

2014-2015 ANNUAL EVALUATION SYNTHESIS REPORT

OF THE PERFORMANCE AND
RESULTS OF ITC OPERATIONS
EVALUATED IN 2014-2015

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Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations	iv
I. Background and methodology.....	1
II. Performance and results towards achieving corporate objectives	1
III. Recent development of the evaluation services.....	7
IV. Implementation status of evaluation recommendations and good practices	10
V. Learning themes.....	12

Acronyms and abbreviations

AfT	Aid for Trade
CEMAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States
CPC	Committee on Programme Coordination
EAC	Evaluation Advisory Committee
EFI	Ethical Fashion Initiative
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
ES	Export Strategy
FFS	Farmer Field School
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
HPTD	Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development
ITC	International Trade Centre
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
KTDA	Kenya Tea Development Agency
NTF II	Netherlands Trust Fund Phase II
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAC	Project Appraisal Committee
PCTP	Poor Communities and Trade Programme
SCED	Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TCCEP	Trade Climate Change and Environment Programme
TISI	Trade Investment and Support Institution
TRTA	Trade-Related Technical Assistance
UEMOA	Economic and Monetary Union of West African States
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WEDF	World Export Development Forum

I. Background and methodology

1. This is the third Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report by the Evaluation Unit of the ITC following the editions 2013 and 2014. The main clients for this report are ITC management and staff, representatives of ITC member states, Aid for Trade (AfT) practitioners, and other stakeholders. In line with good practices promoted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and its members, the purpose of this report is to present the evaluation-based findings on ITC's corporate-level performance and results, report the implementation status of evaluation recommendations, and stimulate debate on selected learning themes.
2. The annual report is grounded on reviewing the evaluations, impact assessments, status reports on implementing evaluation recommendations, and other studies completed in 2014-2015, examining the corporate-level performance and results, and contemplating the cross-cutting issues and learning themes emerging from various evaluations and reviews.
3. The evaluations and studies being included in the review scope of the Report are: the Evaluation of the Trade, Climate Change and Environment Programme (TCCEP) 2015, the Midterm Evaluation of Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification in The Gambia (SCED)¹ 2014, the Midterm Evaluation of Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development in Lesotho (HPTD)² 2015, and ITC's client surveys on impact 2014 and 2015. The external Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014 and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) Programme Evaluation of ITC 2015 are considered as important external references by this report. The review scope also included the status report on implementing evaluation recommendations.
4. This report added a new section on the recent development of evaluation services, to emphasize the progress made in strengthening evaluation services at ITC. It summarizes the discussions surrounding the newly released Evaluation Policy 2015, the paper on Strategic Services of Evaluation Function 2014, the paper on Impact Assessment at Agency Level 2014, and other discussions with ITC management on evaluation and performance (results) management.
5. In line with the practice of last year's report and with modifications reflecting the revised strategic direction at ITC, the report contains the sections of (i) performance and results towards achieving corporate objectives, which will examine to what extent the programmes/projects are contributing to ITC's corporate objectives; (ii) recent development of evaluation services, summarising the main evaluation products and services at ITC; (iii) implementation status of evaluation recommendations and good practices, which reviews the implementation progress made by individual programmes and projects; and (iv) selected learning themes on sustainability and exit strategy, length of project implementation period, and project monitoring and reporting.

II. Performance and results towards achieving corporate objectives

6. To assess the performance and results towards achieving corporate objectives, this report applies the ITC's corporate objective stated in the Strategic Plan 2015-17, *to foster inclusive and sustainable growth and development in developing countries, especially least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition through trade and international business development*, in addressing the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the operations evaluated in 2014-2015.

¹ Enhanced Integrated Framework [EIF] Tier 2 project

² Enhanced Integrated Framework [EIF] Tier 2 project

7. Based on the evaluations completed in 2014-2015, the relevance of the ITC's operations has been found satisfactory, and the effectiveness and impact considered moderately satisfactory, as evidenced by the TCCEP evaluation, the midterm evaluation of SCED in The Gambia, and the midterm evaluation of HPTD in Lesotho. These major findings on relevance, effectiveness and efficiency have also been echoed by the external Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014 and the OIOS Programme Evaluation of ITC 2015.

Box 1: Brief of the three programmes/projects

TCCEP: The TCCEP was a three year programme (2010-2013), with a budget of USD 2.8 million, aiming to strengthen the capacity of Trade Support Institutions (TSIs) and SMEs to compete in the international market for sustainably produced goods and services. Under the programme umbrella, four projects were designed and implemented, including: Biotrade project in Peru, Climate change project in Kenya, Organics project in Zambia, Biodiversity project, and Environmental mainstreaming.

SCED in The Gambia: The Sector Competitiveness & Export Diversification Project in The Gambia was launched in June 2012, with a budget of USD 2.36 million for the implementation period of 3 years. Other funding included in-kind contribution from the Government in the amount of USD 0.41 million. Apart from support to agriculture, the project also included a trade information component and an inclusive tourism component.

HPTD in Lesotho: The Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project in Lesotho is implemented by ITC, for a 3-year period from 2013 to 2016. The project, with a budget of USD 2.7 million, aimed to build the capacity of farmers and cooperatives in Lesotho to produce high value fresh fruits and vegetables for domestic and export markets. A midterm evaluation, requested by EIF, was conducted in 2015 to assess the progress made.

8. **Trade, Climate Change, and Environment Programme.** The relevance of the TCCEP was largely confirmed by the ex-post evaluation, particularly in terms of placing ITC in the arena of trade and environment interventions, stakeholders' appreciation of a value chain approach, and capacity building with an environmental focus. One success factor is that the TCCEP leveraged related government policies in project design and implementation, which enhanced the relevance to country's development agenda and clients' needs.
9. For example, in Peru the sustainable use of natural resources is featured in its free trade agreements, including the current negotiations with the European Union. In the case of Zambia, the support to income-generation beekeeping as sustainable forest-based enterprises was in line with the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (2007), and agriculture is one of the priority growth sectors in the National Development Plan 2011–2015. However, the evaluation also found that the synergy among individual projects and the coherence between operations in countries are not evident.
10. The evaluation found that the programme was largely effective in achieving results for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Based on interviews with the project-supported SMEs, the TCCEP was regarded very effective in providing knowledge on how to promote products internationally, an area of ITC's comparative advantage, followed by useful information on environmental market opportunities and policies. The effectiveness in improving energy efficiency in tea production in Kenya is illustrated in the case study below. However, the effectiveness was slightly lower in supporting natural resource based products and green technologies and services.
11. In terms of impact, the TCCEP considered the SMEs and Trade Investment and Support Institutions (TISI) as direct beneficiaries and the related small farmers and producers as indirect beneficiaries, and the monitoring had focused on only direct beneficiaries – SMEs and TISIs. Therefore, there was limited data on the impact on the livelihoods of small farmers and producers.

Case study: Carbon Project in Kenya

The Chinga tea factory, to dry the green tea, shifted from unsustainable use of forests to wood plantations. It is reported that 30 acres of land were planted with trees with another 70 acres ready to be cultivated. In addition, firewood is now dried prior to its use, with five more wood fuel storages and drying sheds available for that purpose. This increases the caloric value of the firewood. The Chinga tea factory partnered with four other tea factories to install their own mini-hydro power generation unit to reduce costs of power supply and to use “green” energy. Water supply to the Chinga tea factory is now established by the local water authority and delivered with gravity flow, as opposed to pumping water from ponds. As result, energy consumption reduced by 2 per cent for electricity and 34 per cent for wood as shown in the table below.

Carbon project: energy efficiency results	7 month Average 2012/13	Equivalent 7 month Average 2013/14	Change in energy consumption
Electricity (Kenya shillings used to make 1 kg of made tea)	8.33	7.92	-2 per cent
Wood fuel (Kenya shillings used to make 1 kg of made tea)	8.13	5.36	-34 per cent

12. **SCED in The Gambia.** The midterm evaluation of the EIF-funded SCED in The Gambia assessed mainly the relevance of the project to the needs of clients in the country. The SCED project aims to improve the international competitiveness of the groundnut, cashew, sesame and inclusive tourism sectors of the Gambian economy. The relevance of this approach is evident in that the horticultural production involves a large number of the rural poor, making it a priority for poverty reduction. The midterm evaluation concluded that, if implemented as designed, the SCED is strongly relevant and is likely to have a significant impact on the international competitiveness of the targeted sectors.
13. Among the three main components – agricultural intervention, trade information, and connecting tourism to agriculture, strong evidences of relevance were found mainly in the agricultural sector interventions. SCED supported the development of sector strategies for cashew nut and sesame, two commercial products with potential for quality improvement and export; and the project designed activities for quality accreditation, standards development, quality segregation, and implantation of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)³, and farmers’ field schools
14. The initiative of collecting and disseminating trade information of the targeted sectors among policy makers, TISI, enterprises and farmers is very relevant, as the baseline survey found that there was no effective trade information network in The Gambia and the project was filling in a gap. Trade information support holds potential for enhancing the international competitiveness of targeted sectors in agri-business.
15. The concepts of the trade information support and connecting tourism to agriculture were plausible; however the intervention logic was less well articulated, and there were limited signs showing that these two components would be fully implemented and would generate significant results. It should be noted that the implementation is still ongoing, and the midterm evaluation recommended extending the implementation period to allow time for bringing in key national partners, and implement sufficient actions to stimulate impact.
16. **HPTD in Lesotho.** The midterm evaluation found that the HPTD is well designed and highly relevant, and it has the potential to improve export earnings and reducing rural poverty. The finding

³ International quality standards for agricultural production.

highlights the good quality of the design. The project invests mainly in a service package surrounding the production and trade of greenhouse mushroom managed by smallholder farmers, who are very motivated to run small farm business. The main components - enhanced skills and knowledge of smallholder farmers and their cooperatives, a mushroom laboratory for providing greater volumes of mushroom spawn, quality assessment and accreditation of mushroom, a market centre linking farmers' cooperatives to domestic and export markets, and improved financial skills of small farmers and their cooperatives – are highly relevant to the corporate objectives of ITC and to the needs of beneficiaries.

17. The relevance is also confirmed by the fact that this kind of service package has been tried and tested by multilateral banks and other agencies in rural business development, although the need for enhanced links to micro-finance and the necessity of social cohesion (such as women's self-support group) in production and marketing are not obvious in the HPTD design.
18. However, the project at its halfway point could implement only a part of the first two components that is the procurement and installation of the greenhouse kits and the procurement of facilities for the mushroom lab. The project has installed 85 kits and trained farmers on the correct techniques in greenhouse farming, and a Chinese aid project procured the equipment for the mushroom lab, trained local staff, and signed another three-year support to this lab.
19. However, the implementation of the project has not gone without some challenges. There has been limited progress on quality assessment services, market information centre, or financial management. The central coordination role and function has been over-complex, with a lack of clear reporting lines and decision making mechanisms. Communication among the multiple ministries and stakeholders involved are has also been challenging with the EIF National Implementing Unit, or not be able to build consensus on major decisions to steer the project ahead. This underscores the importance of the EIF trade mainstreaming efforts to ensure that institutional capacity building is enhanced to provide concrete foundations and ownership assumption for effective implementation and attainment of results.
20. The contrast between the high relevance of project design and more modest effectiveness in terms of implementation once again highlights the critical importance for ITC of enhancing the preparedness and implementation capacity in challenging country contexts.
21. **Results of performance and impact surveys.** ITC is committed to demonstrating development results and impact in partner countries. ITC conducted impact-oriented surveys in 2014 and 2015. At the present stage, these studies focused only on the first ITC corporate goal directly targeting enterprises. It is foreseen that an appropriate methodology to assess impact on policymaking institutions and TSIs will be addressed in subsequent phases. The first category of survey targeted enterprises having participated in ITC's technical assistance projects to examine their perception of the impact generated by ITC operations. The main message emerging from the 2014 impact-orientated survey is that working with ITC had a positive impact on exports.

Box 2: Corporate-level impact surveys

The effects were more pronounced for smaller companies than for larger companies: The Impact-orientated survey questionnaire was launched by the Market Analysis and Research Section (MAR), Division of Market Development, with an online format in February 2014. The survey covered 23 ITC projects and over 1,000 emails were sent to potential beneficiaries. The survey produced 307 answers, of which 169 were considered valid.. The survey with same design was repeated in 2015.

About 80 per cent of SMEs declared seeing a positive impact in their exports as opposed to only 30 per cent of the large companies. Of the 36 companies that shared details on their export values and the share attributable to ITC, they exported between 14 and 15 million USD in 2013 and attributed about 3.5 million USD to ITC, an average of around 30 per cent. Responding companies also found that working with ITC contributed to the creation of jobs for both men and women. Furthermore, the results of the survey 2015 indicate that ITC contributes to diversification for companies, both in terms of new markets (in 50 per cent of the cases and claimed that they exported on average to 1.5 new countries) and in terms of new export products (where product diversification occurred in 38 per cent of the cases).

Another category of survey conducted in 2014, focused on the clients of ITC that use ITC's trade information public goods. The survey is used to monitor relevance, utilization and performance of the tools, to provide insights on the impact of these tools, and to obtain feedback for future improvements. In terms of enterprises using these tools, the key findings is that importing/exporting rated the influence of ITC market analysis tools on their import or export activity as largely positive. The companies that responded estimated a total of USD 121. 6 million of attributable export value. Some of these companies claimed that ITC Market Analysis Tools were particularly user-friendly and instrumental in helping them to identify new market opportunities.

22. From external perspectives, the development performance and results of ITC, particularly in support the trade of SMEs in developing countries, was examined and confirmed by the two recent external evaluations of the ITC as an organization. Overall, ITC is found providing relevant and customized services to clients in developing countries, and that the development outcomes and impact should be further substantiated in future operations.

Box 3: What the external Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014 talks about ITC's performance

An Independent Evaluation of the ITC was conducted by Saana Consulting in 2013- 14. The evaluation findings and recommendations were presented to the annual meeting of the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) in June 2014.

The evaluation endorsed the relevance and effectiveness of ITC's aid for trade interventions. It found that, as a relatively small organization with a complex internal governance structure, ITC had continued to be focused on delivering practical support to developing countries, and especially to SMEs, to help them increase their development through trade. There are growing demands for ITC-type services, and ITC is well-placed to respond, providing that it secures sufficient and predictable funding for a coherent long-term strategy. Regarding the performance of ITC in the period of 2006–2013, a key message expressed was that, in spite of limited resources and heavy constraints, ITC continued to provide high-quality services in its specialized field.

However, ITC's overall resource situation limits the greater use of this asset by developing countries, reduces its efficiency, and contributes to distortions in the organization and its results. The evaluation drew out four major strategic recommendations with supporting action points to be addressed by ITC management, governance bodies and supporters:

- Move to a strategic base for supporting and deploying ITC's unique strengths in the global Aid for Trade effort.
- Protect and develop ITC's main and distinctive working assets: its special capacity to deal with the private sector in trade and its excellence in technical expertise and appropriate technical assistance.
- Pragmatically strengthen governance and continue to strengthen accountability while minimizing bureaucracy.
- Move ITC up to the next level of visibility, engagement and effectiveness as a key player in the global Aid for Trade effort.

ITC management accepted all the recommendations which formed a substantive input into the formulation of the new ITC Strategic Plan 2015-17, launched in September 2014. A detailed Management Response and Action Plan was prepared by ITC and endorsed at an ad hoc session of the JAG in January 2015.

Box 4. OIOS Programme Evaluation of ITC 2015

The UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) carried out an evaluation of ITC that started in 2014 and culminated in early 2015. This report was commissioned despite a full-blown independent evaluation of ITC that reported in 2014. ITC has co-operated fully to ensure this evaluation added value to the prior evaluation. The evaluation report was presented to the UN Committee on Programme Coordination (CPC) in New York on 3 June 2015 in a formal session and on 9 June in an informal session.

The OIOS report largely endorses the prior independent evaluation, both on findings and methodology. The report is generally positive in its view of the progress made in the period under review (2006-2014) and of the current state of ITC. The OIOS evaluation considered that while ITC had made progress in establishing the architecture for mainstreaming cross-cutting issues, it had not consistently addressed these issues in its project designs. OIOS made five recommendations:

- Regularly monitor operational units' implementation of the action plans formulated in response to the 2014 evaluation of the Centre as well as the present evaluation, and regularly report on such implementation to its Joint Advisory Group;
- Incrementally adopt a more holistic, data-driven approach to strategic planning and budgeting;
- Revise its programme and project approval protocol to ensure project alignment with corporate priorities and objective needs assessments, as well as adequate attention to monitoring and evaluation and risk management;
- Improve its capacity to generate credible evidence on the results its interventions have achieved, and on these interventions' cost-effectiveness; and
- Accelerate mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues.

ITC was able to accept all the recommendations of the OIOS evaluation, although not without caveats, which are detailed in the ITC management response and its action plan.

It is noteworthy that the OIOS Recommendation II - Incrementally adopt a more holistic, data-driven approach to strategic planning and budgeting - presents a challenge to ITC because it can be seen as underestimating the practical constraints on a small agency like ITC. ITC will take this recommendation on board as a direction in which to move, but it will do so carefully, to make sure that it is complementary to the valuable role it plays as a trusted broker between demand for its services and the funding that is available.

III. Recent development of the evaluation services

23. In 2014 – 2015, the Evaluation Unit intensified efforts to further align the evaluation services to ITC's strategic objectives, clarify the evaluation and advisory services, and enhance the utility of evaluation. The related policy guidance is addressed in the ITC Evaluation Policy 2015. The Evaluation Policy 2015 supersedes the Evaluation Policy 2008 and is also referred as the second edition Evaluation Policy.
24. In supporting the revised strategic direction and the programmatic approach to the strategic focus areas, it is critical for the evaluation function to clarify what essential services are provided to the organization, and how the evaluation function serves the corporate objectives. Within the performance (results) management framework of the ITC, evaluation has a role to support the ITC management and delivery managers to better plan, measure and demonstrate results, which is even more prominent considering the weakness in project monitoring and reporting systems mentioned by recently-completed evaluations.
25. The development of evaluation services holds great potential for improving the utility of ITC's evaluation products. As agreed during recent consultations at ITC, the objectives of the evaluation function at ITC are to serve decision making of ITC management on selected policy and strategic areas, improve the performance and results and, therefore, enhance ITC's position in the AfT area. These objectives shall be achieved through priority-setting with ITC management and staff,

- conducting strategic evaluations in a timely manner, and promoting learning and consensus building.
26. To build common understanding in-house, evaluation approaches shall be harmonised among Divisions and teams, to ensure consistence and effective use. In the harmonisation process, the Evaluation Unit is positioned to provide advisory services to delivery managers on monitoring, reporting, and evaluation methods and processes, and it relies on effective monitoring and reporting system to generate quality evaluation findings.
 27. **Evaluation Policy 2015.** The first edition of ITC Evaluation Policy was approved in 2008, and it has been guiding and serving the independent evaluation function and the programme monitoring and evaluation systems at ITC. In line with UNEG Norms and Standards, it is considered a good practice to update evaluation policy periodically.
 28. The decision to update the Evaluation Policy is also related to the recommendations of the two recent external independent evaluations of the ITC and two UN assessments of evaluation function of UN organizations that touched upon the evaluation function of ITC. The Evaluation Policy addresses the recommendations on enhancing the evaluation function, revising evaluation policy, supporting evaluation capacity building, and conducting risk-assessment for evaluation planning. It also emphasizes evaluation advisory services to support monitoring and reporting.
 29. In particular, the revision reflected the changes that have taken place in ITC in recent years, such as the revised strategic direction described in the Strategic Plan 2015-2017, the programmatic approach to address the focus intervention areas, the ongoing efforts to enhance programme and project designs, the revision of corporate monitoring and evaluation systems, and the progress made in impact assessments and impact surveys, and the use of impact stories to communicate development results.
 30. To strengthen alignment with ITC's strategic objectives, the renewed Evaluation Policy emphasizes the evaluation services for strategic decision-making and the utility of evaluations. Evaluation shall act as an agent of change and advise management decision-making through providing evaluation-based evidences and recommendations.
 31. The Evaluation Policy 2015 articulates what main advisory services are provided by the evaluation function to operation divisions and delivery managers. The purpose of evaluation advisory services is to develop an evaluation-based learning culture, and in particular to use evaluation practices and methods in project cycle management to manage and report results with credible evidence. The advisory services include regular comments on monitoring, reporting and evaluation to the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) on project ideas, project plans and programme plans, and support to delivery managers on monitoring and reporting issues such as baseline surveys, midterm reviews, self-evaluations, periodical reviews, impact studies, project completion reports, independent evaluations, etc.
 32. To address the demands on impact assessment, the Policy clarifies that impact assessment, as a type of evaluation, could take the form of either independent evaluation or self-evaluation, pending on the specific requirements, objectives, funding sources, and timing. The decision for undertaking an impact assessment should be based on a balanced consideration of the potential value added, compared with a regular evaluation exercise, and the cost involved in conducting an impact assessment.
 33. It may not be applicable to conduct impact assessment in certain operations, however, some specific impact assessment methods, such as comparison between before and after intervention and comparison between the results observed in target groups and that in comparison groups, could be applied in monitoring, reporting, and evaluation and self-evaluation activities. Among others, the ITC's annual client survey on perceived impact will be supported by the Evaluation Unit.

The Unit will also explore methods to enhance the “impact” elements in ITC’s Impact Stories, a communication product, to uphold the partnership and visibility efforts of ITC.

34. The considerations on evaluation work programme and budget, implementation arrangement, evaluation criteria, process, and use are in line with the good practices promoted by UNEG and verified by ITC. Besides, the Policy makes clear that the conflict of interest should be strictly avoided in evaluation practices. These norms and policy guidance will facilitate building a common understanding within ITC on the matters related to evaluation, self-evaluation, and impact assessment.
35. To enhance the operational prospects of the Evaluation Policy, the Evaluation Unit is in the process of developing two sets of guidelines to operationalize the policy – the Guidelines for Independent Evaluations and Impact Assessment, and the Guidelines for Self-evaluation at ITC. The three documents will compose a package of ITC’s evaluation policy and guidance documents.
36. **Strategic Paper.** As part of the preparation work for revising the Evaluation Policy, the Unit developed a strategic paper in 2014 for consultation with ITC management, on Strategic Services of the Evaluation Unit in Enhancing Corporate Performance and Learning. The paper was presented to the ITC Senior Management Committee (SMC) in November 2014, and the feedback received was very insightful and constructive for the later effort in developing the Evaluation Policy.
37. The paper explained, among other issues, the complementary roles of the evaluation function and performance (results) management function at ITC, for examining and reporting corporate performance and results, and it articulated the operational challenges faced by ITC in strengthening monitoring and reporting systems at programme and project levels.
38. The paper also outlined the main services provided by the Evaluation Unit: independent evaluation services and advisory services, with a view to strengthening corporate monitoring and reporting systems.
39. **Impact methods.** In December 2014, the Evaluation Unit published a guidance paper on impact assessment: Impact at the Agency Level 2014. The paper presented on the one hand the results of an impact-oriented survey, as presented in the Section above in this report, and on the other, the concepts, methods, and lessons learned regarding impact measurement within ITC’s operational context. The key learning point argued by the paper is that the credibility of the impact will have to be further strengthened through applying relevant and practical impact measurement methods.
40. Measuring long-term development results and impact of AfT interventions (such as poverty reduction, women’s empowerment, and economic growth) requires rigorous and relevant methods, and reliable observation over time. In the trade development context, these changes lie much beyond any linear attribution analysis; often increased exports are not entirely the result of a single trade intervention, but rather the results of collective efforts of different sectors, partners and beneficiaries themselves. Thus, it is instructive to construct an impact analysis model which takes into consideration the macro-level intervention logics of multi-sectors, partners, and beneficiaries, and the context-specific outcomes and indicators. This kind of analysis model should reflect, to the extent possible, the complex realities on the ground while distinctively delineating the various impact paths.
41. Another lesson learned from various impact measurement exercises is about the availability and reliability of data. The finding on compromised quality of performance and results data is expressed repeatedly by recent evaluations including the external evaluations. The Evaluation Unit will explore various advisory services to enhance the availability and quality of data contained in the monitoring and reporting systems.

42. Following the programmatic approach outlined in the Strategic Plan 2015-2017, ITC is already progressively carrying out a series of efforts to address the challenges related to measuring and demonstrating long-term results and impact. In operations, ITC is building more convincing logic chains between ITC activities and claimed results, embedding impact consideration into project designs, and ensuring the integration of evaluation recommendations into the project cycle. These actions will facilitate ITC's understanding of attribution/contribution issues in the results chain.
43. To promote the integration of impact measurement, an ongoing effort undertaken by the Evaluation Unit is to review the various impact measurement practices currently applied by delivery managers, with a view to consolidating experiences and generating lessons for the development of a corporate impact framework. The Guidelines for Independent Evaluations and Guidelines for Self-evaluations will address the issues on methods, process, and use of impact assessment and various impact measurement tools.

IV. Implementation status of evaluation recommendations and good practices

44. This is a review of the implementation status of recommendations provided by evaluations completed between 2012 and 2014. The objective of this section is to present the implementation status (including progress and results) and lessons learned, and if applicable, good practices in the implementation of evaluation recommendations. This analysis addressed the evaluation recommendations related to the following projects, programmes and functions:
 - The World Export Development Forum (WEDF), evaluation 2012;
 - Expansion of Intra- and Interregional Trade Among the Member States of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), the Economic and Monetary Union of West African States (UEMOA) and Francophone Countries of the Mekong, midterm evaluation 2012;
 - Poor Communities and Trade Programme (PCTP), midterm evaluation 2013;
 - Netherlands Trust Fund (NTFII) II Programme, evaluation 2013;
 - ITC Export Strategy (ES) Function, evaluation 2013; and
 - Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification (SCED) in The Gambia, midterm evaluation 2014.
45. In line with the ITC Guidelines for Follow-up to Evaluation Report Recommendations⁴, managers of programmes and projects that have been evaluated are required to periodically report on the implementation status of the recommendations and their supporting actions. Implementation monitoring was collected twice during 2014 (June and December); the qualitative and quantitative data for this analysis is based on a desk analysis of the most recent implementation status reported. With a view to determine if the evaluation had helped the project to be more relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable, and contribute to impact, each of the six monitoring reports were reviewed and discussed with the programme or project manager in order to determine what had been accomplished as of December 2014. The findings from this have been combined to form an overall understanding in the form of key messages and lessons learned.
46. Based on the status reports, the recommendations related to the six evaluations are all fully accepted or partially accepted. As of December 2014, among the total of 80 recommendations from the evaluations, 49 are fully implemented by the new phases or new interventions, which represents 61 per cent of the total recommendations; and most of the others are being

⁴ International Trade Centre. Guidelines for Follow-up to Evaluation Report Recommendations, 2008, page 3.

implemented, except two which had not started. The high rate of full acceptance, 88 per cent, by the delivery managers indicates that the majority of the evaluation recommendations were reflected in new designs or new phases. An overview of the implementation status is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Overview of Implementation Status as of December 2014

Evaluations (Date of completion)	Recommendations			Implementation Status			
	Total	Accepted	Partially Accepted	Not started ⁵	Ongoing	Final Status	
						Partially implemented	Implemented
WEDF (2012)	9	9	0	0	0	4	5
South-South (2012)	12	7	5	0	3	1	8
PCTP (2013)	21	21	0	0	0	0	21
NTF II (2013)	12	11	1	0	3	1	8
Export Strategy (2013)	12	11	1	0	7	0	5
EIF Gambia (2014)	14	11	3	2	10	0	2
Total	80	70	10	2	23	6	49

47. The lessons learned presented below are exacted from reviewing the implementation status reports provided by delivery managers, and they are often found common across programmes and projects in the process of implementing evaluation recommendations.
48. **Partnership building.** The specific recommendation on partnership building is found in most, if not all, evaluations, as seen in the evaluations of PCTP, NTF II, and the EIF Project in The Gambia, which highlights the critical importance for ITC programmes of involving broad partners including internal and external, national and international, public and private sector partners, in pursuit of commitment and ownership, coordination and funding, technical collaboration, innovation, replication and scaling up, sustainability, etc. The status reports provided by delivery managers showed that there has been a growing trend on strengthening partnerships with project stakeholders. In the case of PCTP and NTF III, the partnership effort has led to increased support from donors, which has resulted in new projects or new phases of the programme.
49. **Adaptation to budget limits.** In a number of cases (WEDF, PCTP, South-South, and NTF II), the lack of funds was cited as a cause hindering the implementation of some actions. In future, action plans should be adapted to the budget limits, among other considerations, to ensure practical and timely implementation. With the benefit of hindsight, the analysis found that certain recommendations addressing technological refinements or modifications may have not fully considered cost implications and the possibility of rapid advancements in IT technology, such as what was seen in the cases of WEDF, South-South, and PCTP evaluations. The recommendation was implemented in each case of the three evaluations, by means different from that envisioned by the evaluations, which is considered as a good practice to adapt the implementation to the budget, time frame, and specific situations.

⁵ At the time of writing, June 2015, the implementation status of the two recommendations changed from “not started” to “ongoing”.

50. **Timeframe for the action plan.** Management responses and action plans should indicate the timeframe and deadlines for implementation of recommendations. It was found that in a few cases that deadlines were lacking (NTF II and South-South), making it difficult to track and report the progress. The deadline for each recommendation and related action needs to be realistic to allow a reasonable timeframe for implementation. To ensure necessary flexibility, extensions and modifications of action plans should be justified and allowed. Taking into consideration that the management responses are agreed by Division Directors, decisions on extension and modification should be agreed by respective Division Directors.
51. **Monitoring and reporting results.** When comparing the findings from earlier evaluations (WEDF and South-South) to that of the recent evaluations (PCTP or NTF II), there are signs indicating increasing efforts on monitoring and reporting results. However, there is still a lack of emphasis, in the action plans and new project designs, on systematically monitoring and reporting the results and impact, as evidenced by the recent management response and action plans. The Evaluation Unit has started in mid-2104 to convey evaluation comments regularly through the Project Appraisal Committee on new project ideas and project designs, with aims to enhance the monitoring and reporting arrangements and to direct emphasis on measuring and reporting results and impact.

Box 5: Good Practices

Poor Community and Trade Programme (PCTP).

The evaluation recommended the creation of a database application to allow joint product development with the accessory industry, by sharing design files and design ideas through mobile devices. After consulting with industry partners the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) team found that existing technologies would allow organizing product development without creating an additional app. As a result, the EFI developed a means to co-design a collection out of design templates available on an e-commerce platform.

As the programme is extended to December 2020, it plans to continue integrating evaluation findings and recommendations. The revised programme document included various inputs from the evaluation, such as the evaluation findings on EFI's inclusive business model, improvement in the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups, etc. The documents also made references to the results of implementing the evaluation recommendations.

The World Export Development Forum (WEDF)

The WEDF event did not take place in 2013, which led to three of the recommendations scheduled for a two-year period being confined to one year. Under these circumstances, the implementation of the recommendations was carried out to the extent possible. For those recommendations that were partially implemented (efforts towards involving the wider trade-related technical assistance community; network strengthening; and further engagement with the donor community in the planning process) will be ongoing as seen in the new project document. Good practice has been put in place by WEDF, as the implementation of recommendations has been tracked and the tracking record is explicit in the Events project document.

V. Learning themes

52. The learning themes presented below are generated from crosschecking the main findings on the alignment to corporate objectives, recent development of evaluation services, and implementation status of the evaluation recommendations. They are provided for the purpose of stimulating in-house debate on how to address these issues and preparing related actions in operations.
53. **Sustainability and exit strategy.** The concerns on sustainability are one of most prominent cross-cutting issues conveyed by the three programme/projects evaluations. The sustainability prospects of the benefits generated by the TCCEP are varied in different projects. The evaluation did not identify an explicit strategy on sustainability of the programme; however, the evaluation identified

good prospects on SME business and export in Peru, Kenya, and, to certain extent, Zambia as well. The programme's modus operandi on exit arrangement was to focus on existing financial viable companies that would continue to trade after the programme finished, however the programme was weak in articulating a comprehensive exit strategy to sustain the overall benefits of the projects.

54. The sustainability prospects of the two EIF-funded projects are weaker. The HPTD in Lesotho encountered challenges related to coordination and ownership during implementation, and the lack of communication between the key partners in the Government during the design and implementation stages slowed the progress on agriculture production and hindered the implementation of quality assessment (accreditation) and market information centre.
55. The sustainability of the project benefits will be largely dependent on the ownership and participation of the key national partners, therefore the evaluation recommended to bring in key national players and motivated implementation agencies on board in the next stage, and requesting to extend the implementation period to allow sufficient time to establish agreement with key national partners and to implement all the expected activities. An exit strategy agreed by national partners would enhance the sustainability prospects.
56. The SCED in The Gambia progressed well in terms developing horticultural sector strategies for groundnut, cashew nut and sesame sectors, implementing food safety and quality acts, and supporting farmers' field schools. However, the evaluation considered that the de-linking between horticultural sector development and quality standards posed a risk for the realization of the project benefits and the sustainability prospects as well.
57. There is also a great need for effective monitoring, evaluation and compliance actions, as the existing arrangements are too ad hoc to be durable. The Ministry of Agriculture had been cited by the project as an anchor in some of the major activities; however the difficulties in realizing commitment will put the sustainability prospects at risk. An exit strategy supported by national partners, including Ministries of Trade and Agriculture, are necessary to sustain the project benefits.
58. The evaluations acknowledged that the coordination and management arrangements among the national stakeholders are often beyond what ITC could influence, especially in certain country contexts where ITC's actions are pending on the upcoming political elections or government decisions. Based on the findings from the three evaluations, the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report would suggest the ITC management to dedicate one SMC session on discussing how to guide the design and implementation of sustainability and exit strategies in ITC programmes and projects, and propose tailored training and support to delivery managers.

Box 6: A good practice on sustainability arrangement with existing national structures

In Kenya, extension officers operating in field schools and providing assistance via mobile phone text messaging are likely to continue providing climate change related training, as TCCEP used existing national structures and involved the TISI partner in the development of climate change adaptation training manuals. The latter resulted in the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) adding climate change adaptation to the farmers' field school curriculum. Climate change adaptation is also promoted by posters in local languages in public areas like tea collection centres. Farmers are likely to maintain the use of enhanced techniques such as composting or the use of energy efficient stoves requiring less fire wood.

59. **Extension of implementation period.** Another key lesson learned from the midterm evaluations of the two EIF Tier-2 projects is about the length of implementation period. The EIF projects, as often seen in other ITC projects, are bound to be implemented in a three-year period, including the time for sorting out implementation arrangements in the host countries. However, in some EIF client countries, the coordination among key national partners is in itself a consultation-intensive, time-consuming and critical intervention process, and the time dedicated to the preparation and coordination will have to eat in the time expected for implementing other project activities.
60. As evidenced in both EIF projects, in the initial two years, the challenges related to coordination and commitment in the country significantly slowed down the progress, and there were little signs showing the projects would complete the tasks within a three-year time frame. There was a great need to extend the implementation time to implement all activities, and therefore to realize the expected results.
61. The Annual Evaluation report therefore suggests that the EIF delivery managers feedback the evaluation findings to EIF Secretariat and national partners, and convene a meeting with EIF Secretariat and key national implementation partners to discuss the options on how to reschedule a realistic time frame in specific client countries, to allow the project results to be realised and sustained. The lessons could be shared with other ITC projects on how to factor in the preparation and coordination efforts in project planning stage.
62. **Effective monitoring and reporting.** An insight gained from the efforts of promoting evaluation services and implementing evaluation recommendations is about the critical importance of effective project monitoring and reporting to the realization of ITC's development results.
63. ITC's development achievements should be backed with relevant, systematic and reliable data, of each programme and project and in individual client countries, which is still found as a weak link in ITC's project management cycle. The Evaluation Unit could do spot-checking on the performance and results of individual projects and in client countries, but it is not positioned neither resourced to do comprehensive multi-year data collection for each project to track the exact performance and results.
64. The Evaluation Unit has started a mapping exercise of the result assessment tools at ITC, to analyse the utility of assessment and reporting mechanisms. Preliminary findings indicate that the existing tools present important potential for presenting results. For example, surveys, which are the most widely used tool in the organisation, already solicited useful feedback from beneficiaries, but should dig further to understand the "why" factors. The Benchmarking Tool for TISIs could evolve into a more systematically used methodology to determine a baseline for tracking and reporting results. Similarly, the wealth of both quantitative and qualitative information produced by the PCME tool, used in the Empowering Poor Communities to Trade Programme, could be further developed into a rigorous impact evaluation tool and used in wider corporate context.
65. In this respect, within the 2015-17 strategic planning cycle, the Evaluation Unit is planning to promote self-evaluation and project completion report, and enhance quality guidance and validation services of monitoring and reporting products. The roll out of self-evaluation and project completion report is expected to expand the evaluation coverage of ITC's overall operations, and the quality support will enable the delivery managers to better collect, consolidate, and present the concrete results, and feed the lessons and insights in decision making. The upcoming Guidelines will facilitate the implementation of self-evaluations and project completion reports.

