International Trade Centre

TRADE IMPACT
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2022 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report

ITC Independent Evaluation Unit

2022 ANNUAL EVALUATION SYNTHESIS REPORT

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC is the only international agency dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Formed in 1964, ITC is the focal point for trade-related technical assistance within the United Nations system.

For all of ITC's interventions, evaluation is a key instrument to ensure accountability against expected results and to support organizational learning. Evaluations inform ITC's decision-making in policy, programme, and project management, with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing ITC's contributions towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This is an independent publication by the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU), which established a team formed by an independent external consultant (Ms. Petra Voionmaa) and the Head of the IEU (Mr. Miguel Jiménez Pont). The text has been proofread by Ms. Marianne Schmitt (IEU Associate Evaluation Officer).

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2022 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report at a glance

This AESR covers 16 evaluations / reviews and 53 project completion reports conducted in 2020-21

Main findings

Generally high **relevance** of ITC projects, especially in terms of alignment with beneficiaries' needs.

Good **coherence** within ITC. Challenges reported for harnessing synergies with co-implementers.

Effectiveness very positive in more than a third of cases. In others, external factors reduced the performance.

The ITC toolbox for assessing **efficiency** is growing through new approaches for Value for Money.

Most ITC interventions had a positive **impact**.

The autonomy of key actors was a factor that positively influenced **sustainability**.

Key conclusions

- Although developed under the previous Strategic Plan, projects are in line with ITC's vision, mission and principles as set out in the Strategic Plan 2022-25. The other elements of the Strategic Plan (e.g. matrix approach, commitments related to responding to country needs or partnering for purpose) appear to still require more attention.
- While women's participation in trade was well integrated into projects, environmental issues were addressed in less detail. Projects, therefore, do not (yet) reflect the strong focus that the current Strategic Plan places on environmental aspects of sustainability.
- The focus on beneficiaries' needs proved to be a general strength. In relation to the organizational strengths defined in the Strategic Plan as the basis of ITC's value proposition, the AESR found clear evidence of "expertise" and "agility".
- The Strategic Plan is guided by the values of collaboration and coordination. And indeed, most projects evaluated made good use of synergies within ITC. There might have been more opportunities for collaboration with other UN organizations.
- In its Strategic Plan, ITC commits to further developing its organizational strength "trust" through tools such as Results Based Management. The AESR has shown that projects meet ITC's reporting standards as well as requirements set by funders. However, there is still room for improvement.
- Despite promising developments in measuring Value for Money, many challenges remain, for example in quantifying the benefits of policy reform.

Recommendations

1. Bring the green transition to the forefront.
2. Make projects even more responsive to beneficiaries' needs through an enhanced in-house needs assessment toolbox.
3. Optimize collaboration with co-implementing agencies in multi-partner projects.
4. Continue efforts to strengthen Results Based Management tools.
5. Collect and disseminate the Value for Money experience gained by some ITC projects.

Contents

Abbreviations

AESR	Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report
BSO	Business Support Organization
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit of ITC
INTEGRA	*Programme d'appui à l'intégration socio-économique des jeunes*
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOPSE	*Renforcement du Management Opérationnel des Programmes de Soutien à l'Exportation en faveur de vingt-et-un organismes de promotion du commerce de 21 Pays d'Afrique Sub-Saharienne*
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, small and medium sized companies
NTF	Netherlands Trust Fund
OECD-DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCR	Project Completion Report
PIGA	Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa
RBM	Results-Based Management
RQ	Research question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SITA	Supporting Indian Trade and Investment in Africa
T4SD	Trade for Sustainable Development
TMI	Trade and Market Intelligence
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

Introduction

i. The Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report (AESR) aims to facilitate learning by synthesizing key messages emerging from recent evaluation reports and related reviews.

ii. The 2022 AESR additionally includes a new perspective: It helps build knowledge for the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 based on lessons learned from the previous Strategic Plan period. It does this by assessing the findings from evaluation reports and related reviews against the main dimensions of the Strategic Plan 2022-25.

iii. A methodological framework was developed for this purpose (see Annex 3). Each of its fields contains criteria, in the form of research questions against which the respective objectives of the 2022-25 Strategic Plan (columns) can be assessed in relation to each of the evaluation criteria defined by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC, rows). This methodological framework was developed to serve as basis for future analyses of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. However, it should not be seen as static, but rather as a work in progress that may very well be adapted over time.

iv. This year's AESR covers evaluations and reviews from 2020 and 2021,[1] ranging from independent of joint evaluations by ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU, 3 documents), self-evaluations (4 documents), funder-led evaluations or reviews (9 documents), and Project Completion Reports (PCRs, 53 reports). In addition, the sample included sustainability reviews (5 documents) as well as reviews related to Results-Based Management (RBM) commissioned by the IEU (5 documents). Some findings from the review of these documents were further substantiated through supplementary interviews.

Key findings

v. **Relevance** was found to be generally high. ITC interventions target priority needs identified in international and partner country policies and strategies. Projects were aligned and have continuously adapted to the situation and needs of clients and partner countries, in particular to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

vi. In most projects, beneficiary needs were identified in some form at the design phase, and more in-depth needs assessments were conducted during the inception phase of projects, mainly on Business Support organizations (BSOs). However, ITC tools for carrying out needs assessments do not always appear to be sufficiently adaptable to best support projects in their needs assessment tasks.

vii. Most projects were also in line with the vision of the ITC Strategic Plan 2022-25. A few evaluations identified some form of strong comparative advantage. However, this could be

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[1] The reason why this 2022 AESR covers documents from two years (instead one) is that the 2021 AESR focused on the ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and did not carry out an in-depth synthesis of findings from project and programme evaluations.

further enhanced by ITC focusing on its particular strengths (e.g. RBM, risk management, M&E, expertise, innovation, internal coordination and cooperation) and on the four dimensions of its value proposition (Trust, Expertise, Connectedness, Agility).

viii. In terms of cross-cutting issues, most of the evaluations found that gender-specific issues were adequately taken into account. A more nuanced picture emerges for environmental issues which were often not proactively pursued in the projects evaluated.

ix. **Coherence –** Several project evaluations found evidence of positive cooperation with other ITC projects. Partnerships within the UN varied in strength. In-country coordination with projects outside the UN family was generally found to be appropriate. In some cases, challenges were reported in harnessing synergies with co-implementing agencies, – i.e. other organizations with which ITC was jointly implementing projects and programmes.

x. **Effectiveness** was assessed very positively for six out of 16 projects or programmes for which, information was available. For the other ten projects or programmes, the evaluations reported a somewhat mixed picture in terms of effectiveness. In some cases, external factors (e.g. political instability, institutional rivalries, COVID-19) were cited as barrier to turning activities into the expected outcomes.

xi. In several cases, local presence and the establishment of technical partnerships with partners who have complementary expertise were highlighted as significant success factors for ensuring project or programme effectiveness.

xii. In relation to the new strategic objective of advocacy and thought leadership, ITC's leading position in the provision of trade and market information was confirmed, although special efforts are needed to maintain it as user needs and information technology are changing significantly. More evidence of thought leadership was observed, too.

xiii. **Efficiency –** Most evaluations refrained from assessing financial efficiency due to a lack of disaggregated financial data. Instead, they relied mainly on qualitative data. Some of them highlighted the positive effects of the increasing use of local staff and local consultants on cost-efficiency. Others stressed the importance of partner contributions through cost-sharing and co-investment to pave the way for ownership and scaling up of interventions.

xiv. A few evaluations and reviews – mostly of projects funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) – assessed efficiency by also looking at Value for Money (VfM). Already during implementation, these projects had tracked and reported on VfM metrics, usually input costs (e.g. staff costs), costs per output and some form of quantitative cost-benefit ratio, but also a description of the gains achieved when quantification was not possible.

xv. This AESR confirmed the conclusion of previous AESRs on Results-Based Management (RBM): Several consistent reports indicate that one way to further increase efficiency is to use M&E information to strengthen management for results. Although projects meet current ITC reporting standards, as well as those set by funders, project activities are not always well linked to the underlying project theory of change and often lack client-focused baseline data.

A key challenge is to reduce the time currently spent on conducting monitoring while increasing the time spent on learning and adapting, in response to high-quality results data generated through monitoring.

xvi. **Impact –** Most evaluations found some evidence of positive impact. The general picture that emerged from the reports is that the impact of the projects reviewed is already well aligned with the corporate indicators of the Strategic Plan 2022-25**,** particularly those related to "prosperity", "people" and "peace", while projects contributed to a lesser extent to the indicator "planet".

xvii. While most evaluation reports did not provide precise quantitative estimates of impacts achieved, some evaluations reported more in-depth measuring of impact, particularly in relation to impact on gender-related household wellbeing, the improved income for returnees, and to job creation and career advancement opportunities. This suggests that sound M&E tools for planning, management and reporting are in place in some projects, while overall adequate M&E systems for measuring impact do not seem yet appear to be wide-spread good practice.

xviii. **Sustainability –** The use of training of trainers models, cost-sharing with stakeholders and more formal partnerships (e.g. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)) with local implementing stakeholders were found to have a positive impact on sustainability. Pointing to the need for more profound partnerships at the local level, the autonomy of key project actors (e.g. beneficiaries), combined with decentralized and adaptive decision-making, proved to be a critical factor in overcoming the many hurdles that projects inevitably face during implementation. They also ensured that these local actors were empowered to maintain and further develop the benefits of the project after its completion.

xix. The selection of suitable host organizations is another key factor in ensuring a self-sustaining service delivery model, as several projects encountered problems in integrating platforms and training modules into the service delivery of partner organizations. Another area of concern is that, in some projects, exit planning was still weak or even missing.

xx. In summary, the elements that are critical to ensuring high project sustainability are linked to the consolidation of the project value chain, both externally with local partners and internally to intensify collaboration within ITC after the end of a project to ensure the continuity of the results achieved. These are matters that require proper planning, management, and monitoring, and could contribute to the consolidation and recognition of ITC's organizational strengths (e.g. RBM, risk management, M&E, expertise, innovation, internal coordination and cooperation) to respond to clients' sustainability needs.

Conclusions and recommendations

xxi. In terms of objectives of the Strategic Plan 2022-25, the ITC portfolio already appears to be well aligned with ITC's vision, mission, and principles. The other objectives (e.g. matrix

approach, commitments related to responding to country needs or partnering for purpose[2]) seem to be on track to achieve the Strategic Plan 2022-25, albeit with moderate risks, and will therefore require more attention. This is not surprising given that firstly, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 has just come into effect and secondly, the projects included in the reviewed sample were designed several years ago and therefore cannot fully reflect current strategic priorities.

xxii.   This AESR suggests the development of several tools (see Recommendations 2, 4 and 5). This is consistent with the recommendation of last year's AESR to elaborate a set of sub-strategies that are conducive to achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Such additional instruments could help to provide a more focused and specific guidance to facilitate the implementation of Strategic Plan objectives, which are currently assessed as requiring more attention.

xxiii.   In relation to the AESRs of previous years, some similarities and contrasts can be identified: Like previous AESRs, this 2022 AESR confirms the need to further strengthen the ITC systems for RBM, while pointing to commendable ongoing efforts in this regard (see Conclusion IV). Other observations suggest that changes have occurred since previous AESRs: For example, this AESR is the first to include findings on VfM, illustrating progress achieved in measuring this aspect of efficiency (see Conclusion V). Compared to previous AESRs, this AESR has analysed in more detail the extent to which environmental issues have been taken into account in projects and programmes (see Conclusion I). This is in line with global developments related to the triple crisis (climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss) and the increased focus on sustainability in the Strategic Plan 2022-25.

xxiv.   The evaluation reports and reviews gave a generally positive assessment of effectiveness and impact, with some challenges identified in certain aspects of sustainability. The relevance of the projects was generally rated as high, although some concerns were raised on the incorporation of environmental aspects (see Recommendations 1 and 2).   Areas for improvement was identified for the evaluation criteria "coherence" (Recommendation 3) and "efficiency" (Recommendations 4 and 5).

Conclusion I: Environmental aspects within the ITC portfolio

xxv.   More than 10 years ago, ITC incorporated sustainable development issues beyond competitiveness, by starting to develop projects and programmes on trade and poverty (now Ethical Fashion Initiative), trade and women (now SheTrades) and trade and sustainability (now Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD)). Building on this experience, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 has brought sustainability issues to the forefront of ITC's strategic orientation. This is reflected in the fact that three of the five the new impact areas defined in the Strategic Plan relate to sustainability (Sustainable and Resilient Value Chains, Inclusive Trade, and Green Trade).[3] This is a commendable development and is in line with the general trend in international cooperation to take greater account of sustainability.

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[2] Strategic Plan 2022-25 objectives identified in this AESR can be found in the methodological framework in Annex 3.

[3] The other two being E-commerce and Regional Integration and South-South Trade.

xxvi. At the same time, it is important to turn the green transition into a just one. Supporting partner countries in taking advantage of new green trade opportunities is one aspect of it. Another is the need for investments in energy infrastructure and productive capacities required for creating green employment in developing countries. Such reflections should guide the implementation of the sustainability dimension of ITC's new Strategic Plan.

xxvii. While aspects related to sustainability standards in value chains and to the participation of women in trade were well addressed in the projects evaluated, environmental issues were less extensively covered: Among the projects evaluated, only one (T4SD Hubs) explicitly targeted green trade. In the other projects, while environmental consideration did indeed regularly guide the selection of the sector in some way, there was little evidence that deeper analyses of the environmental context of the projects and their possible impacts on the environment were carried out. Despite recent and innovative initiatives in the areas of green competitiveness, responsible procurement and sustainable trade and investment, the findings of this AESR show that environmental aspects should also be better mainstreamed as a cross-cutting dimension into individual projects as well as the ITC project portfolio.

xxviii. As the projects studied for this AESR were designed and implemented several years ago, new ITC projects may already have a stronger focus on environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, there is likely to be room for improvement.

Recommendation 1: Bring the green transition to the forefront:

xxix. When putting into practice the Strategic Plan 2022-25, pay particular attention to ensure environmental mainstreaming is considered more consistently in each ITC project, and environmental objectives are expressed explicitly in a larger number of projects.

This recommendation is addressed to the Trade and Environment Section (Division of Sustainable and Inclusive Trade) and the Project design Taskforce (Office of the Executive Director – Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance).

Conclusion II: The comparative advantage of ITC

xxx. Various forms of comparative advantage were mentioned in the evaluation reports: They ranged from the provision of data solutions, support to BSOs and the development of national export strategies to working with the private sector in general. All these areas of intervention are part of ITC's core business model. From a supply perspective, ITC's core business model is to provide trade and sustainable development-related technical assistance through projects and offer a range of public goods (e.g. trade information). This consistency between the comparative advantages identified in the evaluations and ITC's core business model can be interpreted as a confirmation of ITC's overall orientation.

xxxi. From a systemic change perspective though, it requires ITC to partner and generate value with a complex group of stakeholders who face different challenges but share a common goal. Overall, relations with partners were generally assessed positively, e.g. projects were well aligned to partners' needs and specific situations. In some cases, however, the selection of suitable host organizations capable of ensuring a self-sustaining service delivery model

proved difficult. The increased presence of ITC in the field can be expected to have a positive impact in this respect, as it improves ITC's capacity to understand and manage complex contexts, including the selection of and cooperation with diverse sets of partner organizations.

Conclusion III: Organizational strengths of ITC

xxxii. The Strategic Plan 2022-25 identifies four organizational strengths – trust, expertise, connectedness, and agility – as the foundation of ITC's value proposition. And indeed, evaluation reports and reviews pointed to "expertise" and "agility" as particular strengths. In terms of agility, for example, several reports noted that the projects successfully adapted their tools, processes and intervention areas over time to remain relevant despite changing circumstances (e.g. Covid-19 Pandemic). This is a testament to ITC's capacity for proactive management and rapid adaptation. It is also a reflection of ITC's ability to be nimble – a characteristic that had already been positively highlighted in previous AESRs.

xxxiii. Alignment with clients' needs proved to be another general strength. This strong performance could be partly attributed to the fact that some form of needs assessment was carried out. For example, in-house tools such as CUBED were regularly used. This trend is certainly a good development. At the same time, there are indications that not all of these tools are designed to optimally support projects in their needs assessment tasks - especially in terms of adaptability to project contexts - or that these tools are not always used optimally. The importance of developing a corporate needs assessment model has been acknowledged within ITC. An internal strategic planning working group recently conducted the mapping of the existing ITC diagnostic tools and methods for needs assessment. It recommended adopting a coherent approach based on the existing integrated / interlinked ITC diagnostic tools and methods – to be used in a modular and flexible manner, according to relevance and resource availability.

Recommendation 2: Make projects even more responsive to beneficiaries' needs through an expanded in-house toolbox:

xxxiv. Keep on encouraging projects to align with beneficiaries' needs, while further strengthening the toolbox available to do so. To increase the adaptability and operational simplicity of ITC needs assessment tools, and their use as project baselines, undertake a conscious and planned effort to further developing the in-house toolbox available. Provide corporate guidance for how to conduct specific needs assessments for project design, and general needs assessments on trade and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

This recommendation is addressed to the Division of Country Programmes in cooperation with the technical sections that focus on specific beneficiary groups.

Conclusion IV: Harnessing synergies through collaboration and cooperation

xxxv. The guiding principles of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 state that ITC's decision-making processes are based on the values of collaboration and coordination. The AESR analysis suggests that there is a solid basis for achieving this. While (only) one evaluation report noted the existence

of silos within ITC, there was ample evidence of successful in-house collaboration. The vast majority of projects systematically sought and used synergies with other ITC projects.

xxxvi. In addition, some positive examples of concrete collaborations with other UN organizations were noted (joint or co-implementation of programmes; facilitation of liaising with Ministries, support from UN local offices in organizing activities in-country) – there could have been more opportunities for such collaborations. The AESR 2020 had already observed that alignment with UN reform at the country level was taking place but needed more structure. Its recommendation to implement a corporate strategy for engagement in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) was accepted. The findings of this AESR underline the relevance of this recommendation.

xxxvii. Harnessing synergies with co-implementing agencies sometimes proved difficult. Ideally, the ground for harnessing synergies between project or programme components implemented by different co-implementing agencies is laid already at the design phase when ITC is often consulted, but usually without having a real influence on design decisions. Also, in the implementation phase, many factors that are outside the control of ITC affect the overall coherence of such multi-agency programmes. That being said, relatively simple measures such as regular and trustworthy communication among implementing agencies can be important in improving the results of the overall programme - and of ITC's operations as part of it.

xxxviii. Overall, it seems that – although successful (especially in-house) collaboration was observed in several cases – the potential of cooperation is not yet fully leveraged. Further systematic intensification of cooperation within the UN family as well as co-implementing agencies could bring significant benefits in terms of improving coherence and cost-effectiveness of projects. At the same time, this could be a piece of the puzzle to improving the sustainability of projects.

Recommendation 3: Optimize collaboration with co-implementing agencies in multi-partner projects:

xxxix. Encourage ITC projects to plan for a systematic regular exchange with co-implementing agencies and for increased collaboration to stimulate a better use of synergies.

This recommendation is addressed to the Project Managers of multi-agency projects in collaboration with ITC staff in the field, when possible.

Conclusion V: Results Based Management

xl. In its Strategic Plan 2022-25, ITC pledged to further build on its organizational strength "trust" by maintaining and strengthening tools such as those for RBM. Moreover, two RBM-related recommendations of the 2020 AESR have been integrated into the Strategic Plan, one on theories of change and another on M&E systems. The relevance of these recommendations was confirmed by our findings.

xli. This year's AESR was able to draw on the several RBM reports commissioned by IEU over the past three years. These reports provide deep insights into the RBM approaches currently in

use and detailed suggestions for possible ways forward. Their findings were confirmed by project and programme evaluations reviewed for this AESR. In summary, while some projects are using sound M&E tools for planning, managing, and reporting on results, comprehensive M&E systems for measuring impact do not yet appear to be widespread.

Recommendation 4: Continue efforts to strengthen RBM tools:

xlii. Make the RBM tools of ITC projects more robust and consistent, e.g. by offering more generic tools that can be adapted to the needs of a particular project. The overall aim should be to provide project managers with the means to select and apply an appropriate RBM approach, suited to the size, intervention area, and other characteristics of their particular project, while ensuring that projects follow a common set of client-focused and purpose-driven RBM principles. This should ensure that RBM is used as a management tool for steering, including continuous adjustment, of projects, and would be particularly important for complex projects.

This recommendation is addressed to the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (Office of the Executive Director).

Conclusion VI: Value for Money (VfM)

xliii. In addition to narrative reporting, funders increasingly require more detailed – and in some cases quantitative – analysis of efficiency in terms of value for money. Some projects have pioneered in this area. Others should follow suit as this trend is also reflected in ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-25. In its foreword, the Executive Director announced that ITC will continue to monitor development results, including by ensuring VfM. Indeed, improved VfM reporting not only strengthens ITC's accountability to its funders but also enhances its ability to continuously adapt its projects for greater efficiency. Similarly, VfM can be seen as an element of ITC's ability to demonstrate results which, in turn, is part of ITC's value proposition.

xliv. The level of sophistication with which some ITC projects report on VfM has developed quite rapidly and the toolbox available for VfM reporting is growing. Of particular importance is the fact that the Umoja financial management system offers the possibility to allocate costs to deliverables, which add up at outcome/country levels. Despite these positive developments, many challenges remain as these VfM techniques are still only implemented by a fairly limited number of projects.

xlv. A particular concern is measuring, and ideally quantifying, the benefits of policy reform. Such support usually requires longer-term processes in which many influencing factors come into play. In such cases, it is often difficult to establish causal links between an intervention and an observed change, leading to a so-called "attribution gap". This challenge is not specific to VfM but relates to measuring the impact of policy support in general. Further developing ITC's toolbox for measuring change could therefore not only facilitate VfM reporting but also – in combination with high-quality M&E systems – contribute to solving the problem of attribution in estimating impact at the policy level. This would thus confirm and reinforce ITC's position in this important intervention area. Since the development of such tools to assess the impact

of policy reforms goes beyond the topic of VfM, it could be further explored within other, ongoing strands of work, e.g. the sustainability reviews.

<u>Recommendation 5: Collect and disseminate the VfM experience gained by some ITC projects:</u>

xlvi. Conduct an assessment of current VfM practices in ITC projects, draw lessons learned and use this knowledge to provide more structured guidance for future projects on the use of VfM techniques and M&E disciplines.

This recommendation is addressed to the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (Office of the Executive Director) and the Financial Management Section (Division of Programme Support).

1. Introduction and methodology

1. The **objective** of this year's Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report (AESR) is the same as that of the previous nine AESRs: to facilitate learning by synthesizing the key messages emerging from recent evaluation reports and related reviews. This year, documents from 2020 and 2021 are covered.[4] Based on these findings, the AESR draws conclusions and recommendations aimed at ITC management and other staff.

2. The AESR also monitors the extent to which recommendations from previous editions have been followed. To this end, reports from ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) on the implementation of recommendations from previous independent evaluations are included in the annex (Annex 5).

3. The 2022 AESR also includes a new perspective. As part of the management response to the 2021 AESR, the IEU has been tasked with analyzing the lessons learned from the implementation of ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-25. The 2022 AESR will contribute to this task by assessing the findings from evaluation reports and related reviews against the main dimensions of the Strategic Plan, thereby establishing a form of baseline against which to track progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan in the coming years.

4. The 2022 AESR is structured around the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability). In summarizing the findings for each of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the

> *Throughout Chapter 2, **research questions** (RQ) are positioned in **boxes** next to the related text so that the reader can easily identify them.*

AESR links them to ITC's objectives set out in the Strategic Plan 2022-25. A **methodological framework** (see Annex 3) has been developed for this purpose. Each of its fields contains criteria, in the form of research questions, against which the respective Strategic Plan objective (columns) can be assessed in relation to each of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (rows).

5. The results of these **research questions** are presented in Chapter 2 ("Findings"), insofar as the assessments and reviews in 2020 and 2021 provided observations that allowed such conclusions to be drawn. In addition to an analysis guided by the OECD/DAC criteria (Chapters 2.1 – 2.6), the AESR includes a summary of the findings per the Strategic Plan objective (Chapter 2.7).

6. The main **method of data collection** was desk research, complemented by interviews with selected ITC staff.

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[4] The reason why this 2022 AESR covers documents from two years (instead one) is that the 2021 AESR had focused on reviewing the ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and did not provide an in-depth synthesis of findings from project and programme evaluations.

7. Table 1 shows the different types of evaluation reports and related documents reviewed for this AESR (see also Annex 1 for a complete list of all document titles, by type).

Table 1: Types of evaluation reports and related documents

	Independent and joint evaluations	Self-evaluations	Funder-led evaluations and reviews	Sustainability reviews, reviews on Results Based Management	Project Completion Reports
Evaluation commissioner	IEU (one jointly with UNCDF)	Project manager	Funder	IEU (jointly with the EIF)	-
Evaluation or reporting teams	IEU / External evaluator	ITC project manager or external evaluator	ITC project manager, staff from co-implementing agency or external evaluator	IEU / External evaluator	Internal (ITC project)
Independence	High	Medium	High (external evaluations); Medium (others)	High	Medium
Number in 2022 AESR	3	4	9	10	53

8. The analysis of the documents was carried out in several steps. An initial general examination served as a basis for the design of the research methodology. Thereafter, an in-depth review enabled the extraction of the key messages related to the research questions contained in the methodological framework. The information gathered from each document was then compared to identify patterns, trends, and other emerging lessons.

9. Some findings from the document review that were of particular interest to the IEU were corroborated through supplementary interviews (topics covered: intra-ITC coordination and measuring Value for Money (VfM)). Moreover, additional data on the Strategic Plan's objective of "leading the global dialogue" was collected through interviews with ITC staff responsible for communications and outreach activities. A total of seven interviews were conducted with other ITC staff (other than IEU; see Annex 2).

10. The review and analysis of documents complemented by interviews formed the basis for the **findings** contained in Chapter 2. The **conclusions** (Chapter 3) summarize and further condense these findings. Each conclusion is linked to the performance of ITC in relation to the objectives of the Strategic Plan objectives and the evaluation criteria. They are generalizations

of project-related findings and, as such, are intended to provide lessons learned that could be useful beyond the project-specific case.

11. Most conclusions are followed by a **recommendation** that aims to offer guidance for further improving the performance of ITC's strategic management, its projects, and the strategic build-up of ITC's portfolio. The conclusions and recommendations do not address all aspects that emerge in the findings. Instead, they focus on the clearest patterns and trends and on the aspects that are within ITC's sphere of influence. Thus, they mainly refer to the findings that seem to have the greatest potential for unlocking positive change.

12. One **limitation** encountered was the wide variety of evaluation-related documents. They include various types of information, ranging from full-fledged independent evaluations to self-reporting of project implementation progress to funders. As a result, they vary considerably in depth and quality (descriptive or analytical/critical). This limits the extent to which common patterns could be identified.

13. Another limitation is that all evaluations are inherently backward looking. The projects to which the documents refer were designed several years ago. Therefore, they do not fully reflect the current situation. The challenges identified in the AESR may have already been resolved.

14. This year's AESR is also not expected to provide information on the current state of implementation of the Strategic Plan, for the simple reason that the projects and programmes covered were designed and implemented under previous strategic guidelines.

15. What the AESR can provide, however, is an analysis of the extent to which the priorities and objectives of the Strategic Plan were already reflected in ITC interventions before the development of the Strategic Plan. In this sense, the findings of the 2022 AESR can serve as a baseline against which future AESRs and the planned mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan can track progress. The methodological framework for this AESR has been developed to serve this future analysis as well. However, it should not be seen as static, but rather as a work in progress, that may well be adapted over time.

2. Findings

2.1 Relevance

16. Relevance is about doing the right thing, more specifically about ensuring that the objectives of an intervention are consistent with international and partner countries' policies, ITC's corporate goals and the needs of the beneficiaries.

17. The evaluation reports and reviews analyzed for this AESR generally confirmed that ITC interventions targeted **priority needs** identified in international and partner country policies and strategies. All interventions focused, in one way or another, on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through trade-related interventions.

> RQ 1.4.2: Design focusses at the relevance of trade for achieving the SDGs.

> RQ 1.1.1: Conformity of projects to ITC's Vision, mission, and principles.

18. Own analysis conducted as part of this AESR indicates that most of the projects were also **aligned with the ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-25**. ITC's vision of a world where trade builds inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economies, seems to be well implemented.

19. The same statement – albeit with some limitations – seems to apply to ITC's mission, which provides a more detailed description of how its vision is to be achieved, namely "by boosting the competitiveness of MSMEs … in developing countries". While the focus on MSME competitiveness is well reflected in the ITC portfolio reviewed, four projects targeted stakeholders in a high-income developing country (Qatar[5]) and in developed countries (European Union[6]). This could be seen as somehow contradictory to ITC's mission. At the same time, the relevance of these projects can be justified to some extent by the value that the high-income country perspective brings to the rest of ITC's work, as outlined in the PCRs of two of these projects.[7]

> RQ 1.2.2: Design is client-focused.

20. The design of the projects was generally **client-focused**. For instance, the *evaluation of the Ethical Fashion Initiative in Mali and Burkina Faso* found that the project was relevant for, and aligned with, the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. The same conclusion was reached in the *evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) IV*. The latter, however, also observed that

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[5] Qatar: Foundations for B2B E-Commerce; Qatar: Bar code initiative for SME trade development

[6] SheTrades: using data to address constraints to extra-EU trade; Business survey study to identify the information needs' of EU services exporters

[7] PCR of the project "Business survey study to identify the information needs' of EU services exporters": "Survey results allow ITC to gain a "developed country perspective" over trade obstacles that could help to understand the missing links between EU and extra-EU partners with a view to identifying ways to strengthen business links and best practices (in terms of information sharing) that can add value to ITC TRTA in developing countries."
PCR of the project "Qatar: Bar code initiative for SME trade development": "ITC deepened its relationship … in relation to the use of traceability systems in trade-related financing, controlling counterfeiting, Intellectual property abuses enterprise social inclusion and sustainability credentials. This learning and experience is now being used in new ITC projects that the Access to financing team is involved in."

some respondents – despite their overall positive appreciation of the support received – felt that some of the interventions were not fully adapted to their reality. According to this evaluation, this could be related to the fact that consultations in the design phase had not always included all stakeholders and sometimes took place after the project had already started.

21. The *Senegal and Ugandan NTF IV projects* provided examples of successful customized approaches: MSMEs were categorized as "gold", "silver", or "bronze", based on their level of maturity and export readiness, and support was adapted accordingly. The evaluation identified this as an important success factor.

> RQ 1.2.3: Design integrates modular and customized approach when offering core services.

22. Although projects were generally well matched to clients' needs, in two cases the final beneficiaries were not reached as intended: The *evaluation of ITC's performance in trade and market information* noted that MSMEs had difficulties using the tools and that they needed help interpreting the data, e.g. from BSOs. It was also reported that the tools were used less in ITC's priority countries than in the rest of the world.

23. For the *Libya Trade Academy*, low completion rates for online trainings were a challenge, although the project had adapted its approach by moving from linear to modular trainings (where users could access stand-alone modules, and by creating mobile-friendly content). The PCR of this project linked these low completion rates to the deteriorating security situation in the country. However, the evaluation also found that, while the learning platform already contained elements that encouraged participants to spend time on the platform (community-based discussions, gamification elements), more attractive incentives might have motivated learners to complete the modules. One example of such possible incentives was a grant offered to the top ten business plans with additional mentoring and coaching.

24. The use of different forms of **needs assessment** was documented. Stakeholder consultations were generally carried out during the design phase. In the case of the *Libya Trade Academy*, needs assessment had started even earlier. The design of the core product, an online course for young entrepreneurs, was prepared through a pilot project with a short, 12-hour training course. In most projects, more in-depth needs assessments were conducted after project approval, i.e. during project implementation, usually in its inception phase. Examples include a gap analysis carried out under the *"Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme" in Palestine*, or a market assessment on bottlenecks and policy-related challenges conducted in the ITC-implemented component *"Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa" (PIGA) of the project "Manufacturing Africa".*

> RQ 1.3.2: Use of client focused needs assessments.

25. ITC has a range of **in-house tools** for needs assessments and similar purposes. One of them is CUBED,[8] which is used for due diligence but also as a mini-benchmarking tool to assess institutional strengths and weaknesses for baselines. Evidence of such uses was, indeed, found in several evaluation reports. The *"Trade and Investment Project" in Myanmar* used

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[8] See report "Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change" p.6

CUBED as a due diligence method for selecting project partners. According to the mid-term evaluation of the *"Trade for Sustainable Development Hubs",* these hubs planned to use CUBED to gather evidence on the capacity of partner institutions to integrate the T4SD Hubs' offer into their services.

26. However, the same evaluation also pointed out the limitations of CUBED as a needs assessment tool: "CUBED assessments are not designed to plan and monitor institutional development comprehensively" (p22). The evaluation noted that there was another ITC tool specifically developed for this purpose – the institutional benchmarking tool - but it did not seem to allow the indicators to be adapted to the circumstances of a particular project.

27. Furthermore, the evaluation found that at least one of the partner institutions had already benefitted twice from a CUBED assessment. This clearly shows the need to take into account existing assessment results.

28. There is evidence that projects have managed to **align and continuously adapt** to clients' and partner countries' situations and needs, particularly to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. The project *"Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism" in Tanzania* managed to identify opportunities in local markets to respond to the negative effects on the tourism sector and reduced opportunities for producers in the supported value chains. To adapt

> RQ 1.3.3: Evidence of country ownership through the alignment and ongoing adaptation to clients'/partner country's situations and needs.

to the Covid-19 context, the *Myanmar tourism project (NTV IV)* adjusted its focus away from the European market towards regional and domestic markets. Similarly, the *Ethical Fashion Initiative in Mali* started producing and selling masks to compensate for losses in international sales of fashion products and to take advantage of e-commerce opportunities. This project had to change course again due to the deteriorating political situation. It started to promote the employment of fashion artists who had settled in the project region as internally displaced persons.

> RQ 1.4.1: Support of countries on WTO-related matters

29. Three projects were identified as having provided **support directly related to the World Trade Organization (WTO)**. These are the *Advancing Afghan Trade Project*, the project *Support to Facilitation of Trade between CEFTA Parties,* which facilitated the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, and the project *Supporting Sudan in its WTO accession*. At the same time, it can be said that all ITC projects are indirectly related to WTO matters, as they strengthen the ability of companies to trade by providing them with as a gateway to take advantage of the opportunities arising from trade agreements designed under the WTO.

30. In terms of **alignment with the cross-cutting objectives** (environment, human rights, gender equality, youth, and social responsibility), most evaluations found that gender was adequately addressed, in part by linking projects to ITC's SheTrades initiative.[9]

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[9] E.g. NTV IV Myanmar Trade and Investment Project; T4SD Hubs

31. With regard to environmental issues, a more differentiated picture emerges. In the case of sector-focused projects, the selection of the sector was regularly based on environmental considerations.[10] Green aspects were also directly supported in the specific case of voluntary sustainability

<div style="float: right; border: 1px solid blue; padding: 8px;">
RQ 1.6.1:
Alignment to cross-cutting objectives.
</div>

standards. Beyond that, however, green aspects were rarely proactively pursued. For instance, the evaluation of *NTF IV* remarked that approaches to creating positive impact on environmental sustainability (especially in sectors related to natural resources such as tourism and cacao) should have been further explored, e.g. through environmental impact assessments. More generally, the same evaluation found that additional contextual analysis of cross-cutting issues and issues related to conflict settings could have paved the way for a more robust project approach.

32. As far as human rights are concerned (e.g. labor standards, rights of ethnic minorities), they were discussed less frequently in the documents reviewed. An exception is the *NTF IV evaluation,* which found that a human rights analysis had indeed been carried out on certain aspects of the projects' context, albeit to a limited extent. According to this evaluation, more attention should have been paid to human rights in Myanmar to better understand the realities of ethnic minorities.

<div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 8px;">
RQ 1.7.1: Alignment to ITC's comparative advantages to respond to client needs, based on technical and operational capacities and organizational strengths.
</div>

33. In a few evaluations, some form of **comparative advantage** was found. In the *evaluation of ITC's performance on trade and market information,* the provision of bespoke data solutions tailored to specific needs was identified as an area where ITC has demonstrated a clear comparative advantage: *"There is no organization currently in a position to compete with ITC in an area like this, as they do not have the ability to provide data so rapidly or use automation to such an extent to facilitate that rapidity"* (p25).

34. In terms of support to BSOs, the *sustainability review of the IT & ITES Export Competitiveness project in Bangladesh* found that ITC was rated above average to leading in the landscape of organizations providing similar support.[11] A similar statement was made in the *Advancing Afghan Trade Project evaluation*, when it came to national export strategies – an area where ITC has traditionally been considered an expert. The evaluation noted that ITC is better placed than any other organization to lead processes to develop such strategies and to draw on a global network of expertise and data to inform the process.

35. However, the *NTF IV evaluation* contained a more nuanced assessment: It highlighted ITC's expertise in working with the private sector. At the same time, however, it recommended for projects with a multi-level ecosystem approach, the development of formal and concrete partnerships with other organizations involved in policy dialogue and institutional

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[10] E.g. Myanmar Trade and Investment Project, EU Bhutan Trade Support Programme
[11] ITC distinguished itself by understanding the local needs and context and incorporating this knowledge into processes and deliverables. Furthermore, the ITC network was praised as unique in offering global, regional, national and local networks.

strengthening. This could allow ITC to focus on its particular strengths, while remaining connected to efforts at the policy and institutional levels.

36. The precise organizational strengths that underpin these areas of comparative advantage cannot be fully explored within the context of this AESR. Overall, however, a link can be made to the four dimensions of ITC's **value proposition** (Trust, Expertise, Connectedness, Agility) of the Strategic Plan 2022-25, in particular through the observed role of technical experts and networks (Expertise) and the demonstrated use of tailored and innovative approaches (Agility).

2.2 Coherence

37. The "coherence" criterion assesses the compatibility of an intervention with other interventions in a country, sector, or institution. Internal coherence is about the use of synergies within ITC. Indeed, several project evaluations found evidence for positive **cooperation with other ITC projects**, in many cases with SheTrades.[12]

> RQ 2.2.2: Core services' roles and synergies within matrix are identified (design), and further developed (implementation).

38. Successful coordination within ITC has also been reported in other cases. Lessons learned from the *NTF IV Myanmar tourism project* informed the conceptualization of a SECO-funded project that started somewhat later in the same sector and country, but with a different, complementary regional focus. During the implementation phase, joint activities (e.g. COVID guidelines, knowledge platform) were organized. In another case, two projects worked together although they were in different sectors: *NTV IV Uganda* and *MARKUP Uganda,* with their support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and agriculture respectively. They exchanged regularly, for example by organizing an open discussion for companies from both sectors to identify and catalyze synergies between the IT and Agribusiness.[13] In The Gambia, the *Youth Empowerment Project* developed and tested approaches (e.g. a training model) that were then also used in the Gambian *Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth* project. The cooperation between these two (EU-funded) projects was so extensive that even joint Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed with partner organizations and joint contracts were concluded for the procurement of services.

39. Factors that enabled this cooperation include the later start of the projects (i.e. no parallel timelines – which facilitated the adaptation of already tested approaches), funding from the same source, the involvement of the same people (e.g. ITC staff, consultants) in the design and implementation of both projects, and the geographical proximity of local staff.

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[12] NTF IV Senegal and Uganda projects; Myanmar Trade and Investment Project; T4SD Hubs

[13] In the ongoing NTF V programme (which is not formally included in the sample analyzed in this AESR), the collaboration between these two sectors went even one step further. The country team of the Senegal NTF V project (focusing on ICT in agriculture) was subcontracted to implement the EU-funded PACAO Senegal project (focusing on ICT and two agricultural value chains), thus closely linking the implementation of these two projects.

40. Despite these positive examples from the field, *the evaluation of ITC's performance on trade and market information* still found **evidence for silos**: Access to data stored by the Trade and Market Intelligence (TMI) unit was not automatically available to all other ITC staff but was perceived as depending on personal relationships. While there seemed to be a tendency toward increased collaboration between TMI and other ITC sections and programmes, the evaluation pointed to the more general challenge that the financial sustainability of the Sections was tied to project funding. This, in turn, created an environment that set boundaries and limited information sharing.

> RQ 2.4.1: Strengths of partnerships within UN, as well as with WTO and other partners.

41. **In-country coordination with other development projects** was generally found to be appropriate. One evaluation observed particularly positive results of collaboration with other projects: In the case of the NTF IV programme, the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) not only acted as a funder for the programme (fully) implemented by ITC, but also developed a parallel project for each of ITC's country-level projects, which were implemented directly by CBI. These parallel projects were designed to take advantage of strong complementarities. In Myanmar, for example, the two projects coordinated their support during the design phases. ITC and CBI shared the thematic areas between themselves according to their particular expertise, some of which stemmed from previous experience in the country. CBI focused on destination marketing and coaching of tour operators as well as institutional strengthening of national tourism associations, while ITC covered the development of value chains, strengthening of tourism associations at sub-national and state-level as well as technical aspects of export marketing and branding. In the Mano River Region, CBI focused on technical assistance for (prospective) exporters and supported local BSOs in improving their services in cooperation with ITC.

42. Despite this generally good collaboration with other development projects, in four cases challenges were reported in exploiting **synergies with co-implementing agencies** with which, ITC was jointly implementing a project. Two of these cases were projects where ITC was one of the implementing partners for another UN organization. The *mid-term evaluation of the Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme in Palestine* found that synergistic linkages between activities carried out by the different implementing partners under this FAO-managed programme were sometimes not present or not as strong as they could have been. In the project *Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia,* the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) was responsible for overall project management, while the majority of one of the three components was directly managed by ITC. While the evaluation of this project found a strong partnership between ITC and UNCDF, it also observed some challenges in the design of the project, where the (laudable) attempt to combine different thematic initiatives[14] into one larger project may have had a detrimental effect on the impact of the individual interventions.

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[14] Local government finance, skills development and financial inclusion.

43. The other two cases where challenges in harnessing synergies within jointly implemented programmes were observed, concern actions funded by the European Union (EU). In the case of the programme *"Improving (re)integration of Returnees in Afghanistan",* the lack of a common vision and strategy resulted in three components not working together but, instead being implemented as separate projects. Finally, the *INTEGRA report* noted that the logframe for this action had been designed before the implementing agencies came on board. As two coordination activities (which were not the responsibility of ITC but of the other implementing agencies) had not yet been implemented, collaboration based on synergies between the implementing agencies had not taken place.

44. As part of the UN family, partnerships with other UN organizations are of particular relevance to ITC. Varying degrees of **strengths of such partnerships within the UN** were observed. Among the projects evaluated, three were co-implemented with other UN organizations.[15] This can be a fruitful basis for a high degree of cooperation within a jointly implemented project. However, in at least one case – namely the *Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme in Palestine* (see above) – synergies do not seem to have been fully realized.

45. In addition to the joint implementation of a project, other forms of collaboration within the UN family were found. For example, ITC projects cooperated with other UN organizations to liaise with national Ministries[16] or to manage in-country activities more easily thanks to the support of UN employees in local offices.[17]

46. Through the TMI Programme, ITC was involved as a "co-custodian" in the tracking of three SDG indicators and in another case contributed to the UN's common multi-country analysis for the Caribbean. However, the *evaluation of ITC's performance in trade and market information* observed that the programme's involvement in UN processes at the country and regional levels appeared "to be limited, ad-hoc and based on personal interest and commitment, rather than prioritized by the section or the organization" (p.45). It is fair to point out that more systematic support for UN Coordinated Country Assessments, for example with TMI data and analysis, would require the allocation of core resources for this purpose.

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[15] a) Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia: UNCDF implemented this EU-funded project. ITC was its key project partner and responsible for activities related to one of the three components.
b) Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme in Palestine: FAO acted as main implementing agency of the programme. ITC contributed by providing trainings on competitiveness and market access capacities.
c) Manufacturing Africa: ITC and World Bank Group were – in addition to McKinsey – implementing agencies of this project.

[16] Central Asian Trade Intelligence Portal.

[17] Sub-Saharan Africa: Improving food packaging for Small and Medium Agro-Enterprises.

47. Coherence can also be interpreted as the extent to which **ITC information tools** complement each other and those of other stakeholders. The *evaluation of ITC's performance on trade and market information* found that ITC tools are indeed complementary as they address different information needs. At the same time, the diversity of tools was not easy for users to manage, which affected internal coherence. The Global Trade Helpdesk is a one-stop shop for market information seekers and was said to be as a step in the right direction. However, the evaluation found that the integration of the tools could be further developed. In this context, it was also noted that multiple international organizations seem to collect data that is conceptually very similar, which creates room for rationalization.

> RQ 2.5.1: Coherence within ITC between different suppliers of information.
>
> RQ 2.5.2: ITC positioning builds on / supports, the work of stakeholders / partners.

2.3 Effectiveness

> RQ 3.2.1: Effectiveness in transforming activities into outputs; Effectiveness in achieving intermediate outcomes.

50. Effectiveness – understood as the **achievement of outputs and outcomes** – was assessed very positively in six[18] out of 16 projects or programs for which related information was available.[19] For example, the NTF IV evaluation states that the programme fulfilled most of its targets and that most of the results were achieved at the MSME level. Similarly, the evaluation of the *project Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan* praised ITC's results and the effectiveness of the integrated approach by which, ITC worked not only through (local) social enterprises but also directly with farmers down the value chain. Moreover, PIGA met or exceeded the majority of the output indicators.

51. For the other ten[20] of the 16 projects or programmes, evaluation reports or reviews reported a somewhat mixed picture in terms of effectiveness. In some instances, external factors were identified as an impediment to turning activities into the expected outcomes. While most outputs of the *Advancing Afghan Trade project* were achieved and ITC was praised for its professionalism and technical expertise, political instability, staff turnover within partner organizations and institutional rivalries were constraining factors for realizing the envisaged outcomes. In the same vein, not all outcome targets of the *SITA project* were fully met, due to external policy changes, political instability, weak investment environment, the emergence

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[18] *Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism in Tanzania; NTF IV; PIGA; MOPSE; Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan; Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme in Palestine.*

[19] An assessment of the criteria "effectiveness" was not possible in the case of three sustainability reviews (Nepal, Bangladesh, Senegal) due to their focus on specific aspects related to longer-term project results. Moreover, for two projects (*Myanmar Trade and Investment project* and *NTF IV*) two evaluation reports or reviews were included in the sample. They are counted only once in this analysis of the effectiveness criteria.

[20] *Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia*, *Trade & market information; Libya Trade Academy; T4SD Hubs; Myanmar Trade and Investment Project; Advancing Afghan Trade Project, l'Initiative de Mode Ethique au Burkina Faso et Mali; Bhutan Trade Support Programme; SITA; SheTrades Connect.*

of the COVID-19 pandemic and a cut in funding. Nevertheless, the project contributed significantly to strengthening its beneficiaries' ability to trade thanks to the project team's hands-on approach, direct communication with beneficiaries, and always-available mindset. In the case of the *Myanmar Trade and Investment project*, not all results could be achieved as it had to close down ahead of schedule after the 2021 *Coup d'Etat*.

52. A roughly similar distribution of effectiveness rating is found in the PCRs: Out of the 53 PCRs, 40 percent (21 PCRs) self-assessed their projects' effectiveness as highly satisfactory, 55 percent (29 PCRs) as satisfactory and 5 percent (3 PCRs) as moderately satisfactory. Interestingly, for projects for which both PCRs and evaluations are available, ratings also largely correspond.[21] This can be interpreted as sign of good quality of the self-assessments undertaken in the PCRs.

53. **Local presence** was highlighted as a significant success factor for the *T4SD Hubs*. One lead ITC expert per country was there responsible for day-to-day project management in the field. The evaluation found that their contribution was essential in coaching institutions and consultants. In the *NTF IV projects in Senegal and Uganda*, relocating the project offices to tech hubs proved important as it increased the collaboration with all stakeholders and allowed to accelerate the project team's understanding of the tech ecosystem.

> RQ 3.3.3: Contribution of local presence to effectiveness.

54. In the *Advancing Afghan Trade project*, which delivered its advisory services by international experts mainly remotely or during 2- to 3-week missions, concerns were raised by private sector partners about the limited field presence. Therefore, the evaluation recommended that the project's Kabul Co-ordination Unit housed in the compound of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), be strengthened in terms of personnel, status and decision-making authority.

55. Collaboration with UN field structures was also described for the *PCR of the Sub-Saharan Africa: Improving food packaging for Small and Medium Agro-Enterprises project,* where FAO conference rooms were used for project activities. Apart from these instances, the evaluations and other reviews did not mention any other cases of harnessing of synergies with operational capacities of local UN structures (in terms of sharing field offices/infrastructure), though this does not necessarily mean that such collaboration did not exist. The reason might simply be that this issue was not specifically analyzed or documented in these reports.

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[21] PCR rating "Highly satisfactory" for *MOPSE and* the *NTF IV projects* Myanmar, Senegal and Uganda; Rating "Satisfactory" for the *Advancing Afghan Trade, the Myanmar Trade and Investment Project and the NTF IV* project in the Mano River region; Rating "Moderately Satisfactory" for the *Libya Trade Academy*. For an overview of these projects' ratings from evaluation reports, please see the first two paragraphs of this section.

RQ 3.4.1: Contribution of all types of partnerships to results achieved, in particular, through technical partnerships.

56.   According to the Strategic Plan 2022-25, technical partnerships rationale is to provide ITC with access to knowledge and complementary competencies. They are usually based on some kind of formal agreement, such as a MoU. According to the evaluations, such **technical partnerships** played a significant role in ensuring project effectiveness in *NTF IV* (cooperation with CBI), *MOPSE* (partnership with Business France) and the project *Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan*. In the latter case, the evaluation commended ITC for its successful partnerships with the Herat University, Rehabilitation Association and Agriculture Development for Afghanistan, as well as private sector companies and social enterprises and encouraged the other two implementing agencies to adopt a similar approach by also partnering with local actors.

57. In terms of the **effectiveness of communication and information tools**, the evaluation of *ITC's performance on trade and market information* confirmed its leading position in this area. At the same time, it was noted that ITC's traditional comparative advantages have reached a peak as users' needs were

RQ 3.5.1: Evidence of strengthened position as leading source of information in the field of MSME and trade.

undergoing major changes. In part, ITC has responded by introducing new tools that cover less traditional areas and developing data products that provide additional analytics. However, the evaluation results suggest that ITC's in-house expertise in areas such as Big Data and artificial intelligence is relatively thin, suggesting that partnerships with organizations and experts in these areas will be important to maintain ITC's leadership position.

RQ 3.5.2: Use of innovative tools to produce content and reach audiences.

58. The **use of innovative tools** to produce content and reach the target audiences (RQ 3.5.2) was demonstrated in the *NTF IV projects,* where high-quality promotional videos were important for disseminating project success stories in the Mano River Region and Myanmar. Some videos even won international awards. Digital platforms were positively mentioned in the evaluation of *MOPSE* (development of an Agricultural Market Information System) and the *Libya Trade Academy* (courses offered through the Libus platform). In Libya, the project team adapted its approach to the digital needs of its target group (development of a mobile app; possibility to register through social media accounts instead of email addresses).

59. The sample of reports analyzed for this AESR included two instances of **thought leadership**: The *PCR of SheTrades: International workshop agreement on the definition of Women Owned Businesses* describes how ITC has supported the global definition of "women-owned businesses" through wide-ranging international consultations. The report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure*

RQ 3.5.3: Consolidated ITC status in thought leadership and advocacy on trade and sustainable development issues.

change" describes how SITA further developed the findings of a baseline survey to address a gap in the academic literature regarding the differential engagement of business in South-North vs South-South value chains. The results were presented at a high-level UN conference

and contributed significantly to the overall aim of SITA in making a stronger case for South-South cooperation.

60. The data on ITC's communication can provide further indications for assessing the effectiveness with which ITC contributes to global debates. It reveals that 36 books, papers or other items[22] were published in 2021. In the same year, ITC publications, including those from previous years, were downloaded 42,701 times, a 3% increase from 2020. Tracing the evaluation of these figures in the coming years – ideally complemented by data on contributions to external publications, on events, social media activities etc. – will shed light on the reach of ITC's work in the international discussion on trade and development, while also providing information on the extent to which the related objectives of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 have been successfully implemented.

2.4 Efficiency

61. Efficiency measures the extent to which the intervention delivers results in an economic and timely manner. Most evaluations refrained from assessing the financial efficiency. Instead, they rely mainly on the qualitative responses of respondents to assess the

> RQ 4.2.1: Ratio between inputs and outputs

ratio between inputs and outputs. For instance, the *evaluation of the Advancing Afghan Trade project* reported that stakeholders were generally very positive about the efficiency of project management. The *NTF IV evaluation* concluded that projects implemented activities in a cost-efficient manner by increasingly using local staff and local consultants and, in the case of Senegal and Uganda, by sharing resources (project manager) and using similar approaches to implementing project activities.

62. A few evaluations and reviews went a step further in assessing efficiency by also considering **Value for Money (VfM)**. This was particularly the case for projects funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) that had been required to report on VfM metrics. The exact VfM approach used in these projects varied over time and evolved along with the VfM guidelines developed by FCDO.[23]

63. Two projects from the sample examined, offer interesting lessons learned on VfM. The *SITA project* systematically tracked VfM from its inception phase and adapted its approach over the lifetime of the project based on lessons learned and the evolving FCDO guidelines. The establishment of its M&E system enabled the project to track not only (*i*) input costs (e.g. staff costs, recruitment) over time as percentage of total costs and (*ii*) costs per output and sector, but in addition, (*iii*) to calculate the cost of delivered outcomes through a cost-benefit analysis. In the case of SITA, these delivered outcomes (=benefits) achieved were mainly investments and export deals, the data for which were collected monthly by interviewing project stakeholders. Towards the end of the implementation period, a fourth VfM category

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[22] Of which 5 books, 16 papers, and 15 associated items.
[23] The latest and most detailed guidelines for monitoring and reporting VfM ("BSP Value for Money Approach Paper") were issued in December 2020.

was added, relating to (*iv*) equity.[24] To facilitate the collection and analyses of these VfM categories, SITA created a structure in its financial management system (UMOJA) that allowed each cost item to be tagged and thus assigned to an output and a sector. While SITA was the first ITC project to use such tags, others have followed suit, according to the project staff interviewed.

64. The FCDO-funded *Myanmar Trade and Investment Project* also reported on the various VfM metrics, but with partly different approaches than SITA due to its intervention area (support to policy processes and business support organizations, instead of SITA-type company level export and investment promotion) and its smaller size. In doing so, it applied the same VfM metric as SITA – in line with the FCDO guidelines (hence, metrics *i* to *iv* above). However, when analyzing how well inputs were converted into outcomes (metrics *iii*), it faced the challenge of having to calculate the benefits of the reform processes and institutional development. Rather than attempting to quantify these results, it described the gains achieved for beneficiaries in its final report – as required by the FCDO guidelines for cases where quantification is not possible.

65. Some evaluations reported **delays** in the implementation of project activities, for example related to the selection of value chains[25] or institutional challenges of partner institutions.[26] In many instances, the Covid-19 pandemic delayed project activities or impacted the path of their implementation (see also Chapter 2.1, Relevance).

66. The quality of the **intervention logic and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems** is a factor in determining the success of a project, including in terms of its efficiency. Several previous AESRs (e.g. AESR 2020) found that more detailed theories of change and better structured M&E systems could improve project results. This general conclusion is still valid. The standard tools seem to be applied and the minimum requirements are met. However, there seems to be still room for strengthening management for results. For example, the *evaluation of NTF IV* found that the M&E system provided sufficient and appropriate information for the most part. However, unclear links between project activities and the overall programme logic, as well as the lack of baseline data, hampered efforts to manage and assess performance.

> RQ 4.2.2: Quality of the projects' logframe / theory of change and of their further development into client-focused results chains.
>
> RQ 4.2.3: Adequacy of M&E systems used.

67. This picture is confirmed by a number of consistent reports reviewing the approaches for RBM used in ITC projects (see RBM reports in Annex 1). According to the "*Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects*", all projects analyzed met current reporting needs of funders and ITC's corporate-level reporting. At the same time, however, they did not meet most of the requirements of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standard for measuring results, which ITC aims to meet. For example, it

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[24] Interpreted by SITA as "Cost of improving the capacity/productivity of a woman owned/managed enterprise"

[25] Bhutan Trade Support Programme

[26] Advancing Afghan Trade

found that "results chains lack sufficient details on who or what is expected to change, and they do not show the flow of change from intermediate outcome to outcome and eventual impact" (p.9). It, thus, encouraged projects to use more detailed **intervention-specific results chains** that link project actions all the way up to change. Such intervention-specific results chains should not be used primarily for accountability purposes but should be understood as a knowledge tool for project management to update progress and steer the project. The report also found that the quality of M&E data varied from project to project and therefore, recommended the establishment of a clear quality control system with guidelines for minimum best practices in managing and measuring results.

68. The report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*" came to similar conclusions: While all ITC projects had logframes with indicators, risks, and assumptions, the underlying theory of change or a detailed results chain was not always elaborated. The report found that logframes, theories of change and results chains were often confused, conflated, or seen as a need to "tick boxes". A key challenge identified in it was how to reduce the time required to conduct monitoring and increase the time required to learn and adapt in response to the data and results. Therefore, it recommended to "consider common or broader solutions to simplify monitoring for projects without compromising on quality and creating space for learning and adaptive management" (p14).

69. The draft review "*Large ITC projects implementing good M&E practices before closure of inception phase*" echoes this finding: "Project design directives at ITC do not extend to the development of fully articulated M&E architectures beyond log-frame development. Instead, projects largely choose individual paths to achieving monitoring and reporting goals, which appear to be based on a combination of available resources, existing skills and experience, project management's individual philosophy/approach, and presumed oversight and supervisory guidance" (p2). Among other things, it recommended a set of **minimum standards** consisting of a theory of change (including results chains), a consolidated plan for M&E activities (including staffing, training, etc.), the establishment of a data collection system (including baseline data and a centralized beneficiary database), and the development of an adequate project-wide knowledge management system.

70. The **importance of M&E systems for the management of projects**, especially complex projects, was highlighted in the case study of the INTEGRA project. In this project, the creation of results chains and associated monitoring plans became a useful management tool that proved particularly relevant as the INTEGRA project coordinator did not have full responsibility for the teams implementing the various project components. The improved M&E tools enabled the project coordinator to successfully manage the implementation of the different components despite this project complex and challenging structure.

71. The report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*" also provided clear positive feedback on the M&E system used in several projects selected for this Review, due to their assumed use of M&E best practices. The report documents a range of **in-house tools** that ITC has developed for assessing and managing change, and highlights that these tools are considered useful by project managers and are used across projects. One example

is the CUBED benchmarking tool mentioned in Chapter 2.1. The report concluded that, although different tools were used on a *case-by-case* basis in different projects, this observed trend was encouraging as it could help to standardize assessments overall, allowing for faster and better quality survey administration. If used properly, these tools could ensure the evaluability of projects at different stages, from design to inception to implementation.

> **RQ 4.2.4:** Use monitoring and reporting information for real-time implementation assessment and course correction.

72. One way to increase efficiency is to use M&E information for steering project management. Examples of such adaptive management were again observed in the report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*", many of them related to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that while such examples are highly dependent on the attitude, values and skills of the individuals, guidance on mechanisms to encourage their use throughout the project cycle is also important, e.g. by designing M&E systems to allow flexibility or using monitoring data for feedback loops. The importance of **using M&E for adjusting interventions** based on positive and negative findings was also highlighted in the "*Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects*". This advocated for the development of a learning culture that requires all project staff to consider the impact of project activities and adjust interventions accordingly.

73. In addition to providing baseline values for tracking change over time, **baseline assessments** should also serve as a basis for targeting project activities and for providing information on project implementation in general. Using baselines in this way, for example as part of an enhancement of M&E tools, as recommended in the reports cited above, could allow projects to make more informed decisions, based on detailed knowledge of the needs and characteristics of their beneficiaries.

> **RQ 4.2.5:** Use of client-focused baseline assessment to underpin and guide the targeting of project activities.

> **RQ 4.3.2:** (Financial or in-kind) contribution from partners/clients.

74. **Partner contributions** are not only a sign of ownership but also increase the efficiency of the projects. In some projects, the partners provided office space free-of-charge.[27] In addition, in the *NTV IV Uganda and Senegal projects,* a cost-sharing approach was adopted for certain activities. The beneficiaries of the projects, SMEs and start-ups, paid themselves for their visas, accommodation and COVID-19 tests when they participated in the project activities.

> **RQ 4.4.1:** Contribution of all types of partnerships to efficiency, in particular, through local partnerships.

75. Some other types of **partnerships** were leveraged to enhance efficiency. Through a partnership with Amazon, start-ups supported by the *NTF IV* programme were able to receive Amazon Web Services credits worth USD 10,000 per start-up. In the area of

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[27] E.g. NTF IV Uganda project; Myanmar Trade and Investment Project

value chain development, a project in Ghana and Ethiopia[28] managed to attract co-investment to scale-up interventions to a larger number of farmers and beneficiaries thanks to the MOUs it granted to implementing partners. In Myanmar, additional support for beneficiaries of the *Trade and Investment Project* was leveraged from the EU-funded Arise Plus project, also implemented by ITC.

76. The *evaluation of ITC's performance in trade and market information* reported that ITC works with private sector actors to jointly develop and distribute tools, e.g. with the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi Alliance or with the International Chamber of Commerce. However, as these partnerships primarily consisted of creating customized access for selected corporate and donor partners based on a fee-based model, the evaluation encouraged ITC to pay more attention to ensuring that such collaborations have spillover effects for ITC target groups for whose benefit the tools were ultimately funded.

77. Partnerships and outsourcing were also used by many projects as practical solutions to overcome challenges in monitoring change, as noted in the report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*". Examples included outsourcing to a company, using partner institutions for data collection and monitoring, and mobilizing broader alliances with buyers and other stakeholders in the value chain.

78. To further improve the quality of the **approach and metrics used to assess performance**, the *evaluation of ITC's performance on trade and market information* recommended upgrading ITC's ability to track the actual use of its market analysis tools. The tracking systems collected data on registered users of certain tools but did not comprehensively track usage by non-registered users. In addition, the annual survey conducted to respond to corporate and funder reporting indicators was sent only to a subset defined as "frequent" users. The quality of the survey therefore suffered from biased sampling. Based on these

> RQ 4.5.3: Quality of approach and metrics used to assess the performance of tools.
>
> RQ 4.6.1: Performance on purpose-driven identity objectives tracked and used through feedback loops for learning, for internal organizational decisions.

observations, the evaluation highlighted the need for more comprehensive feedback on the usefulness of the tools for the intended target groups. This would allow ITC to better track its performance and adjust its tools based on the results of these feedback loops.

> RQ 4.7.2: Evaluative learning integrated into programmatic and resource allocation decisions.

79. Some evaluation reports discovered best practice examples of adaptive management through **evaluative learning.** For example, in the *NTF IV Mano River project*, the initial plan to start activities in Sierra Leone (and only later in the other countries of the Mano River Region) was reversed after the midterm self-evaluation concluded that such a phased approach was of limited utility. This was seen as an important improvement that ensured that each country could move forward on its own terms without delay.

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[28] "Innovative MSME and Value Chain development through Alliances in cocoa coffee and associated crops sectors in Ghana and Ethiopia"

2.5 Impact

80. At the impact level, ITC aims to contribute to inclusion, sustainability, and prosperity, or, in other words, to contribute to people, planet and prosperity, underpinned by peace and partnerships. The results framework of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 also includes **five corporate indicators** that provide some measure of these objectives (see Table 3).

Table 3: Strategic Plan 2022-2025 *corporate indicators at impact level*

Prosperity: # of jobs created, supported, or maintained; changes to value chains that support development
People: Focus on women, youth, and other people in vulnerable situations (the poor, refugees, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups)
Planet: Sustainable resource management, sustainable production and consumption, climate change action
Peace: ITC % delivery in countries in armed conflict or at risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict
Partnerships: Agreements with partners that commit to extending services to MSMEs

81. Indeed, evaluation reports and reviews (e.g. *NTF IV, PIGA*) cited several cases where jobs were created or maintained. Some projects have had a positive impact on women's lives and contributed to the corporate indicator on vulnerable populations (*Ethical Fashion Initiative in Burkina Faso and Mali* and *SheTrades Connect*).

82. Other projects operated in conflict prone or affected areas (Afghanistan, Libya, Mali /Burkina Faso, Myanmar) and thus, contributed to the peace-related indicator (see Table 3). Overall, the picture that emerges is that the projects reviewed are already well aligned with the corporate indicators at the impact level**,** even

> RQ 5.1.1: Contribution to economies that are more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economies.

though these projects were designed before the Strategic Plan 2022-25. Having said this, we observe a weaker representation of projects that contribute to the indicator on sustainable resource management, with environmental impacts being a key dimension only in the T4SH Hubs project.

83. Regarding the achievement of the impact targets set by the projects and in the achievement of unintended positive or negative effects (RQ 5.2.1), most evaluations found evidence of **positive impact generation**, but without providing more precise quantitative estimates. In a few cases, impacts were quantified. The *PIGA evaluation* reported the creation of an estimated 2,989 jobs, 77% of which were for women and 20% for under-24s. The evaluation of the *Ethical Fashion Initiative in Burkina Faso and Mali* found that the increase in income of direct beneficiaries increased by 340% (this figure was only reported for Burkina Faso) and a total of 2,427 jobs were created in the two project countries.

84. Two other cases of in-depth impact measurement were mentioned in the evaluation reports analyzed. In the project *Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan*, ITC developed a dashboard system to track progress in income improvement for the target group and in

terms of overall economic value generated by the social enterprises. In The Gambia, the midterm evaluation of the project "*Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth*" mentioned that the project was setting up a systematic mechanism to document beneficiaries' employment after they had completed the training provided by ITC. The use of this method would not only provide evidence of job creation, but also of the career progression pathways that opened up for the project's beneficiaries.

RQ 5.6.2: Achievement of impact related to cross-cutting objectives.

85.   The evaluation of the *Ethical Fashion Initiative in Burkina Faso and Mali* is a best practice example as it provides a detailed description of the achievement of impact related to gender. It was found that the additional income generated with the support of the project enabled the beneficiary women to reduce the most arduous household tasks, for example by purchasing gas kitchens. The nurseries set up under the project enabled the women to leave their young children during working hours. Participation in the project gave the women more recognition within the community and better access to decision-making processes. Awareness-raising events organized in collaboration with UN Women and the *HeforShe* programme were well received by participants and have reportedly begun to change household dynamics.

RQ 5.7.1: Adequacy of M&E systems for measuring impact.

86. This same evaluation was able to build on an adequate **M&E system for measuring impact.** Similarly, some other reports found that adequate M&E systems for impact measurement enabled the evaluated projects to demonstrate the existence of a link between the cause of an observed change and an identified intervention (the so-called "attribution" dimension).

87. However, an adequate M&E system for measuring impact does not yet appear to be a widespread good practice. In some evaluations, the lack of data was explicitly mentioned as a reason why a more accurate assessment of the impact achieved was not possible (e.g. *NTF IV*). This observation is also reflected in the "*Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects*", which found for its sample of eight large projects that "results measurement systems are not gathering enough data or information that can be used to substantiate overall attributable impact of the projects' work" (p34). It also found that attribution was not systematically considered when designing impact assessments of ITC projects. In the same vein, the report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*" expressed concerns about the ability of projects to address the issue of attributability, especially when it comes to capturing change at the policy level.

88. Nevertheless, positive examples were also found where projects tried to better **understand why change had occurred or not.** According to the report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*", the selected projects used a range of methods for this purpose. The wide range of verification measures used by each project varied from Rigorous Randomized Control Trials,[29] quasi-experimental methods to simpler methods of before-and-after comparison and comparing trends. The examples of more rigorous evaluation were mainly limited to interventions working at the micro level, where these methods can usually

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[29] INTEGRA project

be applied more appropriately. They were, therefore used to assess the impact on individuals rather than, for example, the impact of policy reforms. Most other projects that have measured change have used other, less rigorous methods. For example, *SITA* conducted an investment facilitation case study using interviews with 5-6 investors as a method to show what role the project played in decision-making.

2.6 Sustainability

89. Sustainability - i.e. the extent to which net benefits are likely to continue after the end of an intervention - is key for the longer-term success of projects. Factors that were found to have a positive effect on the sustainability of the results achieved included the use of models training of trainers,[30] cost-sharing with stakeholders[31] and more formal partnerships (e.g. MoUs) with local implementing stakeholders.[32]

90. One lesson learned from *a sustainability review* of a project in Tanzania[33] is that the **autonomy of key actors** is central to sustainability and that navigation and adaptation are skills that

> RQ 6.2.1: Sustainability of results achieved

should be developed during the project to ensure its sustainability. This requires a certain "level of flexibility in project management that should be reflected in the performance monitoring and reporting expectations of donors" (p6).

91. **Covid-19** proved to have negative impacts on sustainability in Senegal[34] (negative effects on the mango value chain and export markets) and in the Tanzania project mentioned above (reduced opportunities for producers who used to work with tourism-related activities). However, the *sustainability reviews* of these two projects provided evidence of how actors successfully mitigated these negative effects through adaptions.

92. In other projects, the lack of **suitability to local conditions** and difficulties in maintaining equipment threatened sustainability. The *sustainability review of the Tanzanian* project concluded that production gains and income increases remained above pre-project levels. However, it was also found that the greenhouses supported by the project were not always suitable for local climatic conditions and had to be moved to another location in the case of a project site. Again, it was found that the autonomy of the key actors - in this case through their ability to make the decision and enforce the move of the greenhouses to a more suitable location – was crucial for the sustainability of the project. The *sustainability review of the Senegalese project* concluded that the results in terms of strengthening the capacities of stakeholders in the Senegalese mango industry seem to hold up to date. However, threats to the sustainability of the project were also identified, particularly with regard to the maintenance of the equipment and materials provided.

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[30] NTV IV Uganda and Myanmar

[31] NTV IV Uganda and Senegal

[32] NTV IV programme; Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan; PCR of the project "Innovative MSME and Value Chain development through Alliances in cocoa coffee and associated crops sectors in Ghana and Ethiopia"

[33] Sustainability review of the project "Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism, Tanzania"

[34] Sustainability review of the project "Improving the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos"

93. In the *Mano River NTF IV project*, trainings were provided free of charge. This reliance on a traditional service delivery model without building a **self-sustaining service delivery model** reduced sustainability. In the *T4SD Hubs*, the idea was that host institutions would hire local experts trained by ITC or hire their own staff to deliver the coaching programme after the project ends. The evaluation, however, noted that this remained to be seen. It pointed out that the selection of suitable host organizations was key to ensuring that such integration of ITC tools and methods actually take place. It noted that the criteria ITC had used to select hosts for the T4SD Hub primarily assessed the risks of project implementation rather than the potential for the training programmes to continue. In these cases, it is uncertain whether the handover of the systems to partner institutions will succeed as originally planned. This points to the complexity involved in ensuring the sustainable use of the platforms and the trainings created by the projects.

RQ 6.2.2: Evidence of sustained (multi-year) engagement with partners for local follow up of results.

94. Evidence of **sustained, multi-year engagement** with partners was found in the evaluation of *NTF IV*, where Uganda and Myanmar had already been supported in the same sectors under NTF III. In contrast, the project duration in the Mano River project of NTF IV was considered too short to achieve sustainable results. In the case of *PIGA,* while investors were generally satisfied with the project, several of them noted that they would have preferred longer term support. Similarly, one investment promotion agency noted that longer-term support would have better suited its absorption capacity. Finally, in the PCRs that assessed projects with a duration of only one year, the duration was regularly described as insufficient.[35]

95. National ownership by the partner country is a prerequisite for sustainability, especially when it comes to policy processes. In a few cases, evaluations could not determine whether **policy documents and strategies** were used. According to the *sustainability review of the Nepalese export strategy design*, the project interviewees did not know whether the strategy had been implemented. Nevertheless, the sustainability of the project was considered high, as the strategy was still used as reference material in public institutions even several years after project completion. During the interviews for the *evaluation of the Advancing Afghan Trade project*, the most frequently asked question by stakeholders was whether the supported documents (including a national export strategy) would be implemented. However, a positive sign was that other development partners seemed to be starting to look at this national export strategy as a guiding framework for their work.

RQ 6.3.1: Country ownership of results achieved.

RQ 6.4.1: Contribution of all types of partnerships to sustainability.

96. Several projects experienced problems with **integrating platforms and training modules into partner organizations' service offering.** In the *Libyan Trade Academy*, the original plan to transfer the training platform to local universities had to be abandoned due to political instability. Instead, ITC agreed to host the virtual learning space until a suitable local partner has the capacity and willingness to do so.

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[35] e.g. in "Syria – Enabling through digital channels"

97. M&E – and its use in project management – can play a key role in ensuring sustainability: Two evaluations reported that **exit planning** was weak or absent.[36] In addition, **measuring impact after the end of projects** appears to be a common challenge. As

> RQ 6.6.1: Contribution of ITC performance objectives to sustainability.

the report "*Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change*" noted: "Beyond the anecdotal evidence, there are few mechanisms to follow up properly on what has worked and what has not" (p12). The five sustainability reviews that the ITC's IEU has conducted in recent years are a promising development in this regard. While not part of an institutionalized mechanism, they offer valuable insights into the longer-term sustainability of a few, selected projects.

98. This situation also complicated the task of the *sustainability reviews.* The report on Senegal, for example, highlighted the importance of using a more rigorous definition and analysis when integrating sustainability into projects. In the same vein, the report "*Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects*" found that while all projects reviewed had some information on the sustainability of change (e.g. stakeholder perceptions), they mostly lacked information on why some actors would be motivated to work towards the sustainability of project results. It therefore recommended defining sustainability indicators at the beneficiary level.

99. In the *sustainability review of the Nepalese export strategy design project,* the potential for more intensive collaboration within ITC after the completion of a project was recognized. In this project, the implementation of the officially endorsed export strategy proved difficult. The sustainability review therefore considered it crucial to mobilize further resources to follow-up on this project's work, e.g. through ITC regional and other relevant technical sections. Such **internal ITC value chains** could strengthen sustainability by ensuring continuity of the results achieved.

> RQ 6.7.1: ITC's comparative advantages to respond to client needs are consolidated and recognized.

This would pave the way for the consolidation and recognition of ITC's organizational strengths (e.g. RBM, risk management, M&E, expertise, innovation, internal coordination and cooperation) to meet clients' needs.

2.7 Baseline for assessing Strategic Plan 2022-25 implementation

100. The table below provides a baseline assessment for the implementation of ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-25. The following color code was used:
    - Green: well on track for achieving the Strategic Plan 2022-25
    - Orange: on track for achieving the Strategic Plan 2022-25, but with moderate risks
    - Red: not on track
    - Grey: inconclusive / no assessment possible due to lack of data

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[36] Mano River NTF IV project, Libya Trade Academy

Table 4: Baseline for assessing Strategic Plan 2022-25

	Color code assessment	Narrative assessment
Vision, mission, and principles	Green	- All projects are in line with ITC's vision and mission, with the exception of those few projects which target stakeholders outside developing countries. - Projects generally contribute to ITC's corporate indicators at impact level and, hence, to fulfilling its vision and mission.
Matrix approach (core services & impact areas) / framework for MSMEs	Orange	- In the evaluated (older) projects, only scattered support for green issues as a key dimension. - Generally good performance in terms of results achieved, in particular at the level of MSMEs. - Evidence found for successful in-house collaboration. Persistence of silos documented in one case. - Some challenges for ensuring sustainability observed.
Responding to country needs	Orange	- Good alignment with, and adaptation to, clients' needs. - Some evidence of customized and modular solutions (e.g. categorizing companies according to their level of preparedness; modular IT solutions). - In some cases, close involvement on the ground. In others, stakeholders called for more use of local resources (consultants, staff).
Engaging with the WTO and the UN / Partnering for purpose	Orange	- Within the sample of projects reviewed, some (limited) support for WTO processes was provided. - Successful instances of collaboration with UN agencies were found, though some reports point out the need for a more structured approach for UN collaboration. - Projects entered into a wide variety of partnerships to deliver support, e.g. with private companies, and other development actors (e.g. CBI), or for the purpose of outsourcing M&E tasks. - In several cases, synergies with co-implementing agency of the same project were not fully harnessed.
Leading the global conversation	Orange	- ITC is currently leading the provision of market and trade information. However, since users' needs are undergoing major changes, action is needed to keep this position. - Individual instances of though leadership found. - Cases detected where innovative tools were used to produce content and reach audiences (e.g. videos).
Purpose-driven identity, including cross-cutting objectives	Orange	- Gender tends to be well integrated in the interventions (e.g. through partnering with SheTrades). - Other cross-cutting topics, especially green topics, are usually not proactively pursued.
Organizational strengths / Value proposition	Orange	- Organizational strengths are related to ITC's hands-on approach and strong technical expertise, in particular when working with the private sector. - Successful adaptations to Covid-19 is a sign of a flexible and innovative mindset.

		- A range of in-house tools are used for project design and monitoring purposes (e.g. CUBED). - Opportunities for improvement on results-based management exist, e.g. using M&E tools for steering projects and a learning-led culture for project implementation.
Resource mobilization	Grey	*No assessment. The information contained in the evaluation reports and reviews does not allow for the formulation of solid findings.*

3. Conclusions and recommendations

101. Looking at the full range of findings and how they fit into the methodological framework (see Annex 3), a certain pattern emerges. The most distinct insights seem to come from the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria "relevance", "coherence" and "efficiency" (rows of the methodological framework), as well as from the Strategic Plan objective "matrix approach / framework for MSMEs" (first column of the methodological framework). This does not mean that ITC performed particularly well or poorly on these aspects. Rather, it suggests that the evaluation reports and reviews analyzed as part of this AESR, revealed particularly distinctive patterns and interesting observations, including areas for improvement, on these categories. They are, therefore, highlighted in the conclusions and recommendations below.

102. The findings of this AESR also provide insightful details on the other evaluation criteria, i.e. on "effectiveness", "impact" and "sustainability". However, these are less represented in the conclusions and recommendations. The reason for this is that the extent to which these findings offer common patterns – and thus the potential for generating higher-level insights – was less pronounced. This may be related to the fact that the projects were implemented under very different circumstances, which do not lend themselves to generalizations regarding the achievement of outcomes and impacts - and thus in relation to the evaluation criteria "effectiveness", "impact" and "sustainability".

103. Nevertheless, some general high-level conclusions can be drawn on all aspects evaluated. In the evaluation reports and reviews, effectiveness and impact were generally assessed positively, with some problems identified in certain aspects of sustainability. The relevance of the projects was generally rated as high, although some concerns were expressed regarding the integration of environmental aspects (see Recommendations 1 and 2). Areas for improvement were identified in the evaluation criteria "coherence" (Recommendation 3) and "efficiency" (Recommendations 4 and 5).

104. Regarding the Strategic Plan objectives, the ITC portfolio already seems to be well aligned with ITC's vision, mission and principles, as shown in the baseline for assessing the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 (Chapter 2.7). The other objectives seem to also be on track, but with moderate risks, so they will require more attention. This is not surprising considering that firstly, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 has just come into effect and secondly, the projects included in the reviewed sample were designed several years ago and therefore cannot fully reflect current strategic priorities.

105. This AESR suggests the development of several tools (see Recommendations 2, 4 and 5). This is consistent with the recommendation of last year's AESR to elaborate a set of sub-strategies that are conducive to achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (Recommendation 2). Such additional instruments could help to ensure that also those objectives of the Strategic Plan, which are currently assessed as requiring more attention, are reached.

106. Compared to AESRs of previous years, some similarities and contrasts can be identified. Like previous AESRs, this 2022 AESR confirms the need to further strengthen ITC systems for RBM,

while pointing to the commendable ongoing efforts in this regard (see Conclusion IV). Other observations suggest changes have occurred since the previous AESRs were conducted. For example, this AESR is the first to include insights on VfM, illustrating progress in measuring this aspect of efficiency (see Conclusion V). Compared to earlier AESRs, this AESR has analyzed in more detail the extent to which environmental issues have been taken into account in projects and programmes (see Conclusion I). This is in line with global developments related to the triple crisis (climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss) and increased focus on sustainability in the Strategic Plan 2022-25.

Conclusion I: Environmental aspects within the ITC portfolio

107. More than 10 years ago, ITC incorporated sustainable development issues beyond competitiveness, by starting to develop programmes on trade and poverty (now Ethical Fashion Industry), trade and women (now SheTrades) and trade and sustainability (now T4SD). Building on this experience, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 has brought sustainability issues to the forefront of ITC's strategic direction. It states that ITC will invest in its green transition offer, to make a greater contribution to addressing the global climate, biodiversity, and pollution crises. It will do this through its support for MSMEs to produce more sustainably, integrate into circular economies and take advantage of other new green trade opportunities. At the same time, the resilience of MSME to climate change needs to be strengthened. To achieve these objectives, the Strategic Plan 2022-25 highlights a number of factors, such as green finance for MSMEs, access to green technologies, services, and innovation.

108. This new focus on sustainability is also reflected in the fact that the titles of three[37] of the six new impact areas – and thus the matrix approach introduced by the Strategic Plan – refer to sustainability dimensions. This is a commendable development and is in line with the general trend in international cooperation to focus more on sustainability, especially in relation to climate issues.

109. An increased focus on sustainability would not only be consistent with the new impact areas. It would also be in line with the 2020 AESR recommendation to fully mainstream sustainable development good practices. This recommendation, along with the other five recommendations, was included in the Strategic Plan as actions to improve ITC performance.[38]

110. At the same time, it is important to turn the green transition into a just one. Supporting partner countries in taking advantage of new green trade opportunities is one aspect of it. Another is the need for investments in energy infrastructure and productive capacities required for creating green employment in developing countries. Such reflections should guide the implementation of the sustainability dimension of ITC's new Strategic Plan.

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[37] Sustainable and resilient value chains; Inclusive trade; Green trade
[38] See "Recommendations for improved ITC performance and responses in this Strategic Plan", Strategic Plan 2022-25, p51

111. The findings of this AESR show that aspects related to sustainability standards in value chains and to the participation of women in trade were well addressed in the sample of projects reviewed, while environmental issues were less extensively covered. Of the projects for which evaluations or reviews were available, only one project (*Trade for Sustainable Development Hubs*) was more explicitly focused on these aspects.

112. Apart from the question of whether a project aims to have a positive impact on the environment as one of its key objectives, environmental sustainability should be a cross-cutting issue in of the design and implementation of each project. This is necessary to ensure that unintended negative impacts are avoided and potentials for positive impacts are exploited. The AESR analysis showed that the selection of sectors was indeed regularly guided by environmental consideration of some form. At the same time, there was little evidence that more in-depth environmental impact assessments were systematically carried out for the projects examined (see Chapter 2.1 Relevance).

113. As the projects studied for this AESR were designed and implemented several years ago, new ITC projects may already have a stronger focus on environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, there is likely to be room for improvement.

→ **Recommendation 1: Bring the green transition to the forefront:**

114. When putting into practice the Strategic Plan 2022-25, pay particular attention to ensure environmental mainstreaming is considered more consistently in each ITC project, and environmental objectives are expressed explicitly in a larger number of projects.

This recommendation is addressed to the Trade and Environment Section (Division of Sustainable and Inclusive Trade) and the Project design Taskforce (Office of the Executive Director – Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance).

Conclusion II: ITC's comparative advantage

115. The evaluation reports mentioned various forms of comparative advantage. They ranged from providing data solutions, supporting BSOs and developing national export strategies to working with the private sector in general. All these intervention areas are part of ITC's core business model. From a supply perspective, ITC's core business model is considered as consisting of delivering trade and sustainable development related technical assistance through projects, and the offering of a range of public goods (e.g. trade information). This consistency between the comparative advantages identified by evaluations and ITC's core business model can be interpreted as confirmation of ITC's overall orientation.

116. From a systemic change perspective though, it requires ITC to partner and generate value with a complex group of stakeholders who face different challenges but share a common purpose. Overall, relations with partners were generally assessed positively, e.g. projects were well aligned to partners' needs and specific situations. In some cases, however, the selection of suitable host organizations capable of ensuring a self-sustaining service delivery model proved difficult. The increasing presence of ITC in the field is expected to have a positive impact in this respect, as it improves ITC's capacity to understand and manage

complex contexts, including the selection of and cooperation with diverse sets of partner organizations.

Conclusion III: ITC's organizational strengths

117. The Strategic Plan 2022-25 identifies four organizational strengths – trust, expertise, connectedness and agility – as foundation of ITC's value proposition. And indeed, evaluation reports and reviews pointed to "expertise" and "agility" as particular strengths (see 2.1 Relevance). In terms of agility, for example, several reports observed that the projects successfully adapted their tools, processes and intervention areas over time to remain relevant despite changing circumstances (e.g. Covid-19 Pandemic). This is a testament to ITC's ability for proactive management and rapid adaptation. It is also a reflection of ITC's ability to be nimble – a characteristic that had already been highlighted positively in previous AESRs.

118. Alignment with clients' needs proved to be another general strength. This strong performance could be partly attributed to the fact that some form of needs assessment was carried out. For example, in-house tools such as CUBED were regularly used. This trend is certainly a good development. At the same time there is evidence that not all of these in-house tools are designed to optimally support projects in their needs assessment tasks – especially in terms of adaptability to project contexts – or that these tools are not always used optimally (see Chapter 2.1 Relevance). The importance of developing a corporate needs assessment model has been acknowledged within ITC. An internal strategic planning working group recently conducted a mapping of the existing ITC diagnostic tools and methods for needs assessment. It recommended adopting a coherent approach based on the existing integrated / interlinked ITC diagnostic tools and methods – to be used in a modular and flexible manner, according to relevance and resource availability.

→ **Recommendation 2: Make projects even more responsive to beneficiaries' needs through an enhanced in-house toolbox:**

119. Continue to encourage projects to align with beneficiary' needs, while further strengthening the toolbox available to do so. To improve the adaptability and operational simplicity of ITC needs assessment tools, and their use as project baselines, make a conscious and planned effort to further develop the available in-house toolbox. Provide corporate guidance on how to conduct specific needs assessments for project design, and general needs assessments on trade and MSMEs.

This recommendation is addressed to the Division of Country Programmes in cooperation with the technical sections that focus on specific beneficiary groups.

Conclusion IV: Harnessing synergies through collaboration and cooperation

120. The guiding principles of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 states that ITC's decision-making processes are based on the values of collaboration and coordination. In relation to the objective of promoting decentralized decisions, it indicates that ITC will empower employees to delegate decisions while taking responsibility for outcomes, and will reduce and mitigate the causes of isolated or siloed behavior.

121. The AESR analysis suggests that there is a solid basis for achieving this: Chapter 2.2 (on Coherence) explored the extent to which opportunities for cooperation and collaboration within ITC and with other development partners were used. While (only) one evaluation report pointed to the existence of silos within ITC,[39] there was ample evidence of successful in-house collaboration. The vast majority of projects systematically sought and used synergies with other ITC projects.

122. The drivers of cooperative decision-making that make such cooperation possible include the later start of the projects,[40] funding from the same source, the involvement of the same people (e.g. ITC staff, consultants) in the design and implementation of both projects, and the geographical proximity of local staff.

123. In addition, a few positive examples of concrete collaborations were noted (joint or co-implementation with other UN organizations; on the ground collaboration to liaise with Ministries; support from UN local offices in organizing activities in-country) – there could have been opportunities for more such cooperation. The sample also included one more explicitly critical assessment: The *evaluation of ITC's performance in trade and market information* described interaction within the UN as limited and ad-hoc rather than strategically prioritized by the organization. The AESR 2020 had already noted that alignment with UN reform at the country level was taking place but needed more structure. Its recommendation to implement a corporate strategy for engagement in UNSDCF was accepted. The findings of this AESR underline the relevance of this recommendation.

124. Harnessing synergies with co-implementing agencies proved challenging according to four evaluation reports or reviews.[41] This is a considerable number of similar observations. Ideally, the ground for harnessing synergies among project or programme components implemented by different agencies is laid at design phase when ITC is regularly consulted but is usually without having real influence on design decisions. Also, in the implementation phase, many factors that are outside the control of ITC influence affect the overall coherence of such multi-agency programs. That being said, relatively simple measures such as regular and trustworthy communication between implementing agencies can be important in improving the results of the overall programme - and of ITC's operations as part of it.

125. Overall, it seems that – although successful (especially in-house) collaboration was observed in several cases – the potential of cooperation is not yet fully leveraged in all parts of the organization. Further systematic intensification of cooperation within the UN family as well as with co-implementing agencies could bring significant benefits in terms of improving the coherence and cost-effectiveness of projects. At the same time, this could be a piece of the puzzle to improving the sustainability of projects. In several projects, there were problems in handing over outputs (in most cases training platforms or training modules) to partner organizations. In other cases, it remained uncertain whether policy or strategy documents

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[39] *Evaluation of ITC's performance in trade & market information.*

[40] i.e. projects did not start in parallel. This facilitated the adaptation of already tested approaches.

[41] *Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan; State of Palestine: Reform and Development of Markets, Value Chains and Producers' Organizations; Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia; INTEGRA project.*

developed with the support from ITC projects would actually be implemented. Collaboration with other projects could ensure that such processes were supported, and thus that results would last beyond the end of the initial project.

→ Recommendation 3: Optimize cooperation with co-implementing agencies in multi-partner projects:

126. Encourage ITC projects to plan for a systematic regular exchange with co-implementing agencies and for increased collaboration to stimulate a better use of synergies.

     This recommendation is addressed to the Project Managers of multi-agency projects in collaboration with ITC staff in the field, when possible.

Conclusion V: Results Based Management

127. In its Strategic Plan 2022-25, ITC pledged to further build on its organizational strength "trust" by maintaining and strengthening tools such as those for RBM. Moreover, two RBM-related recommendations from the 2020 AESR have been integrated into the Strategic Plan 2022-25 (see above under Conclusion 1), one on theories of change and another on M&E systems. The relevance of these recommendations was confirmed by our findings (see Chapter 2.4 Efficiency).

128. This year's AESR was able to draw on the several RBM reports commissioned by IEU over the past three years. These reports provide deep insights into the RBM approaches currently in use in ITC projects and detailed suggestions for possible ways forward. Their findings were confirmed by project and program evaluations reviewed for this AESR. In a summary, while some projects are using sound M&E tools for planning, managing, and reporting on results, comprehensive M&E systems for measuring impact do not yet appear to be widespread.

129. One suggestion made[42] in the RBM reports is the to introduce an improved set of RBM minimum standards, including theories of change, consolidated plans for M&E activities, data collection systems and knowledge management system (see 2.4 Efficiency). This would entail revising and expanding the current RBM design and reporting requirements.[43]

130. A clear distinction should be made between the minimum M&E requirements set by the funder (e.g. through the funder's logframe template) on the one hand and a possible set of additional ITC tools on the other. While the former is usually created in the project's design phase (hence before the official start of the project), the latter are usually developed only at its inception phase – ideally with the involvement of the project team members and other key stakeholders. These two different types of tools need to build on each other in a complementary way. They differ in other aspects such as the level of detail and stakeholders involved in their development.

131. In the end, one of the most important functions of RBM tools is to create a shared understanding of the key results that a project intends to achieve at the different levels of

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[42] *Large ITC projects implementing good M&E practices before closure of inception phase,* draft report, 2022.
[43] *TIFC – Project Development in ITC*, manual; as well as the instructions for logframe design.

intervention (impact, outcome, output). Such understanding and commitment of stakeholders enables a project manager to use RBM tools for what they are intended for, namely as management tools for steering, including continuous adjustment, of project implementation.

132. As the INTEGRA report[44] has shown (see Chapter 2.4 on Efficiency), project coordinators can use RBM tools to successfully manage even – or especially – complex projects. The use of tools to manage challenging project set-ups is likely to become more important in the coming years as the number of field personnel increases, more and more projects are implemented in conflict-affected countries, and economic uncertainty increases. The special value of RBM tools for such more complex project environments is that they can be the basis for creating a shared vision among project staff. They can also help to negotiate the precise division of roles and responsibilities in day-to-day project implementation between the project manager and the rest of the project staff.

→ **Recommendation 4: Continue efforts to strengthen RBM tools**:

133. Make the RBM tools of ITC projects more robust and consistent, e.g. by offering more generic tools that can be adapted to the needs of a particular project. The overall aim should be to provide project managers with the means to select and apply an appropriate RBM approach, suited to the size, intervention area, and other characteristics of their particular project, while ensuring that projects follow a common set of client-focused and purpose-driven RBM principles. This should ensure that RBM is used as a management tool for steering, including continuous adjustment, of projects, and would be particularly important for complex projects.

This recommendation is addressed to the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (Office of the Executive Director).

Conclusion VI: Value for Money

134. Funders' requirements for proof of efficiency are becoming more stringent. In addition to softer, narrative reports, funders increasingly require more detailed – and in some cases quantitative – analysis in relation fo VfM. The FCDO was the first to do this, and others seem to be following suit. For instance, within German development cooperation, proving cost effectiveness ("*Wirtschaftlichkeit*") has become more important in recent years.

135. This trend is also reflected in ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-25: In its foreword, the Executive Director announced that ITC will continue to monitor and deliver development results, including by ensuring VfM. Indeed, improved VfM reporting not only strengthen ITC's accountability to its funders but also enhances its ability to continuously adapt its projects for

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[44] *Learnings from strengthening ITC INTEGRA project implementation and monitoring in preparation for an impact evaluation - A Case Study*, 2020.

greater efficiency. Similarly, VfM can be seen as an element of ITC's ability to demonstrate results which in turn is part of ITC's value proposition.[45]

136. The report, *"Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change",* gives a positive outlook on the potentials of VfM reporting. It observes that "while it is still difficult to speak of "best practice" when it comes to VfM – given the many challenges (e.g. differing costs related to country / regional context, type of intervention, length of time required to achieve policy or institutional results), with time and more examples from projects – VfM calculations could become easier to compare"(p9).

137. This positive assessment is reflected in our findings. The level of sophistication with which some ITC projects[46] report on VfM has developed quite rapidly (see Chapter 2.4 Efficiency). Thanks to the pioneering efforts of FCDO-funded projects, the toolbox available for VfM reporting is growing. Of particular importance is the fact that the financial Umoja management system offers the possibility to tag cost categories and allioate them to a specific output/activity/country, provided that such structure is set up at an early stage of the project (e.g. in its design or inception phase).

138. Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. A particular concern is measuring, and ideally quantifying, the benefits of policy reforms. Such support usually requires longer-term processes in which many influencing factors come into play. In such cases, it is often difficult to establish causal links between an intervention and an observed change, leading to a so-called "attribution gap". This challenge is not specific to VfM but relates to measuring the impact of policy support in general. For ITC, this challenge seems particularly relevant because support for some forms of policy reform processes – particularly for national export strategies – is considered by many as one of ITC's institutional strengths. Further developing the in-house toolbox for measuring such change could therefore not only facilitate VfM reporting, but also - in combination with high-quality M&E systems – contribute to solving the problem of attribution in estimating impact at the policy level. This would thus confirm and reinforce ITC's position in this important area of intervention. Since the development of such tools to assess the impact of policy reforms goes beyond the topic of VfM, it could be further explored within other, ongoing strands of work, e.g. the sustainability reviews.

→ **Recommendation 5: Collect and disseminate the VfM experience gained by some ITC projects:**

139. Conduct an assessment of current VfM practices in ITC projects, draw lessons learned and use this knowledge to provide more structured guidance for future projects on the use of VfM techniques and M&E disciplines.

   This recommendation is addressed to the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (Office of the Executive Director) and the Financial Management Section (Division of Programme Support)

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[45] Aspects related to showing results feature in ITC's value proposition both under *reliable procedures and protocols/RBM* ("trust") and under *project management* ("expertise"), Strategic Plan 2022-25, p24f.
[46] *SITA; Myanmar Trade and Investment Project.*

Annex 1: Documents covered by AESR 2022

I.   Independent and joint evaluations
- Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia, Mid-term evaluation report, 2021 (joint evaluation with UNCDF)
- Evaluation of ITC's performance in trade & market information, 2022
- Final evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase IV, 2022

II.   Self-evaluations
- Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) IV, Export Sector Competitiveness Programme, Midterm Self-Evaluation, 2020
- Final report of the self-evaluation of the Libya Trade Academy Project, 2020
- Midterm self-evaluation of the Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Hubs, 2020
- Myanmar Trade and Investment Project, project completion report, 2021

III.   Funder-led evaluations and reviews
- Final evaluation: Advancing Afghan Trade Project – Phase 1, final report, 2020
- Mid-term evaluation of the programme "Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan", final report, 2020
- Evaluation à mi-parcours de l'Initiative de Mode Ethique au Burkina Faso et Mali, final report, 2020
- Rapport d'évaluation finale sur la mise en œuvre du projet « Renforcement du Management Opérationnel des Programmes de Soutien à l'Exportation en faveur de vingt-et-un organismes de promotion du commerce de 21 Pays d'Afrique Sub-Saharienne (MOPSE)», 2020
- EU Bhutan Trade Support Programme, ROM report, 2021
- Midterm review of the Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme, State of Palestine, 2021
- Supporting Indian Trade and Investment in Africa (SITA), Final evaluation exercise report, 2021
- Manufacturing Africa, annual review 2020/21
- Trade and Investment Project, Myanmar, programme completion review (draft), 2021

IV.   Sustainability reviews
- Export Strategy Design, Nepal, 2021
- SheTrades Connect, 2021
- IT & ITES Export Competitiveness, Bangladesh, 2021
- Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism, Tanzania, 2021
- Improving the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos, 2021

V.   Reviews related to Results Based Management (RBM)
- Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects, 2020
- Learnings from strengthening ITC INTEGRA project implementation and monitoring in preparation for an impact evaluation - A Case Study, 2020
- Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change, 2020
- ITC M&E capacity assessment, 2021
- Large ITC projects implementing good M&E practices before closure of inception phase, draft report, 2022

VI.   Project Completion Reports
- Project Completion Report Synthesis 2020

- Project Completion Report Synthesis 2021
  PCRs dating from 2020:
- North Africa: Engaging MSMEs and the Arab diaspora to support export-driven economic growth
- Haiti: Ethical fashion initiative
- UEMOA: Projet d'Appui à la Compétitivité du Commerce et à l'Intégration Régional (PACCIR)
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Improving food packaging for Small and Medium Agro-Enterprises
- Alliances for Action: Development and piloting of Implementation Guidelines
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Sustainable Finance Conferences and Trainings for Financial Institutions and SMEs
- Syria: Enabling through digital channels
- Palestine: Linking refugees and young population in Gaza to market opportunities
- Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (RESI): Linking Refugees in Kenya to Market Opportunities (Components 1 & 2)
- Feasibility study for value addition in the fruit and vegetable sector of Sri Lanka
- Ukraine National Export Strategy
- NTM Survey Pakistan
- Qatar: Foundations for B2B E-Commerce
- SheTrades: using data to address constraints to extra-EU trade
- Fashion Show World Cotton Day
- Rwanda: Enabling the future of e-commerce
- Renforcement du Management opérationnel des OPC dans 20 Pays moins avancés
- Grenada: supporting the fresh fruit and vegetables food safety management systems
- South-South - ITC participation at BAPA+40, methodology and resource mobilization
- Market Price Information
- Zambia: Empowering the Zambia Credit Guarantee Scheme to Improve SME Access to Finance
- Vulnerable Migration & Forced Displacement Framework
- SheTrades and UPS partnership
- Promoting Labour Market Integration of Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Turkey
- Support to Facilitation of Trade between CEFTA Parties
- Supporting Sudan's WTO Membership Negotiations and Related Trade Policy Reforms
- State of Palestine: Enhance Employment of Refugees and Young Population in Gaza
- Afghanistan: Trade-related assistance
- Libya: Trade Academy
- Promperu - Institutional Benchmarking
- Central Asian Trade Intelligence Portal (CATI)
  PCRs dating from 2021:
- Ukraine: Linking SMEs in the fruit and vegetables industry to global and domestic value chains
- Sri Lanka: Trade related assistance
- Djibouti: Projet de développement et de promotion du tourisme
- Myanmar: Inclusive tourism development with focus on Kayah state (consolidation) & Tanintharyi (extension) (NTF IV)
- Uganda: Export development of IT and IT-enabled services (NTF IV)
- Senegal: Export development of IT and IT-enabled services (NTF IV)
- Myanmar Trade and Investment Project (TIP)
- SheTrades: International workshop agreement on the definition of Women Owned Businesses
- State of Palestine: Reform and Development of Markets, Value Chains and Producers' Organizations

- Mano River: Value Chain Development for Cocoa (NTF IV)
- SheTrades Coffee
- Poor Communities and Trade Programme
- Business survey study to identify the information needs' of EU services exporters
- Qatar: Bar code initiative for SME trade development
- Kenya: Supporting refugees to trade through digital agents model
- Innovative MSME and Value Chain development through Alliances in cocoa coffee and associated crops sectors in Ghana and Ethiopia
- Lesotho: National Trade Policy Implementation Programme and formulation of National Export Strategy Roadmap
- SheTrades: Empowering Women in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- Lebanon: Creating sustainable jobs and stable income
- Collecting data on women in extra-EU services trade in selected EU Member States
- MENA E-Commerce Entrepreneurship Knowledge Series
- Pacific: Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Network Analysis and Mapping to guide entrepreneurship support under UNCDF's Pacific Digital Economy Programme

Annex 2: Interviews with ITC staff

Date	Name	Project / topic covered
13.04.2022	Giulia Macola, Emilie Dairon	*NTF IV Myanmar project*: Intra-ITC cooperation
14.04.2022	Raimund Moser	*Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia:* Intra-ITC cooperation
14.04.2022	Tianyu Mao	*Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa / Manufacturing Africa:* Approach used for VfM reporting
20.04.2022	Tara Bhuwanee	*Supporting Indian Trade and Investment in Africa*: Approach used for VfM reporting
20.04.2022	Charles Roberge, Amaliia Mkhitarian	*Myanmar Trade and Investment Project*: Approach used for VfM reporting
26.04.2022	Martin Labbe	*NTF IV Uganda project*: Intra-ITC cooperation
26.04.2022	Natalie Domeisen, Sibylle Neuhaus	Data on ITC's publications and events

Annex 3: Methodological framework

Strategic Plan objectives

Criteria	Vision, mission, and principles (1)	Matrix approach (core services & impact areas) / framework for MSMEs (2)	Responding to country needs (3)	Engaging with the WTO and the UN / Partnering for purpose (4)	Leading the global conversation (5)	Purpose-driven identity, including cross-cutting objectives (6)	Organizational strengths / Value proposition (7)	Resource mobilization (8)
Relevance (1)	Conformity of projects with ITC's vision, mission and principles. (1.1.1.)	Design focusses on MSME competitiveness as the leverage to generate systemic change (SDGs). (1.2.1.) Design is client-focused. (1.2.2.) Design integrates modular and customized approach when offering core services. (1.2.3.)	Evidence of country leadership over the partnership for development with ITC. (1.3.1) Use of client focused needs assessments. (1.3.2.) Evidence of country ownership through the alignment and ongoing adaptation to clients'/partner country's situations and needs. (1.3.3.)	Support of countries on WTO-related matters (WTO agreements; accession…) (1.4.1.) Design focusses on the relevance of trade for achieving the SDGs (i.e. creating trade that is sustainable, inclusive and transformative). (1.4.2.)	Information provided to different types of constituencies is relevant to their knowledge and advocacy needs. (1.5.1.)	Alignment to cross-cutting objectives. (1.6.1.) Alignment to Strategic Plan responses to evaluation to improve ITC performance: (i.e. Sustainable development good practices; Project theories of change; M&E corporate system; Project results sustainability; Project field office performance and coordination; and, Engagement in UNSDCF). (1.6.2.)	Alignment to ITC's comparative advantages to respond to client needs, based on technical and operational capacities and organizational strengths. (1.7.1.)	Consistency with ITC's core mandate and strategic priorities. (1.8.1)

Coherence (2.)	Contribution of ITC's guiding principles and core values to coherence. (2.1.1.)	Scope of intervention in conformity with core services and impact areas. (2.2.1.) Core services' roles and synergies within matrix are identified (design), and further developed (implementation). (2.2.2.)	Evidence of inclusive development partnerships through the alignment to clients'/partner country's own priorities and policies, and systems and processes. (2.3.1.)	Strengths of partnerships within UN (engagement with UN Resident Coordinator offices; participation in the UNSDCF and CCA, in joint programming and M&E), as well as with WTO and other partners. (2.4.1.)	Coherence within ITC between different suppliers of information. (2.5.1.) ITC positioning builds on / supports, the work of stakeholders / partners. (2.5.2.)		Consistency between high-level long-term strategic objectives and their operationalization, including sub-strategies necessary for their achievement (such as the updated resource mobilization strategy). (2.7.1.)	Partnerships with entities with complementary strengths to coordinate resources for joint objectives and projects. (2.8.1.)
Effectiveness (3)	Quality of ITC's trade development interventions in building inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economies. (3.1.1.)	Effectiveness in transforming activities[47] into outputs[48]; Effectiveness in achieving intermediate outcomes[49] (3.2.1)	Effective use of hub concept and of hybrid delivery models. (3.3.1.) Effective use of operational capacity in the field, notably through work with UN country teams. (3.3.2.) Contribution of these forms of local presence to effectiveness. (3.3.3.)	Contribution of all types of partnerships to results achieved, in particular, through technical partnerships (e.g. through MoUs, joint delivery initiatives). (3.4.1.)	Evidence of strengthened position as leading source of information in the field of MSME and trade. (3.5.1.) Use of innovative tools to produce content and reach audiences. (3.5.2.) Consolidated ITC status in thought leadership and advocacy on trade and sustainable development issues. (3.5.3.)	Objectives related to ITC performance, gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as to environmental sustainability, pursued in all programmatic work. (3.6.1.)	Evidence of strategic nurturing and development of organizational strengths, to enable value proposition. (3.7.1.) Contribution of ITC's organizational strengths to results achieved (e.g. RBM, risk management, M&E, expertise, innovation, internal coordination and cooperation). (3.7.2.)	Evidence of a qualitative / quantitative deepening in relations with traditional funders and of a diversification to other funders. (3.8.1.)

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[47] Activities as defined in ITC's results framework: advise, train and coach, inform, and convene.

[48] Outputs as defined in ITC's results framework: improved consensus, increased knowledge and skills, and increased awareness.

[49] According to the ITC's result framework, the wording of intermediate outcomes is the same as that of core services. However, for the purpose of this analysis, we understand intermediate outcomes as the expected results achieved through the provision of the corresponding core services.

Efficiency (4)	Focus of ITC's support on sustainable and inclusive livelihoods. (4.1.1.)	Ratio between inputs and outputs. (4.2.1.) Quality of the projects' logframe / theory of change and of their further development into client-focused results chains. (4.2.2.) Adequacy of M&E systems used. (4.2.3.) Use monitoring and reporting information for real-time implementation assessment and course correction. (4.2.4.) Use of client-focused baseline assessment to underpin and guide the targeting of project activities. (4.2.5.) Use of project-wide knowledge management system for efficient project management. (4.2.6.)	Evidence of mutual accountability and transparency between the ITC and country partners and clients. (4.3.1.) (Financial or in-kind) contribution from partners/clients. (4.3.2.)	Contribution of all types of partnerships to efficiency, in particular, through local partnerships (decentralization of project functions; local implementing partners; deepened partnerships with BSOs). (4.4.1.)	Improved functionality, features, and user-friendliness of the tools through integration of modern information technology into production and distribution. (4.5.1.) Use of hybrid events to expand the audience base and increase participation and interaction. (4.5.2.) Quality of approach and metrics used to assess the performance of tools. (4.5.3.)	Performance on purpose-driven identity objectives, (including cross-cutting objectives), tracked, and used through feedback loops for learning, for internal organizational decisions. (4.6.1.) Use of opportunities for digitalization and the reduction of carbon footprint. (4.6.2.)	Poor performance identified, assessed, and addressed. (4.7.1.) Evaluative learning integrated into programmatic and resource allocation decisions. (4.7.2.) Adequacy of human resources. (4.7.3.) Adequacy of internal processes and decision-making processes. (4.7..) Adequacy of connectedness infrastructure. (4.7.5.)	Leveraging of in-country funds. (4.8.1.) Performance in terms of matching to changing funding environment and concerning new funding modalities and approaches. (4.8.2.)
Impact (5)	Contribution to economies that are more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous economies. (5.1.1.)	Achievement of outcomes and impacts; non-intended positive or negative effects. (5.2.1.)	ITC strengthens country's situation / ability to meet its national development objectives. (5.3.1.)	ITC's contribution within System-wide trade and sustainable development technical assistance value chains. (5.4.1.)	MSME and trade information supports constituencies to generate positive change. (5.5.1.)	Contribution of ITC performance objectives to the impact achieved. (5.6.1.) Achievement of impact related to cross-cutting objectives. (5.6.2.)	Adequacy of M&E systems for measuring impact. (5.7.1.)	ITC's contribution to growth of resources invested in trade and sustainable development. (5.8.1.)

Sustainability (6)	Long-term effects on inclusivity, sustainability, and prosperity. (6.1.1.)	Sustainability of results achieved (6.2.1.) Evidence of sustained (multi-year) engagement with partners for local follow up of results. (6.2.2.)	Country ownership of results achieved. (6.3.1.)	Contribution of all types of partnerships to sustainability. (6.4.1.)		Contribution of ITC performance objectives to sustainability. (6.6.1.) Sustainability of results related to cross-cutting objectives. (6.6.2.)	ITC's comparative advantages to respond to client needs are consolidated and recognized. (6.7.1.)	Learnings on organizational strengths and value proposition performance are fully embedded into resource mobilization. (6.8.1.) Development of thought leadership, and advocacy fully embedded into resource mobilization. (6.8.2.)

Annex 4: Brief description of evaluation reports and reviews

I.   Independent and joint evaluations

Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth in The Gambia, Mid-term evaluation report

The overall objective of the programme is to increase employment of women and youth and generate inclusive and sustainable growth in The Gambia. It was implemented by UNCDF. Four of six intervention areas in the skills development component (one out of three programme components) were managed directly by ITC. The evaluation followed a theory-based methodology, assessing actual programme performance against a Theory of Change.

The evaluation found that the programme was highly relevant to the priorities of the Government of The Gambia. It had been delivered efficiently, particularly given a difficult operating environment with relatively weak government structures, co-ordination and capacity. The programme's combined contribution to job creation had, however, been limited. This was primarily because the design of the programme is focused mainly on supply side aspects of the labor market.

The evaluation recommended to develop a separate SME job creation component to support SMEs in key sectors and facilitate access to finance. Moreover, it suggested that UNCDF and ITC could consider strengthening the demand side aspects of the skills development components.

Implementation period: 48 months from June 2018

Total budget: 15,105,000 EUR from the European Union

Evaluation of ITC's performance in trade & market information

Trade information is considered to relate to the Transparency in Trade Programme led by the organization's Trade and Market Intelligence Section (TMI). The programme aims to improve the trade and investment decisions of companies, notably small businesses, BSOs and policymakers by ensuring the collection, processing and free online dissemination of current trade and investment-related data and analytics through a set of web-based market analysis tools.

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide a comprehensive picture of what kind of trade and market information ITC provides today, and how well the organization analyses, distributes, and uses it in furtherance of its mandate.

The evaluation found that ITC's market analysis tools were widely recognized as providing high-quality, up to-date, comprehensive trade and market information. At the same time, it observed that ITC's traditional comparative advantages had reached a peak since user needs were undergoing major changes. In part, ITC had responded to this: First, it launched new tools that cover less traditional areas or fill perceived gaps in areas of traditional information needs. Second, ITC started developing data products that go beyond disseminating raw or lightly transformed data to provide additional analytics, or to integrate insights across platforms. Finally, it was offering bespoke data solutions that respond to particular demands, such as the African Trade Observatory.

The evaluation emphasized that further action and continuous enhancement remained necessary given the growing needs of economic operators to better understand international trade issues which are becoming more complex. Moreover, the effectiveness of the tools in reaching target audiences and responding to their needs should be further enhanced.

Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase IV, Final evaluation

The final evaluation covered the NTF IV projects carried out in Mano River (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), Myanmar, Senegal, and Uganda. It examined the NTF IV programme relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, value for money, and sustainability.

The evaluation found the overall rating of the NTF IV Programme to be satisfactory. NTF IV successfully built on lessons and achievements from NTF III as well as previous phases to make significant progress towards programme and project outcomes. This was commendable, particularly in light of the major challenges that emerged over the project lifecycle, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Myanmar's political crisis. It reflected a strong commitment by programme staff and other stakeholders to taking the real needs of various categories of beneficiaries into account to ensure the delivery of high-quality, relevant programme activities and outputs. Nevertheless, although the programme design was set to address the multi-stakeholder ecosystem surrounding the MSMEs as well as the latter themselves to ensure their competitiveness, the approach was less holistic than planned overall.

The evaluation recommended considering a longer programme lifecycle of five or even six years, to allow for a full participatory design phase before programme activities begin. In such an extensive design phase, time and resources should be invested in the development of robust, useful, and user-friendly RBM tools. To ensure projects within a similar programme are clearly linked to one another, ITC should always develop, ideally through an inclusive and collaborative process, a full Theory of Change at programme level, which clearly sets out expected change pathways and illustrates how each project contributes to results at the programme level.

Start and end date of the programme: 2017-2021 (5 years)

Total budget: 10,288,701 USD funded by the government of The Netherlands

II.   Self-evaluations

Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) IV, Export Sector Competitiveness Programme, midterm Self-Evaluation

The midterm evaluation covered the NTF IV projects carried out in Mano River (Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone), Myanmar, Senegal, and Uganda. The main objective was to assess the performance against intended outcomes and to guide decision-making for the rest of the program's implementation up to June 2021.

The evaluation assessed the aspects of program design, implementation, relevance, ownership, effectiveness, likely impact, efficiency in implementation, sustainability prospects, cross-cutting issues, and program steering and management. Overall, the program was assessed as satisfactory; the results were found to be encouraging, despite some delays that were expected to be overcome.

Core recommendations were to present evaluation findings to key project stakeholders in each country, review and revise program/project logical frameworks and targets to ensure they were reachable, and define an exit strategy in each country. It was also recommended to maximize internal synergies among ITC-managed projects at the country level and forge external synergies with other TRTA projects where appropriate, and support fundraising efforts for successor projects in the target countries.

Scope of the evaluation covered: 2017 to 2019.

Total budget: 10,288,701 USD funded by the government of The Netherlands

Libya Trade Academy Project, Final report

The project aimed to introduce Libyan youth to the principles of entrepreneurship and empower them to develop business plans and enter value chains, leading to the development of sustainable businesses (MSMEs).

The evaluation found the project to be aligned to the national, regional, and global needs and priorities of integration of the business sector through innovative solutions, specifically the introduction of entrepreneurship as a key component of youth inclusive economic development.

The project set the stage for the expansion of the entrepreneurial culture among the youth and women in Libya. Although the project's efforts went a long way to making the user platform interface as engaging as possible, the completion rate was low. However, the online design of the project and remote provision of support and services make potentially it self-sustaining.

It was recommended that future projects should consider incentivizing learners to complete the courses through offering grants and extra technical assistance in the form of mentoring and coaching. Partnerships with national universities should be explored again when security is restored and following their re-kindled interest to adopt the Libus platform for their business courses. Partnerships with the public sector for project planning, implementation, and service delivery, should also be explored. An assessment to understand the underlying cause of user apathy would be useful to determine the extent to which it can be mitigated. Future projects should develop an M&E framework and data collection tools that articulate instrumental and transformational changes rather than processes, and exit strategies should be developed as a core component of project implementation.

Start and end date of the program: 2017 to 2020

Total budget of the project: 1.4 million USD funded by Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères de France

Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) Hubs, midterm self-evaluation

The main purpose of the midterm evaluation was to inform planning for the remaining duration of the T4SD Hubs (in Ghana, Kenya, Lao PDR, Nepal, Peru, and Viet Nam) and to provide input for a possible replication in other countries.

The evaluation reported that the project met the needs of the T4SD Hub hosts and companies that benefitted from coaching by ITC consultants. It confirmed the relevance of the tools and the quality of support provided to companies. The project was on track to reach its targets (200 companies trained and coached). In some cases, the targets set out in the logical framework had been exceeded, due to an underestimation of interest and demand in each country.

It was recommended that the project assess the potential impact of the pandemic on delivery, evaluate all tools piloted, integrate capacity building on developing bankable proposals to finance technical upgrading in SMEs into each module, consider a gradual translation of course material into local languages, and develop publicly accessible, free eLearning courses for all courses. New T4SD Hubs were recommended to select host organizations based on an assessment of institutional potential, combine technical with institutional strengthening, and develop a clear strategy on how to mainstream ITC's service offerings into BSOs.

Scope of the evaluation covered: 2018 to 2020

Total budget of the project: 4.5 million USD funded by ITC's Trust Fund (Window 1).

Myanmar Trade and Investment Project, project completion report

The project aimed to improve the business environment and Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) capacities to stimulate trade competitiveness and investment promotion, including in focus states/regions.

According to this report, the project outputs had been estimated as complete at 85% of the original plan. The National Export Strategy 2020-2025 along with 13 individual sectoral and trade support function strategies was ready for endorsement. Seven states and regions validated their plans of action for the 1st investment promotion strategies. The capacities of eight BSOs were strengthened, enabling them to more sustainably represent their members interests.

Critical points that significantly affected project implementation were the outbreak of the Covid pandemic, the 2020 November elections and the declaration of the state of emergency in February 2021.

Start and end date of the project: September 2018 to May 2021 (please note: project activities had to be ceased after the declaration of the state of emergency in February 2021)

Total budget: 3,875,000 USD from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK

III.   Funder-led evaluations and reviews

Advancing Afghan Trade Project – Phase 1, final evaluation

The project aims to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to use trade as a lever for enhanced regional cooperation, economic and human development and poverty reduction.

The evaluation found that the project had clearly helped the Afghan Government to formulate a better-informed trade policy and a strategic vision to support trade competitiveness. Project outputs had also contributed in some instances to the implementation of better-informed trade policy: However, it also noted that external factors had constrained the extent to which project outputs could lead to the expected outcome, both in terms of policy formulation and implementation.

Recommendations include stricter prioritization of focus activities as well as a strengthening of ITC's Kabul Co-ordination Unit in terms of personnel, status and decision-making authority.

Start and end date of the project: August 2016 to March 2020

Total budget: 4,550,000 EUR by the European Union

Improving Reintegration of Returnees in Afghanistan, midterm evaluation

The program aims to secure a livelihood for the displaced, returnees, and host community members, in their location of residence. This is done through three components – 1. A training and vocational training approach led by a consortium of NGOs; 2. A value-chain approach to supporting social enterprises in Afghanistan, focusing on Herat and Kabul led by ITC ("Afghanistan Ethical Lifestyle Initiative for the Economic (re)integration of Returnees and Internally Displaced People") 3. A national, standards-level program aimed at developing overall guidelines for skills training and employment led by GIZ. These three programs are supposed to feed into one cohesive approach – from the national to the local, integrating communities and private sector actors – to economic reintegration.

The midterm evaluation observed that due to the lack of a collective vision of partners involved, the programme lacked the capacity to influence the reintegration landscape. It recommended, among others, refocusing the program as local economic development and resilience program and adopting localization as an immediate operational standard alongside a partnership and exit strategy. Moreover, it saw the need to set up clear indicators and a learning approach for the Action to guide each partner.

Scope of the evaluation covered: April 2017 to April 2020.

Budget of the project component implemented by ITC: 8,788,046 EUR funded by the European Union

Initiative de Mode Ethique au Burkina Faso et Mali (Ethical Fashion Initiative Burkina Faso and Mali), midterm evaluation

The Ethical Fashion Initiative in Burkina Faso and Mali aims to connect the local textile artisan communities with internationally recognized designers. The project is based on the valorization of the cotton value chain to market woven textiles or interior objects for the international market of fashion and interior decoration. The initiative is to pilot a private sector response to the root causes of migration.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity, the midterm evaluation found that the project demonstrated the potential of the cotton sector in both countries, that it is coherent with national policies, and that it generated tangible results. The growing demand for products provided by the project requires adaptation and increased training of craftspersons to respond to demand. The project was found to improve the living conditions of beneficiaries and support women's economic and financial empowerment. It created jobs that have the potential to become sustainable, but results depend on the presence of the project to connect supply and demand.

Evaluation recommendations were designed to address the challenges the project faces to maintain and explore linkages with international markets. It was also recommended that the project should strengthen its work with IOM at the country level, define roles and responsibilities, and search for a local supplier in Mali. A no-cost extension was also recommended.

Start and end dates of the project: February 2017 to February 2021

Total budget of the project: 10.45 million USD, funded by EU DG for Internal Partnerships

Renforcement du Management Opérationnel des Programmes de Soutien à l'Exportation en faveur de vingt-et-un organisme de promotion du commerce de 21 Pays d'Afrique Sub-Saharienne (MOPSE ; Strengthening the operational management of export promotion agencies in 21 Sub-Saharan African countries), final evaluation

ITC, in partnership with Business France, carried out a capacity-building project for 21 trade promotion organizations (TPOs) or ministerial services in 21 sub-Saharan African countries. The objective of the project was to improve the efficiency of the participating TPOs in supporting the development of SMEs in their respective countries, by adopting more efficient TPO management practices. To achieve this objective, the project developed a training and mentoring program targeting the manager level.

The evaluation found that the project was beneficial for all TPOs. The project made it possible to significantly improve their internal organization, particularly regarding customer segmentation, action plans, alignment with their strategic objectives, and measurement of their efficiency, as well as their visibility and credibility. Even though progress made by TPOs varied, all managing directors expressed their satisfaction in participating in the project. Most managing directors also expressed the need to strengthen certain areas of competence that were still fragile or poorly assimilated, through additional targeted technical support or training.

The core recommendations were for trainings to take place within each TPO, and that a follow-up project for a new phase of the MOPSE project should take place.

Start and end dates of the project: January 2018 to December 2019

Total project budget 1.59 million USD funded by Agence française de Développement (AFD).

EU Bhutan Trade Support Programme, ROM report

The intervention aims to diversify Bhutan's exports by improving the national trade and investment regulatory framework, and increasing exports, income and employment along two selected value chains.

The ROM report observed that the intervention was seen with high regard in the eyes of both the government counterparts and the private sector. Most targets had been met or exceeded for Outputs 1 and 3. Progress under Output 2 has been moderate, mainly due to delayed product selection at the start and the subsequent outbreak of COVID-19.

Recommendations directed to ITC include the revision of indicators and the adding of activities for Outcome 2, the strengthening of the sustainability under each Output, and the exploration of synergies with other ongoing interventions not covered by the existing donor coordination mechanism in the country. Furthermore, it encourages ITC to ensure accurate data collection and reporting on issues such as risk assessment, assumptions, gender equality and environment.

Period covered by the ROM report: May 2019 to March 2021

Total budget: 4,000,000 EUR from the European Union

Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme, State of Palestine, midterm review

The Reform and Development of Markets, Value Chains and Producers' Organizations program, known as the Multi-Donor Agribusiness Programme, was designed to accelerate the market-based development of Palestinian agribusiness, employing a demand-led risk-sharing strategy that enables small-scale producers and processors in the agribusiness sector to drive the investment choices of the project. It was implemented by FAO. Some activities were carried out by implementation partners, among others by ITC. ITC's work involved the provision of market intelligence to identify priority commodities for exporting potential and to promote the B2B linkages of local agribusinesses.

Although the program is overall on track towards the achievement of its results, the current time frame of 4 years will not be sufficient to implement all activities at scale and get a good sense of impact and results for lessons learning purposes. Beneficiaries are reporting high levels of satisfaction around the quality of project implementation.

As one of its longer-term suggestions, the evaluation recommended the organization of a major meeting (or series of meetings) including all key stakeholders to share the knowledge acquired in the program and to establish the commitment to a stronger and more strategically focused program as a major tool to mobilize private sector investment in agribusiness through a risk-sharing approach.

Period covered by the project: September 2017 – June 2020

Total budget: 29 million USD funded by a consortium of European donors

Supporting Indian Trade and Investment in Africa (SITA), Final evaluation exercise report

The program aimed to support higher-value exports from Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda to India and third countries with the help of Indian knowhow, technology, and investment. It operated in the following five sectors: pulses, spices, cotton - textiles - apparel, leather and edible oils. The final evaluation exercise aimed to provide an independent assessment of the achievement of the program's outcomes.

The report concluded that the SITA project had been an innovative program that had largely achieved expected outcomes and made a material difference to the businesses with which it engaged. The project's hands-on approach, direct communication with beneficiaries, and always-available mindset distinguished the ITC team from other development programs that try to achieve a similar objective, but operate at arm's length. Lessons learned include that not all

business-to-business connections were successful and without complications, and more scrutinous screening could have been considered. The evaluation exercise recommends that future programs should ensure that sector-focused initiatives also promote product diversification or other forms of risk mitigation for producers and processors.

Start and end date of the program: 2015 – 2021

Total budget: 29 million USD from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK

Manufacturing Africa, annual review 2020/21

The program aims to increase foreign direct investment into manufacturing in Africa. It aims to help create 90,000 jobs and generate £1.2 billion of new FDI. It supports developing countries to industrialize, produce higher value-added goods, and thereby transform their economies, creating high-quality job opportunities for the poor.

One of its three components – the Partnership for Investment and Growth in Africa (PIGA; closed in March 2021) – was implemented by ITC. It facilitated poverty-reducing manufacturing investments into Africa from China and sought opportunities for UK commercial benefits. It operated in Mozambique, Zambia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

The review found that PIGA met or exceeded the majority of output indicators, despite closing earlier than initially scheduled given ODA cuts. PIGA succeeded in closing 7 deals (value of £81m) with a further 3 being progressed by another implementing agency and likely to close in the following months. Over the course of the project, PIGA improved the capacity of Investment Promotion Agencies by training 800 staff members, supported the development and implementation of an FDI tracking tool (replacing excel and paper-based systems), provided support to develop investment promotion materials and delivery of studies and research to support and strengthen investment promotion services.

A lesson from PIGA was that investments can take a long time to reach close and lots of support and relationship building are required. The experience from PIGA showed that aftercare was key "in ensuring investors implement all the phases of their investment projects and for reinvestment".

Start and end date of the overall program: 2017 – 2027 (Duration of ITC implemented PIGA: 2016 to 2021)

Total budget: 100 million GBP from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK (Budget of ITC implemented PIGA: £7.7 million, co-funded by FCDO China)

Trade and Investment Project, Myanmar, programme completion review (draft)

The project aimed to improve the business environment and Trade and Investment Support Institutions' capacities to stimulate trade competitiveness and investment promotion, including in focus states/regions.

The review noted that the project was performing very well and was recognized by partners in Myanmar. Substantive interim outputs were achieved. However, the final outputs could not be completed due to the declaration of a state of emergency (i.e: coup in Myanmar), which resulted in a loss of 7 implementation months. Lessons learned to the need for a flexible project design due to the complex socio-economic environment in Myanmar.

Start and end date of the project: September 2018 to May 2021 (please note: project activities had to be ceased after the declaration of the state of emergency in February 2021)

Total budget: 3,875,000 USD from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the UK

IV. Sustainability reviews

Export Strategy Design, Nepal, 2021

The project assisted the Nepalese government in 2015 to design export strategies as part of the existing national trade strategy. One of the sectors the government selected for this exercise was the coffee sector.

The review found that interviewed stakeholders had very limited knowledge to which extent the strategy had been implemented since its official endorsement. This clearly demonstrated an issue with the monitoring and coordination mechanism to ensure that the implementation of a delivered and officially endorsed strategy is pursued, in cases when ITC support is strictly limited to the design of the same strategy.

Several positive impacts were observed, including capacity building and increased trust in the Nepalese coffee sector, which until today has a positive effect on the donor's willingness to fund activities in this area. Furthermore, the quality of the engagement process during the development of the strategy as well as the resulting strategy have been praised as excellent. This strengthens the sustainability of the strategy, leading to partial implementation by different actors over time: activities are still starting up and additional funds are being sought to implement certain parts of the strategy.

Overall, the findings of this review suggest that a resource allocation to facilitate the transition between the strategy design phase and the beginning of its implementation is required to achieve impact at the implementation level. The bottom line is that the implementation management support is part of the technical assistance package of strategy design and that ITC ensures an effective monitoring and communication mechanism for strategy implementation together with beneficiary countries.

SheTrades Connect, 2021

One component of the SheTrades Connect project was to help female fashion designers participate in trade fairs so they can take advantage of international trade opportunities. For this sustainability review, beneficiaries contacted, who participated in the Pure London trade fair in July 2017.

The review found that the project had a high impact. Most of the women described their experience as clearly positive, as they had learned a lot through the project. This lasting learning outcome makes for a high level of sustainability of project results. On the other hand, the trade fair itself turned out to be a disappointing experience since it was poorly organized and not well suited for the fashion designers' brand maturity and hence, with one exception, had no impact on sales or new business relationships.

Findings indicate that a more sophisticated and targeted approach is advised. Participation at events such as a trade fair requires significant time, financial and emotional investment from fashion designers. Besides, the right choice of fairs and brands is crucial for successful participation. Therefore, such interventions should be further tailored towards the specifics of each brand, both for training and regarding the choice of suitable events in order to increase impact and avoid negative effects.

IT & ITES Export Competitiveness, Bangladesh, 2021

This sustainability review focused on the impact of activities organized to strengthen and professionalize the managerial capacities of organizations that are supporting businesses in the IT and ITES sector in Bangladesh. These activities were part of a larger project portfolio, the greater part of which focused on providing training to companies and establishing business linkages. The

review is largely based on the testimony of only four individuals, which limits the reliability of its findings.

The high turnover among staff is the main reason that limits the sustainability of results achieved in supporting the organizations. Nevertheless, the work done by ITC was praised as very high quality.

Findings indicate that in order to increase sustainable impact of the business support organization strengthening, such activities should be accompanied by an implementation strategy, possibly preceded by a study that examines barriers to implementation and ways to address them. Moreover, organizational stability should be strengthened, on the one hand by seeking ways to support staff continuity to reduce capacity drain, and on the other hand by considering repeating and update such exercises every 2 to 3 years to keep momentum and build on previous efforts.

Integration of horticulture supply/value chains into tourism, Tanzania, 2021

This project was part of a portfolio of interventions, the SECO-UN Trade Cluster Project in Tanzania, which lasted from Feb. 2013 to Dec. 2018. It aimed at integrating horticulture supply/value chains into the tourism sector by enabling local smallholder farmers to gain market access to supply fresh fruit and vegetables to the country's tourism industry.

The sustainability review concludes that the project made a positive difference in the horticultural sector in Tanzania and contributed to the capacity for trade, especially for small producers and youth. Project's results, and impact, have been reasonably sustained: gains in production and resulting increases in revenues for small producers and youth remain above pre-project levels, greenhouse use has increased in the area where the project has been implemented, and new markets have been exploited. The success of the project over time is due in large part to its focus on sustainability from the design stage and throughout its implementation. (Post) project monitoring however was not systematically carried out and, as such, opportunities for sustaining and amplifying value may have been missed.

Recommendations call for broader involvement of stakeholders at the design stage, more appropriate and sustained monitoring, as well as a systems view of the horticultural sector in Tanzania.

Improving the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos, 2021

The EIF/ITC "Project to Improve the Competitiveness of Senegalese Mangos (PICSM)" lasted from August 2015 to March 2018. The project aimed to strengthen the competitiveness of Senegalese mangos and related manufactured products on the international market, to increase the contribution of the mango industry to socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in Senegal.

The review concludes that the project had some positive effects on the capabilities of individuals involved in the mango value chain and on some aspects of trade capacity, such as quality of production and identification of potential export markets. The review considers that the project likely contributed positively to increases in mango production and export. Project monitoring data, relative to results and their sustainability, are limited. As such, the review was not able to gather sufficient and appropriate evidence on results - including at project completion - to assess their sustainability over time.

 Recommendations call for a review of project design processes, of project monitoring practices and stock-taking with the *Agence Sénégalaise de Promotion des Exportations*.

V. Reviews related to Results Based Management (RBM)

Review of the performance monitoring systems in new large projects, 2020

The purpose of this review was to assess ITC's provisions for monitoring of large projects to identify where and how improvements can be made.

Based on the data collected for the sample of 10 large projects, it was found that although the current performance monitoring systems meet the reporting requirements of ITC and the funders, large projects fall short in reporting on attributable impact resulting from their implementation. The major weakness is their inability to report on change steps that are identified in well-articulated results chains that show all key changes that happen as a result from implementing activities to lead towards change. The projects did not include a monitoring plan for each intervention-specific results chain to measure the results of activities at all levels from outputs up to impact.

The review recommended that ITC Senior Management instructs large projects to monitor against their anticipated changes by preparing intervention-specific results chains. It is also recommended that Project Managers and the project team members are supported with technical expertise, coaching, and training on how to apply good results measurement practices. Moreover, all new upcoming projects should include monitoring in their budget narratives, and as a budget item, to be used with discussing with project funders

Learnings from strengthening ITC INTEGRA project implementation and monitoring in preparation for an impact evaluation - A Case Study, 2020

The report presents the learnings regarding project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (M&E), and results-based management obtained during work with the Integra project in 2019/2020 to lay the groundwork for Integra's participation in an impact evaluation exercise.

It formulates a number of recommendations relevant for the Integra project but possibly also for other ITC projects. For example, it should be ensured that results chains are thought through before beginning project implementation. Furthermore, the development of a fully articulated monitoring plan that directly corresponds to the results chains is recommended. This monitoring plan should be considered as a management tool to follow component implementation by different team members.

Means of verification of results - How ITC projects measure change, 2020

This review was carried out of ten ITC projects, with the purpose of better understanding how ITC projects measure and attribute change.

It concludes that nearly all of ITC projects interviewed have put in place mechanisms to allow monitoring and evaluating change. A noticeable positive development is the consistency in survey tools being applied. At higher level, impact assessment, most projects apply a form of Before and After Comparison. Several projects go beyond the standard M&E frameworks and indicators to better understand why a change has occurred or not.

It recommends investing a bit of time and funds for researching the impact from policy change, with the overall aim of strengthening the case for ITC's work in the area. Furthermore it suggests supporting project managers in better understanding the different uses and benefits of the tools – and moving beyond making them simply obligatory. A final recommendation is to consider common or broader solutions to simplify monitoring for projects without compromising on quality and creating space for learning and adaptive management.

ITC M&E capacity assessment, 2021

The report summarizes the key conclusions from an organizational capacity assessment of ITC's project M&E system and presents ten recommendations.

These recommendations include the streamlining of program planning to better assemble M&E elements and prepare for project monitoring and during implementation, as well as the reinforcement of project teams' understanding, attitudes, and practice to reliably measure ITC's Corporate indicators as Core indicators central to ITC's mission. The report also points to the need to invest in and strengthen project management roles, responsibilities, understanding, and capacities for timely and reliable project monitoring and reporting. It suggests upgrading data quality control for monitoring that supports reliable and accountable project reporting.

Large ITC projects implementing good M&E practices before closure of inception phase, draft report, 2022

This report is currently available in the draft version. It presents an early assessment of key issues and challenges which will be further redefined. The finalized report will provide the elements required for a corporate system institutionalizing good M&E practices for large ITC projects at the end of their inception phase.

Annex 5: Follow up on the implementation of previous AESRs recommendations

(As of August 2022)

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
1: Optimize the operationalization of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025: (a) The strategic planning function to prepare an implementation framework bridging between medium- to long-term high-level objectives in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and the subsequent further-operationalized objectives in annual operational plans.	**1.1:** An implementation framework, outlining the Strategic Plan commitments, intended actions and responsibilities, is approved by the senior management committee, and is available as an internal document. It will serve as the basis for the annual operational plans.	**Status: Implemented** The document, detailing the commitments of the Strategic Plan has been developed and used for the first time in 2022, to develop the intended results for this year and capture them in the Operational Plan 2022.
(b) Monitor and report progress in the implementation of all Strategic Plan 2022-2025 objectives accordingly.	**1.2:** The Implementation Plan, supported by ITC-s results framework, form the basis of ITC-s annual Operational Plans. Reporting on the annual operational plan, in form of bi-annual CCITF reports, will therefore reflect both the ITC results framework and the implementation plan. ITC will also produce a final review of the operationalization of the Strategic Plan to report on cumulative achievements against Strategic plan commitments (summaries of data reported in the CCITF reports /Annual reports)	**Status: Implemented** The Operational Plan 2022 and its results targets are structured in line with ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The CCITF mid-year and end-year reports will follow the same format. The report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-21 was published in Q1 2022.
2. Enhance the capabilities of internal resources to better align them with ITC's growth agenda requirements: (a) Develop and implement sub-strategies that are conducive to achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Elaborate for each of them an action plan with objectives and milestones and follow up on progress.	**2.1:** • Based on the Strategic Plan commitments and UN System-wide strategies, Senior Management decides on the sub-strategies that should be developed. • The sub-strategies are identified in the Implementation Plan, with responsibilities for their development • Sub-strategies are elaborated, and key strategy milestones are integrated in the SP implementation plan	**Status:** (a) **Implemented** Senior Management decided on substrategies for - Resource Mobilization - Partnerships - Communication - Country Engagement and on the programmatic 'moonshots' for

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
	• Monitoring is carried out accordingly	- Green Trade - Digital Connectivity and Trade - Youth and Trade - Gender All substrategies except one (communication) were developed with action plans and resource allocations for 2022. Project leads are required to report on achievements at the end of the year.
(b) During the 2022-2025 period, develop a clear, organization-wide understanding of internal value chains and of how best to combine individual products and services, in which order and context, to achieve specific goals.	**2.2:** • Development of a comprehensive 'blueprint' theory of change for each core area and each impact area and the corresponding internal value chains, with the understanding that the blueprint will be customized to each individual project context in form of project specific results chains. • Directory of products and services	**Status: Ongoing** The 'moonshot' strategies and related initiatives are launched in 2022 in the areas of green economy, gender, digital connectivity and youth. They reflect areas where ITC wants to push the envelope further and reach higher scale impact. They include theories of change developed collaboratively by each moonshot team together with working groups of staff from throughout ITC. The development of comprehensive blueprints for the core services areas and other impact areas will commence later in the year.
(c) Promote the values of coordination and collaboration into the Strategic Plan 2022-2025.	**2.3:** • MAG discussion on drivers and impediments to coordination and collaboration, setting of concrete objectives and how to implement them. • SMC and Directors' emphasis on productive coordination and collaboration, and setting incentive structures accordingly (project approvals, KPIs in performance appraisals, conflict reviews).	**Status: Ongoing/Implemented** MAG discussion scheduled for Q4, after having collected some experience with ITC's re-aligned organizational structure. There is an ongoing emphasis on the imperative of coordination and collaboration by the ED and SMC members. Regarding new project development in ITC, the Project Design Taskforce (PDTF) is now integrated (since May 2022) in SPPG/OED, reinforcing its capacity to coordinate its work with SPPG and with all technical sections, country sections and DPS. PDTF places an increased priority on ensuring that project developers and their teams coordinate, collaborate and capture all necessary inputs from others in ITC. PDTF requires project developers to consult with relevant mainstreaming focal points, moonshot leads and DPS units. Mandatory logframe review meetings for new projects also provide further opportunities to

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
		ensure that all relevant technical staff as well as DCP Country Managers are aware and contribute to the development of new project proposals
3: Enhance continuous learning and accountability for Strategic Plan 2022-2025 implementation (a) Within the annual CCITF report, include an analysis of the lessons learned from the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, ideally through a steering mechanism, incorporating collective feedback from across the organization.	**3.1:** • Steering mechanism established, in form of a group at the mid-management level (MAG or selected Division representatives at Chief level). • Annual review of the implementation plan and implementation by the Steering group, with a documentation of the lessons learnt that will be shared with Senior Management and included in the annual CCITF reports.	**Status: Ongoing** Draft terms of reference for the Steering Mechanism to be presented for approval to the Senior management Committee (Q4 22). The Steering Mechanism to present the Annual Review of the implementation plan and implementation. Insertion of Steering Mechanism contribution into the 2022 CCITF report (Q1 2023).
(b) Undertake an independent mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025.	**3.2:** • Mid-term review of the ITC Strategic Plan priorities and implementation as per Implementation Plan, by IEU with a panel of experts • Adjustments in the Implementation Plan, by SMC, if required.	**Status: not started** The Mid-term review of the ITC Strategic Plan is to be undertaken in 2023 – 2024.
4: Underscore the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 results-focus (a) The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to determine four to five corporate key high-level or transversal objectives to which projects will contribute, along with concrete and measurable client-focused objectives, partly but not exclusively framed within the SDGs.	**4.1:** Strategic Plan identifies key high-level objectives and defines the results framework for them.	**Status: Implemented** The Strategic Plan has identified key high-level objectives and transversal objectives to guide the formulation of ITC projects and the internal and external functioning of the organization. They can be structured into these categories: 1. ITC's vision, mission, and behavioral principles; 2. Matrix approach (core services & impact areas) / framework for MSMEs; 3. Commitments related to responding to country needs or partnering for purpose, defining priority countries and priority partnerships;

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
		4. Commitments related to ITC's intellectual leadership in trade and sustainable development; 5. Determination of a purpose-driven identity, including cross-cutting objectives and corresponding corporate indicators "prosperity", "people", "peace" and "planet"; 6. Organizational strengths / Value proposition, identifying measurable internal requirements; and, 7. Resource mobilization objectives.
(b) Place the responsibility to develop coordinated solutions for the achievements of key high-level or transversal objectives on parts of the organization and request the interested ITC sections to track achievements accordingly.	**4.2:** • Within the overall ITC results framework, validation, or new development of theories of change for each impact area, with corresponding generic internal value chains collaboratively developed by contributing sections • Sub-strategies for selected areas (see recommendation 2) • Reporting on the respective results indicators by the contributing sections	**Status: Ongoing** See recommendation 2 above.
5: Ensure that the implementation of Strategic Plan 2022-2025 remains client-focused and adjusts to stakeholders' continuously evolving and increasing needs over the next four years (a) Build on the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 objectives to engage in extensive and in-depth dialogue with ITC's clients about their needs related to the high-level or transversal objectives, backed with preparatory need assessments. This will pave the way to co-design and co-implement concrete initiatives to fulfil these objectives.	**5.1:** • Clients' needs related to the impact areas are discussed at the regular high-level events organized by the ITC (JAG, WEDF, She Trades Global, WTPO Conference and Advisory board, Good Trade Summit, T4SD Forum, MSME day, etc.), with the purpose of engaging clients in prioritization, co-creation and co-implementation of concrete initiatives. • These discussions are nurtured with preparatory value-added analysis related to clients' evolving needs. • ITC participates in UN-led Country Common Country Assessment (CCA) and Coordination Frameworks (CF) in countries where ITC has a comparative advantage.	**Status: Implemented** The recommended approach, to remain client-focused and adjust to changing needs will be maintained. ITC has and will continue to dialogue with clients through multiple channels: Events (e.g. the WTPO conference May 2022), research (e.g. SMECO) and engagement in UN Country Teams. (ITC has participated in the development and signed 32 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and has participated in the ongoing Common Country Analysis (CCA) process of 22 countries.

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
(b) Develop transferable general models (or 'blueprints') for "integrated solutions" oriented towards the needs of specific client groups or contexts, which can then still be adapted as the situation requires.	**5.2:** In view of selected specific client groups or contexts, theories of change for interventions that are linked to ITC's core services and impact initiatives. (see above)	**Status:** Ongoing – see Recommendation 2
(c) Develop sub-strategies for different types of partnerships, oriented towards the needs of specific client groups or contexts, including at the country level, and ensure due measurement of their results.	**5.3:** Partnership sub-strategy, with sections for selected types of partners, including development of monitoring framework and reporting.	**Status: Implemented** Partnership sub-strategy developed.
6 Ensure full understanding and adherence of staff to Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (a) Maximize staff participation in Strategic Plan 2022-2025 design and implementation. Extensively diffuse and explain the Strategic Plan 20222025.	**6.1:** • Staff involved and consulted during the design process of the Strategic Plan • Strategic Plan and the management response shared and discussed with staff through Townhall, division and section meetings.	**Status: Implemented** Staff were involved and consulted in the design process, and the SP was presented at various meetings. The strategic plan design process was supported by 7 working groups who worked together in 2021 to bring perspectives from staff throughout ITC, the working groups covered: - Vision / Mission - Good trade - Enterprise competitiveness - Results framework - Business Lines - Country assessment - Cost effectiveness / value for money / business delivery - COVID 19 & ITC's response Working groups findings were shared and integrated into the working draft leading to the finalisation of the strategic plan. In addition, staff groups discussed ITC's value addition and services offer in each core services area and each impact area.
(b) Invest in clarifying with staff the corporate value agenda to meet Strategic Plan 2022-2025 objectives through targeted dialogue, orientation, and training initiatives.	**6.2:** • Linked to the point above - staff understand the strategic priorities and where and how their work contributes to them.	**Status: Implemented** The priorities for ITC, inclusive and sustainable development, are clearly communicated by the ED in all her interactions with staff. The moonshot discussions brought staff from across ITC together

AESR 2021		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
	• The Strategic Plan is included in the induction programme for new staff.	to discuss how impact in these priorities can be achieved collectively.

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
1: Mainstream Sustainable Development good practices (a) Fully mainstream ITC expertise and good practices in the area of gender and equity into project planning and management arrangements for the entire portfolio, where applicable and (b) Use the learnings, processes, and tools acquired through the above-mentioned exercise, to mainstream expertise and good practices in other Sustainable Development dimensions	**1.3:** Develop new tools and approaches for mainstreaming gender and other sustainable development dimensions based on project demand	**Status: Implemented** As part of its work, PDTF supports project developers by referring them to tools and approaches for mainstreaming developed in ITC. The recent development and endorsement by SMC of the moonshot strategies for impact areas that include gender, youth, green and digital connectivity (all in receipt of W1 funds) provides additional support for the effective mainstreaming of sustainable development dimensions in new projects, based on demand. The moonshots' strategy narrative includes a theory of change, logframe and results framework that can support and provide input to new projects as needed. The project portal now includes a matrix to be completed by all project developers that identifies where new projects are positioned across the 2 dimensions of "Impact areas" and "Core services". This matrix complements the project portal's "Mainstreaming development makers" rating scale where project developers are required to outline the rationale for positioning their project on the 4 markers "youth / gender/ social responsibility / green". Further, emphasis on the importance of mainstreaming sustainable development dimensions is placed through referring project teams onto the project development guidelines in ITC's project portal, the project quality criteria, and the ITC mainstreaming guidelines. ITC has appointed mainstreaming focal points to support projects in their efforts. Together with their dedicated technical sections, they will continue to play a key role in the development of new tools and approaches for mainstreaming sustainable development dimensions, based on project demand.

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
2: Enhance the capacity to utilize theories of change: (a) Develop the ITC Results Framework into a more detailed Theory of Change for the next ITC Strategic Plan and, (b) Increase Project Managers' capacity to utilize the 'Theory of Change' tool to be more results-focused and improve results monitoring and information collection about attributable changes in complex project environments.	**2.1:** Review of ITC's results framework and its visualization in the format of a theory of change in the course of the preparation of ITC's Strategic Plan 2022-2025	**Status: Implemented** The ITC results framework was revised as a result of the discussions about ITC's new Strategic Plan 2022-25. It is visualized on p.60 of the Strategic Plan document.
	2.2: Enhance Project Managers' capacity to develop project-level theories of change and use them for monitoring and management.	**Status: Ongoing** Since May 2022 the Project Design Taskforce (PDTF) has been integrated in SPPG, thus reinforcing good coordination and collaboration in project development within SPPG and with the project teams in technical sections and regional sections, and supporting the reinforcement of the project managers' capacities to develop their new project's results' frameworks, theories of change, logframes and results chains, as needed. Engaging with project teams on more than 80 new project proposals developed annually by ITC over the past few years, PDTF continuously builds its capacity to support and train project managers with regard to project-level theory of changes, logframes and results chains, in alignment with ITC's corporate results framework, and funders' and implementing partners' expectations and beneficiaries' needs. ITC's project development tools, such as the project portal, our approaches to project development' workflows and processes are regularly reviewed, adjusted and improved where needed. This is facilitated by collaboration with partners in the design of new projects' intervention logic, logframes, results chain, results indicators and reporting modalities. New, value-adding approaches identified in the context of project design and in the course of external reviews are integrated gradually in ITC's approach to project development, to complement existing tools. External evaluations and IEU evaluations and reviews, such as the current Developmental Evaluation Review on the Monitoring & Evaluation practices of three large projects in ITC led by ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit, will contribute to these with their findings and recommendations.

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
3: Enhance simplification, harmonization, and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system: Conduct an assessment of the M&E practices across ITC project portfolio to serve results-focused project management, learning, and accountability and to enhance the simplification, harmonization, and effectiveness of the M&E corporate system	**3.3:** Continue the implementation of the ITC corporate data management strategy	**Status: Implemented** ITC continued the implementation of its corporate data management strategy, in line with the UN Data Strategy. Individual tools capturing beneficiary data, as well as their interconnections have been developed, rolled out or improved. ITC has further harmonized data collection methods and introduced tools to facilitate data collection for projects. Project teams have received training and assistance in the context of data collection relevant for M&E. Furthermore, ITC built foundations for a data governance structure and policy to enable effective data management.
4: Enhancing project results sustainability: (a) Identify in the project cycle, the potential for replication and scaling-up of the project, and (b) Ensure the development and regular updating of exit strategies during project cycle, and their implementation.	**4.1:** Ensure that all project proposals integrate a detailed outline of the "Sustainability", "Local Ownership" and "Exit Strategy" as indicated in ITC's project development guidelines and project portal mandatory requirements.	**Status: Implemented** All ITC new projects require the development of a dedicated project plan that integrates the elements listed in Action 4.1: "Sustainability" "Local ownership" and "Exit strategy". PDTF works with project teams to ensure that such elements are adequately represented and substantiated as per ITC's project management guidelines, in line with the project's proposed scope, objectives and intervention logic. Projects who do not meet such requirements will not be cleared by PDTF for review by SMC and would not be approved by SMC.
	4.2: Add a new entry field in the ITC project document templates and project portal under the "Strategy" component requesting Project Managers to identify the potential for scaling up & replication.	**Status: Implemented** The ITC project portal now includes a mandatory field for all projects. The project portal captures this information under "Potential for scaling up / replication" under the "Strategy" field.
	4.3: At the design and inception stage, sustainability and scaling aspects to be integrated in the project risk register, followed by regular risk monitoring and reporting during project implementation.	**Status: Ongoing** PDTF continues to put emphasis on the sustainability and scaling aspects as part of its project development work alongside project developers in the technical sections and country sections. End of inception review meetings take place with PDTF for all large projects that include a dedicated inception phase, during which sustainability elements and proposed adjustments to the logframe and results framework are reviewed. Project Managers are also required to present the findings and achievements of their project's inception phase at SMC for approval.

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
		In the context of identifying 'risks to achieve impact objectives', risks and risk mitigation measures addressing sustainability and scaling aspects are reviewed. An update of the risk register in the project portal with additional guidance for project developers is foreseen for Q1 2023.
	4.4: IEU to provide regular briefings to all relevant ITC staff on results of impact sustainability assessments, project evaluations / AESR / Project Closure Reports in relation to Project Results, and lessons to be learned.	**Status: Ongoing** In 2021, the evaluation unit has finalized a first set of Sustainability Reviews, a new type of evaluative assessment measuring the sustainability of project results for projects that have ended 3-4 years earlier. As a next step, it is foreseen to share the results of these reviews with ITC colleagues and discuss them in learning workshops to jointly draw further lessons for future interventions. This approach will also be used for future reviews. Moreover, the evaluation unit will look into additional interactive formats to share results from evaluative exercises, such as the AESR or the synthesis of project completion reports, with ITC staff.
5: Build on good project field office performance and coordination: (a) Introduce an induction process in particular for project management staff in the field, to ensure they share a sufficient knowledge of ITC, and (b) Identify and enforce protocols and good practices to work effectively through project field offices and to ensure good coordination among field personnel and among field and HQ personnel.	**5.2:** Organizing regular induction programmes (including trainings and selected courses) for ITC field personnel.	**Status: Implemented** ITC's HR section developed an online induction programme for all staff that can be accessed any time, as well as a wide selection of trainings on the ITC Learning & Development portal. The rapid move to on-line meetings as a standard meeting format, due to COVID-19, also greatly facilitated the inclusion of field personnel in all ITC information sharing, training, discussion and networking activities. In addition, ITC's Innovation Lab launched the innovation challenge "Improving knowledge sharing with the field", led by the Innovation lab's knowledge sharing HQ-field team. The initiative included a series of conversations – ITC Shares - aimed at creating an exchange platform between ITC employees across countries on subjects/ issues which are of interest to all of ITC – independent of the location employees work in. The sessions have included topics such as digital communities, connecting the unconnected, and modalities of MSME support during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
	5.4: Organizing an all-ITC email at regular intervals (or via monthly newsletter) to introduce field personnel	**Status: Implemented** ITC's internal newsletter, managed by CE, features field-based colleagues on a regular basis. A systematic integration of field personnel in ITC's 'Who is

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
		Who', and the increased use of on-line meetings to which field-personnel have access and play active roles has also facilitated contact and coordination among field and HQ personnel.
6: Implement corporate strategy to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks: (a) Finalize and adopt a corporate strategy to engage more systematically in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and (b) Enforce this strategy, including training requirements for ITC Country Officers about how and why to engage in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.	**6.1:** Adoption of the ITC UNSDCF Engagement Strategy	**Status: Implemented / Ongoing** In late 2020, ITC defined and adopted a 'compact' and summary action plan with UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), to enhance collaboration between the ITC, Resident Coordinator Offices and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO). ITC's commitments cover 3 areas – increased communication and information sharing between ITC and RCOs; contribution of ITC to Common Country Assessments and Country Cooperation Frameworks in countries where member states' priorities include trade and MSME development; and capacity building for RCOs on MSMEs, trade and investment. DCO committed to building platforms, tools and processes that facilitate information exchange, relationship building and collaboration with the whole UNSDG membership, regardless of physical presence in country. The RCOs committed to increased information sharing; advocacy for ITC's work, networking and support in resource mobilization. At present, ITC is finalizing its internal country engagement and communication strategy that prioritizes objectives and actions for the coming years.

AESR 2020		
Recommendation	**Action**	**2022 Reporting**
	6.2: Roll-out of the ITC UNSDCF Engagement Strategy	**Status: Implemented / Ongoing** The ITC/DCO/RCO compact has been implemented over 2021 and in 2022. ITC has participated in the development and signed 32 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and has engaged in the ongoing Common Country Analysis process of 24 country teams. ITC's Senior Management regularly meets with Resident Coordinators during country missions, and during RC visits to Geneva. Webinars for RCOs have informed about ITC's and the UN Trade clusters' work, RCs hold briefing meetings with ITC's Country Offices, and ITC databases, tools and methodologies have been made available to RCOs. ITC also participates in DCO working groups and Senior Management is actively engaged in the UNSDG. As to ITC's internal country engagement and communication strategy, elements of it were decided at the ITC Senior management retreat in early 2022 and are already being rolled out. The implementation of other components will commence, following the formal approval of the draft strategy.
	6.3: Capacity building for ITC Country Managers through e-courses provided by DCO and UNSSC and, if deemed necessary, ITC's own training programmes	**Status: Implemented** By the end of 2020, ITC Country Managers were informed of e-courses such as the UNSDCF online course and the SDG Primer offered by UNSSC. Following the approval of the internal country engagement strategy, ITC's Division of Country programmes will organize dissemination sessions for Country Managers and other staff, on the action plan and respective roles and responsibilities and related support.

Annex 6: Follow up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations

Implementation Status of Past Recommendations as of 31 March 2022

Since 2013, and in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards50, and ITC Evaluation Guidelines51, the IEU follows up on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations. This process monitors progress made on the recommendations and helps to ensure that they contribute to ITC's organizational effectiveness, learning and accountability.

This follow up addresses independent evaluations carried out by the IEU. It does not include recommendations given in self-evaluations or funder-led evaluations.

As of 31 March 2022, the IEU followed-up on 54 recommendations resulting from the following six independent evaluations conducted by the IEU:

- Final Evaluation of the Pashmina Enhancement and Trade Support (PETS) Project in Nepal
- Evaluation of the Certified Trade Advisers Programme (CTAP);
- Evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP);
- Midterm Evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) in The Gambia;
- Evaluation of the ITC Participation and Performance in the UN Delivering as One (DaO) System; and
- Evaluation of the ITC Programme 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISI)'

Overview of implementation status as of March 2022

Evaluations	Recommendations			Implementation Status		
	Total	Accepted	Partially Accepted	Not Started	Ongoing	Implemented
Nepal 2018	14	8	6	--	--	14
CTAP 2018	5	5	--	--	--	5
TFP 2019	10	8	2	--	--	10
YEP 2019	11	8	3	--	--	11
DaO 2019	6	5	1	1	5	--
TISI 2020	8	8	--	--	2	6
Total	**54**	**42**	**12**	**1**	**7**	**46**

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[50] Standard 1.4 Management response and follow up: The organization should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that management responds to evaluation recommendations. The mechanisms should outline concrete actions to be undertaken in the management response and in the follow-up to recommendation implementation. Source: United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). *Norms and Standards for Evaluation.* New York: UNEG, p. 17.
[51] International Trade Centre (2018). *ITC Evaluation Guidelines, Second Edition.* Geneva: ITC, p. 46

At the end of March 2022, 85% of recommendations were implemented, 13% were ongoing, and 2% - all but one - were not started.

The status regarding individual evaluations was as follows:

Nepal:

The evaluation provided 14 recommendations addressed to various project stakeholders including the Government of Nepal, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies (MOICS), the Nepal Pashmina Industries Association (NPIA), the Trade Export Promotion Centre (TEPC), and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) – the funders. All of the recommendations have been implemented.

In January 2020, the EU-funded Nepal Trade-Related Assistance project started, which includes a pashmina component. The component directly addresses three recommendations from the PETS evaluation, namely (i) Chyangra Pashmina (CP) strategy development, (ii) capacity building for value addition for goat farmers, and (iii) promotion of CP products made from Nepalese fibre.

As of March 2022, as recommended, a technical committee that includes MOICS, NPIA, and TEPC, had been established and the pashmina sector development strategy was drafted. As also recommended, the NPIA is also working with the World Bank-funded Nepal Livestock Sector Innovation Programme (NLSIP) project and MOICS for backward integration activities related to pashmina. Since the end of the PETS project, the NPIA has established strong partnerships with key stakeholders along the pashmina value chain to develop a strong Nepali pashmina sector supply chain.

The recommendation to the EIF was implemented through, among others, (i) the coordination and support role of the EIF national implementation unit housed in MOICS; and (ii) the Nepal EIF's Sustainability Support Project, approved in December 2021, which includes a pashmina component.

CTAP:

The evaluation of CTAP (an ITC training programme) provided five recommendations designed to inform strategic decision-making for future operations, scaling up and further qualitative developments. All five recommendations have been fully implemented.

The Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness (SEC) section's approach to develop SME competitiveness was discussed with and validated by key internal stakeholders. This common understanding led to fruitful collaboration in the Strategic Plan working group on SME competitiveness. SEC also collaborated with the Research and Strategies for Export (RSE) and Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance (SPPG) in the identification of areas of change for SME competitiveness and the mapping of SEC's approach to those areas. SEC's approach to develop SME competitiveness is part of SEC's common approach for the development of enterprises and value chains. The identification of gaps in SEC's portfolio led to the development of new services (i.e., continuous improvement, entrepreneurship, managers' leadership training, and family business). A new programme, Certificate in Small Business Internationalization (CSBI) started in February 2022, with the aim to contribute to sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the Caribbean Region through improved export advisory services provided by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) BSOs.

To improve the portfolio of SME competitive performance capacity-building services, the Export Accelerator Programme was piloted in January 2021, with a second phase planned to start in mid-2022. The MSME Diagnostic and Benchmarking Platform (www.itcbenchmarking.org/) was launched at the 2022 World Trade Promotion Organizations (WTPO) Conference and Awards, and the platform will be piloted with the Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) project with Pakistani MSMEs in the agribusiness and livestock sectors.

TFP:

The evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme provided 10 recommendations designed to help the programme move into the right direction in a phase of growth. As of March 2022, all of the recommendations were implemented.

Building on the implementation of the recommendations, ITC ensures that the allocation of projects to programmes is done accurately by the project managers. This is supported through the enhancement of the functionality of the project portal of an automated notification to programme coordinators, whenever a new/changed project is submitted that links to their programme. In addition, a new filter in the Portal allows to search for projects that involve staff members working in a specific section/programme. This provides the programme coordinators with the opportunity to validate the programme link, and enables programmes to manage their portfolios effectively, allowing work-planning and reporting for programmes, across individual projects. In addition, programme managers (and related country managers) are notified by the project portal when a project concept (and small plan) is submitted which is marked as contributing to their programme.

As also recommended, the TF programme now has a detailed staffing and work plan and has engaged with ITC senior management. In 2022 a new senior extrabudgetary post was integrated into the TFP, and further discussions with senior management are planned to ensure that a portion of TFP staff or parts of their contracts can be funded from core funds to facilitate human resource planning.

YEP

The midterm evaluation provided 11 recommendations addressed to The Gambia Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration, Industry and Employment (MOITE); to the project; ITC; and the EU (as the funders). All of the recommendations have been implemented.

ITC continues to support the government in outreach to other development partners to adapt the YEP framework for youth empowerment in the areas not reached by ITC. As of March 2022, a series of meetings and retreats took place with the objective to address sustainability issues, which included MOTIE staff as well as representatives from other Ministries. In addition, knowledge exchange was promoted through other existing platforms. ITC also held a series of discussions with the Office of the President to make sure the lessons are being considered in the consultations to develop the new Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP).

As recommended, a number of new initiatives were developed in collaboration with MOTIE and affiliated institutions based on the YEP model. As a result, mainstreaming the YEP model resulted in several approaches including an initiative to support community-based reintegration for returnees that was funded through a UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) project, a GIZ-funded project to support employability through technical and vocational education training (TVET) and access to finance, a UN Human Security Trust Fund (UNHSTF) project that supports entrepreneurship and business support services, and a new project funded by the UN Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF).

DaO

As of March 2022, five of the six DaO evaluation recommendations were ongoing, and one had not started.

ITC is developing a corporate strategy for engagement with the UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and the Division of Country Programmes (DCP) is leading an effort to select priority countries to strategically reinforce ITC's field presence in terms of deployment of personnel. Once the UNCT engagement strategy is officially adopted, ITC will ensure tasks related to UNCT engagement are indicated in the job descriptions, and work plans of relevant staff. In addition, supporting materials will also be provided for personnel representing ITC in the field, and for their communication with relevant UN stakeholders.

ITC has been engaging in UNCT discussions in order to mainstream trade issues throughout joint programming, planning, reporting, and resource mobilization. By the end of 2021, ITC had signed 27 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and 24 UN Common Country Analyses (CCAs), with an aim to sign 3 more UNSDCFs and engage in 2 additional CCAs during 2022.

With regard to country intelligence reports, ITC launched a new website and the Open Data Portal (https://open.intracen.org/), where a range of data on ITC's activities at the country level are publicly available. ITC continues to work closely with other UN development system partners, notably through the framework of UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). In December 2021, ITC and UNCTAD organized a joint online seminar on trade and SDGs primarily for the Resident Coordinators (RCs). It served as an opportunity to highlight the importance of trade in achieving SDGs and to introduce ITC's offerings related to UNCT joint programming, planning and tracking of progress toward SDGs. ITC continues to engage with RCs and relevant UNCT members through participating in UNCT retreats and other key strategic decision-making events.

TISI

As of the end of March 2022, six of the eight recommendations were implemented and two were ongoing.

There has been a significant shift toward a more diverse portfolio of institutions, with the traditional work with TPOs now being a minor share of corporate indicators dedicated to the number of institutions having improved operational or managerial performance because of ITC support. Diversification has come from work with chambers, regional networks and organizations, cooperatives, and investment agencies (of the 95 results in 2020, over 50 were non-traditional ITC TPO partners).

Digital delivery channels became a critical part of the offering, hastened by the lockdown of COVID-19. The programme tailored its approaches to make them appropriate for video conferencing and online workshops, delivered via e-learning modules, and hybrid events.

The programme has strengthened its identity and recognition value, with the new name for the Section 'Institution & Ecosystem Development (I&E)'. Knowledge transfer amongst staff in the section has been done to ensure staff are trained and can apply key methodologies such as Cubed, Benchmarking, strategy mapping, etc. New solutions around service digitalization were developed and staff are trained to apply this training for BSOs. In addition, the new benchmarking model has inclusiveness and sustainability features, and Cubed assessment and training for available for SheTrades and Green to Compete hubs.

With the new ITC strategic cycle, the focus has shifted to supporting the larger ecosystem supporting MSME internationalization, allowing ITC to engage with a wider range of BSOs. As a result of Covid-19, sharing information through digital and local channels was a priority. Scale and reach were done through regional BSO networks as well as taking part in a number of online events, webinars and trainings. When possible, the section ensured peer-to-peer learning by supporting BSOs to connect and share experiences and best practices.

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