team has focused on developing

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel P. Keller, Senior Evaluation Expert, Evillard, Switzerland

<sup>12</sup> Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh, consultant, EvalCo Sàrl, Switzerland

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Forero, Bogotá, consultant, Colombia

<sup>14</sup> Fanan Biem, evaluation intern, ITC

<sup>15</sup> Juliana Knoll, Programme Assistant, ITC

innovative products and services (including technical cooperation activities) that are yet to be fully realized.

17. While the expected broad project outcomes for the period 2013 – 2015 were not explicit in project plans, the results framework for the ongoing phase (2016–2020) was better elaborated. Based on an understanding of past and ongoing operations, the evaluation attempted to construct an intervention logic through further interviews and desk review (see Chapter II).
18. It became clear that translating the outcomes of project activities into wider outcomes and impact on a global scale would require much longer than the period covered by the evaluation. While the output level could be evaluated, an assessment of broader outcomes and impact results was not feasible. Nevertheless, the evaluation attempted to identify signs of potential impact through a contribution analysis that highlighted the pathways of T4SD's contribution to development results, rather than establishing a direct cause-effect relationship.
19. **Other methodological challenges.** The detailed assessment of efficiency would have required financial statements that allocate expenditures to both results and budget lines. It was thus not possible to present or even assess resource allocation in detail.
20. The evaluation TOR indicated expectations on the development of different scenarios for the future of T4SD beyond 2020. Based on balanced considerations, the evaluation findings and conclusions indicate that one reasonable recommended option would be conducive to the further development of the programme.
21. Despite these limitations, findings obtained from different sources were consistent and clear. Stakeholders consulted actively participated in the evaluation process and openly shared information; and the evaluation encountered no undue influence or interference. In brief, the findings, conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on solid and representative evidence.



## II. Description of T4SD operations

22. T4SD is a continuous project providing information services on VSS since 2009.<sup>16</sup> As mentioned earlier, it has been co-funded by SECO and BMZ, and subsequently also to a smaller extent by GIZ and the European Commission.
23. Since 2009, T4SD had been implemented as part of ITC's "Transparency in Trade Programme", Section of Market Analysis and Research, Division of Market Development. Following the ITC's re-organization in November 2016, T4SD merged with the "Trade Environment Programme" and became a project within the Division for Enterprises and Institutions, while its internal structure and objectives were maintained. T4SD remains closely linked to ITC's "Sustainable Trade" framework.
24. **Intervention logic.** As an innovative service, the project has been working on a learning-by-doing pattern in the early years, with a view to testing new products and services to meet clients' demands and creating a niche service in the VSS field. In this regard, a mature theory of change was not a prerequisite for assessing the performance and results of the project. As the project was approaching a mature stage where core products were recognized broadly, the 2016-2020 project plan outlined a better developed results framework, providing a useful reference for the evaluation to recount the actual intervention logic in the past years — what challenges to be addressed, what solutions proposed, what expected outputs and results for clients and partners.
25. According to the project intervention logic, T4SD aims at addressing the following challenges:<sup>17</sup>
  - It is widely acknowledged that VSS have proliferated, resulting in a lack of global transparency on the opportunities and obstacles these present for consumers, multinationals, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and particularly SMEs in the developing world.
  - Many, especially smaller exporters, lack the capacity to deal with VSS and use them to capitalize on their potential benefits (competitiveness, new business opportunities, pursuing environmental and social objectives).
  - Enterprises suffer from problems relating to costs, overlapping standards and conflicts of private, voluntary standards with public, mandatory standards (e.g. in public procurement). Opportunities to harmonize standards and streamline auditing processes (e.g. recognition of prior audits by other suppliers) have not yet been fully exploited.
26. The intervention logic assumes that these challenges impede the potential strength the standards could have, such as flexibility to adapt VSS to users' requirements. The main purposes of T4SD's interventions are to help businesses to better understand VSS, to connect businesses with partners<sup>18</sup> and to provide capacity building in VSS.<sup>19</sup>
27. Following the intervention logic, the project essentially provides intelligence and capacity building on VSS through the following tools/services<sup>20</sup> and activities<sup>21</sup>:
  - The publicly accessible VSS Repository;
  - The yearly T4SD Forum (the latest edition from 25 – 27 September 2017);
  - A free, generic online self-assessment tool (on compliance of users with basic principles of sustainable production);

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<sup>16</sup> Including codes of conduct and audit protocols

<sup>17</sup> As perceived by T4SD's management and confirmed by different stakeholders interviewed

<sup>18</sup> Connecting business relates to both commercial relationships of products/services fulfilling VSS and business support services with businesses requesting VSS-related support.

<sup>19</sup> Based on an analysis of services presented in the T4SD brochure and validated through interviews

<sup>20</sup> See more detailed description of these different tools/services in Chapter III.3 below.

<sup>21</sup> Terminology (activities, outputs, outcomes and impact) used as in the Programme Document.

- Research publications on VSS;
  - A resource library on VSS;
  - A platform to link sustainable producers with buyers;
  - A platform to link providers with users of VSS-related business support services;
  - Training and capacity building (mostly in partnership with other organizations);
  - Customized tools (funded by specific clients like companies or NGOs).
28. Among these services, the core component of the T4SD is the credible, central, and neutral repository for information on VSS (covering social, environmental, quality, safety, integrity, governance and other issues), which provides transparency and enables comparability between processes and requirements of the standards initiatives. While T4SD's work is relevant to all sectors, the emphasis has so far been especially on agri-food and textiles.
29. T4SD's activities are expected to result in the following direct benefits (outputs):
- Transparent, credible, verified and specialized information on VSS to governments, producers, traders, consumers, NGOs, researchers and the interested public;
  - Strengthen capacities to apply VSS by supply chain actors;
  - Market linkages between producers and buyers of sustainably produced goods and services;
  - Market linkages between providers and users of VSS-related business development services;
  - The collection, analysis and publication of macro data relating to VSS for research and policy making purposes.
30. T4SD's outputs are expected to result in the following expected outcomes:
- Enabling informed decision making relating to VSS. T4SD's expected key outcomes are to enhance transparency of voluntary sustainability standards for all actors along supply chains, and strengthen the capacity of producers and exporters to participate in more sustainable production and trade.
  - Main expected broader changes are to foster sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12), allowing the production and use of products and services in a socially beneficial, economically viable and environmentally friendly way.
31. T4SD has worked closely with the following key stakeholder groups<sup>22</sup>:
- Major donors for the project, including Swiss SECO, German BMZ and GIZ, and DG Trade, European Commission.
  - The clients and direct beneficiaries of services, including:<sup>23</sup>
    - i. Suppliers: Farmers, producers, producer organizations, processors and traders benefit from VSS information, self-assessment tools and e-learning sustainability network;
    - ii. Buyers: Especially fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies and retailers, which are particularly targeted by customized assessment tools, which they funded;
    - iii. Business service providers (including TPOs and TSIs)<sup>24</sup> benefit from free access to SustainabilityXChange, country-based capacity building services and e-learning;
    - iv. Policy makers (taking better educated policy decisions);
    - v. NGOs (inform their work, including VSS development, advocacy, etc.).
  - Other partners:
    - vi. Private sector companies contributing to T4SD in any form
    - vii. Development actors, including international organizations, UN agencies, development banks and development-oriented NGOs. These include partners involved into field-based capacity building, research, etc., contributing to the T4SD Forum.

<sup>22</sup> Analysis of the evaluators based on desk study and interviews.

<sup>23</sup> See page 3 TOR. The evaluation will further explore potential positive outcomes generated by service use.

<sup>24</sup> TPOs: Trade Promotion Offices; TISI: Trade Information Service Institutions

### III. Evaluation analysis and findings

32. This chapter presents evaluation analysis and findings of T4SD's performance and results, according to ITC's evaluation criteria. Based on the analysis and findings, relevant conclusions and recommendations are provided.

#### i. Relevance

33. Relevance assesses the consistency of the objectives of an intervention with ITC's corporate goals and comparative advantages, the client country's development strategy or policy priorities, and the needs of beneficiaries.

#### Relevance to ITC's development goals and comparative advantages

34. T4SD's operations are fully aligned to ITC's development objectives and SDGs, including those expressed in the following documents: Trade for Sustainable Development – making sustainable supply chains a reality (ITC, 2015), Trade for Sustainable Development – building sustainable value chains (ITC, May 2017), and Trade for Sustainable Development, Partnering to Create Customized Tools (ITC, 2016).
35. T4SD's operations respond well to ITC's comparative advantages, such as neutrality in trade development, which is essential for the credibility of the VSS Repository, ITC's widely acknowledged technical competence in VSS, and ITC's convening power, which is reflected in an ability to facilitate substantial discussions by bringing a wide array of different stakeholders to the table. The latter was particularly apparent in the successful T4SD Forum in September 2017.
36. T4SD's planned trade promotion objectives (linkages between sustainable producers and buyers) are at the core of ITC's mandate, but relating activities have just started. As evidenced by ITC's cooperation with Swisscontact in Colombia, deploying ITC's core competencies in technical cooperation targeting producers requires partnerships with development agencies or programmes with a strong successful track record in providing comprehensive assistance to the specific target beneficiaries.
37. **Relevance to achieving SDGs.** T4SD's key objective to promote VSS among a wide array of stakeholders responds well to international priorities, which are, inter alia, reflected in the actions toward achieving SDGs. Through promoting core principles of VSS among both producers and consumers, T4SD's key objectives potentially contribute to various SDGs, particularly, but not limited to the following:
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. (The VSS are closely related to sustainable consumption and production patterns.)<sup>25</sup>
  - SDG 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. (Many VSS include standards relating to decent work.)
  - SDG 5: VSS are obviously potentially relevant to gender and internationally recognized human rights objectives (including labor rights).
  - SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (VSS relating to sustainable agricultural production).<sup>26</sup>
  - In the spirit of SDG 17, T4SD also displayed good examples of effectively building partnerships and mobilizing private sector resources.

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<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

## Relevance to the needs of clients and beneficiaries

38. Beneficiaries interviewed and surveyed confirmed that T4SD met their need for transparent, credible, verified, and specialized information on VSS. The ongoing relevance of the VSS Repository will require significant further investments in its constant updating and upgrading.
39. Moreover, the T4SD Forum responded to the need for networking and offering a platform for sharing of experience on VSS. T4SD's contribution to fostering partnerships among various actors was highlighted as well.
40. Beneficiaries in Colombia (producers) appreciated T4SD's support in analyzing their compliance with basic principles of VSS (relating to cacao production) and some capacity building on how to close gaps.
41. There is a considerable, yet unmet need for trade information on VSS, including which standards are in demand by which buyers and market prices paid for VSS-certified products. Such information would fit well into ITC's core competencies, but has not yet been provided. Overall, T4SD's objectives are of high relevance and fully in line with beneficiary needs.

### ii. Effectiveness

42. Effectiveness. It is to assess that to what extent the intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, accounting for their relative importance.

## The VSS Repository and the Standard Maps Tool

43. Data is currently publicly accessible through the Standard Maps Tool<sup>27</sup>, which by the end of September 2017 included around 250 VSS in over 80 sectors and 180 countries<sup>28</sup>. The platform categorizes the standards according to requirements (e.g. ethics, quality, management, social, environment)<sup>29</sup> and processes<sup>30</sup>. ITC uses rigorous methodological steps to ensure global, comprehensive and neutral information on standards. It was not possible to check quality of data entries comprehensively, but indirect feedback received by users was positive.
44. A review of the current website shows that its key feature is to help companies to identify relevant standards, compare them (e.g. in terms of benefits, certification costs) and run self-assessments against standard requirements. The tool produces a diagnostic report with recommendations for improvements. The report can be shared online (e.g. with clients, certification bodies, partners, etc.).
45. The user survey among registered standard map users<sup>31</sup> resulted in the following key findings:
  - Most survey respondents (63%) are from developing countries; 20% are from developed countries, 8% from LDCs, 4% from transition countries and 4% preferred not to reply). The evaluation team found no explanations for the high percentage of responses received from Mexico and Peru. In terms of languages, English, Spanish and French-speaking respondents were most prominent.
  - In terms of languages of respondents, English was most prominent (62%), followed by Spanish (42%) and French (4%). The fact that only one respondent was from a French-speaking African country (Senegal) could indicate the need to reinforce efforts in these countries.
  - Most survey respondents work for companies, although the website is also used by the government sector, research institutions, consultants and research institutions.

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<sup>27</sup> [www.standardmap.org](http://www.standardmap.org), last visited on 17 October 2017

<sup>28</sup> At the end of 2016, 238 standards were recorded in the database (see Table 1 pages 2 – 5, Memorandum 2016 T4SD year-end report 2016). Table 2 idem outlines the standards to be recorded in 2017.

<sup>29</sup> A challenge is that standards often include several criteria, e.g. social, environmental combined.

<sup>30</sup> Processes include: general, audit, claims and labelling, support and standard governance.

<sup>31</sup> 71 replies were received; the results of the survey provide useful information, but are statistically not relevant.

- Internet search plays an important role in learning about T4SD's website (48% of respondents). ITC's seminars (24%) and other events (15%) seem to be an excellent opportunity to promote the website, and word of mouth is important as well (21%).
  - General research (69%), information about a specific standard (42%), and learning about standards in general (39%) lead the purpose of accessing the website.
  - Feedback on the tools was overwhelmingly positive. The survey confirmed that most useful are the standards comparison tool (for 68% of the respondents very useful and for 20% somewhat useful) and the standards database (66% very useful and 25% somewhat useful); 34% of respondents found the impact of the tools for their work very positive (45% positive and 10% somewhat positive).
  - Some respondents expressed concerns about VSS in general. This highlights the importance of ITC to maintain a neutral position and provide well-founded information, while abstaining from advocating for the use of VSS or even promoting specific VSS.
46. Interviews in Colombia indicated the importance of customizing the self-assessment tool, not only to national languages, but also to the specific national socio-economic context and specific products. In Colombia, it became also clear that farmers required intensive expert support to apply the tool. While potential other uses (data collection, market linkages between farmers and buyers) seem to be plausible, the evaluation was not able to draw conclusions, as the tool was still in the piloting stage. So far, the tool has been useful for capacity building purposes, by helping to systematically identify gaps in cacao producers fulfilling commonly found basic requirements of most VSS and not yet for other purposes.

#### **T4SD Forum**

47. ITC's convening power has been growing in the VSS field. In the past four years, the T4SD Forum has established itself as an influential global event among a wide range of VSS stakeholders, including international organizations, national government organizations, the private sector, NGOs and research institutions. The T4SD Forum 2017 edition, a three-day event held at ITC and WTO, was considered a great success and one of the four ITC global events (besides WEDF, WTPO and She Trades Global).
48. Based on interviews and personal observation, T4SD Forum provides a unique value-added as a forum to discuss VSS-related topics among a wide range of different stakeholders, including the private sector. It serves as an important networking and communication platform, which complements the VSS repository. Partners and participants expressed strong endorsement and appreciation of the value of the T4SD Forum, as it successfully connects the VSS stakeholders globally through annual events, and it raises the public awareness of VSS compliance in trade development.

#### **Sustainability network**

49. The planned matchmaking platform aims at linking "sustainable suppliers" with "sustainable buyers". Target users will include farmers, producers, processors and manufacturers, who will be able to create basic sustainability profiles. These profiles will include information about their business, production and trading activities. Users can also request a Global Location Number (GLN), issued by the Global Standard 1 (GSI) to link to GSI-enabled traceability systems. Users can register on the website or through invitation by partners. Another purpose is to produce, analyze and publicize data. According to interviews, preparation work is still ongoing. The network is not yet functional and an assessment would be premature.

#### **Online Platform SustainabilityXChange**

50. On the sidelines of the T4SD Forum on 26 September 2017, ITC launched the new internet platform "Sustainability Map", which aims at connecting businesses and producers to pave the

way towards more sustainable trade. The purpose of “Sustainability Map” is to offer users access to wide-ranging information related to sustainability initiatives and standards, allowing businesses to deploy better sustainability practices in international trade.

51. Moreover, Sustainability Map intends to enable users, regardless of their position in the local, regional or international value chain, to gain a better understanding of the sustainability standards that are relevant to their export markets, and to connect with business partners. Sustainability Map consists of four modules and builds on ITC’s already well-established online tools, such as Standards Maps and the SustainabilityXChange, while introducing two new and interconnected modules, the Sustainability Network and Sustainability Trends.
52. A visit to the website on 30 September 2017 indicates that right after its launch, the features described above have not yet been widely used. The last posts (imported from the former Standards Map platform) date more than one year back.<sup>32</sup> The expert database still has only 208 profiles, thus only eight more than at the end of 2016. Only around 40 institutions are included in the directory of institutions (many of them existing partner organizations of T4SD). Strong efforts to promote the platform are needed. A google search displays results to International Finance Corporation’s (IFC) “Sustainability Exchange” Conference first.
53. An assessment of the platform and its benefits for different stakeholder groups (businesses, government officials, researchers) after it has just been launched would be premature.

### **Library**

54. The Library currently contains close to 1,200 publicly available documents<sup>33</sup> from approximately 130 publishers, covering 45 product categories, with an emphasis on quality and business management, followed by certification and organizational development.

### **Nine customized platforms leveraging the T4SD platform**

55. As of July 2017, the following nine customized platforms had been developed:
  - In cooperation between Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform and ITC, a customized online tool for SAI’s Farmer Self-Assessment (FSA)
  - A customized tool for Delhaize Group (leading Belgian food retailer)
  - A customized online assessment for the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)
  - A EU-funded tool for the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council for farmers, agricultural consultants, processors and traders, exporters and importers, trade associations and policy-makers to review and analyze standards and regulations applicable to Fiji crops and livestock products.
  - A benchmarking tool developed with AIM-PROGRESS (mutual recognition of supplier audits).
  - The online tool “Basic Criteria for a Sustainable Cocoa” (Swisscontact, funded by SECO), also reported under technical cooperation activities.
  - The “Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool (SSCT)” is part of a larger project of the German government called “Quality Check” (see also: Joint-Portal between T4SD and the Global Social Compliance Programme for Quick-Scan analysis of sustainability standards, codes of conduct and companies’ audit protocols.)
  - Joint-portal with the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI) on sustainability standards for flower horticulture.
56. Further tools seem to be at various stages of development, such as:<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.sustainabilityxchange.info/en/community-forum-moderated-discussions>, post on real-time information from small-holder farmers (October 2016).

<sup>33</sup> See Memorandum T4SD year-end report 2016. A site visit in July 2017 indicates that the number of publications and their content is plausible, but it was not possible to verify the number of publishers and product categories.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum T4SD year-end report 2016 validated through interviews in July 2017

- FEFAC - European Feed Manufacturer's Federation (Soy Benchmarking Tool)
  - Danish Ministry of Environment and Food (benchmarking tool, of comparing/benchmarking public and private standards, which seems to receive funding from the Danish government (Environment & Food Ministry)).
57. The German government reportedly builds on T4SD data for its own consumer information website called "www.siegelklarheit.de", which was launched in February 2015. It should be noted that the data sources used for Siegelklarheit are beyond the data delivered by T4SD.
  58. Similar "T4SD Private Sector Advanced Solutions" that further expand and develop the customized self-assessment tool jointly developed by ITC and SAI Platform in 2014 (see above), seem to be planned, e.g. for PepsiCo.
  59. Customized solutions are planned to be funded by the respective private sector partners.

### **Trainings provided by T4SD**

60. The above services are complemented by training and research activities, which include:
  - E-learning platforms (free online course for standard users).
  - Training in the field conducted in cooperation with partners. According to progress reports, these trainings are capacity building capacities of intermediaries (training of trainers) and direct service provision.
  - Training activities were reported in the following beneficiary countries (Vietnam with ADB; Cambodia with ADB; China with CAEC, UNEP, and IOYFP; Columbia with Swisscontact). Except for Colombia, it was not possible to observe specific training outcomes (how participants used what they had learned).

### **Research and publications**

61. T4SD funded the following publications:
  - Social and Environmental Standards: Contributing to More Sustainable Value Chains (2016)
  - Sustainable Sourcing of Agricultural Raw Materials – A Practitioner's Guide (2013)
  - Influencing Sustainable Sourcing Decisions in Agri-Food Supply Chains (2016).
62. The publications are of high quality and some stakeholders interviewed claimed that they knew about them. It was not possible for the evaluators to assess the use of the publications systematically or even draw conclusions on possible wider benefits.

### **Technical cooperation activities in Colombia**

63. T4SD's management recognized the importance of linking the VSS Repository to national activities, to reach out to beneficiaries in developing countries and to achieve results for SMEs and small producers. VSS-related technical assistance in developing countries is highly relevant to ITC's mission and potentially contributes to the broader socio-economic development objectives of SDGs. Interviews and surveys confirmed the challenges of small producers in meeting VSS requirements and the high demand for capacity building in developing countries.
64. T4SD is piloting a country assistance service to support small producers and MSMEs, and the in-country partnership led to the realization of a self-assessment tool. In Colombia, ITC's contribution to the value strengthening project in the cacao sector progressed in the right direction. T4SD worked with Swisscontact Colombia to design a customized self-assessment tool, which facilitated the assessment of small processors. The self-assessment tool facilitated a systematic assessment of producers against common key criteria of widely used VSS. This assessment tool was an important component of Swisscontact's value chain project, which addressed multiple challenges within the cacao value chain over years. The positive changes

observed in the field, such as new export opportunities, were achieved through extensive support of the project, including but not limited to the self-assessment tool. The tool has so far not yet been used for other intended purposes (e.g. analysis of data that is collected, linking buyers to producers through publicizing their profiles). The SECO country office also considered that T4SD has managed to position its global tools in a development project, with the support of SECO, and these tools constitute a very good source of market access information.

65. Anecdotal evidences also point out the prominent value of the cacao value chain project in terms of domestic peace building and poverty reduction, which is well recognized by the Colombian Government, donor agencies, project partners and cacao producers in project areas. T4SD's technical assistance within the framework of this project has been highly appreciated by all concerned in the country by beneficiaries.
66. If the assumption holds true that higher sales prices of sustainably produced products outweigh the costs of VSS compliance, technical assistance in implementing VSS would potentially contribute to increased revenue for farmers and local processors. Besides, many VSS require ensuring societal, health, environmental and other benefits for producers, which relate well to ITC's corporate objectives and SDGs as well.
67. However, compliance with VSS alone is not a guarantee for market access; it is one among many specifications that producers must meet. Suppliers need to find buyers, and they must be able to deliver the right quality and quantity at a competitive price. Unless delivered within comprehensive value chain strengthening projects, however, VSS-related technical assistance is unlikely to lead to sustainable results. Besides, training on the use of ITC tools should be arranged in collaboration with country partners.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Achieving results within the 2016–2020 project plan**

68. T4SD project management intends to shift T4SD's focus from only mapping VSS to providing well-rounded solutions through an enlarged set of complementary web-based tools and advisory services. The project team considers the VSS Repository as a public good and plans to continue offering it free of charge. In contrast, the project considers the customized services (especially the customized tools for companies) not as a public good, and will provide them against a cost-recovering financial contribution.<sup>36</sup>
69. For certain donors, in the framework of international aid, subsidizing commercial operations in developed countries could be problematic, even though it could result in a development impact (e.g. corporate social responsibility activities). On the other hand, private sector funding to cover the costs of VSS Repository might affect the perception of neutrality.
70. Looking forward, it is pivotal that partnerships with the private sector are not merely used for fund-raising purposes, but align to specific development objectives (particularly the SDGs). In this regard, clear rules on the use of private sector contributions and transparency on fund use are important for the neutrality of VSS Repository and future resource mobilization. ITC's future managerial accounting system will allow for disaggregating costs according to activities and thus provide transparency of fund use.<sup>37</sup>
71. Apart from the VSS Repository, sustainable production and consumption is covered by many development actors. The T4SD conference for instance competes with IFC's global flagship

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<sup>35</sup> As per comments of SECO country office, it is necessary to ensure an escalation and associate actors (public and private) that can provide training on the use of ITC tools, and train-the-trainers approach and working with associations / guilds is useful.

<sup>36</sup> As explained under limitations in Chapter II above, T4SD does not separately report on the costs of "public goods" from services of a commercial nature. Due to the lack of aggregate financial data per type of product or service, it is not clear yet whether the services to private firms are provided on a full-cost basis.

<sup>37</sup> One additional concern of core donors is that private customized tools should include reasonable overhead costs (not to be cross-subsidized by donor funding).



Sustainability Exchange addresses operational, environmental and social challenges and opportunities faced by infrastructure and natural resource actors in emerging markets.

72. A focus on capitalizing on its core strength (internal technical expertise, impartiality, convening power, network of trade support institutions, etc.) and avoiding distraction through too many non-strategic activities will remain pivotal for ITC.

### iii. Efficiency

73. Efficiency assesses the extent an intervention has converted its resources and inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) economically into results.

#### Value for money

74. Based on the consideration of relevance and effectiveness, T4SD provided generally good value for money, but economic efficiency of different intervention strategies differs significantly. As an example, one-off trainings provided through headquarter missions are clearly less efficient than technical assistance delivered through the partnership with Swisscontact in Colombia. Also in Colombia, efficiency may be improved by strengthening capacity building among local institutions and consultants (so far technical inputs are delivered by ITC staff only).

#### Project management performance

75. By and large, the project management performed well in delivering innovative solutions within a limited time span and budget, and creating value-addition to clients and to ITC. All stakeholder interviews highlighted the responsiveness of project management and staff to flexibly respond to their needs.
76. The current project document (2016 – 2020) significantly improved the application of ITC's results-based management tools. There is still some room for improving consistent reporting against agreed indicators (see for example the latest progress report to SECO)<sup>38</sup>.
77. Forward-looking strategic project management needs to be strengthened. Firstly, the Steering Committee of the T4SD project should be composed of representatives of the signatories to the project agreement who are empowered to take decisions. The Steering Committee of the T4SD project is obviously not competent to take decisions relating to the entire T4SD project. In line with good governance principles, steering committees with decision making power need to remain project specific unless a project is funded as a whole by a pool of donors.
78. Secondly, the potential of using the expertise represented in the Advisory Committee of the T4SD project to feed into the strategic decision making of the Steering Committee has not yet been fully exploited. A solution that worked in other similar projects was to invite the Advisory Committee to Steering Committee meetings as observers. If the confidentiality of the topics to be discussed requires, participation in parts of the meetings might be limited to Steering Committee members.
79. **Project monitoring, reporting and evaluation.** The project team provides annual reports on progress, results and fund use, both for ITC reporting purpose and donor reporting requirements. The annual reports are of good quality and have served as a useful self-review and management tool to the team, and as an update to the donors and stakeholders. Also, a client feedback survey has been conducted last year for the Sustainability Map. However, the current funding driven practice has not been conducive for establishing a results chain derived from a long-term strategy and related planning and M&E practice. In the future, the project strategy should specify objectives for key activities and related indicators, and future monitoring and reporting should focus on achievements aligned to ITC objectives and relevant SDGs.

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<sup>38</sup> See progress report 1H/2017, August 2017.

80. **Financial efficiency.** As explained under methodological limitations above, ITC’s managerial reporting system currently does not allow an allocation of expenditures to both UN budget lines and cost centers (objectives, activities). A detailed assessment on efficiency of fund use (relating inputs to outputs) is therefore not possible. Furthermore, T4SD activities are not always reported separately.<sup>39</sup>
81. According to ITC’s latest financial report provided by the project team as per 28 September 2017, 73% of the total budget of US\$ 2,771,584 has been reported as committed or spent.

#### **iv. Impact**

82. Impact measures changes that have occurred or are expected to occur to the partners and beneficiaries, and to indicate the positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended medium to long-term results, caused by the interventions.<sup>40</sup> The impact domains aligned to UN 2030 SDGs will be considered in assessing impact.
83. It is certain that the project has made significant contribution to increasing transparency and comparison in the VSS field. Transparency on VSS contributes to ITC’s trade facilitation objectives, including international market access for developing countries and LDCs. Without better transparency on VSS, significant challenges for market compliance remain for MSMEs and small producers in developing countries and LDCs. Market access does require more than meeting mandatory standards and VSS required by international buyers. Products must be competitive, both in terms of price and quality, and better knowledge of VSS is one of the approaches to better price and quality.
84. If it holds true that market prices of sustainably produced products outweigh the costs of VSS compliance, VSS would potentially contribute to higher revenues of farmers and local processors. Moreover, societal, health, environmental and other benefits required by many VSS have the potential to enhance non-monetary aspects of improved livelihoods. Achieving impact objectives obviously require combined efforts of beneficiaries, ITC and other development partners.
85. Beyond the envisaged objectives, easily accessible, reliable and neutral information on VSS potentially contributes also to achieving a variety of widely acknowledged trade-related policy objectives. Better consumer information, improved market access information, and other elements of a sound market environment are examples that are relevant to most countries.
86. As T4SD has been in the process of creating an innovative public goods and it has newly entered in technical assistance projects in countries, an attempt to assess T4SD’s impact on the ground would be premature. However, T4SD’s potential contribution to wide ITC’s objectives on trade-related impact and relevant SDGs goals are evident, especially to SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

#### **v. Sustainability**

87. Sustainability assesses the likelihood of continued long-term benefits.
88. The initial results of the core products and customized services are promising, but their long-term development results are unlikely to be fully completed within the current funding cycle (2016–2020). The VSS Repository is a permanent service responding to an ongoing public need. Unlike specific technical cooperation activities and tailor-made small projects, long-term funding is required and possibly available, pending its value to existing and potential donors.

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<sup>39</sup> In ITC terminology, the T4SD operation had been termed a “project” until late 2016. Since then, the T4SD Programme has included two separate operations: the T4SD project and the newly merged Trade and Environment Programme. This evaluation covers only the T4SD project.

<sup>40</sup> IFAD, Evaluation Manual, 2015 edition

89. For services to the private sector that are likely to directly contribute to T4SD's development objectives, a clear business plan is needed, which defines the specific services to be offered and shows the financial self-sustainability of these services.
90. Interviews with stakeholders of technical support in Colombia concluded that achievements will only be sustainable with the already planned follow-on support. Swisscontact is currently in contact with different donors. A core element of Swisscontact's sustainability strategy has been to strengthen Red Cacaotera's capacities to provide technical assistance to farmers and to market the cocoa of its member cooperatives. Each technical cooperation activity is different and requires tailored measures to ensure sustainability. But a core element is to "institutionalize" support, which requires longer term assistance rather than one-off trainings.
91. The initial and promising results at all levels are unlikely to be fully completed within the current funding cycle (2016–2020). From today's perspective, it is likely that ITC will be able to attract funding for the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum from donors and for customized tools from business partners and clients, and therefore be able to sustain the initial benefits in the longer term. Sustainability measures need to differentiate between different types of services (public goods to be available on a longer term basis, project-based technical cooperation activities, and commercial services).

**vi. Gender equality and human rights**

92. Gender equality and women's empowerment assesses whether these elements are sufficiently embedded in the interventions, and the extent to which interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment through interventions. The same principles apply to the UN's human right objectives.
93. Gender objectives relating to the participation of women in project activities are reported against; however it is too far reaching at this stage to assess the gender-related outcomes (e.g. wider benefits generated for women and men). Gender objectives at outcome and impact levels are not defined.
94. T4SD's work did not primarily relate to promoting human rights. No performance indicators were defined and human-rights related outcomes were not reported. Generally, many VSS include elements that relate to human rights issues, of which labour-related human rights are most widely found.

**vii. Innovation, replication and scaling up**

95. ITC's evaluation criteria of innovation, replication and scaling up assess to what extent the intervention has introduced innovative approaches to achieve ITC's goals or to better adapt to emerging contexts, and the extent to which they have been replicated or scaled up by development partners.
96. The innovation value of the project is significant. It has created a niche service to meeting the demand of clients and beneficiaries, and it has positioned ITC in the VSS field as a global forum convener. T4SD's global VSS Repository is a unique product, as explained above. The innovation is that the project applies the concept of a freely accessible repository to the world of VSS as a public good. Another major innovation is the approach to promote the use of the VSS Repository through partnerships and technical cooperation activities (e.g. customized tools).
97. Moreover, the evaluators are not aware of any other intervention that plans to use data generated by customized tools for trade promotion and trade data collection purposes. For the time being, this is an innovative idea only. It should be noted that not is the approach to generate data through value-added services new, but is its application to the users of VSS.

#### **IV. Conclusions, lessons learned and overall rating**

##### **i. On the VSS Repository**

98. The global VSS Repository is T4SD's unique core product, and it has evolved into a significant brand service that positions ITC as one of the key international public stakeholders in the VSS field. The VSS Repository primarily responds to the public interest of transparency on VSS and their requirements. It is an innovative public good of high relevance to ITC's mission and related SDGs, and ITC's impartiality and expertise are essential to the credibility of the repository.
99. Transparency on VSS complements the WTO rules relating to transparency of mandatory standards (SPS, TBT), and therefore potentially facilitates international trade. Comparable to the publication of mandatory standards under TBT/SPS rules, the publication of VSS is one among many, yet an important tool for international market access for developing countries and LDCs. Publicizing credible and neutral information on VSS increases their transparency and credibility.
100. Easily accessible, reliable and neutral information on VSS potentially contributes also to achieving a variety of widely acknowledged trade-related policy objectives. VSS repository actually provides a good base for further applying various customized tools for consumer information, such as Siegelklarheit, and for improving small producers' market information and access (such as LBCS in Colombia), which are examples that are relevant to most countries.

##### **ii. On the T4SD Forum**

101. The T4SD Forum provides a unique value-added as a forum to discuss VSS-related topics among a wide range of different stakeholders, including the private sector. It serves an important networking and communication platform, which complements the VSS repository. ITC's convening power has been growing in the VSS field. In the past four years, the T4SD Forum, a three-day event held at ITC and WTO, has established itself as an influential global event among a wide range of VSS stakeholders, including international organizations, national government organizations, the private sector, NGOs and research institutions.
102. As the Forum successfully connects VSS stakeholders globally through annual events, and it raises the public awareness of VSS compliance in trade development, partners and participants expressed strong endorsement and appreciation of the value of the T4SD Forum.
103. The T4SD Forum has evolved into one of four ITC global events (besides WEDF, WTPO and She Trades Global). Unlike capacity building and customized tools, the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum will require longer term funding by one or several donors (pooling).<sup>41</sup>

##### **iii. On the customized tools**

104. The development of customized assessment tools for private and non-governmental sectors added value in terms of promoting the VSS Repository, networking, internal learning and data collection for the VSS Repository. Private sector contributions to these activities were, although classified as funding, essentially a service fee for establishing customized tools. Developing customized tools are services of a commercial nature and not a public good.
105. T4SD does not report separately on the costs of "public goods" and services of a commercial nature. Due to the lack of aggregate financial data per type of product or service, it is not clear yet whether the services to private firms are provided on a full-cost basis.

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<sup>41</sup> As per comments from BMZ and SECO, the possibility of ITC core funding should be considered as well.

106. For certain donors, subsidizing commercial operations in developed countries within the framework of international aid could be problematic. Even though some activities of the private sector may have a development impact, it is not a primary purpose of commercial businesses. Private sector funding of the VSS Repository might affect the perception of its neutrality.

107. Looking forward it is pivotal that partnerships with the private sector are not merely used for fund-raising purposes, but align to specific development objectives (particularly the SDGs). Clear rules on the use of private sector contributions and transparency on fund use are important for future resource mobilization. ITC's future managerial accounting system will allow for disaggregating costs according to activities and thus provide transparency of fund use.

#### **iv. On VSS-related technical assistance in developing countries**

108. In Colombia, ITC's contribution to value strengthening project in cacao sector progressed in the right direction. T4SD worked with Swisscontact Colombia to design a customized self-assessment tool, which facilitated the assessment of small processors. This assessment was an important component of Swisscontact's value chain project. The positive changes observed in field, such as new export opportunities, were achieved through extensive support, including but not limited to the self-assessment tool, which addressed multiple challenges within the cacao value chain over years. The tool has so far not been used for other intended purposes (analysis of data that is collected, linking buyers to producers through publicizing their profile).

109. Tailoring customized electronic tools to the local context, language and specific industry is a key success factor for them. Moreover, using these types of tools successfully in a rural context requires offline functionalities. Strong hands-on coaching by experts is pivotal. In most cases, it is would be unrealistic to assume that farmers will, at least initially, use these tools themselves (e.g. enter data correctly).

110. Anecdotal evidences also point out the prominent value of the cacao value chain project in terms of domestic peace building and poverty reduction, which is well recognized by the Colombian Government, donor agencies, project partners and cacao producers in project areas. The technical assistance of T4SD in the framework of the value-chain development project has been highly appreciated by all concerned in the country, including the intended beneficiaries (SMEs and small producers).

111. Compliance with VSS is not a guarantee for market access; it is one among many specifications that producers must meet for gaining such access. In line with various compliance requirements, suppliers need be able to deliver the right quality and quantity at a competitive price. If the assumption holds true that higher sales prices of sustainably produced products outweigh the costs of VSS compliance, technical assistance in implementing VSS would potentially contribute to increased revenue for farmers and local processors. Besides, many VSS require ensuring societal, health, environmental and other benefits for producers, which relate well to ITC's corporate objectives and SDGs.

112. VSS-related technical assistance has to be delivered within comprehensive value chain strengthening projects, so that it can lead to results for SMEs and producers. The initial evidence from Colombia indicates that partnering up with organizations and/or programmes implementing value chain projects could be a practical option for T4SD to achieve desired impact on the ground, as T4SD has neither the operational resources nor the experience to ensure upscaling in many countries. To ensure visibility of ITC, branding (corporate identity) is important if working with large partners.

113. Another possible channel for scaling up is to mainstream T4SD's work into ITC's existing capacity building and advisory services to trade support institutions and country projects, and into ITC's trade policy advice. This would also be desirable in terms of building

synergies among programmes within ITC, and achieving common corporate goals and SDGs. Clearly less efficient are donor-driven, one-off ad hoc capacity building activities delivered through headquarter missions, which are also rather unlikely to lead to sustainable outcomes.

**v. Need for a strategy on deploying T4SD's innovative tools**

114. A flexible design and open formulation of objectives was the right approach to enable innovation in piloting VSS-related work. It allowed ITC to identify the key challenges relating to VSS, gradually select those to be addressed and then develop the necessary instruments in consideration of ITC's comparative advantages. Despite rather open operational planning, T4SD has been operationally well managed, thanks to a committed, dynamic and client-oriented team.

115. As T4SD is reaching a more mature stage, there is a need to sharpen T4SD's strategic focus and to implement an effective strategic steering mechanism, which should be agreed with SC member on rules of cooperation including a defined time frame that would allow SC members to review the proposals and documents before the SC meetings. T4SD has built the VSS Repository as an acknowledged core product and has been adding new products and services. Ongoing work is consolidation and upscaling needs to follow a defined strategy.

116. Ensuring T4SD's strategic focus also requires an effective steering mechanism that allows T4SD to respond to rapidly evolving context in the field of VSS and to ensure funding for strategic services. Benefited from long-term relationships with BMZ, SECO and EC, the project has been consistent in building up strategic products and services, such as the VSS database and related tools, which were endorsed by key donors. The strong partnerships have also allowed T4D to leverage the tools with new donors (Denmark and USAID). As the project has evolved into the stage of expanding services and customized tools and engaging with new partners, there is a strong need to reconsider the current steering mechanism. T4SD's well-prepared Steering Committee meetings have mainly served the purpose of regular information exchange and donor reporting, and the Technical Committee has been mainly an expert group working on technical details of T4SD's tools. So far, the Advisory Committee has been marginally used to inform decision making by the Steering Committee. Strategic consultative inputs from members with voting power and other purposes of the Steering Committee meetings (such as information exchange, networking) need to be separated and specified.

117. Weighing potential contribution to the corporate objectives, T4SD needs to focus on consolidating and upgrading the work in progress (e.g. the integration of the Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool) while exploring additional activities. As observed by certain stakeholders, the risk of a mission drift may be emerging, as some new fund-driven projects could negatively affect ITC's neutrality and impartiality, given the potentially diverging interests of stakeholders in developed and developing countries. Moreover, a rapid diversification of customized services could lead to overstretching a small core team, which may jeopardize the depth and quality of core products and services.

**vi. Balancing potentially diverging interests of the North and the South**

118. As observed by certain stakeholders, VSS have traditionally come from the global North; however the costs of compliance have been mostly felt by smallholders in the global South, the developing countries. In some cases, the expectations of smallholders that compliance with VSS would be rewarded by increased income did not materialize. These were clear concerns expressed by stakeholders in Colombia and some international partner NGOs, and the project has been treading a delicate but implicit balance on this matter.

119. Given the potentially diverging interests and long-lasting debates between the developed and developing countries on applying VSS and other compliance measures, it is necessary for T4SD to communicate explicitly on ITC's neutrality in this sensitive debate and clarify its position in bridging the two sides. Efforts may be taken to enhance the risk management and communication on the rules of selecting VSS and engaging with the private

sector. Furthermore, to balance different concerns, attention may be paid to including VSS from developing countries into the VSS Repository.

**vii. On sustainability of initial results**

120. The initial and promising results delivered by the projects are unlikely to be fully completed within the current funding cycle (2016–2020). From today’s perspective, it is likely that ITC will be able to attract funding for the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum from donors and for customized tools from business partners and clients, and therefore be able to sustain the initial benefits in the longer term. Fund raising needs to differentiate between the different types of services provided by T4SD. The VSS Repository and the global T4SD Forum are permanent services responding to public needs. Unlike specific technical cooperation activities and tailor-made small projects, long-term funding is required and possibly available, depending on the value of the VSS Repository and the Forum to existing and potential donors. For services to the private sector that are likely to directly contribute to T4SD’s development objectives, a clear business plan is needed, which defines the specific services to be offered and shows their financial self-sustainability.

**viii. On gender and human rights**

121. VSS are obviously potentially relevant to gender and internationally recognized human rights objectives (including labour rights). Gender objectives relating to the participation of women in project activities are reported against; however it is far-reaching at this stage to assess the gender-related outcomes (e.g. wider benefits generated for women and men). No performance indicators for human rights were defined.

**Overall rating**

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Summary comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Project performance</b>		
✓ Relevance	Responds well to ITC’s strategies, core competencies and potentially contributes to several SDGs relating to socio-economic and environmental objectives, especially SDG 12 on sustainable production and trade. Services fully met the needs of beneficiaries.	6
✓ Effectiveness	The delivery of outputs is on track and achievements in developing the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum are outstanding. The publicly accessible VSS Repository includes 250 VSS in over 80 sectors and 180 countries, and T4SD’s rigorous methodology ensures quality of data. As a one of ITC’s global events, the T4SD Forum has evolved into a unique platform in the VSS field for discussion among a wide array of stakeholders.	5
✓ Efficiency	Overall, inputs were economically translated into outputs. While T4SD has been operationally well managed, there is room to enhance strategic planning and management.	5
✓ Impact	Not applicable	
✓ Sustainability of project results	From today’s perspective, it seems likely that ITC will be able to attract funding for the VSS Repository and T4SD Forum from donors and for customized tools from business partners and clients, and therefore be able to sustain the initial benefits related to major operations. It is too early to assess limited technical cooperation results.	5
<b>Other performance criteria</b>		
✓ Innovation	The VSS Repository in combination with different tools is innovative and currently unique. This innovative project has positioned ITC as a key international public service provider in the VSS field.	6
✓ Gender mainstreaming	Gender objectives at output level but not at outcome level, are reported against. With limited data, it is too far-reaching to assess the gender-related outcomes; no rating is provided.	N.A.

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Summary comments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
✓ Overall performance and results	Overall, the T4SD's quality is rated as satisfactory but with the caveat that the assessment of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability was only possible in terms of direct project deliverables rather than in terms of lasting effects they are expected to generate.	5

**Indications of ITC's 6-point rating methods**

<b>6 Highly satisfactory</b>	A project with overwhelming positive results, and no flaws.
<b>5 Satisfactory</b>	A project with some strong results, and without material shortcomings.
<b>4 Moderately satisfactory</b>	A project with a clear preponderance of positive results (i.e., it may exhibit some minor shortcomings though these should be clearly outweighed by positive aspects).
<b>3 Moderately unsatisfactory</b>	A project with either minor shortcomings across the board, or an egregious shortcoming in one area that outweighs other generally positive results.
<b>2 Unsatisfactory</b>	A project with largely negative results, clearly outweighing positive results.
<b>1 Highly unsatisfactory</b>	A project with material negative results and with no material redeeming positive results.



## **V. Recommendations**

### **Strategic recommendations on the future development of the project**

#### **To ITC Management and DEI Management**

##### **Implementation period: 2018-2019**

- i. To delegate the T4SD team with a task of developing an organizational strategy on positioning ITC in the international VSS field, for the endorsement of ITC Senior Management.
122. This VSS strategy should be aligned to ITC's corporate objectives and results framework, creating enabling conditions to consolidate an emerging brand of ITC's comparative advantages, and factoring in the value of complementing the WTO rules relating to transparency of mandatory standards (SPS, TBT).
123. The strategy should also explore the possibility of mainstreaming capacity building on VSS-related topics in relevant ITC services and projects, particularly in capacity building for TSIs, market intelligence for SME export and technical cooperation activities working on enhancing SME competitiveness.
124. The strategy should also be specific on setting measurable objectives and related monitoring, measuring and reporting mechanisms to ensure the practicability and traceability of achieving results.<sup>42</sup>

### **Technical recommendations on project management and operations**

#### **To T4SD Management and the Steering Committee of T4SD**

##### **Implementation period: within the remaining period of the current 2016–2020 project plan**

- ii. For longer term funding, provided agreement of SECO and BMZ in principle, to propose a follow-up phase to consolidate the public good services (VSS Repository, T4SD Forum and Sustainability Platform). The funding proposal should detail the costs of maintaining these public good services on a long-term basis.
- vi. To enable the Advisory Committee members to provide a consultative voice to the Steering Committee to shape the future strategic development of the project and maintain a clear strategic consultation process on decision making by Steering Committee members with voting powers.
- vii. To continue enhancing, updating and upgrading the VSS Repository. Improve its functionalities (features), check the accuracy of its contents, ensure a timely update to the VSS included and gradually increase the number of VSS included, prioritizing those of high practical relevance to users.
- viii. To promote the use of the VSS Repository through public and private partnerships with potential key users of standard data. In doing so, providing customized applications specifically serving the needs of users group should only be provided on a full-cost basis, which would address the concern of certain donors on possible cross financing between public and private goods. For better alignment to programme objectives, the Programme team should establish a business plan for customized services that shows the long-term financial, technical and institutional sustainability.
- ix. To thoroughly verify and enhance the features of the Sustainability Map platform. The team needs timely checks to fix technical errors (such as links, display of content, etc.),

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<sup>42</sup> As per comments of SECO, recommendation on ITC core funding/staff for functions like T4SD should be considered; this issue should be raised and addressed between SECO and ITC management.

and based on satisfaction survey among users, the Sustainability Map platform should be gradually upgraded and improved in terms of utility and user-friendliness.

- x. To further pilot the Colombia case technical assistance model design in other countries and other sectors, regularly assess the performance and results, and customize the model accordingly when replicating it. It is advisable to upscale technical cooperation activities through collaborating with development agencies and ITC's projects working in value-chain development, preferably with a record of accomplishment, to achieve and report concrete trade development results on ground.

## Annexes

### i. Annex I: List of documents reviewed

1. Evaluation documents
  - 1.1 The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (UNEG, 2016)
  - 1.2 ITC, Evaluation Policy, (ITC, 2015)
  - 1.3 Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC), DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, Quality Standards for, Development Evaluation (OECD 2010)
  - 1.4 OECD/DAC, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (2002)
2. General Background Information
  - 2.1 Trade for Sustainable Development – making sustainable supply chains a reality (ITC, 2015)
  - 2.2 Trade for Sustainable Development - building sustainable value chains (ITC, May 2017)
  - 2.3 GIZ, Factsheet on the Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool (SSCT) (GIZ, October 2015)
  - 2.4 Trade for Sustainable Development, Partnering to Create Customized Tools (ITC, 2016)
  - 2.5 SECO, Factsheet, Innovation in Sustainability Standards, ISEAL Alliance
3. Strategic governance
  - 3.1 1<sup>st</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2014, 5 March 2014
  - 3.2 2<sup>nd</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2014, 17 November 2014
  - 3.3 1<sup>st</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2015, 31 March 2015
  - 3.4 2<sup>nd</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2015, 16 November 2015
  - 3.5 1<sup>st</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2016, 5 April 2016
  - 3.6 2<sup>nd</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes 2016, 25 November 2016
  - 3.7 2<sup>nd</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Meeting 2016: Agenda Discussion Questions, 25 November 2016
  - 3.8 1<sup>st</sup> T4SD Steering Committee Notes, 04 May 2017
  - 3.9 Trade for Sustainable Development – T4SD in 2017: progress and next steps, a presentation to: T4SD Steering Committee, 04 May 2017
  - 3.10 T4SD Governance Committee (member list)
  - 3.11 Meeting minutes 1<sup>st</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting, 03 July 2015
  - 3.12 Presentation 2<sup>nd</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting, 10 December 2015 [mentions survey among website users, probably expert platform, no minutes?]
  - 3.13 Meeting minutes 3<sup>rd</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting, 18 May 2016
  - 3.14 Meeting minutes 3<sup>rd</sup> Advisory Committee Meeting, 25 January 2017
  - 3.15 Meeting minutes Technical Working Group Meeting, 01 October 2015
  - 3.16 Meeting minutes Technical Working Group Meeting, 29 September 2016
4. Planning and reporting
  - 4.1 T4SD Project Plan 2013 – 2016
  - 4.2 T4SD Project Activities and Budget 2017 – 2020 (includes budget and logical framework)
  - 4.3 T4SD Project Document (036) 2016 – 2020 [is this a final version?]
  - 4.4 T4SD Project performance and planning report 2013 (mid-year), 26 July 2013
  - 4.5 T4SD Project performance and planning report 2013 (end-of year), undated
  - 4.6 T4SD Project performance and planning report 2014 (mid-year), 25 July 2014
  - 4.7 T4SD Project progress – yearly review 2014 (end-of year)
  - 4.8 Memorandum T4SD year-end report 2014
  - 4.9 T4SD Project performance and planning report 2015 (mid-year), 25 July 2014
  - 4.10 Memorandum T4SD year-end report 2015, 23 July 2015
  - 4.11 List of trainings provided (Excel file: MAR mission agenda)
  - 4.12 Final report, Exporter Self-Assessment and Capacity Building Project, funded by the European Union (DG Trade), 31 December 2013 – 31 December 2016. [project supported E-learning platform and funded training workshops, includes self-assessment of trainings]
  - 4.13 Financial reports to GIZ (Status of Funds two contracts: # 81206631 from 15 November 2015 – 31.12.2016 and # 81192195 from 15 September 2015 – 31 March 2016) Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool (SSCT)
  - 4.14 Annual Budget SECO Contribution 2014 – 2015

5. Agreements with Donors
  - 5.1 SECO: Agreement Letter between SECO and the ITC on the T4SD Project (2013 – 2015) dated 20 December 2012
  - 5.2 SECO: Agreement between SECO and the ITC on the extension of the Project until 31 December 2016 signed on 30 April 2015.
  - 5.3 SECO: Contribution Agreement between SECO and ITC on the T4SD Project as a Part of SECO's Transparency and Innovation of Sustainability Standards (TISS) Programme dated 31 August 2016 *[includes description of SECO context]*
  - 5.4 EU: T4SD, Request for contribution, Small traders' capacity building programme (1 October 2012 – 30 September 2015)
  - 5.5 GIZ: Agreement on contract # 81206631 from 15 November 2015 – 31.12.2016 on Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool (SSCT), including memorandum on retro-activity.
  - 5.6 GIZ: Agreement on contract # 81192195 from 15 September 2015 – 31 March 2016) Sustainability Standards Comparison Tool (SSCT), including agreement on extension.
  - 5.7 Agreement between ITC and HIVOS concerning the Sustainability Standards Resource Centre, 28 August 2013
  - 5.8 MoU between ITC and the European Brands Association (AIM), 03 September 2013
  - 5.9 MoU between ITC and the European Brands Association (AIM), 12 October 2016
  - 5.10 Agreement between ITC and the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food, Kingdom of Denmark, concerning the Integrated Sustainable Agriculture Programme, 25 September 2015 (including amendments signed on 4 March 2016 and 2 December 2016, extending the MoU until 31 December 2017 [content: customized tool])
  - 5.11 MoU between ITC and Delhaize Brothers and Co. ("the Lion"), 8 September 2014 [content: customized self-assessment tool]
  - 5.12 MoU between ITC and the European Feed Manufacturers Association (FEFAC), 03 September 2015 [customized self-assessment tool]
  - 5.13 MoU between ITC and the Stichting IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), 26 November 2014 [customized benchmarking tools]
  - 5.14 MoU between ITC and PepsiCo, Inc., 28 December 2014 [customized SFI platform, annual update]
  - 5.15 MoU between ITC and PepsiCo, Inc., 28 December 2014 [*customized SFI platform, annual update, provided twice in two different folders, is this the same document?*]
  - 5.16 UNEP: UN Agency to UN Agency contribution agreement on training on sustainable value chains [in China] and co-hosting the EU-China Sustainable Value Chains Forum on Textiles and Fashion
  - 5.17 MoU between ITC and LOGYCA Association, GSI member organization in Columbia), 03 May 2017 [covers GSI system standards to localize, using Global Localization Numbers = GLN, part of GEPIR = Global Electronic Party Information Service]
  - 5.18 Licensing and Cooperation Agreement with GSI AISBL, 10 May 2017 [license to use the Global Farm Registry and the GSI Proprietary Information]
  - 5.19 MoU between ITC and the Mediterranean Shipping Company MSC [training, further customized services would be subject to an amendment of the agreement]
  - 5.20 MoU between ITC and the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative SAI [main content: development of a customized online self-assessment tool, *supersedes the agreement signed on 5 April 2017, which is not on file*]
  - 5.21 MoU between ITC and the Swiss Foundation for Technical Development Cooperation (Swisscontact) and the National Association of CocoaCacao of Colombia (the CocoaCacao Network), 11 January 2017 [LBSC tool, training; model for joint TA, with no funding of Swisscontact]
  - 5.22 Agreement between ITC and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), 30 September 2016 [activities: one among several activities: sustainability market place, US\$250,000].
6. General programme outputs
  - 6.1 Web tools and platforms produced under the T4SD Programme
  - 6.2 Social and Environmental Standards: Contributing to More Sustainable Value Chains (2016)
  - 6.3 Sustainable Sourcing of Agricultural Raw Materials – A Practitioner's Guide (2013)
  - 6.4 Influencing Sustainable Sourcing Decisions in Agri-Food Supply Chains (2016).
7. Colombia
  - 7.1 ITC: Fact Sheet, Basic Guidelines for Sustainable CocoaCacao Colombia – cocoaocacao sector Offering small-scale cocoa farmers global recognition for their sustainable practices (June 2017)
  - 7.2 ITC: Introduction to the « Lineamientos Basicos para un cacao sostenible - LBCS » tool (presentation in Spanish)

- 7.3 ITC: Trade for Sustainable Development, Building Sustainable Supply Chains, presentation by Joseph Wozniak
- 7.4 ITC/Swisscontact, Progress Report 2016
- 7.5 Survey among user organizations of the LBCS tool
- 7.6 Website usage report <http://www.standardsmap.org/lbcs> LBCS tool for the period: 17 March 2015 – 31 March 2016
- 7.7 Participant lists of various workshops
- 7.8 Concept Note for collaboration between ITC and Swisscontact (June 2014)
- 7.9 Presentation Cooperative Coomprocar in Spanish and English
- 7.10 Presentation Cooperative Corpoteva in Spanish and English
- 7.11 Presentation Cooperative Cortepaz in Spanish and English
- 7.12 SECO and Swisscontact, Country strategies for the specialty cocoa market, successful policies and private sector initiatives in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.
- 7.13 Presentation on LBCS (slides, in Spanish), Swisscontact, August 2017
- 7.14 Fact Sheet SECO (SECOMPETITIVO Programme, strengthening the competitiveness of Peru to improve living standards) in Spanish
- 7.15 Fact Sheet SECO (SECOMPETITIVO and IDB Colombia Sustainability Facility), 2016 – 2020
- 7.16 Paper “The Colombian CocoaCacao and Chocolate Sector, Dynamics of Production, national Commercialization and Export, by Miguel Angel Pérez, CocoaCacao Specialist, Swisscontact.
- 7.17 SECO, Swiss International Cooperation: Economic Cooperation and Development Colombia, 2017–2020, February 2017

ii. **Annex II: List of persons consulted during the evaluation process**

Organization	Names
SECO	Christian Robin
German mission in Geneva	Hendrik Schmitz Guinote
GIZ	Silke Peters
BMZ Berlin	Sandy Harnisch
BMZ Berlin	Helmut Fischer
USAID	Sashi Jayatileke
EC	Mark Henderson
European University Institute	Brigid Laffan Matteo Fiorini
FiBL	Julia Lernoud
MSC	Dirk van de Velde
ISEAL Alliance	Patrick Mallet
GSI	Malcolm Bowden
SIM	Leontien Hasselman-Plugge
Global Social Compliance Programme	Sonia Schmid
COLEACP	Morag Webb
Foreign Trade Association	Veronica Rubio
IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative	Tony Bruggink
WWF	Jenny Walther Thoss
ProColombia, Bogota, Colombia, Gerente de Exportaciones Cadena Agro – alimentos. Vicepresidencia de Exportaciones.	Andrés Felipe Castellanos Rodríguez
ProColombia, Bogota, Colombia, Asesor – Gerencia de Exportaciones Agroindustria	Juan Elías Raad
ProColombia, Bogota, Colombia, Asesor – Gerencia de Exportaciones Agroindustria	Yeny Lorena Ovalle Muñoz
Swisscontact Colombia, General Manager	Cecilia Rivera
Swisscontact Colombia Cocoa and chocolate Coordinador	Miguel Angel Pérez
Swisscontact Colombia + Competitiva Programme, M&E Project Advisor	Veronica Leal
SECO Colombia, Chief Embajada de Suiza en Colombia	Christian Sieber
SECO Colombia, Deputy Chief	Catalina Pulido
SECO Colombia, incoming Chief	Christian
Red Cacaotera, General Manager	Miguel Angel Vargas Caro
Red Cacaotera, Administrative and Operations Coordinator	Andrea Zea
Red Cacaotera, Media and Information Coordinator. Responsible for the LBCS platform	Roger Rodríguez Vega
Colombia, Tumaco (municipality) Legal Representative for the cooperative Corpoteva, Tumaco.	Luis Eduardo Martinez, and several cacao farmers
Colombia, Tumaco (municipality) Legal Representative for Consejo Comunitario Bajo Mira y Frontera. Born in vereda Peña Colorada.	Oberman Quiñones Torres, and several cacao farmers

T4SD Project team, ITC	Joe Wozniak Mathieu Lamolle Sandra Cabrera Regina Taimasova Petra Walterova
DEI, ITC	Anders Aeroe
SIVC/DEI, ITC	Robert Skidmore
OLAC/DCP, ITC	Claudia Uribe Pineda
OED, ITC	Dorothy Tembo Matthew Wilson
IEU&SPPG, ITC	Iris Hauswirth Miguel Jimenez-Pont

### iii. Annex III: Case study Colombia

Written by Patricia Forero

**“Winning the CocoaCocoa of Excellence Award for the Tumaco region in the “Salon du Chocolat” in Paris has maybe not yet been reflected in our prices, but it gave us international recognition, and thus national, and more important, local recognition. When the news came out in Tumaco, proudness arose, and all conflict actors lowered their voices giving room to peace, and respect for all cocaococao growers. After that, we are seen different, and we grow and harvest cocaococao with more ease.”**

Luis Martinez, Corporación Corpoteva, one of the three associations of the Tumaco Exports Alliance, winners of the Award (2015) and users of ITC’s LBCS tool.

#### Tumaco, natural richness hand in hand with poverty and violence



Tumaco, a municipality in the Nariño Department at the south-west coast of Colombia, is a tropical biodiverse isolated land that lies between a thick forest and the Pacific Ocean. It is inhabited by 194,000 people (2016) of whom 95% are afro<sup>43</sup>, descendants from freed slaves from different African countries, most coming from its neighbor city Barbacoas. A river-port city destined to forced gold mining by Spanish colonists and later elite successors.

For over 300 years, Tumaco has lived from successive forestry extraction bonanzas adopting similar logics and social institutions to those used in the mining city of Barbacoas. In short, rubber, tagua nut, and wood have been extracted favoring the interests of foreign transnationals, elites and public officials of the cities of Pasto and Bogota, while seriously deteriorating the environment and pushing marginalized groups to poverty through low salaries, lack of public goods and services, and short retribution to local economies.

These systems where locals seem forgotten, have, as affirmed by several authors, **destroyed sustainable forms of living**, fueled violence, and provided the conditions for modern coca bonanzas, and illegal armed groups.<sup>44</sup> Thus, and paradoxically, Tumaco’s natural wealth has been at the roots of the *Tumaqueños*’ misery and violence.

In recent years, however, even with a low government presence and assistance, local farmers that have resisted to join actual coca plantations systems, have managed to obtain better technical management and more sustainable processes for their crops. For cocaococao, this was due in great part, to international cooperation presence in the region. Notably, that of Swisscontact. In this way, agriculture and agro-industry are now as important to Tumaco’s economy, as fishing, commercial forestry, and tourism. Thus today, Tumaco produces all of Nariño’s African palm (20% more profitable than cocaococao), 92% of its cocaococao, and 51% of the Department’s coconut.<sup>45</sup> .

<sup>43</sup> Alcaldía de Tumaco – Nariño. (2016). Indicadores de Población. [www.tumaco-narino.gov.co/indicadores.shtml#poblacion](http://www.tumaco-narino.gov.co/indicadores.shtml#poblacion).

<sup>44</sup> Zambrano, Andrés. (2015). “Análisis/ Tumaco y la historia del conflicto en Colombia”. Bogota. Article published in Portafolio journal. <http://www.portafolio.co/opinion/redaccion-portafolio/analisis-tumaco-historia-conflicto-colombia-40136>, and González, Diego León (2014). Origen Bonanzas y Colonización. San Juan de Pasto. Slideshare: <https://es.slideshare.net/diegoleon58958/tumaco-origen-bonanzas-y-colonizacin>.

<sup>45</sup> Alcaldía de Tumaco – Nariño. (2017). Información general. [http://www.tumaco-narino.gov.co/informacion\\_general.shtml](http://www.tumaco-narino.gov.co/informacion_general.shtml).



Hopes for new ways of living open as well, as Tumaco's once famous port is being dredged and reopened for Pacific trade to South America and the world, and as 400 men and women from the guerrillas in the country's Pacific region have recently laid down their arms to take part in Colombia's Peace Process.<sup>46</sup> In this context, alternative economic models are also being proposed by Government and others, including one from a former guerrilla leader that suggests investing subsidies from demobilized guerrillas and coca growers into crop exports.<sup>47</sup>

## Swisscontact and ITC in Tumaco

### Challenges

In this specific local context of violence, poverty and efforts for peace, together with biodiversity and ancestral African traditions –including various legally organized collective lands that gather more than 900 families, SECO through Swisscontact, chooses to operate in Tumaco from 2014 – 2016, hoping to improve the livelihood and peace of the *Tumaqueños* by developing high-quality export cacao (domestic market only offered to buy cacao at low prices, no matter the quality) as a sustainable way of living, and a profitable alternative to illicit crops.

The challenge was to develop a sustainable and lucrative activity, hand in hand with farmers, with enough quality cacao that could help establish enduring commercial relationships between farmers' organizations and international buyers, even if associated farms – not daily accessed by farmers due to distances from the municipality and poor-state roads- seemed part of the jungle. The starting point were processes already engaged by Swisscontact with other farmer organizations in other regions of Colombia, aware that they were to be adjusted to respond to the conditions and resources of farmers, cooperatives and collective land organizations in Tumaco.

Thus, in the track of establishing farms and organizations sustainable processes to increase cacao quality, productivity, organizational capacities, and commercial abilities for exports, the ITC Standards Map global public good (database and self- assessment tool) for international sustainability certifications just fit like a glove.

Hence, implementation then assumed a 'little' extra work from both ITC and Swisscontact. Jointly, they patiently adjusted the Standards Map self-assessment tool to precisely fit cacao local needs and cacao market opportunities, in a language that would speak to them from their day to day labors and organizational activities. It was meant to clearly tell them where to start, what they needed, and where they had achieved good results so that they could make advances in a process-way. All, to boost sustainable processes and later permit self- sustainable evaluations. This is how the ITC - Swisscontact **LBSC**<sup>48</sup> platform was born. As a support tool for these processes. Together with Swisscontact's intervention. Online and off-line for better field use.

### Results

Implementation of the **LBSC** brought as well, unexpected results. Along with technical assistance to improve quality and productivity, the process of gathering information for the self- assessment tool familiarized producers with minimum sustainability criteria, and with a handy check-list. Trainers of trainers (current and future) also found a convenient route map to guide improvements in criteria at producers' rhythm, according to local security conditions and financial resources. Starting from nothing, the **LBSC** tool has supported awareness and follow-up in Swisscontact's processes led to change production, quality and trade models, in a sustainable way.

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<sup>46</sup> See more in (Spanish). Bogota (2017). <http://www.acuerdodepaz.gov.co/>

<sup>47</sup> Arenas, Natalia. (July, 2017). "El modelo económico de Romana que aún no despega". Bogota. Article published in La Silla Vacía journal. <http://lasillavacia.com/historia/el-modelo-economico-de-romana-que-aun-no-despega-61839>

<sup>48</sup> Stands for Linemamientos Básicos de Cacao Sostenible in Spanish.

***“The LBSC Platform has the necessary criteria to help us advance. It also shows us what we can really achieve. What sense would it have to engage in an Organic certification if we see we are far from obtaining it? After self-assessment, we saw it was more realistic to look for a Fair Trade certification”***, Luis Martinez, Cooperative Corpoteva.

In addition, Cooperative Corpoteva leaders express that while collecting the **LBSC** good practices criteria to assess 200 family farms, they also gathered all genetic varieties of the farms, improving notably their marketing potential, their added value, and their sales-production planning according to the needs of gourmet chocolatiers. Databases and new results were then valued.

Producers in Tumaco now sell conventional cocoa to domestic markets individually, and fine and flavor quality cocoa through organizations with common post-harvest infrastructure. Exporters of the *Alianza Exportadora de Tumaco* (3 **LBSC** user organizations that work together to achieve export volumes, and cover 1,320 families) have seen the benefits of their careful extra work: they have doubled selling prices, and have been recognized for their commercial quality at the most important chocolate showroom of the world: the Salon du Chocolat of Paris<sup>49</sup>. The distinction granted in 2015, has given them international market recognition, as well as respect from local actors, including illegal ones.

According to farmers, this distinction and commercial results have also motivated Fedecacao government agency to follow on their steps and start supporting commercial quality processes instead of experimental quality exports.

Exports have also been achieved through the work of the Red Cacaotera, an association of cocoa organizations, born from Swisscontact’s intervention, which gathers more than 100 organizations that represent 30,000 producers’ families, and an impressive 35% of all Colombian cocoa production. As an exports platform, Red Cacaotera currently promotes commercial relationships between international buyers and producers, enables exports logistics and procedures, facilitates financial instruments, and manages analytical databases of the organizations associated, among others.

Commercial results and premiums on prices have also promoted improvement processes, and more sustainable and sophisticated control and tracking procedures to ensure quality:

***“We installed 12 monitoring nodes. One for each vereda location. So now, when we have a problem with the export samples, we can track the problem and correct it, or establish penalties if it’s necessary”***, Oberman Torres, Community Council Bajo Mira y Frontera.

## **Future**

ITC’s **LBSC** is projected to serve as a self-assessment tool, and as good-practice and a standards validation platform that can provide a closer communication between buyers and producers, making it less necessary to pass through international certifications. Trusty validation of standards important to buyers, without certifications, would represent a great benefit for small and medium producers who cannot easily pay nor recuperate certifications investments.

In that sense, ITC has signed an agreement with Red Cacaotera and Swisscontact to promote the use of the tool, and enable the validation of its assessments (for organizations or producers) through visits on the field and certifications on demand. This, in the hope of benefiting low-income producers with good practices.

## **Cocoa organizations visited in Tumaco**

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<sup>49</sup> See in Spanish: [www.rcnradio.com/locales/cacao-de-tumaco-gana-premio-mundial-a-la-excelencia-en-el-salon-de-chocolate-de-paris](http://www.rcnradio.com/locales/cacao-de-tumaco-gana-premio-mundial-a-la-excelencia-en-el-salon-de-chocolate-de-paris)



### **Corporación Corpoteva**

**Associates:** 220 small family farm producers.

**Production volume:** 65 tons of high quality cocoa /year

**Legal Representative:** Luis Eduardo Martinez, born in the vereda San Luis Robles.

**Member of the *Alianza Exportadora de Tumaco.***

**Sustainability Approach:** **LBCS** user.

Corpoteva was created with the objective of offering credit and commercialization services for high quality cocoa that could benefit associates with primes. They have worked with international USAID Cooperation through programs like MIDAS and Colombia Responde, and with United Nations FAO and UNODC.



### **Community Council Bajo Mira y Frontera**

**Associates:** 924 small family farm producers under a black community collective ownership of the land (Colombian Law 70/1993).

**Production volume:** 416 tons of high quality certified cocoa/year.

**Legal Representative:** Oberman Torres, born in vereda Peña Colorada, Tumaco.

**Member of the *Alianza Exportadora de Tumaco.***

**Sustainability Approach:** Certified Faire Trade in 2010 through Usaid Cooperation funds, but lost this certification once they could not sell Faire Trade, and did not follow-up on processes. They recovered it during Swisscontact's – ITC cooperation. Today, 729 of the 924 associates already certified Fair Trade, are also obtaining the Organic or Biological seal NOP-USDA. The **LBCS** tool has facilitated identifying the missing criteria in the gap from the Fair Trade certification to the Organic/Biological.

#### iv. **Annex IV: Survey analysis**

### **SURVEY ANALYSIS**

#### **On ITC Standards Map Tools**

by Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh, Management Consultant, EvalCo Sài

#### **I. General Information:**

- **71 users** answered the survey.
- **Languages** used (number of answers):
  - English: 54%
  - Spanish: 42%
  - French: 4%
  
- **Gender:**
  - 61% male
  - 30% female
  - 9% did not answer about their gender
  
- Their **country of residence:**
  - 69% are from **Developing Countries:** Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Senegal, Indonesia, India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, UAE, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico (6%), Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru (7%);
  - 20% are from **Developed Countries:** Germany, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Switzerland, UK, USA;
  - 6% are from **Least Developed Countries**, in the list: Bangladesh, Madagascar and;
  - 3% are from **Countries with Economy in transition:** Ukraine, Russia;
  - 3% did not answer about their country of residence
  
- Their **employer:**
  - 28% work for enterprises (13% for Large Enterprises, 3% for Medium Enterprises, 7% for Small Enterprises and 6% for Micro Enterprises)
  - 18% work for Government or diplomatic missions
  - 15% for University, Research Institutes, Academic
  - 15% are independent/individual
  - 8% for Trade Support Institutions
  - 4% for International Organisation
  - 4% for Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)
  - 6% did not answer about their employer
  
- Their **working field:**
  - 42% working in research field
  - 30% are consultants for private companies

- 23% work as a government official
- 17% are traders
- 15% are producers of agricultural or fisheries products
- 14% are manufacturer of non-agricultural products
- 13% are processor of agricultural or fisheries products
- 11% as development practitioner
- 8% in wholesaling
- 7% in retailing
- 7% in sourcing

## II. Specific questions:

### I. How did you learn about the Standards Map website?

- 48% learned about it by their own research on Internet
- 24% through seminars and trainings organized by ITC
- 21% through colleagues
- 15% through seminars and trainings organized by others
- 6% through other sources
- 1% by media

Those who learned *through seminars and trainings organized by others* have listed:

- Through my studies at the ADEX Institute (in Peru)
- Through a University
- In an international marketing course
- Through Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- By OMC-SPS
- Because our certification (Triple Seal) entered the portal on the advice of Christian Robin of SECO
- During the training course facilitated by PTB
- Through a training facility in Egypt called FTTC (Foreign Trade Training Centre in Cairo)
- Through Diplomatic School of Mexico
- Iran TPO

Those who learned *through other sources* have listed:

- Consultant working on it
- By Trademap and its tools

### 2. For what purpose have you used the website [www.standardsmap.org](http://www.standardsmap.org)?

- 62% use this website for general research purpose
- 42% to inform themselves about a specific standard
- 39% to learn about private standards in general
- 14% for other purposes
- 13% to conduct a self-assessment against a specific private standard

Those who used the website *for other purposes* have listed:

- Educational
- Benchmarking
- I represent a private firm that has concerns with the effect of private standards
- As an input to market research and to establish strategies for international trade both academic and SME
- understand standards requirements for various markets
- In tenders for the products we import as market references
- Include RA / SAN System Information
- To produce profiles of markets and agro-export products

### 3. Which of the following services of Standards Map do you find useful?

#	Tools	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful for me
1	Tool to compare different standards	68%	20%	1%
2	Standard database	66%	25%	0%
3	E-learning tools	45%	18%	8%
4	Collection of reference material	35%	35%	4%
5	Database of producers	35%	27%	11%
6	Expert database	30%	32%	6%

### What other additional services would you find useful?

- Good practices by sectors, more friendly and intuitive application.
- You have an exhaustive list of standards for most of the products, Country-wise. Practically it would be very difficult, for exporters, to comply with all the standards given. And many of them are not mandatory as well. Would be really very useful for us, if you could highlight the most critical/important 3-4 standards in the list required to export a specific product to a specific Country
- Seeing together import and export trade data, now it is possible to download them only separately.
- Agro Value Addition Information
- It would be nice if standards such as BRC or ISO would cooperate to have more details of their standards inside Standards Map
- Country level information about Non-Tariff Barriers and their qualification
- Thematic summaries by country
- If a union could be made between the legal and additional requirements for exporting with the certifications, that is to say that this certification could help to fulfil some legal or additional requirement so that it can be exported to a certain country
- Detailing more specific about information they provide
- Database of Competent Authorities by topic, the following box of comments is not enabled, my comment is that it should be a differential online survey if it is a producer, exporter, official, etc., that should be the first question and then depending on the selection will be the questions. If it is of Government there are questions that did not

apply and that could be different, for example question 5 applies only to exporters and the last (11) on the destination of exports does not include all possible regions.

- Contact Certification Systems
- Increase the quantity of products
- Historical series for exporting items left
- I think it would be useful to have a database of the mandatory standards that would need certain products for a specific market
- Studies or information on the impact of standards
- Offering a link to a social risk assessment tool would be useful to show what social hotspots a standard manages

**Please add here any comments or suggestions you may have provide:**

- Case studies
- Statistics about trade

#### 4. Did you use the self-assessment tool and if so, how?

- 66% said they did not use the tool
- 13% said use the tool for checking their company's compliance with a standard
- 8% said use the tool for other purposes
- 7% used the tool for checking the compliance of their suppliers with a standard

Those who used the tool *for other purposes* have listed:

- Training and helping companies to do their self-assessment
- Educational
- Check other companies' compliance with a standard
- For research purpose and to use data to compare international markets
- To learn about it
- Inform and teach other companies that can use this platform to check compliance and conformity with some standard
- Evaluate the knowledge I acquired in the management of this tool

#### 5. Main benefits of Standards Map

#	Benefits	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Better understand issues related to private standards	48%	28%	3%	0%
2	Improve my services	39%	27%	0%	0%
3	Better understand requirements of my buyers	38%	25%	6%	0%
4	Better understand requirements of consumers	32%	24%	6%	1%
5	Better make trade-policy related decisions	31%	34%	3%	0%
6	Realize additional exports	24%	13%	7%	3%
7	Improve product quality	21%	24%	4%	4%

8	Improve working conditions of my company	14%	24%	11%	1%
9	Realize additional sales	14%	21%	6%	3%
10	Improve gender quality in my organization	8%	15%	11%	6%
11	Improve the environmental impact of my company	6%	34%	4%	1%

Those who think about *other benefits* have listed:

- I believe that the comparison tools are not useful in the current climate of heightened doubt over the cost benefits of so-called voluntary standards. I think the better questions to be tackling – among others – are to see the on-the-ground impact (negative) or these marketing organizations, along with what use they provide to public safety or more sustainable trade. I see no positive effects personally. (Male, from Switzerland, working for Large Enterprise and Research)
- Obtain trends in the demand and supply of products; TMCA; identification of market opportunities; analysis of competing countries; use it as a foundational database, and comparative database.

## 6. Rating the influence of the Standards Map Tools on my work

- 34% found it **Very Positive**
- 45% users found the Tools **Positive**
- 10% found it **Somewhat Positive**
- 1% found it **Somewhat Negative**
- 10% of users did not answer this question.

In total, 89% of users found that the Standards Map Tools have positive impact on their work. Only one person found it Somewhat Negative. It's a man from Switzerland who works for a Large Enterprise and has research activities. He seems have doubt about the effect of voluntary standards in general, not specially about the impact of Standards Map Tools.

### In which working field most users appreciate Standards Map Tools?

There are 24 users rating Standards Map Very Positive and 32 users rating Positive (79% of total of users who has answered the survey). Following are the percentages of them divided by working field. 88% of development practitioners who answered the survey have found Standards Map Very Positive or Positive:

#	Working field	%
1	Development practitioner	88%
2	Consultants for private companies	86%
3	Manufacturer of non-agricultural products	80%
4	Sourcing	80%
5	Research	77%
6	Traders	75%
7	Government officials	69%
8	Wholesaling	67%
9	Producers of agricultural or fisheries products	64%



10	Retailing	60%
11	Processor of agricultural or fisheries products	56%

**For which type of employers most users appreciate Standards Map Tools?**

100% of users who work as independent, in international organisations or NGO, and in micro enterprises have found Standards Map Tools Very Positive or Positive:

#	Employer	%
1	Independent/Individual	100%
2	International Organisations	100%
3	NGO	100%
4	Micro Enterprises	100%
5	University, Research Institutes, Academic	91%
6	Trade Support Institutes	83%
7	Small Enterprises	80%
8	Large Enterprises	78%
9	Government or Mission	69%
10	Medium Enterprises	0%

