

Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function

International Trade Center

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Brief Background

Peer review focus and timeline

- Assessment of Independence, Credibility and Utility of ITC's evaluation function (focus on Quality and Use)
- Conducted between Dec 2015 and June 2016
- Process:
 - Review of background docs and assessments of evaluation reports
 - Fact finding mission and stakeholders interviews
 - Discussions and comments on the draft report
- Very positive engagement of all stakeholders throughout the process

Main conclusions

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- Evaluation function **evolving since 2006**
- High level of **commitment of the ITC management** to the evaluation function
- High degree of acceptance and recognition in supporting organizational change
- On-going **reform process** within ITC and increased emphasis on **results and accountability expected** to further strengthen EU's role and position

Main conclusions (cont'd)

Evaluation function in ITC:

- Created a **distinct institutional space** for its role as stipulated in the Evaluation Policy
- Has an **earmarked operational budget** and critical minimum staff to carry out its annual plan of work
- Is generally respected by the programme and technical departments as **credible and useful**
- 2015 Evaluation Policy: a **leap forward** in terms of alignment with UNEG norms and standards

Independence

- Concept of **independent evaluation** function gaining ground within the organization
- No guidance in the Policy on principles of **structural and functional independence of the Evaluation Unit(EU)**
- **Strong progress made** but to date :
 - **No structural independence** of the EU
 - **Nuanced functional independence** supported by the integrity of the current management
- Need for **functional independence** also being recognized and accepted by majority of senior professionals of ITC

Credibility

- **EU's approach and methodologies in line with UN evaluation principles** and UNEG evaluation quality standards
- **Institutional quality assurance mechanism** of evaluation reports is lacking
- **Financing** of evaluation function considered inadequate compared to variety and depth of its responsibilities

Utility

- Substantial efforts by the EU to make evaluations **widely accessible internally and externally**
- Evaluations conducted in the past 3-5 years **generally useful**
- **Increasing uptake of recommendations**
- **Use** of evaluation results appears **stronger at programmatic** than at **policy** level
- **Small number** of evaluations **limits influence** of evaluation on policy and programmes

Recommendations

Independence

- Need to **conduct regular reviews of Evaluation Policy periodically:**
 - To align with the evolving international standards
 - To consider **more clarity on the independence dimension** of EU
 - **distinct structural status** for the EU separate from SPPG and reporting directly to the ED
 - Position level of the EU Chief should be **upgraded to P5**

Credibility

- Finalization of the work plan should be **independently vested with the Chief of EU**
- **Predictability of resources and autonomy** are important for the independence and credibility of evaluation
- The annual evaluation work plan should be adequately budgeted and resources should be **specifically allocated to various types of evaluations under EU's control**
- Projects and programmes considered strategically important should have a **mandatory budget for evaluations**
- **Interface national stakeholders could be strengthened**

Utility: evaluation coverage

- **Scarcity of evidence of results of ITC initiatives** as a critical issue for the organization (*Ext. Indep. Evaluation 2014 and OIOS Review of ITC 2015*)
- **Corporate mechanism** should be instituted by EU that ensures that different evaluation streams comply with an integrated set of methodological and quality standards.
- EU should be **informed of the process of evaluations commissioned elsewhere within ITC** and be involved with their **quality assurance**

Utility: Management Response

- ITC should establish a **clear division of responsibility** between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management of the response to evaluations
 - Macro data on **status of implementation of management responses** is maintained and periodically reported to SMC by EU
 - **Responsibility for ensuring compliance** of implementation of agreed actions remains with the line department.

Utility: Org. learning and KM

- EU should establish mechanisms to **systematically harvest and share lessons** from existing evaluations
- Essence of lessons and organizational learning must **percolate to the higher layers** and governance for informing and enriching their perspective for decision-making
- Strategic and thematic evaluations of organizational significance and annual evaluation synthesis reports should be **presented to JAG in a systematic way**

Thank you