



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP

Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative

Management Response, Action Plan, Results, and Means of Verification

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| Date of submission of final evaluation report: August 2022 |
| Date of finalization of management response: November 2022 |

Recommendation No. 1: Strategic positioning and focus

SheTrades should use the niche, brand and operating space it has successfully created to deepen its engagement in processes that help transform sectors (and/or specific value chains) to be more gender inclusive, with specific support to groups of women who are currently underrepresented or who benefit less from engaging in trade in the sector.

Presently, the SheTrades change model assumes that if a critical mass of WEs/WOBs are enabled in trade (globally, in a given country context, or sector), this will automatically open pathways also for other women – including younger or less privileged women -- in the same sectors, or as employees of WOBs. While this may be true in some sectors or geographic locations, it would need to be monitored and possibly complemented by other approaches to ensure that women are empowered to trade and benefit from engaging in economic decision-making. This would require a different set of targets that better reflect how sectors become more gender equal and inclusive, and what formal and informal barriers stand in the way. A deepened engagement in carefully selected sectors (or for specific segments of underrepresented WOBs/WEs) may also call for a consolidation of tools and approaches currently offered by SheTrades, possibly dropping some of the resource-intensive events at global level (e.g. SheTrades Global) in favour of approaches that are tailored to the country, regional and/or sector specific contexts.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a) Be more explicit about the targeting of sectors and groups of women in SheTrades activities in order to enable gender transformative shifts – particularly for those who are underrepresented or benefit less in economic decision-making in the sector at present.**
- b) Set up a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that systematically track qualitative outcomes over time both at sector level and for different sub-groups of beneficiaries.**
- c) Critically review the number and scope of high-level visibility events in view of current delivery capacity.**

Note to ITC management: Targets on number of women to market, if used as an aspirational goal at the corporate level, should be set based on evidence, realistic delivery capacity and internal dialogue with clearly formulated expectations on what SheTrades and other gender mainstreaming efforts will contribute. Overly ambitious targets can skew efforts and resources to demonstrating quantity over quality and prevent monitoring of more meaningful gender outcomes.

Management Response and Justification:

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| Accepted: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | This recommendation is accepted. In the next phase of the programme, ITC will continue to build on the niche, brand, and operating space it has successfully created and expand its outreach to more groups of women (as far as this is in line with ITC’s mandate) including workers, young women, and small-scale traders. For each target group, carefully designed M&E data collection systems will be put in place, which will also include |
| Partially accepted: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Rejected:

qualitative case studies. The team has set up regular meetings to strengthen learning from ITC projects as well as from lessons from other organizations. In addition, no new quantitative target has been set for the initiative going forward, and SheTrades Global (its flagship event) in its current format will no longer take place however ITC will continue to mobilize women and partners in the context of 1) strategic platforms and 2) market-oriented events such as trade fairs for the SheTrades Hubs. This will free up resources to focus on approaches that are tailored to country, regional and/or sector specific contexts. This is all already reflected in ITC's Gender Moonshot approved by ITC's Senior Management in September 2022

Action Plan and Responsibilities: *This recommendation is addressed to SheTrades*

| Actions: | Expected Result and means of verification | Responsible office or partner | Contributing* Section(s) or partner(s) | Implementation deadline | Remarks |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------|
| Include more groups of women in ITC's work on gender and trade outlined in the Gender Moon Shot through increased collaboration with other ITC sections. | Scaling up of interventions to target more groups of women to lead to more gender transformative results in targeted sectors and value chains. MOV - Project beneficiary profiles, project reports | WYVC | SEC/IE | Q2 2023 | |
| Set up a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that systematically tracks qualitative outcomes | A more robust M&E methodology to better capture qualitative results as well as quantitative | WYVC | SEC/IE | Q2 2023 | |
| Cancellation of high level, resource intensive event SheTrades Global | Free up resources to focus on approaches that are tailored to country, regional and/or sector specific contexts leading to more transformative results | WYVC | N/A | Q4 2022 | |

Recommendation No. 2: SheTrades offering and support (1)

Ensure tailored and transparent targeting and tracking, of project beneficiaries, including young WEs/WOBs and those operating in male or male-dominated sectors, with links to other ITC programmes and partners.

The considerably higher benefits gained by project beneficiaries means that the selection, validation and follow-up with those benefiting from sponsorships or more tailored support via SheTrades needs to be carefully considered, including the role of partners in that process (avoiding gatekeeping or concentrating beneficiaries to those who are better connected in the capitals over rural/less well-established WEs/WOBs). Formal directories of WEs/WOBs often leave out informal traders, women employees or small-scale women suppliers (farmers, those engaged in crafts etc.) who should also be considered for tailored forms of support through complementary means and an initial sector/value chain gender analysis. Additional provisions may have to be made for women operating in traditionally male/male-dominated and/or high-growth sectors where a smaller number of women may be reached.

A reframing of the SheTrades platform as being complementary to other forms of support is called for with more navigational support, particularly for less experienced users.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a) Improve the validation and tracking of project beneficiaries, working with partners to reach those outside of the capital, young WEs/WOBs, and other women in the value chain (informal traders, women employees, small-scale women suppliers etc.).
- b) Promote and position the SheTrades.com platform as a complement to other in-person, peer-based and/or targeted project activities and with links to other ITC projects and resources.
- c) Work with partners to tailor and package content on the platform to the specific needs of different categories of beneficiaries (including young women).

Management Response and Justification:

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| Accepted: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | This recommendation is accepted. In recent years, ITC has already broadened its target group to women in more vulnerable contexts. For example, SheTrades West Africa targets women in rural, poor smallholder farming involved in commodity value chains. This approach will be mainstreamed into large ITC projects, providing an opportunity to expand beyond urban-based, export-ready women entrepreneurs. Moreover, ITC is developing specific services for young women, informal cross-border traders, and women employees, in collaboration with other sections within ITC (SEC, TFPB, IE etc.). |
| Partially accepted: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Rejected: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

SheTrades has always supported women in moving up the value chain, therefore increasing gender equality in male-dominated links of global value chains. Moreover, SheTrades projects have often targeted women in IT sectors, where they are traditionally under-represented. Going forward, ITC will mainstream gender into large projects which target other male-dominated sectors.

SheTrades.com will be reframed as a repository of knowledge and learning tool that complements other interventions rather than the “entry-point” in to SheTrades services.

Action Plan and Responsibilities: *This recommendation is addressed to SheTrades.*

| Actions: | Expected Result and means of verification | Responsible office or partner | Contributing* Section(s) or partner(s) | Implementation deadline | Remarks |
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| Complete final upgrade shetrades.com and maintain (no new functionalities) | SheTrades.com will support other interventions but will scale back on functionalities to make it more user friendly and save on resources. All functionalities working correctly. MOV – SheTrades.com easier to register and navigate, feedback from users | WYVC/IT | IT | Q2 2023 | |
| Work with partners (internally and externally) to tailor and package content for target project beneficiaries | Tailored service offerings to target specific needs of beneficiaries including new groups MOV – SheTrades Virtual Learning Space, SheTrades.com, project reports, feedback forms | WYVC | SEC/TFPB/UPS/Mary Kay/Unilever/Sidley Austin/Maersk | Ongoing | |
| Scale up outreach beyond registered users on SheTrades.com and formal directories | Improved validation and tracking of beneficiaries to reach more groups of women. MOV - Project beneficiary profiles, project reports, feedback forms | WYVC | SEC/TFPB/DCP | Ongoing | |

Recommendation No. 3: SheTrades offering and support (2)

SheTrades should seek to re-activate already launched hubs where there is strong local buy-in and/or where there are ongoing projects that can support start-up and coordination costs, while refraining from starting new hubs where there is weaker ownership among national partners, and where there is no dedicated funding. National ownership and alignment with local initiatives should be prioritized over maintaining and promoting SheTrades as a global brand in the local context.

Where buy-in is strong and where there is available projects/funding, it is recommended to pursue the hub model by ‘reactivating’ them. On the other hand, and as part of broader consolidation efforts, SheTrades is recommended to refrain from launching any non-funded SheTrades Hubs, or to set up hubs that are not clearly linked to in-country project(s) that can also be used for national coordination. In countries where ITC has more than one ongoing initiative, the SheTrades hub could be used to ensure closer collaboration between ITC projects in-country so that gender mainstreaming expertise is shared with other ITC programmes. SheTrades should also consider how best to transfer ownership of the hub concept to a set of national actors in a way that forges closer ties for collaboration in-country and that does not conflict with other nationally branded initiatives to promote women’s entrepreneurship and trade. SheTrades could play a role in working more closely with local private sector partners by linking them to SheTrades hubs, conducting gender training to pursue gender mainstreaming as part of corporate operations, and to diversify their supply chains in ways that open opportunities for local women entrepreneurs.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a) SheTrades should critically assess how to reactivate and continuously support launched hubs to ensure that ongoing communications with hub members can be maintained and local activities conducted. Where there is lack of local buy-in, SheTrades should consider closing hubs and clearly communicate to registered hub members how they can participate in other SheTrades activities by other means.**
- b) National ownership should be prioritized, including alignment with other national initiatives to promote WEs/WOBs and export promotion.**
- c) Unless dedicated funding and staff capacity is available, SheTrades should refrain from launching any new hubs.**
- d) SheTrades should seek to enhance and regularly share information with other in-country ITC projects as part of their national coordination budgets, and as part of its role in institutional gender mainstreaming at ITC.**
- e) SheTrades should explore how to involve local private sectors partners in creating incentives and skills for work on gender transformative approaches in selected value chains and act as intermediaries for involving women (particularly rural woman suppliers, women farmers) in inclusive sector value chains. SheTrades hubs (where they exist) should be used systematically for sharing lessons and insights.**

f) SheTrades should incentivize and coach international market partners on how to connect short-term funding support and mentoring with internal supplier diversity programmes, potentially with links to established SheTrades hubs and their operations in the national contexts.

Directed to ITC management:

g) To enhance in-country coordination across ITC programmes and avoid a proliferation of thematic ITC hubs (SheTrades hubs, green hubs, youth hubs) it is recommended to have a corporate strategy on how and under what conditions to set up hubs, their mandate for coordination in the country context, and how to ensure that there is knowledge sharing between hubs set up in the same country (and possibly region) to support gender mainstreaming across other thematic initiatives.

Management Response and Justification: *This recommendation is addressed to SheTrades and ITC management*

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| Accepted: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>This recommendation is accepted. Since its inception, the ITC Women and Trade Programme has collaborated with national stakeholders and partner organizations to implement its in-country activities. In 2019, the Programme began developing the “Hub” concept where national stakeholders and partner organizations take on a multiplier role and provide services on behalf of the Programme. The approach strengthens ITC’s local presence without creating heavy overhead costs and strengthens local capacities.</p> <p>The SheTrades Hubs help increase the sustainability of the Programme’s in-country interventions by promoting local ownership through a participatory approach and alignment with national and sectoral priorities.</p> <p>In 2022, SheTrades took stock of progress so far and lessons learnt, and adopted a new strategy on the Hubs, which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New governance: a dedicated team coordinates activities, M&E and comms for all the Hubs, funded through W1 and W2 projects • Review of all existing Hubs, with resources allocated to a total of 12 active ones, and process to set up new Hubs limited to 3 per year • New Hubs being set up on the basis of strict selection criteria, namely commitment, focal points, and own resourcing • All activities contribute to corporate indicators, and focus on service improvement by the Hubs to women, and increased competitiveness and access to markets for women-led businesses (trainings, B2B) • ITC works closely with the Hubs to mobilise private sector partners (Mastercard in Rwanda), as well as donors for country specific activities (FCDO in Mauritius) • Clear communication to stakeholders on the services and approach of the Hubs in country • Peer-to-peer learning between Hubs <p>Moreover, IE is coordinating all ITC Hubs across different areas (green, women, youth, digital) with the goal of maximising services accessed by in-country beneficiaries through the various Hubs, as well as promote knowledge and lessons sharing among ITC Hubs coordinators.</p> |
| Partially accepted: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Rejected: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

| Action Plan and Responsibilities: <i>This recommendation is addressed to the Project Managers of multi-agency projects in collaboration with ITC staff in the field, when possible.</i> | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Actions: | Expected Result and means of verification | Responsible office or partner | Contributing* Section(s) or partner(s) | Implementation deadline | Remarks |
| SheTrades Hubs team established, resources allocated, and new governance structure established | A dedicated team to coordinate activities, M&E and comms for all the Hubs. Launched SheTrades Hubs sufficiently supported MOV – feedback from host institutions and members, Hubs only being set up in countries with resources | WYVC | IE | Q2 2023 | |
| Incentivise national ownership of hubs and activate local private sector | National ownership of Hub and engagement of private sector to provide opportunities for women in selected sectors MOV – feedback from host institutions and members, feedback from local private sector | WYVC | IE | Q2 2023 | |
| Develop a high-quality offering on competitiveness and B2B, for selected sectors, delivered through the SheTrades Hubs as well as sharing of best practices between the hubs | SheTrades Hubs equipped with materials, part of peer to peer sharing activities MOV – feedback from institutions, participation in B2Bs, sales achieved | WYVC | IE | Q3 2023 | |
| Design corporate strategy on how and under what conditions to set up hubs | Strategy developed and approved and rolled out | IE | GIVC/WYVC/SEC/DED | Q4 2023 | |
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| Recommendation No. 4: <u>SheTrades within ITC (1)</u> | | | | | |

Ensure that SheTrades tools and resources correspond to in-house needs for gender mainstreaming across programmes and as part of ITC’s corporate gender mainstreaming strategy, with a clear mandate, expectations, and sufficient resourcing for SheTrades to take on this role.

A repositioning of SheTrades to also fill an internal learning function on gender and trade would require more effort toward documenting programmatic guidance on gender mainstreaming, including how to work with intersectional dimensions and with men/in male-dominated sectors. Concrete examples on how SheTrades tools or resources can add value to gender mainstreaming efforts in other ITC programmes could also be written up and distributed internally. This would include more critical lessons, highlighting programmatic obstacles and how they were overcome in different settings and for different segments of women. Guidance on how to work with different types of partners in order to introduce a gender perspective, drawing on SheTrades’ extensive partnership model would also be helpful, including how to tailor the partnership portfolio to respond to gender issues in different settings (considering the need to widen or bring in different types of partners from e.g. NGOs or the private sector as needed), and in how to coach private sector partners to adopt a gender transformative approach in its support to gender in trade (including through its own internal policies). This could help position SheTrades as an internal knowledge and resource hub on gender – going beyond just targeting women in trade – to addressing more systemic formal and informal barriers and intersectional gender dimensions.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a) Provide space for systematizing internal learning and reflection around programmatic lessons that can be documented and shared with others (in-house and/or externally), including examples of how, in what settings, and under what conditions different SheTrades tools and resources have been successfully applied to advance gender outcomes and how to shift gender targeting into gender transformative results (particularly in male-dominated or led sectors).**

Directed to ITC management:

- b) Review and consolidate the internal ITC gender mainstreaming architecture and SheTrades’ mandate within it alongside gender expertise, and internal mechanisms and resources.**

Management Response and Justification:

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

ITC will set up a gender mainstreaming technical unit within the SheTrades Programme, housing a pool of resources on trade and gender for project managers; and set up a working group to increase uptake of existing tools on trade and gender, identify bottlenecks in current services, and develop new solutions, as well as share good practices. ITC has specific offerings for project managers: shetrades.com, data tools (SheTrades outlook, NTMs and SMECS), Gender Toolkit for Agricultural Value Chains, trainings on gender-lens investment, gender-responsive public procurement toolkit,

Rejected: among others. ITC will develop new offerings on SMEs support, and BSOs services improvements that can be used by project managers. A portal (for ITC Staff) on ITC's intranet with compiled information on all gender related tools.

Action Plan and Responsibilities: *This recommendation is addressed to SheTrades and ITC management*

| Actions: | Expected Result and means of verification | Responsible office or partner | Contributing* Section(s) or partner(s) | Implementation deadline | Remarks |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Set up of Gender Mainstreaming technical unit and working group | Technical unit and working group set up | ITC/WYVC | SPPG/HR | Q1 2023 | |
| Design and roll out of the ITC Gender toolkit | Gender toolkit rolled out | WYVC | HR | Q2 2023 | |
| Gender mainstreaming portal created for project/programme staff | Portal created | WYVC | IT | Q4 2023 | |

Recommendation No. 5: SheTrades within ITC (2)

Review staff needs to be in line with SheTrades' expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.

A consolidation effort and clarification of mandate of SheTrades within ITC should go hand in hand with a review of staff capacities to deliver on this mandate. This may involve looking at the number and level of staff, including the proportion of junior staff to more experienced internal or external expertise that is being drawn on. The recent reorganisation has led to an opportunity strengthen gender expertise in the new and/or vacant positions created. Additionally, external expertise particularly in women's economic empowerment and gender transformative approaches can be more systematically drawn on to inform the design, monitoring and lessons learning across SheTrades activities and projects. A stronger focus on creating enabling (and sustainable) systems at country level may require a shift toward more in-county staff, with sustained support for national coordinators to bridge short term funding cycles.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a) Ensure that the SheTrades team has (and/or has access to) sufficient gender expertise, advise and training.
- b) Provide clear pathways for junior staff to strengthen their learning and to be able to use their gender mainstreaming expertise as a merit for their career paths within ITC (e.g., by supporting knowledge sharing activities or engaging in gender mainstreaming support for other ITC programmes). Work portfolios and responsibilities should be commensurate with their level of expertise and with clear job descriptions to allow for an adequate work-life balance.
- c) Ensure that new staff get sufficient coaching and/or training as well as hands-on exposure to in-country activities and sector-specific gender issues.
- d) Review human resources needs at a global level versus in-country to ensure continuity and follow up in-country that bridges various short-term funding cycles.

Directed to ITC management:

- e) Ensure that SheTrades management has strong gender expertise and management skills.

Note to ITC management: Longer-term SheTrades staffing needs should be considered and facilitated depending on the role and expected contribution of the SheTrades team to the various strategic objectives of ITC and in relation to meeting internal gender mainstreaming priorities (see recommendation 4).

Management Response and Justification:

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| Accepted: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | ITC is currently reviewing staffing needs, including the number and level of staff needed to deliver on a broader gender mainstreaming mandate. Moreover, SheTrades is investing in internal and external trainings to strengthen the gender expertise especially of junior staff. |
| Partially accepted: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Rejected: | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Action Plan and Responsibilities: *This recommendation is addressed to SheTrades and ITC management*

| Actions: | Expected Result and means of verification | Responsible office or partner | Contributing* Section(s) or partner(s) | Implementation deadline | Remarks |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------|
| Review of staffing needs | Clear plan for recruitment schedule | WYVC | DED | Q4 2022 | |

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| Training to strengthen gender expertise | Pool of gender experts available to advise ITC project/programme staff MOV – list of trained staff, part of the gender working group | WYVC | All | Q2 2023 | |
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