

## Sustainability Review of the ITC project

# “Operational Management of Export Support Programmes” (MOPSE)

Sustainability, lessons and recommendations

December 2024

### HIGHLIGHTS

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- The MOPSE project **contributed positively to the sustainability** of country and regional export ecosystems for those Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) that participated in its activities.
- Generally, ITC’s **ongoing engagement with Business Support Organizations (BSO)**, including TPOs, **increases the likelihood of sustainability** of the value addition of specific time-limited projects
- MOPSE workshops and meetings for peer-to-peer **TPO networking and mutual exchange of information** were a key determinant of the project’s **value and contributor over time of export systems capacity**.
- The MOPSE project contributed **effectively and sustainably to strengthening the internal organization of TPOs** to better support export SMEs and have a **multiplier effect on export ecosystems**.
- The MOPSE project’s design, principles, tools, methods and its technical assistance to individual TPOs, together with ITC’s ongoing involvement have had a **positive overall impact on export ecosystems**.
- A **major impact** of the MOPSE project was the development of a **networking practice** between TPOs that led to formalized relationships through agreements and mutual exchanges to promote exports.
- **Effective coordination** between ITC interventions, and external financing and technical assistance partners more generally, **improves their quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and their sustainability**.
- ITC’s **integrated approach** to project design appears prima facie fit for the purpose of strengthening the **role of BSOs as legacy partners** for ITC projects.
- ITC should assess how well it **communicates the overall value of its work**.
- ITC may wish to follow up on the **need identified by TPOs and BSOs** to develop their **services exports**.

# I. Background & Methodology

## INTRODUCTION

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For ITC's work to have lasting value for those trade communities it supports, its results should be sustainable. Sustainability is however rarely systematically assessed after projects have ended. To do so, the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) has developed an innovative approach to assess the sustainability of the accomplishments of ITC projects a few years after their completion.

In 2020, the IEU piloted this approach with three projects and identified limitations, lessons learned, and recommendations for improving the sustainability review methodology. In 2021, the IEU in partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) successfully conducted sustainability reviews of two ITC-EIF projects: "Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism in Tanzania"<sup>1</sup> and "Improving the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos"<sup>2</sup>.

Building on these successful reviews, the IEU undertook in 2022 the sustainability review of the ITC Trade Development Strategies Programme<sup>3</sup>, by conducting reviews in three countries in which ITC had supported the development of export strategies, namely Saint Lucia, Burkina Faso and Sri Lanka. The 2022 Sustainability Review sharpened the conceptual framing of sustainability by adding an institutional dimension to those of organizations and systems. As well, an updated review of the literature on sustainability, its foundations and conceptual evolution, provided a current basis for developing the following definition:

"Sustainability is a function of the ability of organizations, institutions and networks to effectively navigate changes in contexts over time, to maintain and increase value for populations, with a focus on rights holders and duty bearers. Organizations include businesses, business support organizations, civil society organizations, external financing organizations, research organizations, etc. Institutions are government entities in the executive, legislative and judicial spheres. Networks are functional relationships between organizations, institutions and networks, formal and informal, that are established or coalesce around sectors, themes, issues, goals, etc."<sup>4</sup>

The present Sustainability Review 2024 of the MOPSE project builds on the progressive improvements to the previous reviews and, as such, incorporates their lessons, recommendations and methodological refinements.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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ITC and Business France<sup>5</sup> jointly implemented a capacity-building project for 21 selected trade promotion organizations (TPO) in sub-Saharan Africa, funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD) with a budget of USD 1.6 million. The objective was to improve the effectiveness of the export support activities of the TPOs by strengthening their operational management processes, from strategic objectives to action plans, key performance indicators, monitoring and reporting.

The project "Operational Management of Export Support Programmes" was structured as follows:

- April 2018: Call for applications and selection of the 21 TPOs based on their absorption and commitment capacity.
- May – December 2018: Training in the concepts and methods of leadership action planning and programming by objectives, and development of action plans.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://intracen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sustainability%20Review%202021%20-%20Tanzania.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://intracen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sustainability%20Review%202021%20-%20Senegal.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.intracen.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Sustainability%20Review%202022%20-%20Final%20for%20publication.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ian C. Davies, Credentialed Evaluator - 2022

<sup>5</sup> Business France is a French government agency that is responsible for supporting the international development of the French economy. The agency was created in 2015 as a result of the merger of two previous organizations: Ubifrance and the Invest in France Agency. Business France provides a range of services to help French companies expand their operations abroad, including market studies, trade show participation, and assistance with establishing a presence in foreign markets. The agency also works to promote France as a destination for foreign investment and provides support to foreign companies looking to invest in France. In addition to its headquarters in Paris, Business France has a network of offices in over 70 countries around the world, including in major markets such as the United States, China, India, and Brazil. The agency's mission is to help French companies grow their businesses internationally, while also creating jobs and contributing to economic growth in France.

- January – December 2019: Implementation of Leadership action plan and Export promotion action plan in each TPO; monitoring of implementation by the ITC-Business France team; preparation of 2020 plans; final evaluation of project results at the end of 2019.
- A one-day workshop for the TPO CEOs took place in October 2018 during the World Trade Promotion Organization (WTPO) meeting.<sup>6</sup>

A total of 13 collective events were organized, including 12 in regional or linguistic groups in Africa (Nairobi, Johannesburg, Accra, Lagos, Cotonou, Dakar, Zanzibar, Abidjan, Douala, Kampala, Conakry, Freetown) and a plenary in Paris (plus WTPO Accra planned for autumn 2020 outside MOPSE), supplemented by 10 individual technical support missions to 15 beneficiary agencies.

In parallel with training and coaching on operational management, the MOPSE project included the feasibility study of a corporate volunteering initiative called “African Talent International”, inspired by the French Volunteer for International Experience (VIE) scheme.

An internal final evaluation of the MOPSE project, carried out between December 2019 and February 2020, assessed each of the participating TPOs in terms of their technical capacities for planning and implementing an Export Promotion Action Plan for SMEs as well as their capacities for organizational management. Based on a self-evaluation questionnaire sent to and completed by the 21 participating TPOs as well as the review of documentation produced by each TPO, the evaluation concludes that the project has been beneficial for all participating agencies, with different levels of impact as follows:

- Proven positive impact: eight TPOs (38%): South Africa, Gabon, Ghana, Guinée, Nigeria, Uganda, Sénégal, Zimbabwe.
- Positive impact to be confirmed: seven TPOs (33%): Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia.
- Limited impact: four TPOs (19%): Benin, Cameroon, Mali, Sierra Leone.
- Weak impact: two TPOs (10%): Niger, Tchad.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.intracen.org/news-and-events/events/world-trade-promotion-organizations-conference-and-awards>

## METHODOLOGY

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The purpose of this sustainability review of the MOPSE project was to identify good practices and generate knowledge for future work in this area.

The review considered four key dimensions:

- **Value-addition:** What was the value of the MOPSE project and how has it been sustained up to now?
- **Outcomes:** How did the MOPSE project strengthen capacities of TPOs?
- **Impact:** What effects did the MOPSE project have on national and regional export ecosystems?
- **Context:** What key contextual factors affected the MOPSE project and its effects over time?

### Approach

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To understand and learn from the MOPSE project's sustainability, the review used a systems approach to:

- Understand how MOPSE activities translated into actions.
- Find out whether and how, gains in systems capacity have been sustained.
- Find out whether and how the MOPSE project contributed, i.e., added value, to national and regional export ecosystems.
- Find out whether and how MOPSE activities, through its targeted TPOs, contributed to a multiplier effect of ITC's work.
- Provide forward looking insights for building-in to future ITC initiatives, including their conception, implementation and evaluation, meaningful and actionable considerations of sustainability.

### Scope

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This review focuses on the sustainability of MOPSE benefits and ITC ongoing support in two country TPOs: Guinea and Zimbabwe. The review does not assess or evaluate per se the MOPSE project and activities that took place, nor of the performance of ITC. The review does not assess the performance of stakeholders, individuals or the policies of government.

### Design

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The review used a descriptive multiple case study design using a systems construct. In simple terms, identifying and understanding the inter-relationships between interventions, results and contexts, and their evolution over time (from project completion to present). This design allows for an analysis of value over time, i.e., the sustainability, of project contribution to export systems capacity.

### Limitations

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The main limitations faced by the review were:

- Since resources were not allocated in the project document or the ITC-AFD financial agreement for post-project follow-up data collection and sustainability result measurement, there was limited availability of data to inform the sustainability review after the project ended in 2019.
- The postponement to 2025 of the 2024 WTPO forum that had been initially included in the review's planning as a source of information from the broader population of MOPSE TPO participants.

## II. Sustainability, Lessons & Recommendations

### SUSTAINABILITY

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The review concludes that, overall, the MOPSE project contributed positively to the sustainability of country and regional export ecosystems for those TPOs that participated in its activities.

The review further concludes that the extent to which the value of the MOPSE project was sustained is a function of TPOs' organizational capacity at the time of the project, of national export systems' resilience and ability to navigate effectively changes in context, and to ITC's ability to support these systems.

The review estimates that the project "Operational Management of Export Support Programmes" (MOPSE), carried out by ITC in conjunction with Business France, contributed, to varying degrees, to improving individual capabilities of participants and organizational capacities of TPOs, for approximately two-thirds of those enrolled in the project.

The review confirms that the likelihood of sustainability of results and value over time is increased significantly by a priority focus on networking among peers.

### VALUE ADDITION

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*What was the value of the MOPSE project and how has it been sustained up to now?*

The review considers that the opportunities created by the MOPSE workshops and meetings for peer-to-peer TPO networking and mutual exchange of information were a key determinant of the project's value and contributor over time of export systems capacity, nationally and regionally.

This is exemplified by ZimTrade, the TPO for Zimbabwe, which subsequently entered into agreements and engaged with other TPOs in its region to mutually benefit their national and regional export ecosystems.

The complementarity between the approaches and related expertise of ITC on one hand, i.e., global, regional and national export systems knowledge, and Business France on the other, i.e., export promotion and investment specialization, provided TPOs with actionable tools to strengthen and integrate both their organizations' and their export ecosystems' performance.

This partnership model with Business France as implementing partner provided consistent value to TPOs across linguistic groupings as well as networking capital across the range of beneficiary countries. The partnership added value to ITC's knowledge portfolio, reach and established credibility, while reciprocally ITC added depth to the project by way of its analytical resources and familiarity with national and regional contexts due to its ongoing engagement with TPOs.

By providing TPOs with a set of well-structured operational management tools such as Export Promotion Action Plans, Leadership Action Plans, performance measurement techniques such as benchmarking, etc., and with organization-specific technical follow up to support their implementation<sup>7</sup>, the MOPSE project effectively embedded sustainable operational management practices in the organizations' functioning.

The extent to which TPOs can integrate MOPSE tools and approaches into their day-to-day operations is however proportional to their level of organizational development and institutional support they are provided with, e.g., enabling legislation, reliable funding, government policy, etc. These factors are also key determinants of a TPO's resilience to changes in context that may negatively affect their performance and that of the export ecosystems they are a part of, i.e., external shocks.

ITC's ongoing commitment to working with Business Support Organizations (BSO) more generally, including TPOs, is key to increasing the likelihood of sustainability of the value addition of specific time-limited projects.

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<sup>7</sup> Individual onsite technical assistance was provided to 15 TPOs.

## OUTCOMES

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### *How did the MOPSE project strengthen capacities of TPOs?*

The MOPSE project improved the capacities of TPOs by strengthening their internal management systems and practices, and by integrating into these a programming-by-objectives approach to develop and update export promotion action plans.

A key requirement for selection of TPO's into the MOPSE project was the full commitment and participation of the organization's management, from the CEO through to executive management functions such as export promotion, market development, operations, finance, etc.

Despite changes in individual participation over the course of the MOPSE workshops due to staff turnover in TPOs, this functional commitment contributed both to management efficiency, by using a common frame of reference for performance, and to the sustainability of these organizational improvements after the MOPSE project ended.

The Leadership Action Plan (LAP) prepared at the start of the MOPSE project consisted in a self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each TPO using ITC's Comparative Analysis (Benchmarking) method, which was then applied as a baseline against which to correct structural weaknesses, including in governance, internal organization, resources and procedures, products and services, as well as monitoring and evaluation of performance.

The LAP supported each TPO to develop a Strategic Plan outline designed and reviewed by the ITC and Business France team. In the case of AGUIPEX for example, the outline led to the development of its Strategic Plan 2019-2024, which was validated by the Ministry of Commerce and AGUIPEX partners.

By systematically addressing identified areas for improvement, the tools and methods proposed by MOPSE such as programming-by-objectives, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), customer segmentation, etc., contributed to the effectiveness of TPOs through the implementation of action plans to support export SMEs and monitor performance.

The review concludes that the MOPSE project has contributed effectively and sustainably to strengthening the internal organization and performance of TPOs, particularly in programming their activities to better support export SMEs and have a multiplier effect on national and regional export ecosystems. Of note, the CEOs of AGUIPEX and of ZimTrade, both confirmed the soundness and sustainability of the principles and working methods imparted by the MOPSE workshop.

The review also notes that the tools and reports made available by the MOPSE project to TPOs had a positive effect on their relationships and credibility with their supervisory and funding authorities as they were better able to present practical and realistic value propositions to them.

## IMPACT

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### *What effects did the MOPSE project have on national and regional export ecosystems?*

The review concludes that the MOPSE project's design, principles, tools, methods, its targeted technical assistance to individual TPOs, together with ITC's ongoing involvement with, and support to, export ecosystems, have had a positive overall impact on national and regional export ecosystems.

While it is difficult to attribute growth, or decrease, in exports directly to activities of the MOPSE project, its positive contributions to institutional, organizational and network capacities of export ecosystems, have a reasonable likelihood of carrying through to export growth.

The review concludes that a major impact of the MOPSE project was the development of a networking practice between African TPOs, half English-speaking and half French-speaking, which knew little about each other at the outset, and that led to formalized relationships through agreements and mutual exchanges to promote exports.

The review confirms that, in the case of the two country case studies and as anticipated by MOPSE, personal relationships between managers and exchanges of good practices between technical executives have continued since the end of the project.

More specifically, the MOPSE project can be considered to have had a positive overall impact on national and regional export ecosystems by contributing, among others, to the following:

**1) Organizational capacity** can be understood as the ability of an organization to realize its mission by managing well its resources to achieve good performance. A necessary, but not sufficient, enabling condition for performance is a governance and executive framework that provides strategic direction and priority setting.

The MOPSE project provided TPOs with a comprehensive approach and frame of reference to address key organizational functions of governance, e.g., setting direction, exercising oversight and due diligence, representing key stakeholders; executive management, e.g., organizational leadership, strategy, priority setting, accountability; operational management, e.g., export development and promotion, customer relations, performance monitoring and reporting, communication; etc.

**2) Institutional capacity** can be understood as the legislative and executive framework of government and its public administration, which include instruments such as legislation, policy, national budget, accountability provisions and national plans.

The MOPSE project's structured and systematic approach focused on the relationship between TPOs and supervisory authorities on at least at two key points: the Leadership Action Plan and Export Promotion Action Plan. Through these, and as a consistent theme throughout the workshops, TPOs were provided with content and practical ways to make a credible case to governments, supervisory authorities and funders, for export-supporting policy and regulatory frameworks, political support, as well as establishing and/or consolidating legitimacy and credibility of TPOs.

**3) Systems capacity** can be thought of as the networks of inter-connections between actors in the export trade development universe that provide opportunities for exchanges of information, data, perspectives and ideas. These networks seek to transfer and share knowledge, identify salient issues and priorities for action, catalyze and organize, influence and act, and facilitate adaptation to changing environments and contexts.

Beyond the networking generated by MOPSE and sustained by TPOs, as outlined for the case study countries, the review notes the sustained impact of the feasibility study on the project "Talents Africains à l'International", financed through MOPSE and shared with UEMOA participant countries through four "Ateliers de restitution" that took place in December 2018. The initial pilot project in Bénin, Burkina-Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Sénégal is currently being evaluated with a view to its formal establishment.<sup>8</sup>

BSOs, including TPOs, can be legacy partners, i.e., contribute to sustainability over time of project value creation and addition, their effectiveness in this respect being a function of their organizational capacity and engagement with export trade development networks, i.e., systems capacity.

ITC's integrated approach to project design appears prima facie fit for the purpose of strengthening the role of BSOs as legacy partners for ITC projects to the conditional extent that it integrates and maintains an active focus on government policies, BSO organizational practices and institutional resource flows.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.uemoa.int/actualites/evaluation-de-la-phase-pilote-du-projet-talents-africains-international-tai>

<sup>9</sup> Please see the Six Condition of Systems Change in The Water of System Change by John Kania, Mark Kramer, Peter Senge – Harvard Business School Publication (2018) - <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=60908>

## CONTEXT

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*What key contextual factors affected the MOPSE project and its effects over time?*

The COVID-19 pandemic was a major negative factor for export ecosystems including TPOs. The impacts varied across TPOs as their ability to continue to operate during the period was a function of their relative organizational strength, nature and duration of restrictions, as well as broader social, political and economic features of their environments.

The extent to which these impacts affected the resilience of TPOs, and hence the sustainability of MOPSE benefits, would appear proportional to the level of organizational strength, for example comparing “bounce back” between the cases of Guinea and of Zimbabwe, however resilience and sustainability cannot be dissociated from the contexts specific to each TPO.

## LESSONS<sup>10</sup>

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Overall, the review confirms that sustainability is largely dependent on context and the ability of systems, i.e., institutions, organizations and networks, to navigate changes over time to build on achievements and add value. Sustainability requires a systematic and sustained focus on organizational, institutional and network capacity, and on readiness for dealing with external shocks.

Although typically a project has a specific focus and allocation of resources over a limited period, the sustainability of its benefits is a function of systems capacity. ITC programmes and projects address institutions, organizations and networks, and in doing so contribute to strengthened systems capacity which in turn increases the likelihood of sustainability over time.

The likelihood of sustainability is also a function of synergy between systems to effectively navigate changes in context over time to maintain and increase the benefits and value of interventions in the public interest.

Effective coordination between ITC interventions, as well as between external financing and technical assistance partners more generally, improves their quality, efficiency and effectiveness, and increases the likelihood that their benefits and value will be sustained.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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ITC “capacity-building” projects and programmes should at their outset distinguish clearly between individual capabilities, institutional capacity, organizational capacity and network capacity, and the overall capacity of the export ecosystem to navigate changing contexts to sustain the benefits of interventions and create value.

Much of ITC’s work addresses each of these dimensions, and more, in different ways and at different times. ITC should assess how well it communicates the overall value of its work, including systematically identifying and monitoring how and in what contexts synergies are realized, and what is or can be done to sustain them.

Although results frameworks and their associated monitoring have their use, an integrative systems approach (which includes the former) is better suited to capturing, understanding and communicating the full value of ITC’s interventions.

Review respondents identified the need to develop their services exports and to build the required capacities. ITC may wish to follow up on this expressed TPO and BSO interest.

ITC should consider targeted capacity-building support to the six TPOs with “limited and weak impact” as identified by the evaluation of the MOPSE project, with a focus on capacities to access and generate government funding based on MOPSE tools.

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<sup>10</sup> High-quality lessons learned represent principles from multiple sources and independently cross-referenced as cumulative knowledge that can be adapted and applied to new situations. A lesson becomes a “lesson learned” when put into practice behaviorally. Lessons are cognitive. Lessons learned are behavioral (Dr. Michael Quinn Patton).



## III. Country Case Studies

### Guinea

“Without MOPSE we wouldn’t be where we are today”.

#### BACKGROUND

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This country case study report on the sustainability review for Guinea draws on a systematic analysis of the MOPSE documentation provided by ITC relevant to the Trade and Promotion Organization (TPO) of the Republic of Guinea, as well as information gathered through onsite interviews, meetings and observations during a mission to Conakry by the reviewer which took place from November 4 to 12, 2024.

The Agence Guinéenne de Promotion des Exportations<sup>11</sup> (AGUIPEX), is the Trade and Promotion Organization (TPO) of the Republic of Guinea and the focus of this country case study.

In its current form, AGUIPEX was officially created by decree on April 18, 2019, although prior to its officialization by the government of Guinea, it had sent representatives to the first four MOPSE workshops from June 2018 to March 2019. As such, AGUIPEX participated fully in the MOPSE project as its representatives attended the entire suite of six workshops at the core the project.

It should be noted however that different representatives attended different workshops due to changes in the executive staff of AGUIPEX, and more significantly two Director Generals and one Interim over the period during which the MOPSE workshops were organized.

Since the end of the MOPSE project there have been additional changes in the executive suite including two Director Generals and one Interim, for a total of four Directors General and two Interims from the start of the project to the time of this review. The latest change took place during the reviewer’s mission to Guinea when the current Director General was appointed on November 5, 2024.

#### FINDINGS

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##### Value-addition

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From the perspective of review respondents, the MOPSE project provided value by increasing the planning and operational management capabilities of the AGUIPEX staff, including its executives, who participated in the MOPSE workshops. This was the overall objective of the project and, as such, and consistent with the evaluations that have been conducted, MOPSE can be considered to have been successful for developing the capacities of AGUIPEX.

The project made available to the organization a functional frame of reference for its operations that did not exist beforehand and which, although not entirely integrated and maintained over time, is still used as the basis for managing, planning and reporting on its activities. This was reiterated and reinforced by the newly appointed Director General of AGUIPEX at the time the mission took place.

The project gave the leadership of AGUIPEX a knowledge-informed basis and compelling narrative with which to approach government and establish its institutional mandate, authorities and legal foundation, which it did successfully.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://aguipe.gov.gn/>

The formalization of the mandate of AGUIPEX as Guinea's only government-sanctioned export promotion agency, established its role and credibility as Guinea's premier export trade and promotion organization in the national, regional and international trade ecosystems, including with external financing partners.

Furthermore, the opportunities for networking with other TPOs due to the MOPSE project, contributed to AGUIPEX's engagement with the ECOWAS Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Network<sup>12</sup>, and its subsequent role as chair of the ECOWAS TPO Network Technical Committee on Trade Promotion Events.

These realities have placed AGUIPEX, and the government of Guinea, in a central position to participate in, and benefit from, the ECOWAS Regional Implementation Strategy for the Agreement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Overall, MOPSE has made a lasting contribution by raising the profile and credibility of AGUIPEX, and affecting positively Guinea's capacity for trade.

## Outcomes

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The MOPSE workshops provided AGUIPEX with the opportunity to develop in a practical, sequential and expert-supported manner a set of operational management tools to structure and strengthen its organizational functions and processes.

Starting with a workshop that included a self-evaluation and diagnosis of its organization and introduced basic performance processes and tools such as benchmarking, key performance indicators and leadership planning, subsequent workshops supported AGUIPEX in developing its strategic plan of action, and with the accompaniment of ITC and Business France, begin to use these tools to manage its operations.

A key output of the MOPSE workshops was the Leadership Action Plan (Plan d'Action de Leadership) that the new and now current Executive Director AGUIPEX was responsible for before his nomination as Directeur National du Commerce Extérieur et de la Compétitivité. This Leadership Action Plan led to the development in 2019 of the first Strategic Plan for AGUIPEX with ITC technical support. This strategy was updated in 2022 in partnership with ITC.

These training and capacity-building supports enabled AGUIPEX to pilot its first Export Promotion Action Plan (EPAP) activity to systematically inventory and segment the enterprises it worked with into five market categories for improved targeting. The portfolio of services was adapted to each of the five segments which, among other things, contributed to increasing the number of enterprises from about sixty at the time of MOPSE to approximately 215 export companies today.

The EPAP led to establishing a file for each client that could be followed up on and updated regularly. As a result of the MOPSE training the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was initiated in 2021 but however was not maintained.

During a meeting with the executive of AGUIPEX as part of this review's mission activities, the new Director General instructed his Directors to proceed with re-establishing a CRM system.

The group work, meetings and networking spaces of the MOPSE project provided AGUIPEX with opportunities to learn more from French speaking TPOs about the "Réseau des Organismes de Promotion du Commerce des Etats membres de l'UEMOA (ROPC/UEMOA)"<sup>13</sup> and contributed to AGUIPEX joining the network of TPOs of ECOWAS and to subsequently take on the presidency of the Event Organization Committee.<sup>14, 15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://old22.ecowas.int/ecowas-trade-promotion-organization-tpo-network-holds-its-4th-consultative-meeting-in-preparation-for-its-2nd-agm/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uemoa.int/actualites/assemblee-generale-du-reseau-des-organismes-de-promotion-du-commerce-des-etats-membres>

<sup>14</sup> <https://old22.ecowas.int/le-reseau-des-organisations-de-promotion-du-commerce-opc-de-la-cedeao-tient-sa-4eme-reunion-consultative-en-preparation-de-sa-2eme-aga/?lang=fr>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.leral.net/OPC-de-la-CEDEAO-Modou-Mbene-Gueye-reelu-a-la-tete-du-Reseau\\_a371467.html](https://www.leral.net/OPC-de-la-CEDEAO-Modou-Mbene-Gueye-reelu-a-la-tete-du-Reseau_a371467.html)

## Impact

AGUIPEX considers that improvements in the performance of its operations, to which MOPSE contributed, have had a positive effect on export growth in Guinea, particularly for the agricultural export value chain, however, it is difficult to measure the specific impact of the MOPSE project on export growth.

However, because MOPSE contributed to the establishment of AGUIPEX as Guinea’s official TPO with legal authority to certify certain exports, its revenues are generated through levies for certification on three agricultural export value chains: coffee, cacao and cashew nuts. These go into a fund managed by AGUIPEX, that pays for its operations and for activities to support the development of export value chains.

The fund accounts for 90 to 100% of AGUIPEX’s budget annually depending on whether it receives additional funding from government through the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and SMEs (Ministère du Commerce, de l’Industrie et des PME) When there is additional financial support from government AGUIPEX uses it to expand its portfolio of support services and to test innovative approaches to unlock the potential of new export sectors.

SUCSESSES	CHALLENGES
<p>Official establishment of AGUIPEX by Decree</p> <p>Increased visibility and credibility of AGUIPEX</p> <p>Stable revenue stream from levies on export certification</p> <p>Increase in number of exporters served</p> <p>Focused diversity of export products through market segmentation</p> <p>Engagement in network of TPOs of ECOWAS</p> <p>Positioning in ECOWAS Regional Implementation Strategy for the Agreement of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)</p> <p>Participation in OSAKA EXPO 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing expert accompaniment &amp; coaching is required to operationalize and integrate MOPSE tools</p> <p>IT systems and tools should be updated &amp; corresponding specialized human resources retained</p> <p>Intended organizational reform, including diagnosis, change management plan and implementation, should be accompanied by appropriate expertise</p> <p>Overall, ongoing support is required for AGUIPEX to develop to the point of organizational maturity and stability.</p>

## Context

Two contextual factors stand out as having had a significant effect on the operations of AGUIPEX: Covid 19 and the change of government on September 5, 2021.

In the first instance, the pandemic caused a reduction in productivity for AGUIPEX, as export promotion activities were cancelled, exports fell dramatically and restrictions on meetings and movement put its operations into a holding pattern. The state of emergency that was declared during the pandemic (“état d’urgence”) was kept in place and enforced until shortly after the change of government in September 2021.

The effects of the pandemic-related restrictions were further compounded by the fact that AGUIPEX did not have a formally appointed DG from early 2021 through to March 2022, effectively putting the operations of AGUIPEX into maintenance mode for over two years.

## **Additional observations**

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The new and recently appointed Director General is intimately familiar with AGUIPEX and its operations, having worked for the precursor to AGUIPEX from 2016 to 2018 as “Chargé de l'Enregistrement des Exportateurs”. He participated actively in MOPSE as the substitute focal point from October 2018 to February 2019, attending four of the six workshops. Prior to his recent appointment he was « Directeur National du Commerce Extérieur et de la Compétitivité », for the « Ministère du Commerce de l'Industrie et des PME », capping nine years of executive roles in the ministry.

He has undertaken an organizational assessment with a view to make a significant organizational reform supported by a change management plan and with the technical assistance of experts in organizational development. He is the Commissioner for Guinea's participation in the 2025 Osaka International Exposition.

# Zimbabwe

“ZimTrade’s mission: To develop and catalyze sustainable competitive value enriched exports.”

## BACKGROUND

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This report on ZimTrade<sup>16</sup>, the Trade and Promotion Organization (TPO) of the Republic of Zimbabwe, is informed by a mission by the reviewer to Harare, which took place from November 16 to 24, 2024, and during which data were collected through meetings, observations, visits to exporters and attendance at a business forum<sup>17</sup> organized by ZimTrade. This country case study report also draws on ITC documentation relevant to ZimTrade and to the MOPSE project.

ZimTrade is a well-established TPO in Zimbabwe since 1991, created to promote and develop international trade in Zimbabwe, and to assist local businesses strengthen their export capabilities and access global markets. It is an experienced trade promotion organization in Zimbabwe, with a strong focus on performance management and regional collaboration.

ZimTrade's total annual budget is approximately \$4.5 million USD. Most of its funding, around 90%, comes from a 0.01% Trade Development Surcharge (TDS) levied on selected exports and imports, excluding minerals and energy, cotton and raw/unmanufactured tobacco, while 5% is from a government grant worth about \$350,000 USD per year. The rest of the funding is from Development Cooperation Partners (DCPs).

One of the key features of ZimTrade is its organizational stability, highlighted among other things by the fact that the current CEO has been in place since 2018. Each of the MOPSE workshops was attended by either the current CEO and/or the current Export Promotion Manager.

ZimTrade’s stability, reflected in the consistency of its participation in the MOPSE project, together with the fact that it bears the hallmarks of a well-performing organization, including a well-developed performance monitoring system, provide an exemplar of how a TPO can act as a multiplier of ITC’s work, scaling up the export value chain and scaling across the export ecosystem to achieve its mission and value proposition.

Of note is ZimTrade’s range of coverage of businesses in its export ecosystem as was showcased by meetings and discussions during the mission with both a larger and established global export player and a smaller youth-led export start up.

## FINDINGS

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### Value-addition

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According to ZimTrade a key value addition of its participation in the MOPSE project was generated through the opportunities it provided to network with other participant countries’ TPOs. These MOPSE fora translated, among other things, to ZimTrade signing several Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with counterparts in Rwanda, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, and Mozambique, to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing.

These agreements were operationalized through activities such as reciprocal learning exchanges, as well as professional development visits to ZimTrade by TPO colleagues from Malawi and Namibia that highlighted the importance of practical benchmarking and knowledge sharing through joint site visits and workshops.

ZimTrade’s Export Development Department highlighted the importance of networking and value creation in achieving export readiness and success. The partnerships and MOUs established through the MOPSE project facilitated greater regional collaboration and knowledge sharing between ZimTrade and its counterparts. This has allowed ZimTrade to learn from the experiences of other TPOs and explore potential areas of cooperation.

<sup>16</sup> <https://tradezimbabwe.com/>

<sup>17</sup> Zimbabwe-China Business Forum – November 20, 2024 - Hyatt Regency Meikles Hotel, Harare, Zimbabwe

The tools presented in the MOPSE workshops were seen as valuable by ZimTrade, as they helped the organization refine its Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, as the initial one introduced was too complicated, and incorporate relevant elements from the Export Promotion Action Plan (EPAP) framework into its strategic planning and performance measurement. While the MOPSE project was a one-size-fits-all approach, ZimTrade customized and adapted the tools and learnings to fit its own organizational context and needs.

ZimTrade considers ITC's involvement as an added value in co-creating training programmes, providing frameworks for organizational improvement, and building its capacity to deliver effective, industry-relevant training. This collaboration is considered instrumental in strengthening the organization's export readiness initiatives. Highlights include:

- Co-development of the flagship "Marketing and Branding for International Competitiveness" training programme: ITC worked with the department to develop this 13-module programme, which covers critical areas for export readiness.
- Benchmarking and performance improvement: The department utilized ITC's performance improvement roadmap, which includes benchmarking exercises and a dashboard to measure organizational performance. This helped the organization integrate best practices and continuously improve its initiatives.
- Training of trainers: ITC, along with a consultant, provided the training of trainers programme that enabled the organization to develop a pool of industry-based associate trainers for its programmes.
- Feedback and content validation: The department worked closely with ITC to validate the training content based on feedback from clients and trainers, ensuring the programmes remained relevant and practical.

## Outcomes

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ZimTrade identified the following key outcomes of the MOPSE workshops:

- Client Relationship Management (CRM) System: The initial CRM system introduced through MOPSE was too complicated and not user-friendly for ZimTrade's staff. This prompted ZimTrade to later develop a more customized and simplified CRM system that better fits their needs and processes.
- Export Promotion Action Plan (EPAP): While ZimTrade already had a strategy in place, the EPAP framework from the MOPSE workshops helped them incorporate new elements into their strategy, such as export readiness assessments and the cluster development programme. They were able to borrow and adapt relevant parts of the EPAP to align with their own strategic priorities.
- Performance Measurement: The MOPSE workshops highlighted the importance of robust performance measurement systems. This reinforced ZimTrade's efforts to have well-defined KPIs, quarterly reviews, and a dedicated performance and risk manager to monitor progress.
- Networking and Collaboration: The MOPSE workshops facilitated connections between ZimTrade and other TPOs in the region. This led ZimTrade to sign several new MoUs and engage in knowledge sharing and benchmarking visits with counterparts in countries like Malawi and Namibia.

Overall, the MOPSE project helped ZimTrade refine its internal systems and processes, while also expanding its regional collaboration and learning from the experiences of other trade promotion organizations.

ZimTrade considers that the MOPSE workshops were a valuable exercise, highlighting the usefulness of tools such as the EPAP and the CRM. While it had already a strong leadership function, organizational strategy and strategic planning process, some specific topics such as benchmarking and key performance indicators provided ZimTrade with a reference against which to review and update where useful its performance framework.

ZimTrade recognizes the importance of having a well-defined strategy and quality data to manage its implementation. For example, it uses a quarterly dashboard and reports, showcasing key performance

indicators and export growth. These data feed into the implementation of strategies (currently from 2021 to 2025). Keeping track of market trends and changes is essential for providing quality market services, and ZimTrade has a dedicated market intelligence officer. A dedicated manager for performance and risk is in place, producing monthly monitoring and evaluation reports.

## Impact

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ZimTrade has introduced a few new programmes to promote inclusive growth and support exporters:

- Clusters programme: ZimTrade developed clusters in each province to group smaller producers together so they can export collectively, rather than as individual exporters. They have taken these cluster groups to trade fairs in Germany, China, and Dubai to help them market their products.
- "Eagles Nest" programme: This is a competition and incubation programme for youth entrepreneurs. For this ZimTrade won an award in 2022 from the WTPO Network Awards programme managed by ITC.
- "Next She Exporter" programme: This is a yearly mentorship programme specifically targeted at women exporters. It aims to build the capacity and export readiness of women-led businesses.

ZimTrade sees these new programmes as important initiatives to promote inclusive growth and support different segments of exporters, including youth, women, and smaller producers. The programmes provide training, mentorship, and opportunities for the participants to showcase and market their products. The clustering approach in particular is meant to help smaller players access export markets more effectively. ZimTrade is actively running and promoting these new initiatives to foster a more diverse and dynamic export ecosystem in Zimbabwe.

ZimTrade currently has one active short-term project with ITC: Capacity-Building and Market Information for Essential Oils. This project is in partnership with the UK Department for International Trade and involves training and capacity-building activities related to the essential oils sector.

ZimTrade has partnered with several organizations both within Zimbabwe and in the region:

- Domestic Partnerships with local Business Membership Organizations: Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC), Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA), Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA).
- Regional agreements: ZimTrade has signed MOUs with various Zimbabwean organizations, including: - Rwanda Development Agency - Malawi Trade Promotion Organization - Botswana Investment and Trade Center - Zambia Development Agency - Ipex of Mozambique - Dubai Exports
- Regional Collaboration: ZimTrade has engaged in benchmarking visits and knowledge sharing with counterpart organizations in countries like: - Kenya - Mauritius - The African Union and AfCFTA office have also facilitated regional workshops for trade promotion organizations to share best practices.
- International Partnerships: ZimTrade is currently partnering with the UK Department for International Trade on a short-term capacity-building and market information project for the essential oils sector.

SUCSESSES	CHALLENGES
<p>ZimTrade initiatives have been recognized for their excellence, including the "Best Model Farm Project" being nominated for the WTPO Awards, and the "Eagles Nest" youth incubator programme winning an award in 2022 for its support of inclusive and sustainable trade.</p> <p>ZimTrade's strong social media presence, with over 45,000 followers, has been an effective channel for identifying and engaging with potential exporters.</p> <p>ZimTrade won the Best Foreign Exhibit Award as a foreign exhibitor at a trade event in Namibia in 2024.</p> <p>CEO of ZimTrade is Commissioner General for Zimbabwe for OSAKA EXPO 2025.</p>	<p>Measuring and Tracking Services Exports: ZimTrade has struggled to find the right fit for developing export potential for services, as opposed to goods.</p> <p>Integrating Intellectual Property Management: Ensuring exporters are equipped to protect their intellectual property is an important, but sometimes overlooked, aspect of export readiness.</p> <p>Securing Voluntary Expert Assistance: Maintaining a reliable pool of voluntary experts to provide technical assistance can be challenging</p>

## Context

As has been the case globally, the COVID-19 caused exports to fall dramatically however ZimTrade was able to adapt and resume its operations with a minimum of disruption due to its organizational strength.

From a national political perspective, and importantly, there is clear and strong government support for the work and direction of ZimTrade at the highest level, i.e., the Presidency.<sup>18</sup>

## Additional observations

ZimTrade has participated in the biennial Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF), an initiative of the AfCFTA Secretariat and Afreximbank since the inaugural one in 2018 in Cairo, Egypt; 2021 in Durban, South Africa; 2023 in Cairo, Egypt and will be taking part in the next one in 2025 in Algiers, Algeria. The implementation of the AfCFTA could provide a platform for increased regional collaboration and knowledge sharing among TPOs.

<sup>18</sup> "President Emmerson Mnangagwa officially opened ZimTrade's annual Export Week on October 17, 2024, at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) in Bulawayo. Held under the theme "Qala, Tanga, Start", the event aims to foster dialogue between the business community and policymakers on key issues in the export industry. This premier platform connects international buyers with local producers, enhancing Zimbabwe's access to global markets. In his remarks, President Mnangagwa expressed confidence that the discussions during the event would help stakeholders refine strategies for promoting national brands, addressing logistical hurdles, and exploring trade finance solutions for exporters." Staff Reporter, Breeze FM magazine.