The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive in global markets, thereby contributing to sustainable economic development within the framework of the Aid-for-Trade agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

ABOUT CBI

The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) is the an Agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. CBI contributes to sustainable economic development in developing countries through the expansion of exports from these countries. This is through sustainably strengthening the competitive capacity of SME exporters and producers in developing countries, focusing mostly on European markets.

ABOUT BASIS

The Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) is the national trade body for the Software & IT Enabled Service Industry of Bangladesh. The association has more than 700 members, half of these companies export to over 40 countries worldwide. It is estimated that over 75% of Bangladeshi ICT companies have BASIS membership. BASIS is the main technical counterpart under NTF III Bangladesh and directly works with the companies of the IT & IITES industry. The TSI provides industry expertise and technical guidance to the project team.

ABOUT DCCI

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) provides very useful services for the development of business and industry in Bangladesh and counts more than 14,000 members. DCCI is the lead partner on cross-cutting topics such as entrepreneurship promotion and venture-capital related advocacy. It contributes to the implementation by disseminating information about project activities to their members and actively developing their service portfolio targeting IT & IITES companies.

For more information on project, visit www.intracen.org/itc/projects/ntf-3/bangladesh/
NTF III in Bangladesh

Building on the NTF II programme and its lessons learned, the purpose of the Netherlands Trust Fund phase III programme is to increase the income of producers and exporters in specified sectors in selected priority developing countries, including Bangladesh and its Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) industry.

In the case of this project, the intended outcome is to enhance the export competitiveness of the IT&ITES industry, and generate new export revenues for the sector. This will be achieved in coordination with CBI's Export Promotion Programme (ECP).

The project was launched in June 2014 and works with 40 selected beneficiary SMEs, as well as with the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS), and the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

The expected project results are:

- 5% more jobs created in 24 beneficiary small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- An increase of 8% in the value of IT&ITES exports as reported by participating SMEs.
- 3 new export markets entered by beneficiary enterprises.
- SMEs have met 100 new potential buyers through the project.
- The two assisted trade support institutions BASIS and DCCI report improvements in their managerial performance and/or services to SMEs.

Women in IT

The gender challenge in Bangladesh is massive. Only 13% of the workforce in the IT sector are women and only 6 out of more than 700 IT companies are led by women. NTF III Bangladesh focuses on increasing the number of women working in the Bangladeshi IT and ITES industry.

Project activities in the past included:

- Women in IT synergy workshop held in Dubai.
- PR outreach and showcasing of strong women in IT through social media and YouTube.
- Support provided to the launch of the BASIS Women’s Forum at Digital World 2015.
- Targeted training on pitching and individual advisory from a Swiss start-up coach.

The project furthermore appointed a female winner of a local start-up competition, nominated 3 Bangladeshi women leaders for ITU’s GEM-TECH Awards, and took a women delegation to ITU’s Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum in Brazil, where beneficiary women entrepreneurs had the opportunity to meet potential clients in a B2B set-up. Close linkages and learning spillovers are facilitated across similar projects in Kenya and Uganda on an ongoing basis.

OUTPUT 1: Capacity of partner TSIs in providing services to SMEs in the IT and ITES sector improved

Capabilities of two beneficiary trade support institutions, namely the Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS) and the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) are being strengthened in institutional marketing and managerial capacities. The project also capacitates Bangladeshi foreign trade representatives as “Industry Ambassadors”. Moreover, the market intelligence and research capacities of BASIS are being strengthened, building on ITUC’s and CBI’s complementary portfolios in this area.

Finally, NTF III Bangladesh reinforces the capacity of BASIS as an organization through putting in place professional management, business planning, developing business models and a performance-management system.

OUTPUT 2: Export capacities of SMEs in the IT and ITES sector improved

The project recruited 40 NTF III Bangladesh companies in selected growth segments like mobile, web and image processing. The project increases export capacities of selected enterprises through a training on how to develop export marketing plans, which has been tailored to the sector and is deployed through local trainers at the BASIS Training Institute.

Finally, the project provides training on quality-certification planning and advises them on growth strategies.

OUTPUT 3: Business linkages and technical partnerships created and/or expanded

The project, with BASIS in the lead, organizes B2B matchmaking activities in Dhaka, the UK, the Netherlands and in Denmark. It organizes international trade missions to the Bangladeshi tech fair Digital World. Strong synergies are also being sought among the three NTF III projects that focus on the IT and ITES sector, namely Bangladesh, Kenya and Uganda.