

# Operationalizing the Strategic Plan 2015-2017

## Defining projects & programmes

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### 1 Introduction

ITC has a new Strategic Plan for 2015-2017 that centres on thematic focus areas and programmes. In this plan, the organization sets a growth target for future years with growth in the size of projects and programmes within the portfolio. An important step in operationalizing this strategic plan is to better define what is meant by programmes, what the benefits of programmes are, and to design appropriate processes and governance structures to put them in place.

Clearer programme and project rules will assist ITC unlocking the benefits associated to a better structured portfolio such as improved strategic focus and more effective management. They will also allow ITC to 'build in' the new approach as part of the New Project Portal.

Restructuring the portfolio is also a key cornerstone in ITC's response to the independent evaluation as it is a means to (i) focus ITC's interventions, (ii) strengthen governance and accountability and (iii) improve effectiveness.

The organization is committed to moving towards a "programmatic approach", but realizes that restructuring a project and programme portfolio is not an overnight task. This requires both a well thought through set of principles, *and* pragmatic flexibility. Hence, some of the programme level business processes and governance mechanisms in this document present something of an ideal scenario. Further discussions are being held to establish the right approach for each programme.

### 2 Definitions & reporting requirements

#### 2.1 Logic from mission to project

The Strategic Plan 2015-2017 mentions the importance of focus areas and programmes to drive towards more impact (Figure 1 visualizes how projects lead to impact using programmes and focus areas as management tools). The concepts of focus areas and programmes have gained in importance and it is hence important to clarify what these concepts mean and to embed them into ITC's management tools.

Six **focus areas** are created *"to ensure effectiveness and to avoid being spread too thinly. These six focus areas represent a coherent set of interventions with corresponding programmes that are adapted and customized into client-focused solutions"*.

All projects of ITC in the period 2015-2017 should fall within the framework of these focus areas. Each individual focus area contributes to at least 1 outcome of ITC as set out in Figure 1. The level of focus areas is most suitable to provide focus and facilitate communication around ITC's work.

At a next level, 16 **programmes** are in the Strategic Plan, each of which fall within 1 focus area. Organizing more around these programmes should unlock benefits in terms of strategic focus and improved accountability. Therefore this document focuses on strengthening principles, definitions and governance of programmes.

Each **project** will then be categorized under 1 of the programmes. Nevertheless there should be sufficient flexibility to allow for innovation and to answer specific emerging needs of beneficiary countries, where aligned with the broader ITC strategy.

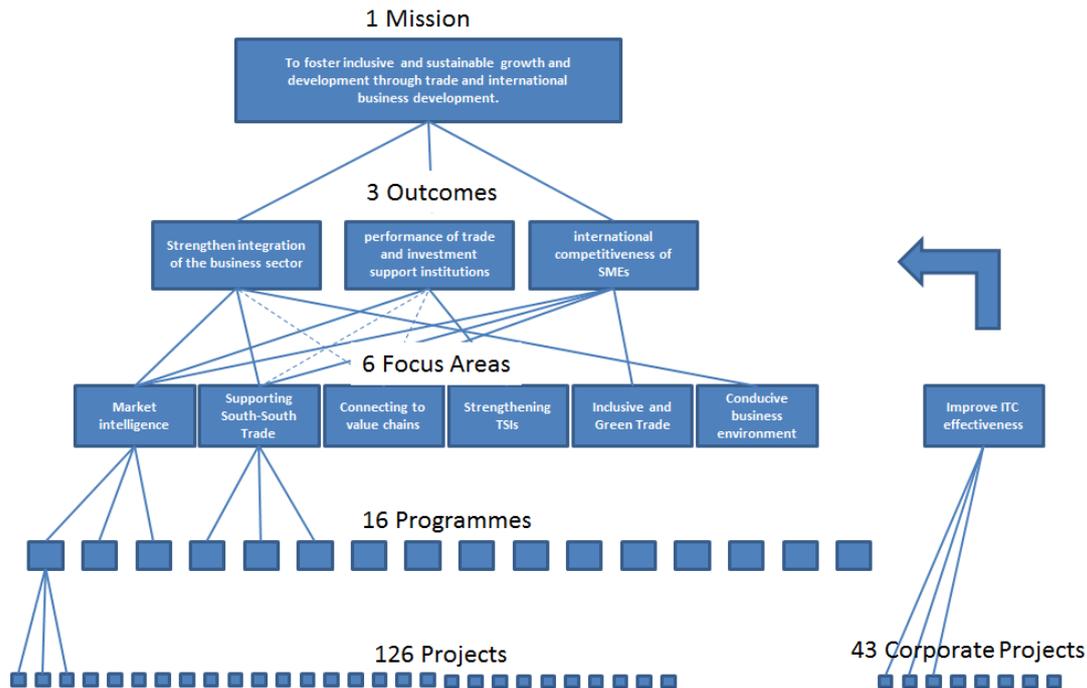


Figure 1: Operationalizing the Strategic Plan 2015-2017

## 2.2 Programmes

### 2.2.1 What is the benefit of managing by programmes?

**Strategic focus:** integration of similar projects, products and activities within the framework of corporate strategy, platforms to build corporate knowledge, and strengthen the use of evaluations.

**Efficiency:** fewer components to manage, better use of administrative resources and strategic management time to enable delivery

**Flexibility:** driven by outcomes and impact rather than outputs, thereby enabling adjustments in response to external changes and risk factors

**Accountability:** performance measurement framework, clear governance structure including a steering committee with stakeholders, leadership by programme manager

### 2.2.2 Definition of programmes

ITC in the 2015-2017 strategic plan, has introduced 16 programmes in **six focus areas** (see Figure 2).

To strengthen programmes as a vehicle to drive achievement of its strategic objectives, ITC adopts the Prince2 definition of programmes:

*A programme is a temporary flexible organization structure created to coordinate, direct and oversee the implementation of a set of related projects and activities in order to deliver outcomes and benefits relating to an organization's strategic objectives. A programme may have a life that spans several years.*

- Prince2®

## Appendix II: ITC Focus Areas and Programmes

Focus Areas	Programmes
1. Trade and market intelligence for SME competitiveness	Competitive Intelligence Programme
	Non-Tariff Measures in Goods and Services Programme
	Transparency in Trade Programme
2. Supporting regional economic integration and South-South links	Boosting Intra-African Trade Programme
	Promoting South-South Links Programme
3. Connecting to value chains: SME competitiveness, diversification and links to export markets	Value Added to Trade Programme
	e-Solutions Programme: linking businesses to markets
4. Strengthening trade and investment support institutions	Assess Improve Measure (AIM) for Results
	Building Coalitions of Services Industries
5. Promoting and mainstreaming inclusive and green trade	Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship and Trade Programme
	Empowering Women to Trade Programme
	Empowering Poor Communities to Trade Programme
	Trade and Environment Programme
6. Building a conducive business environment	National and Sector Export Strategies
	Trade Facilitation Programme
	Supporting trade negotiations

Figure 2: Focus areas and programmes in ITC's Strategic Plan 2015-2017

Along with the Prince2 definition come the Prince2 principles of good programme management:

- Grouping projects and activities into programmes comes with efficiency, governance and strategic benefits
- ITC programmes are aligned with the organization's strategy, and contribute to the corporate outcomes
- Programmes are likely to have a lifespan of several years. They have a timeframe and budget that is reviewed at regular intervals;
- Programmes are likely to be multi-disciplinary, risky, liable to change direction as a result of experience and external events
- Programmes can be multi-donor, and used as a platform for mobilising resources
- Programmes require performance measurement framework with indicators that are linked to the corporate and project level
- Programme governance involves a board, which can include external stakeholders, and ITC corporate procedures
- Programme managers are responsible for programme delivery; project managers are responsible for project delivery.

### 2.2.3 Programme Planning & reporting requirements

Programme planning and reporting will focus on strategic aspects of portfolio management such as impact and outcomes of the programme, knowledge sharing and management, potential for new projects and resource mobilization, marketing of ITC's approach.

<b>Programme design (multi-year planning)</b>	<i>Designing an initiative to implement ITC's strategy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logframe design meeting</li> <li>• Programme Plan, incl. full programme budget (no Programme Idea required)</li> </ul> (Separate project plans for each project within the programme)
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Annual planning	<i>Detailed planning and resourcing to implement the initiative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme management budget + consolidation of budgets of the project portfolio + programme priorities</li> </ul>
Reporting	<i>Keeping track of implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Automated report: monthly financials: overspend, underspend, out-turn</li> <li>• Automated report: quarterly outputs and financials (sum of projects) presented by SPPG as part of the quarterly report to SMC (outcomes presented half yearly only)</li> <li>• Yearly: Narrative on actual outcomes, risks</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Projects

### 2.3.1 Definitions and requirements

A “project” is a temporary endeavour undertaken to meet specific goals and objectives, to bring about beneficial change or added value. A project has a defined start and end point, budget, deliverables and specific objectives that, when achieved, signify completion. A project may be small or large, and may also be part of a programme and is normally associated with a project portal entry.

- ITC Executive Director’s Bulletin: Role of, and support for, the Project Manager, 2010

ITC’s definition of projects is sound, taking into account objectives, deliverables, budget and time. The organization also has requirements for project design, annual planning and tracking progress through reporting. In practice, these project management **requirements** tend to be **placed on any component** of the work programme with a **project portal entry**. This does not assist in direct project management time and management attention to areas of highest strategic or operational importance.

### 2.3.2 Getting management attention on the right project issues

More and more most strategic aspects of projects will be discussed as part of programme planning and reporting, leaving project planning and reporting to focus on financial management and activity and output management. This will enable sharper focus on strategic matters for programme and other senior managers. An important component of this is having appropriate and efficient reporting at project level. At the project level therefore ITC will move towards management reporting by exception, using a traffic light system:

Traffic light to be completed by **project manager**:

- Green = on schedule to deliver all outputs, no corporate requirement for narrative (may be requested by section chiefs, directors or programme managers for projects under their management)
- Yellow = Some outputs may be delayed or not achieved (provide narrative explanation)
- Red = Requires senior management attention: high risk of outputs delayed or not achieved -> escalate (provide narrative explanation)

Phase	Requirement
Project design (multi-year planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project idea (if not part of a programme)</li> <li>• Logframe design meeting (if not part of a programme)</li> <li>• Project plan</li> </ul>
Annual planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual plan (to be finalized beginning of Dec), which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Budget with monthly forecast</li> <li>○ Milestones</li> <li>○ Planned results (quantified outputs and outcomes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly financials: overspend, underspend, out-turn (automatic)</li> <li>• Monthly status (traffic light with narrative*)</li> <li>• Quarterly: Actual outputs (quantitative), against workplan</li> <li>• Half yearly: Actual outcomes (quantitative) against workplan</li> <li>• Yearly: Narrative on actual outputs and outcomes, <u>and overall progress report</u></li> <li>• Regularly: Updating forecast spend</li> </ul>

### 2.3.3 Corporate projects by OED/ DPS

Corporate projects are finite initiatives with clear deliverables, budget, timeframe ( not “business as usual” of corporate sections) that have no direct development impact, but instead work towards improving ITC’s efficiency and effectiveness e.g. IPSAS, JAG, impact assessment, library conversion. Corporate projects should report differently as milestone reporting becomes more important and RBM reporting less relevant.

ITC’s corporate projects in the past have often been managed individually. Yet in so doing ITC may not have fully taken advantage of synergies, and possible efficiencies among and across projects. To mitigate this ITC will now group corporate projects in the following sets, and establish clear guidelines for their management:

- Special events and publications
- Corporate IT tools
- RBM & Evaluation
- Organizational development

Project design (multi-year planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project plan</li> </ul>
Annual planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual plan, which includes:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget with monthly forecast</li> <li>- Milestones</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly: Updating forecast spend</li> <li>• Monthly financials: overspend, underspend, out-turn (automatic)</li> <li>• Monthly status (traffic light + narrative*)</li> <li>• Half-yearly: Milestone reporting</li> <li>• Yearly: Narrative on actual milestones and results achieved</li> </ul>

\* Note: Traffic light to be completed by **project manager**:

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### 2.4 Planning within the organizational hierarchy

The strategic planning process also provides an opportunity to better define the planning requirements for the levels within ITC’s organigram. Plans and strategies at section and/or division level have previously been developed on an ad-hoc basis. During the 2014-15 long fascicle process ITC successfully introduced uniform summary section and division plans.

These summary plans will be maintained for annual planning while 3 year strategies are introduced to detail ITC’s strategy by region, technical area and corporate service.