



International
Trade
Centre

TRADE IMPACT FOR GOOD

Partnerships4Purpose

Engagement Strategy



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ITC's Partnerships4Purpose Engagement Strategy¹

The nature of ITC's work demands that we invest in partnerships². To ensure greater impact, to meet demands and needs from our clients and to truly deliver in an integrated way for the SDGs, ITC will need to continue to invest in existing partners, develop future public and private sector partnerships that deliver mutual benefit, and better monitor and assess how these partnerships are delivering against the new 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. The pandemic has confirmed that global problems require global solutions. The climate crisis cannot be tackled alone, nor can the pandemic recovery. An integrated, multifaceted approach to decision-making, prioritising and implementation is required to deliver as One UN and ensure that our joint impact remains greater than the sum of its parts.

The partnership ecosystem is large and complex. Impact focused partnerships are critical to delivering in the final decade of the SDGs. Funders are looking to International Organizations to show that their resources are being leveraged to develop and scale partnerships – both financial and non-financial. The UN SG has also called for UN entities to work closer together to benefit from scale and leverage their unique strengths.

At ITC we understand that delivering on our mandate in a challenging Aid for Trade environment has to be built on partnerships. ITC has shown that it can deliver successful results with partners but to deliver on our transformational agenda and to be purpose driven in our approach there is a need to expand our reach and better identify:

- Key members of the UN family where impactful collaboration can help drive achievement of the SDGs
- Private sector actors that align with the ITC vision and where collaboration will lead to greater impact for the MSMEs and entrepreneurs we work with including as markets for goods and services from those MSMEs
- Foundations where there is scope to tap into their priorities and funding
- Regional and national actors that can serve as implementing partners for ITC's work on the ground³
- Academic institutions where we can cooperate around advocacy, research and data gathering
- Critical multilateral partners, including vertical funds

¹ This document builds on and should be read in conjunction with the ITC document 'EXPANDING SUPPORT FROM NON-TRADITIONAL FUNDERS: ENGAGING PRIVATE ACTORS' which was updated in April 2020 ITC_Business_Sector_Partnerships_Paper.pdf (itc-cci.net)

² The UN General Assembly defines partnerships as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits.”

³ This engagement strategy does not address implementing partners directly but many of the elements around partnership included in this document are relevant for identifying and working with implementing partners.

The blueprint for ITC's work for the next 4 years has been agreed to in the latest strategic plan with its focus on 5 clear impact areas:



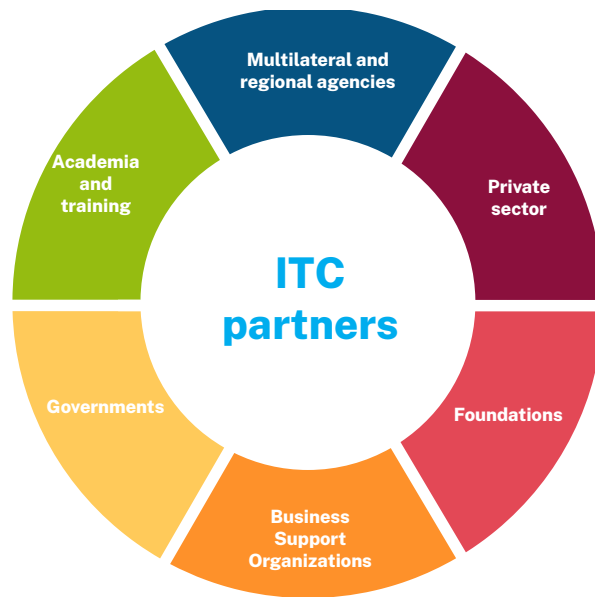
Our partnership engagement strategy moving forward must be mapped against these 5 impact areas as well as mapped against delivery towards the SDGs. This will require that we are more conscious and deliberate on the choice of partner; that we are strategic rather than just simply opportunistic; that our USP and our 'ask' is clear; that the internal processes- including legal, financial and communication- are aligned with delivering for the partnership; and that there is better corporate and team alignment on monitoring of the partnership.

This engagement strategy will support ITC colleagues to build more effective partnerships through:

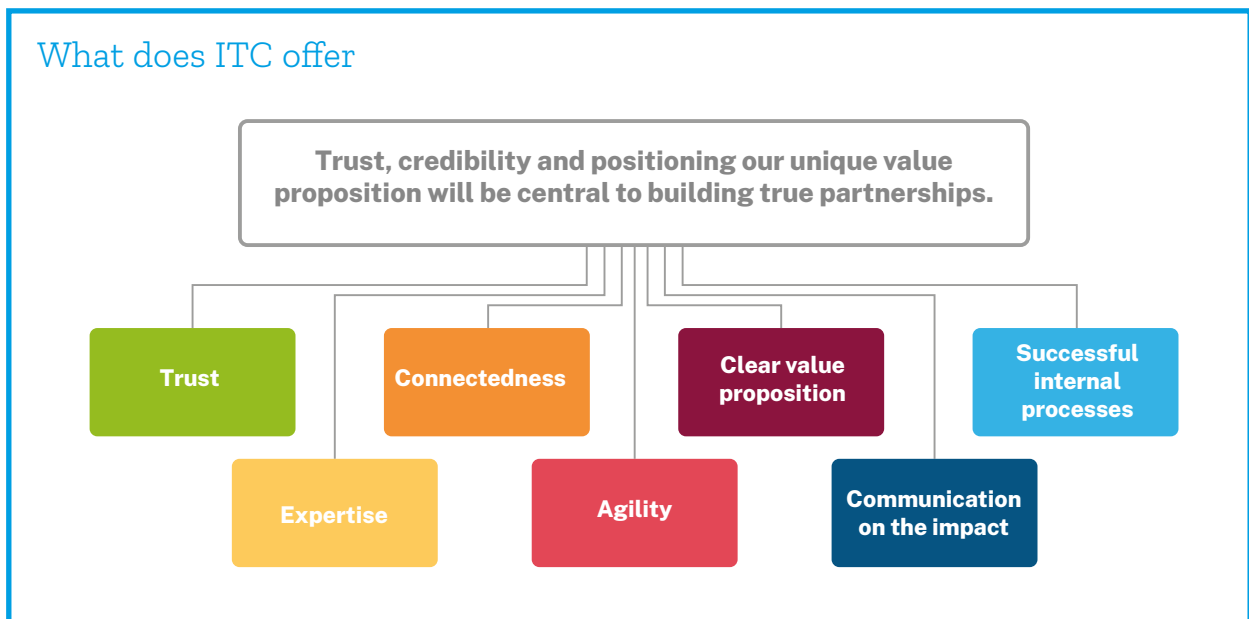


Who are our partners and how can we categorize them?

- Multilateral and Regional Organizations
- Private Sector Partners
- Government Partners
- Civil Society and Philanthropic Foundations
- Academia, Training and Research Partners
- Business Support Organizations⁴



What does ITC offer



⁴ The IE team is developing its own partnership approach to BSOs and TISIs which will be consistent with the P4P Engagement Strategy

1. Development of best practice guidance:

How Should ITC approach partnership engagement?

Engagement to be based on ITC's strategic priorities as included in the Strategic Plan

Alignment with the priorities of the partner without undermining ITC's own strategic priorities

Relationship management is key hence appointing a person or persons to be the focal point (s) and interface and coordinate both internally and with the representatives of the partner entity.

Senior management intervention matters. After the necessary desk research, mapping of shared interests, due diligence etc is done it's important to have ITC senior management engage through a formal letter; and/or meeting to show the corporate importance of the relationship.

Success depends on the partner and is about more than just receiving funds. Private sector engagement can take the form of joint advocacy (for example the work with DHL on e-commerce); in-kind contributions (for example CANVA providing pro-licenses for 500 of ITC entrepreneurs or Zoom and Google for MSME Day); training (such as from PayPal, eBay); providing markets for ITC MSMEs or entrepreneurs (for example work with ETSY and NOVICA on e-commerce or Amazon on the Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative or Chocolats Halba on Alliances for Action); joint research (for example with Huawei on e-commerce)

There is a need to learn from success. Where there has been successful development of private sector partnerships at the project level these need to be better shared and scaled up. Many projects continue to keep successes within their project level ecosystem. The Partnerships4Purpose knowledge committee is aiming to break this cycle by having more sharing of successes and 'how to'.

2. Internal processes that are fit for purpose:

What Internal mechanisms need to be in place to drive successful partnerships?

Two work streams of interest to project managers:

- streamlining of tools and processes
- creating a searchable partnerships dashboard/mart.

Suggest that a Working Group chaired by the DED, with DPS representation and the P4P knowledge community + key project staff that implement partnerships would be useful to address some of these issues

The following areas are primed for continuous improvement:

Enhance consultation between DPS and project managers/partnership leads to have Legal involved in discussions and negotiations with partner legal teams when an MOU, LOI is being developed.

Balance the internal processes for accountability/legal requirements with the aim to facilitate more non-traditional partnerships.

Continuously assess the due diligence requirements to ensure they are fit for purpose.

The partnership assessment form should be digitized with single sign-on such that partners can fill them in.

Continuously assess the average time for legal review to ensure it is proportionate to the low risk levels of non-financial engagement

The partnership assessment form should be digitized

Continuously assess and discuss with projects managers/partnership leads any new additions to MOU requirements to ensure it is facilitative of ITC and partners formalizing partnership arrangements.

Continuously assess the MOU approval process to ensure it does not have too many unnecessary layers and checkboxes.

Continuously assess the process for working with implementing partners from the private sector given the concerns raised by partnership leads especially from our in-country offices. Where necessary, a refresher on the internal process in place could be developed for those working with the private sector as implementing partners. Discussions in the P4P Knowledge community and consultations with project managers (including through a survey) have shown some disconnect between ITC internal processes around MOUs, finance and working with the private sector and there is a need to have more conversations with partnership leads in-country.

Assess need to better connect the legal instruments to financial instruments given concerns raised by partnership leads, especially in-country projects, on grant modalities, lumpsum payment request and related invoices.

Develop a section on the intranet focused on Partnerships4Purpose where the relevant documents and process can be easily accessed. The assistance of ITS will be necessary.

3. The creation of an improved culture of internal transparency around partnership building and better centralizing of information on partnerships



Two elements are being developed to address this:

- 1.) the monthly **P4P knowledge community**⁶ has gathered almost 30 persons to share, learn and cross-pollinate. This has already led to greater knowledge around partnership development and awareness of different ITC teams are doing on building and implementing partnerships
- 1.) the development of a centralised 'dashboard/mart' for project managers to report on partnerships but which also pulls from existing platforms like the NPP and the MOU database. Assistance/ resources from IT to make this searchable and digital will be necessary.

⁵ More information on this is included in Annex 1

⁶ The TOR of the Knowledge Community are in Annex 6 and the initial '10 lessons learned' coming out of the Knowledge Community discussions are in Annex 7

4. Diversification of resource mobilization and clearer focus on which entities ITC should focus: How do we DO Partnerships?

At ITC each partnership should exist for a purpose, based on complementary expertise and a mutually agreed value proposition. ITC values partners who can deliver on shared objectives, including UN agencies, the WTO, other multilateral and bilateral development agencies and an increasingly diverse range of public and private sector partners like multinationals, private sector associations, development banks, professional bodies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and foundations.

While partnerships can greatly help scale ITC's work and increase its reach, we currently approach them without much dedicated corporate coordination and from a multitude of perspectives. Several of our cooperation frameworks are through MOUs, while some are based on shared work programmes. Outreach to potential partners to-date has been largely ad hoc and opportunistic and most partnership initiatives have taken place at the project and programme level and not always grounded in a corporate approach. Going forward it would be important to ensure greater corporate guidance on partnership building while also supporting the entrepreneurial spirit of project teams who are in the drivers seat of identifying and building these partnerships.

- How do we decide on a partner?
- Who leads on partnership engagement?
- How can we leverage existing engagements?

How do we decide on a partner?



- Identify through a form of **SWOT analysis**: what are the key areas of focus of the partner against our priorities? What are the risks?
- Does this partner add value to the work of ITC, and does it align with the UN and ITC goals and values as included in the SDGs and the Strategic Plan respectively?

- Is this partner already working with other UN agencies and is it a signatory to the UN Global Compact principles?
- Undertake a risk analysis to assess if any instances of sexual harassment and exploitation; Instances of human and labour rights abuse; Environmental damage; severe condemnations/accusations made online
- Clearly define who from ITC leads on the partnership engagement
- Have, or are, other parts of ITC already working with this partner? Is this information available in the MOU database or the partnerships centralised 'dashboard'? Has this been raised in the P4P knowledge community?
- Develop a clear 'ask' linked to the Strategic Plan and ensure link between corporate priorities and project level engagement.
- What is the type of partnership aiming for: project level or project level that can scaled to other projects or corporate; advocacy partnership; in-kind partnership such as joint training or supplier diversity or offer of discounts to MSMEs; or as a funder to ITC⁷
- Identify contact person, develop an outreach letter 'template' to initiate formal interaction
- Ensure greater transparency and sharing of knowledge by reporting to the P4P knowledge Community and the partnerships 'dashboard/mart'

Who leads on partnership engagement?



The act of 'doing partnerships' cannot be centralized. But there should be centralized transparency of who is doing what-however the day-to-day act of managing and developing partnerships needs to remain with project teams and divisions.

- At the division or section level appoint a '**partnership relationship manager**' that can collate information, concerns and best practices + participate actively in the P4P knowledge community
- **Regional Desks in DCP** in consultation (transparency and info sharing) with OED/P4P work on building relationships with Regional Development Banks given that these are untapped sources of partnership
- For partnership with academic/research this may be centralized in the **Office of the Chief Economist**
- **Develop teams**, with a partnership lead, (a lead but within a larger WG of persons with technical contributions to build out the work plan as required) **to work on and monitor major corporate partnerships** in areas such as workplan development, monitoring and evaluating of the partnership and information sharing such as what has happened with the ITC/ICC WG and in the development of the ITU MOU, the UNGC LOI, the UNCDF MOU, the Commonwealth Secretariat MOU, the UNDP MOU, and the UNFPA MOU. For transparency update the P4P Knowledge Community.

⁷ Note that SheTrades defines their partners as: 1. Advocates, 2. Contributors and 3. Transformers. The Transformers are those partners that provide funding.

How can we leverage existing engagements?

Better leveraging of traditional W1 funders to support non-governmental partnerships. Tapping into Foundations, Funds and private sector actors in our traditional W1 funder countries must continue to form part of the discussion as we are building the relationship and developing funding compacts. This should also be a clear ask of the funder focal points who should lead on the research and outreach with the necessary transparency to the RM committee and the P4P knowledge community. Better leveraging our country relationships to tap into Foundations and Trust Funds will be important especially in the MENA region and in Europe especially climate related funds in Germany and Norway for example. This should form an important part of resource mobilisation strategy when discussing with W1 and W2 funders: *who do you want us to partner with in your country and can you open the door and we go in together!*

More strategic leveraging of platforms ITC already involved in platforms such as WEF, and Broadband Commission, and better leveraging partners using our tools such as Standards Map, SheTrades Outlook, EComConnect and our Global Public Goods. ITC teams to be incentivized to use these platforms to identify; massage and scale partnership opportunities not just for their projects/sections but for corporate partnership and/or other project level interventions.

Broadening our outreach: Foundations and the Private Sector



Accessing funds is notoriously challenging and many of the foundations often have priorities which are more social and health related. Foundation level trade priorities are few and far between but ITC's "MSME development" angle may have resonance for foundations. That said, they are an important potential of future resource mobilisation and measures should be put in place to better strategize on outreach around the following elements:

Identify the top Foundations and Multilateral Funds that ITC should target based on linkages with

- 1** ITC strategic plan;
- 2** priorities of the Foundation;
- 3** prior UN/ITC engagement of the Foundation or the company that has a foundation arm;
- 4** at the division level develop 'the ask' and have each regional desk recommend at least one geographically focused foundation for investment in and use their relationship management to build linkages (for example in the MENA region there are a proliferation of Foundations that we have not exploited);
- 5** have a clear relationship manager for engagement with the Foundation and Fund (such as SIVC with the climate related funds)
- 6** have a clear understanding of the requirements of accessing multilateral funds such as whether funds are channelled directly to agencies (very rare), the funding cycle or if there is a need for countries to bring partners like ITC on board to access the funds (such as with the GCF and the GEF)

5. Better communication of the outcomes and impacts of our partnerships

- Improve corporate communication to highlight partnerships by ensuring the new Corporate Communication Strategy includes a specific focus on highlighting partnerships;
- The development and launch of partnerships4purpose social media campaign¹²;
- The development and launch of partnerships4purpose digital ‘snapshots’¹³;
- The creation of Partnerships4Purpose webpage on new ITC website,
- The inclusion of best partnership development in the Innovation awards.
- Encourage all projects in house to include #Partnerships4Purpose when publicising their partnerships



¹² As part of the engagement strategy it has been agreed that from April 5 until end July every Tuesday there will be dedicated showcasing of partnerships with a clear ITC owned hashtag (#Partnerships4Purpose) and with a clear template to guide project/partnership managers including the preparation of a web story around it that can be on the new partnerships4purpose webpage. This is a pilot project.

¹³ The first of these will be SheTrades West Africa in May 2022 with a plan to feature six snapshots a year. An example of this is in Annex 6



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