International Trade Centre

REVIEW

Learnings from strengthening ITC INTEGRA Project Implementation and Monitoring in Preparation for an Impact Evaluation

A Case Study

Independent Evaluation Unit

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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.

Reviews are key instruments to support organizational learning. They 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). A review is a flexible tool that uses evaluation methods although it is not bound to applying the due process of an evaluation, in particular regarding diffusion and follow-up.

This Review was conducted by Mattea Stein (external independent consultant) under the overall guidance and quality assurance of Miguel Jiménez Pont (Head, IEU).

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Introduction

1. This report presents the learnings regarding project implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and results-based management obtained during work with the Integra-ITC project in 2019/2020 to lay the groundwork for Integra's participation in an impact evaluation exercise which has been planned and will be conducted by the European Commission in 2021. It is based on several activities and sessions with project component lead experts and project team members over several months leading up to November 2020 to construct results chains and monitoring plans for the project and provide recommendations for the monitoring system.
2. Building on the experience of strengthening the implementation and monitoring in preparation for an impact evaluation of the Integra project, this report intends to contribute to ongoing discussions both at ITC corporate level and within Integra-ITC itself. Therefore, this report shares observations, learnings and recommendations that are relevant at the ITC project approach broad level, which is work in progress.
3. Based on the observations conducted during the review process, the report starts with sharing a handful of high-level learnings.
4. The remainder of the document details observations regarding project design, implementation, management, and monitoring made during the exercise to lay the groundwork for the impact evaluation of Integra, as well as advances made by the Integra project regarding these observations; an appendix briefly describes the background of this assignment (Annex 2) and reproduces the monitoring system document designed for Integra (Annex 3).
5. This review should be understood as a case study, based on one project, that proposes certain generalizations. Limits to generalizability lie, first, in the ex-post nature of the exercise: constructing results chains and establishing a monitoring system ex-ante will be much less work-intensive than reconstructing them when implementation is ongoing, as was the case here. Second, a face-to-face exercise (made impossible by Covid-19 pandemic restrictions) will be faster and easier to streamline. Third, the absence of field missions due to pandemic restrictions means that potential lessons from visiting and training field staff in person are missing in this review.
6. The fact that this exercise was done in preparation for an impact evaluation should, however, does not impose a limitation to generalizability: carefully thinking through a project's theory of change (for example by constructing its results chains), and planning for the monitoring of indicators of change, are essential to support project implementation and M&E, whether or not an impact evaluation is planned.

Key learnings

Relevant to large integrated projects

7. To summarize observations on Integra-ITC, for an inherently integrated project with a strong individual beneficiary focus such as Integra, the approach of splitting overall budgets and impact targets across teams, who then each separately implement activities towards achieving change in their component-level indicators, can be suboptimal as project coherence and the focus on achieving change for the beneficiaries can easily be lost.

Relevant to the project-cycle

Project design:

8. Planning an evaluation exercise from the beginning of the project is useful to align and simplify different reporting requirements (Donor, ITC, UN, etc.)
9. Results chains (along with an associated monitoring plan) are crucial to project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and should therefore be thought through before project start-up.
10. Developing a clear project theory of change focused on beneficiaries can help in addressing the challenge of baseline data collection. It is important to standardize questionnaires at project inception, with efficiency (simplicity, responding to socio-economic expected changes for beneficiaries, the log frame and programme reporting needs).

Project monitoring and reporting:

11. It is crucial to, from project outset, place an M&E expert in-country (who ideally is involved in project design) and to set up a central monitoring system with clear guidelines on how and when indicators are to be measured and updated. Without a central monitoring system built in from the outset, and an in-country M&E expert in charge of managing it, results-based management is impossible (as is an impact evaluation).
12. Once the central monitoring system is set up, and guidelines are defined, thorough training of the project team on the ground (in-country and, if applicable, in the regions) is indispensable, covering each team member’s roles and responsibilities in terms of

M&E (the "What"), the project theory of change and results chain logic (the "Why"), and hands-on training on the project's specific M&E tools (the "How").

13. While reporting on indicators is important, the project itself should not become indicator-centric, but rather must maintain a beneficiary-focus. Results chains that detail how change is achieved for beneficiaries help with this.
14. Data ownership and assigning monitoring and reporting responsibilities can be a challenging process in large projects. The exercise of building individual results chains, leading to a global project level results chain can help in illustrating the alignment of individual outputs to the programme objective.
15. In a project addressing the needs of a large number of geographically dispersed individual beneficiaries, an effective monitoring and reporting function requires the operationalization of a centralized database of beneficiaries combined with an agile and portable on-line system (Nimba) enabling project officials to track, gather and register real-time beneficiary level data. However, this work has been progressing very slowly in the case of Integra.

Project implementation and management:

16. Project components should not be run as separate projects but should remain as integrated elements of one project; otherwise inefficiencies from overlapping activities are inevitable and opportunities for synergies are lost.
17. Given the absence of direct managerial accountability between project coordinator and team members, the results chains (and associated monitoring plans) can become a useful management tool.
18. Communication with technical teams, management, field offices is important. This can be challenging as different people are at different levels of information, depending on their knowledge and implication in the project

Project evaluation:

19. The selection of beneficiaries, together with well-established criteria of selection thorough selection process, randomized selection, and maintaining comparison group database for a Difference in Differences analysis are also important elements for the attribution of results to the project.

Findings and progress achieved

Project design and implementation

Impact evaluation requirements

20. Conducting an impact evaluation (IE) exercise can be useful to improve project results management and project monitoring, as it imposes two key requirements on a project.
21. The first is that of implementation rigor, which is helped by explicitly detailing the project's results chain. By this is meant an exercise that forces the project to think rigorously of how its activities and outputs (elements under the control of the project) will take beneficiaries from where they are at project entry, through desired outcomes (elements over which the project has less control), and ultimately to final impacts. In this way, an IE-driven strategy can assist in bringing order to disparate project activities and shifts focus from counting indicators to achieving impacts for project beneficiaries.
22. The second requirement is that of data collection and management. An IE perspective emphasizes collecting beneficiary-level data all along the results chain at the right time, in the appropriate format, and across all elements of the project.

Theory of change

23. Beyond the IE requirements, a strong advantage of adopting a results-chain based approach to project design, implementation and monitoring is that it puts the focus squarely on the beneficiary/client. It would thus have been ideal for a project such as Integra that directly works with the ultimate beneficiary (e.g. individual job seekers rather than high-level institutions, as may be more commonly the case for ITC projects), to have had a results chain based project design from the outset.
24. However, this was not an option for the ITC team as the structure of the logframe of the overall Integra project, including logframe outcomes, outputs and some of the activities, was designed by a consultant hired by the EU before the implementers (of which ITC is one) were brought on board. Besides, Integra was designed and is implemented with other partners - Enabel and GIZ, who are also supported by other agencies (UNDP, UNCDF, IOM). The programme logframe is designed for and applied in a standard manner to all the implementation agencies.
25. Beyond the specificities of Integra, the lack of more detailed theories of change applies to all ITC projects while each of them has a project logframe, which links through

indicators to the corporate Results Framework. At this juncture, it is necessary to elaborate with a comparison between the logframe and Results Chain:

Logframe	Results Chain
Presented as a table	Presented as a diagram or a flow chart
Reflects the project level theory of change	Reflects intervention logics, current hypothesis about the “expected path to impact” following specific activities
Part of the contractual agreement between a project and a donor; agree on key indicators against project outputs, outcomes and impact at project start; reporting	Internal documents used for (intervention-specific) project management; monitoring for results and learning
More static in nature; need for contractual stability	Flexible and may need to be continuously revised and updated in response to emerging findings about what is happening in the project. By measuring change at each level in the results chain, staff can see what is working, identify where the expected results may not be occurring, and take corrective measures where and when required.
Tool to summarize project impact	Tool to allow gathering of enough information that can show **how** project actions lead to impact

26. Besides, defining results chains enables baseline data collection based on indicators measuring the change that is sought by the project for beneficiaries. Baseline data provides a historical point of reference to inform project planning such as target setting, to monitor change during project implementation, and to evaluate change for impact.

Beneficiary focus

27. While several ITC lead experts were part of the subsequent negotiations with the EU, and the logframe indicators were designed by ITC, the fact that the overall logframe could not be changed meant that some felt their first task was to design and retro-fit activities within an unclear logic framework. As within Integra-ITC each component / lead expert was made responsible for a specific set of logframe indicators, this facilitated an indicator-centric approach (how to design and implement activities to make progress on the indicators under one’s own responsibility) over an “all-of-project” focus on how to achieve impacts and change for the project’s beneficiaries.

Project fragmentation and activity duplication

28. Component-level interpretation of indicators and designing of activities led to component-level solutions (to what were, in fact, project-wide problems) and pushed team members towards a more "siloed" mode of operation. In particular, while the project was originally designed with non-overlapping sets of activities for each component, individual experts attempted to fill in the perceived gaps in the project logic by adjusting the activities under their control; this led to several components implementing similar activities for the same beneficiary type and the potential for duplication of activities.
29. Component / Résultat 3 was originally designed to cover technical training and other activities for job seekers, and components / Résultats 5, 6, and 8 entrepreneurship training (Résultat 5), and financial (Résultat 8) and other support (Résultat 6) towards self-employment and enterprise creation for young entrepreneurs (see also the "Parcours Integra" graph in Annex 1). However, component / Résultat 6 is, for example, also implementing technical training for job seekers (in addition to component / Résultat 3), entrepreneurship coaching (in addition to component / Résultat 5 which has limited its activities to coaching in financial planning) and providing equipment (separate from the financial support through component / Résultat 8).
30. Among the factors determining project fragmentation, the following were identified:
    - Budgets for each component are distributed to different result leads.
    - Level of expertise of the teams' leading the component.
    - Attribution of responsibilities linked to the budgets held by team members.
    - Also, independent of programme results, the teams have their own reporting responsibilities to their sections

Integrated nature of the product.

31. Integra-ITC's intervention logic for youths (evidenced also in the new results chain) is that of a course of several activities ("Parcours Integra") to be followed by individual beneficiaries in sequence (workshops, technical trainings, and internships for job seekers; entrepreneurship training, coaching & networking, and financial support for young entrepreneurs) and across different components to achieve an improved employment situation (see Annex 1 for a graphic representation). However, Integra's project implementation design seemed at odds with this integrated logic, as each component / lead expert was made responsible for contributing a certain number of "jobs created or improved" to the project's total impact target.

32. In particular, according to the integrated project logic, the components providing coaching in financial planning and grants should have focused on those beneficiaries already integrated in the "Parcours" by other project components, to facilitate the startup of or strengthen a beneficiary's entrepreneurial activities (after they have received support by the other components). Instead, these components were responsible for contributing a separate "number of jobs created / improved" to the overall project target and thus have incentives to conduct their own beneficiary outreach. This not only reduced project coherence but also the likelihood that the desired change was obtained for a given set of project beneficiaries (who each only receive part of the package).
33. The project team has started addressing this issue since June 2020, when it hired project focal points in the regions. The coordination unit is now centralising the approach and working on ensuring a parcours Integra for the beneficiaries. For this purpose, the beneficiary database has also been organised and a regular check on existing beneficiaries is done before a new beneficiary is included in the project.

Additional hurdles within the overall Integra project.

34. ITC is one of three implementers of the overall Integra project, and all except one of the logframe components / Résultats that ITC is responsible for are shared with the other implementers.[1] This further complicates a coherent and beneficiary-centered approach, and indeed collaboration based on synergies across implementers in supporting the same individual beneficiaries (discussed in the Description de l'Action, p. 21) has not taken place. Two coordination activities that are fundamental also to individual implementer-level activities have not been implemented or are severely lagging behind. Firstly, the "Guichets Integra", which according to the Description de l'Action were to be set up in all project regions as entry and registration point for beneficiaries, were never created. Secondly, the creation of a shared beneficiary database, overseen by one of the partners (Enabel), has been significantly delayed and it is still not active at this point.

Progress observed during the review process

35. First, in an initial step to move actual implementation closer towards the integrated "Parcours" design, the project has started recently to focus the outreach for new activities to beneficiaries already enrolled through a previous activity, rather than

[1] Components / Résultats 3, 5, 6, and 8 are shared, while 7 is under ITC's sole responsibility and 1, 2, 4, and 9 are fully managed by the other implementers.

conducting new outreach at the activity level as had often been the case. While the full "Parcours" as originally designed may not be attainable at this stage of implementation, the project team is **employing a more holistic approach for the final implementation round** (that will integrate a large number of new beneficiaries over Q1/Q2 2021), offering beneficiaries at least two activities (a training and a coaching) from the outset. A parcours INTEGRA will be ensured depending on the beneficiary profile and needs.

36. Second, the project has recently **hired regional focal points** who will be beneficiaries' point of contact with Integra-ITC and can guide them through different project activities; the need for such guidance and follow-up in order to achieve change for the beneficiaries had been highlighted by the results chain exercise. Over the past few months, the regional focal points have also **conducted ability assessments** ("bilan des compétences") with 800 existing beneficiaries. While this activity was planned according to the logframe, it was not actively being implemented; however, the results chain exercise highlighted its role a logical first step before other beneficiary-facing activities. This activity is particularly crucial given the absence of an overall project wide "Guichet Integra" (which was originally planned as point of selection and orientation of beneficiaries for Integra (ITC, Enabel and GIZ), see the "Parcours Integra" in Annex 1).
37. Third, the collaborative work with each lead expert on the results chains of "their" component helped **regain the beneficiary focus in component-level project implementation**. Combining these individual chains into two project-wide results chains then helped convey the logic and sequence of intervention of each component to the other team members and project management, and stimulated **communication and co-ordination across components**. It led, for example, to attempts to join the pools of experts and coaches created by the different components and contributed to the decision to create the position of regional focal points (mentioned in the previous paragraph) who are the first point of contact for beneficiaries for all project components.
38. Fourth, the visual representation of the project's overall results chains also allowed to **highlight intersection points** among the two project-wide results chains and thereby among Integra-ITC's two main interventions on employment creation – on the labor supply side (improving the skills and employability of youths) and on the labor demand side (upgrading firms to become job creators). Possible intersection points include encouraging the project beneficiary firms to offer internships (that are an element of the "Parcours Integra") to project beneficiary youths.

Monitoring of beneficiary-level change

Central monitoring tool

39. Integra-ITC is inherently conceived as a course of several activities ("Parcours Integra) to be followed by individual beneficiaries in sequence (workshops, technical trainings and internships; entrepreneurship training, coaching & networking and financial support); as such Integra-ITC requires a strong monitoring tool capable of following individuals as they move through these activities. However, at the beginning of the review, no such tool was in place.

Central beneficiary database collection, and in-country M&E expert

40. While the different project components were collecting registration questionnaires from project beneficiaries (having agreed on a shared questionnaire across components), these had not been systematically digitized, merged into a central beneficiary database, and cleaned for errors, duplicates, etc. Indeed, the project did not place a dedicated M&E expert in country at the outset who would, typically, have been tasked with maintaining the central beneficiary database. The officer in charge of administration had the responsibility to coordinate and maintain the database. Without doubt, creating this position is crucial for an individual-beneficiary targeted project (serving, therefore, a large number of beneficiaries) such as Integra-ITC.
41. As an overall M&E system was not built in from project start, when the in-country M&E expert was hired she found her task difficult as she was trying to set up a system from (almost) the outside, with little relation to activities actually under implementation; she left after 8 months due to non-satisfactory performance. The results chain based approach, in contrast, facilitated setting up a system directly derived from actual project activities and following its evolving logic (see Annex 3). However, the implementation of the new system hinges on Integra's ability to hire a new M&E expert who has the capacity to take on its management; this task is ongoing but proving difficult.
42. It is evident from the Integra experience that, rather than trying to catch up ex-post, is indispensable to place an M&E expert in-country from a project's outset. Indeed, beyond the specificities of the Integra project, hiring M&E expertise is an important question for ITC. This function needs to be budgeted and accepted by the donors. Interesting alternatives have been observed in other IEU reviews. These include outsourcing parts of monitoring / data collection functions to a company (YEP),

working with partner institutions for monitoring results– usually through an MOU or via consultants A4A / NES and Alliances / Partnership approach which includes M&E (EFI /A4A).

Sufficient data to be collected to show change at the beneficiary level

43. To be able to convincingly show change at the beneficiary level and attribute it to the project activities and outputs, good quality monitoring and follow up data have to be collected at the beneficiary level, covering indicators all along the results chain. The results chain exercise helped clarify the need to collect data on a much wider set of indicators than was the case, and in a coordinated fashion across components. The data collection questionnaires however need to be practical in use.

Complicated co-ordination of beneficiary databases with the implementing partners

44. As the three implementing organizations of the overall Integra project at least partially share their target population, overlaps in individual beneficiaries were anticipated and one of the implementing partners (Enabel) was charged with creating the IT solution for a shared beneficiary database. Delays in that work have meant that Integra-ITC was unable to rely on the structure of that shared database to construct its own beneficiary database.

Generation of M&E statistics

45. In the absence of a central beneficiary database and monitoring system allowing data aggregating and the extraction of beneficiary and project statistics as needed – and without an M&E expert in charge of these tasks –, M&E reporting relied on substantial manual and ad-hoc work, such as manually counting beneficiaries in scanned attendance documents. In the absence of a project-wide unified system, lead experts developed their own systems, such as individualized spreadsheets, to follow the progress of the components under their responsibility.

The need for a data management system

46. To allow the monitoring of an individual beneficiary’s progress through the “Parcours Integra” – and through the project’s new results chains as well as for the IE –, a data management system needs to be set up that allows beneficiary-level interaction with the data. This requires that all information is collected (and fed into the system) at the individual level (sign-up questionnaire / application form, Integra-ITC activities participated in). Such data collected and stored at the beneficiary level would still allow

their aggregation to extract overall statistics as needed for project management or monitoring / evaluation, including total numbers for indicator reporting against the logframe or the results chains. A clear protocol needs to be in place for who holds the "master" file/database and has the capacity to make changes, while others can only view the database and can submit changes to the "master" file holder. Such an approach would help avoid a re-fragmentation of the data management system into separately held and updated spreadsheets.

Project monitoring and coordination in the context of a complex accountability structure

47. Integra-ITC's project coordinator is not managerially responsible for the teams implementing the different project components. This makes the project coordinator's monitoring and results-based management job particularly difficult. In this context, drawing up results chains (and associated monitoring plans) for the project can become a useful management tool. Indeed, Integra-ITC's project coordinator appreciated the fact that the exercise had the various team members clearly lay down the step-by-step approach they are following in their activities, establish indicators and target values for every step, and provide the expected timing for each step in a monitoring plan. Going forward, project coordination can use this as a monitoring and management tool to follow implementation across components.

M&E system in-country and in the regions

48. As a country-wide project serving a large number of individual beneficiaries across all regions of Guinea, Integra-ITC requires an in-country M&E team (managed by the in-country M&E expert whose role is discussed above). This team now includes regional focal points (mentioned above for their implementation tasks) who locally follow beneficiaries and record their progress through Integra-ITC. In addition to managing all information collection, the in-country M&E expert should be in charge of aggregating the data collected by these team members, and using it to, firstly, update the central beneficiary database and to, secondly, inform regular (e.g. quarterly) progress reports to project coordination. The M&E roles and responsibilities of the in-country M&E expert, national experts and consultants, regional focal points, the Geneva-based lead experts, and project coordination have to be clearly specified in an M&E system setup document (see below Progress observed during the review process).

Training needs on the M&E system

49. These groups of team members, in particular the in-country M&E expert and the regional focal point who perform key roles in the M&E system, should be trained thoroughly on the M&E system setup. This includes the "What" (explain the M&E system setup focusing on individual roles and responsibilities), the "Why" (project theory of change and results chain logic) and the "How" (how to use the M&E tools, including questionnaires and database templates) of their role. Typically, this training should take place in-country, to allow the team setting up the system to observe in detail the M&E setup and capacities on the ground (in the national project office as well as in the regions), and fine-tune certain elements of the system. This was not possible for Integra due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and the training took place remotely instead. Several regional focal points emphasized their interest in further general training in M&E techniques; for projects that start with an M&E setup, such general M&E training should be incorporated from the outset.

Progress observed during the review process

50. Since the beginning of the joint exercise, the Integra-ITC project coordinator has been aware of the issues relating to the central monitoring system and beneficiary database, and the need to upgrade and strengthen them. He also saw the potential of upgraded data and monitoring systems to facilitate results-based management. The various lead experts agreed and acknowledged that the absence of a central monitoring system and beneficiary database hampered project monitoring and management.
51. First, the project was already in the process of hiring an **M&E expert based in-country**. The M&E expert's initial work was focused on the creation of a central digital beneficiary database. At the same time, the different project components were moving towards a **digital (rather than paper-based) version of the sign-up questionnaire**, to be filled in on tablets by local implementers with the beneficiaries. This digital form of data collection will make it easier to merge information from new batches of beneficiaries into the beneficiary database that is in the process of being built. In addition, the project understood the need to **collect more beneficiary-level data to be able to show change** for its beneficiaries; indeed, the newly hired regional focal points have been tasked with (digitally) collecting a set of monitoring and follow up data for beneficiaries they are in charge of.
52. Second, discussions and work are ongoing to **set up the data management system** to host this beneficiary database and centralize any further beneficiary level data. Work is ongoing to use Integra-ITC's remote learning system (Nimba) for the purpose and

thus benefit from the system's capabilities in terms of data aggregation and generation of statistics for M&E and indicator reporting. However, this work is progressing very slowly.

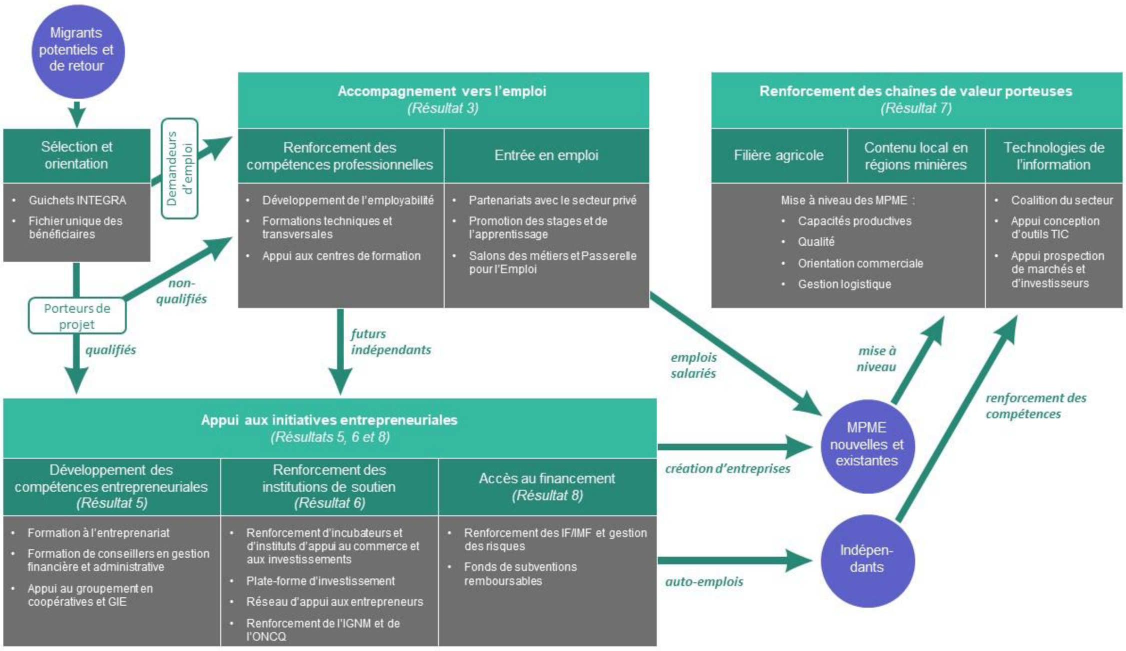
53. Third, project coordination is hoping to use the new **results chains and associated monitoring plans as management tools**. The results-chain based management approach seems in fact particularly well suited for a structure like ITC where the experts are not managerially accountable to the project coordinator.
54. Fourth, Integra-ITC's **full M&E system setup** has been agreed upon with the various team members in charge of executing it; this includes, in addition to a unified approach to beneficiary level monitoring of project activities, a unified project-wide approach to evaluating outcomes and impacts through surveys with beneficiaries after the completion of their involvement with Integra-ITC (see Annex 3). A training of the in-country team on the M&E system (the "What", "Why", and "How") was completed, although in the absence of the new M&E expert who at the time had not yet been hired.

Summary of recommendations

56. Based on the above observations, the following recommendations emerged through collaboration with the various Integra-ITC project team members, and implementation of several of them is ongoing. These may at the same time be relevant to other ITC results-based management efforts – ideally to be committed to before project start – as well as other ITC projects considering to incorporate a prospective impact evaluation.
    a. Ensure results chains are thought through before beginning project implementation.
    b. Develop a fully articulated monitoring plan that directly corresponds to the results chains; consider its use as management tool to follow component implementation by different team members.
    c. Work with all high-level project staff to ensure an integrated, “all-of-project” approach to tracking progress rather than a narrow “siloed” approach; focus on project connectedness and work out synergies across components.
    d. Shift the gaze from project indicators to beneficiary-level outcomes and impacts.
    e. Ensure that specialized M&E staff are directly assigned to the project and based on the ground.
    f. Develop and rely on a centralized data management system instead of individual component-level approaches.
    g. Review and standardize beneficiary questionnaires
    h. Centralize project outreach for beneficiaries.

Annexes

Annex 1: Parcours des Bénéficiaires (“Parcours Integra”)



<u>Source</u>: Description de l’Action "Programme d'appui à l'intégration socio-économique des jeunes en République de Guinée-INTEGRA ITC", p. 68

Annex 2: Background of this assignment

My collaboration with Integra-ITC began in the role of impact evaluation (IE) expert at the European Union Trust Fund (EUTF) workshop in Dakar, Senegal, in October 2019. Integra is one of the projects funded under the EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and began operations in Guinea in 2018 with the main objection job creation among youths. At the workshop, each EUTF project interested in participating in the EU commission's plan to implement IEs for a subset of projects was paired with an IE expert. The workshop aim was to jointly determine whether the project was suitable for an IE and whether the project implementers remained interested (after understanding the full requirements for, and implications of, an IE). Paired with Integra, I worked with the Integra-ITC representatives Miguel Jiménez Pont (Head of Evaluation) and Sadiq Syed (Integra-ITC Project coordinator), resulting in a draft IE concept note (CN) laying out a feasible impact evaluation design for Integra-ITC as well as a roadmap (RM) towards its implementation. Based on this CN and RM, Integra-ITC was included in the EU commission's shortlist for selection for the IE exercise and both myself and the Integra-ITC representatives were invited to a follow-up workshop in Brussels (February 2020) where we continued fleshing out the CN and RM.

The central insight from both workshops was that to be able to conduct an IE for Integra-ITC, an upgrading and strengthening of its monitoring system would be indispensable. At the same time ITC's project coordinator saw value in upgrading the data management and monitoring systems to facilitate results-based management. Given this shared agenda both for IE and results-based management purposes, I was then hired as consultant with the key objective to help improve Integra-ITC's M&E system in a broad sense: to work with project members to develop their results chains, accompanying monitoring plans and a monitoring system, and to conduct trainings on these tools for Integra-ITC and ITC stakeholders.

Annex 3: Integra-ITC Monitoring system document

Monitoring system – INTEGRA – 14/12/2020

Mattea Stein (Consultant)

This document lays out the overall monitoring system setup for Integra, covering the questions:

- **What information** needs to be collected?
- For **which type of beneficiary**?
- **Who** holds the information, who is responsible for collecting it, and who is in charge of supervision?
- **When** does the information need to be collected?
- **How** will the information be **collected?**
- **How** will the information be **stored, managed, and processed?**

The monitoring system is the result of work involving Integra's project coordination, its lead experts, and its M&E expert, that focused on developing Integra's results chains.

This document starts with a summary of Integra's results chain logic, then discusses the roles and responsibilities of Integra's team members within the monitoring system, next clarifies the details of the various data collection activities in table form (including answers to the first five of the above questions), then lays out the data management system, and finally summarizes the monitoring timeline. An appendix explains how to read Integra's detailed results chain document.

1. Integra's results chains

Integra has three main beneficiary groups, youths seeking employment or hoping to start a business, SMEs / co-operatives seeking to upgrade their business and become job creators, and local institutions involved, for example, in skill upgrading and business financing. The results chain exercise led to two results chains, one for youths and one for SMEs / co-operatives, with activities targeting institutions integrated within these two chains, as their ultimate beneficiaries remain youths and/or SMEs. Both chains map out in detail how Integra activities are expected to lead to change for the beneficiaries, identifying links from activities and outputs to outcomes and impacts. For example, youths may receive technical training, job search coaching and support in finding an internship in order to improve their technical capacities and employability, and thus increase their chances to find paid employment; or youths may receive coaching in entrepreneurship and financial planning and in-kind or financial support to improve their entrepreneurial capacities and capital needs to allow them to become successful auto-entrepreneurs.

Each of the results chains has an associated monitoring plan that details the indicators that need to be collected to monitor change all along the chain (ascertain that change is taking place and its depth and quality). Some of these indicators are shown as examples in the "what to measure" column of the data collection table in Section 3 below.

In the data collection table in Section 3 below, the two surveys labelled J1 and J2 are conducted with the beneficiary group youths, to measure indicators of the youths results chain, while surveys E1, E2, E3, and E4 are conducted with the beneficiary group enterprises / co-operatives, to measure indicators of the SME results chain. Activities for the beneficiary group institutions are integrated in both results chains, and the relevant indicators are collected in the surveys labelled I1 and I2 in the data collection table.

2. Team member roles and responsibilities

This section lists the roles and responsibilities of Integra team members in terms of monitoring and evaluation. Full details on the organization of information collection can be found in the "data collection table" in the next section.

The Integra team members who contribute to the M&E system can be grouped into seven profiles: The M&E expert occupies the central role in the system and is in charge of supervising the collection of beneficiary-level application, registration and implementation data, supervising survey data collection conducted in the field, and reporting to project coordination. The national experts – trainers and coaches who conduct specific Integra activities – are responsible for collecting application and registration data from new beneficiaries enrolled through their activities and collecting implementation data (e.g. attendance sheets for their trainings). The regional focal points are tasked with collecting data in the field through follow-up surveys with Integra beneficiaries.

The lead experts ensure that beneficiary-level application, registration and implementation data is properly collected by the national experts implementing activities under their responsibility, and that it is aggregated monthly by the M&E expert; they have monitoring and survey data ownership. The national leads' roles are the overall supervision of the regional focal points and support for the lead experts in their tasks. The data management system (Nimba) team is responsible for maintaining the Integra beneficiary monitoring system, that is, updating the beneficiary database, and linking beneficiary-level implementation (and possibly survey) data to the right beneficiaries. Finally, the overall supervision of M&E activities is assured by project coordination who is responsible for the management of the M&E system.

Detailed roles and responsibilities of Integra team members are as follows:

2.1 M&E expert (hiring ongoing, name to be filled in; Habib Cissé currently in charge)

- occupies the central role in the monitoring and evaluation system
- follows up with national experts and lead experts on monthly submission of new sign-up / application data; aggregates this data monthly into the Integra beneficiary database (or submits data monthly to the Nimba team for integration into the Integra beneficiary database, TBD) (data collection table, lines 2a-4)

- follows up with the Nimba team on monthly data extraction from Nimba on online trainings (data collection table, line 5)
- aggregates survey questions submitted by the lead experts into project-wide survey questionnaires (lines 6-14)
- supervises beneficiary survey data collection by the regional focal points (data collection table, lines 6-11)
- conducts some follow-up data collection (data collection table, lines 12-14)
- reports to project coordination and the lead experts on a quarterly basis on all monitoring and evaluation and data collection activities

2.2 National experts (trainers; coaches (CEF)– short term contractors with specific activities)

- implement the sign-up / application questionnaire, at every activity that enrolls new beneficiaries into Integra activities (see data collection table, line 2a)
- collect attendance data at training, coaching etc. sessions (data collection table, line 3)

2.3 Regional focal points (Cécile Loua, Oumar Keira, Mohamed Lamarana Barry, Mamadou Saliou Oulenko Baldé, Mamadou Yaya Baldé, Madeleine Holie)

- implement the sign-up / application questionnaire, at every activity that enrolls new beneficiaries into Integra activities (see data collection table, line 2a)
- carry out the beneficiary diagnostic / capabilities assessment at the start of the Parcours Integra (in-person activity); these diagnostics / assessments can serve as beneficiary baseline information for M&E of beneficiary-level change (data collection table, line 2b)
- keep statistics on their coaching / “accompagnement” sessions (data collection table, line 4)
- conduct a set of phone surveys with individual beneficiaries at pre-set intervals (data collection table, lines 6-11, and timeline)

2.4 National leads (Boubacar Diop, Mamadou Bobo Bah)

- support lead experts in their responsibilities
- overall supervision of regional focal points

2.5 Lead experts (Raphael Dard, Yaya Ouattara, Thomas Bechmann, Philippe Helluy, Claude Manguila, Frederic Couty, Kerfalla Conte, Hema Menon)

- maintain component / résultat level statistics on the advancement of activity implementation (see data collection table, line 1); aggregate and report the information quarterly to project coordination
- ensure that data sign-up / application data, as well as activity attendance data, is properly collected by the national experts and aggregated monthly by the M&E expert; have data ownership (data collection table, lines 2a-4)
- draft the survey questions for the indicators relating to their activities and submit them to the M&E expert for aggregation into project wide-surveys (data collection table, lines 6-14, especially lines 6-9)

- have data ownership of survey data (data collection table, lines 6-14)

2.6 Data management system (Nimba) team (Raphael Dard, Estève Morel, Mory Diawara)

- is in charge of maintaining the Integra beneficiary data management system
- updates the Integra beneficiary database (add new beneficiaries), using sign-up / application data submitted monthly by the M&E expert (data collection table, line 2a)
- extracts statistics from online trainings monthly (data collection table, line); shares with the M&E expert (data collection table, line 5)
- link beneficiary-level implementation data to the right beneficiary, to obtain beneficiary-level information on all activities followed and support received (data collection table, lines 3-4)
- *possibly*: link survey responses to the right beneficiary in the beneficiary database (data collection table, lines 6-14; also see data management section below)
- ensure that the M&E expert and the lead experts can access the monitoring data in the system and extract relevant statistics
- *the roles and responsibilities of the Nimba team need to be spelled out in more detail once the system is operational for M&E purposes*

2.7 Project coordination (Sadiq Syed supported by Dienaba Keita, Thomas Bechmann and Florence Chaignet)

- overall supervision of M&E activities and responsibility for management of the M&E system
- receives quarterly reports from the M&E expert on all monitoring and evaluation activities
- shares these reports with Integra team members so that the teams of different components / résultats are aware of each other's activities and progress

3. Data collection details

The following table details the data types to be collected for Integra's results monitoring and evaluation. Part 1 of the table describes the information generated by and to be recorded during project implementation; it is thus information held within the Integra team; the indicators that are measured using these data types serve to monitor and report on progress in terms of activities and outputs. Part 2 of the table details the data types to be collected through beneficiary-level follow-up and surveys; the indicators collected here serve to measure and report on change achieved for Integra beneficiaries (outcomes and impacts).

For both Part 1 and Part 2, the data collection table describes each data type, explaining **HOW** the relevant information will be collected, and gives some of examples of **WHAT** will be measured (which indicators). The full list of indicators to be measured can be found in the monitoring plan (MPs) for Integra's new results chains (RCs) (see appendix). The data collection table then discusses **WHEN** the data is to be collected (as well as the timing of data aggregation and reporting), and **WHO** is responsible for data collection. The table's final column indicates who supervises the information collection.

All data collection tools (excel sheets for Part 1 of the table, survey questionnaires for Part 2) need to be co-ordinated across Integra components / résultats. Firstly, all components / résultats use the same sign-up / application questionnaire and excel sheets for recording training attendance and coaching details (Part 1, lines 2-4). Secondly, while lead experts are in charge of drafting the survey questions for the indicators relating to their activities (surveys in Part 2 of the table), the main surveys (J1 and J2 for youths, E1 and E2 for firms / co-operatives) surveys are not component-specific but project-wide. The M&E expert is tasked with aggregating the survey questions submitted by the lead experts into overall surveys.

Data collection table, Part 1: Monitoring project implementation (activities, outputs)

	HOW - data type	HOW - data type description	WHAT - indicator examples (full list in MP, cols E, G, H)	WHEN to measure	WHO creates / collects information	WHO supervises
1	Lead expert statistics	This is information directly created by activity implementation within the different project components / résultats.	Number of partnerships, of training modules, of trainers trained; “Fonds de subvention” is operational; amounts of grants by Integra	Collected continuously; Aggregation & reporting /supervision quarterly	Lead experts, supported by National leads	Project coordination
2a	Sign-up/ application questionnaire	Sign-up/application questionnaire filled in by all beneficiaries at the beginning of Integra interaction (e.g. at workshop / training venue); conducted on tablets (national experts).	Baseline information for the main impact indicators; Beneficiary contact information to facilitate follow-up survey(s)	Collected continuously; Supervision & aggregation monthly; Reporting quarterly	National experts (trainers, coaches)	Lead experts ensure data is properly collected (& have data ownership); M&E aggregates information, checks and follows up on delayed data sharing; M&E expert reports to project coordination
2b	Beneficiary diagnostic / capabilities assessment	Diagnostic / capabilities assessment done at the beginning of the Parcours Integra to determine training / support needs (tabs “Bilan de compétence” and “Outil de diagnostique” of the excel documents “Plan d’accompagnement”.	Education / qualifications / professional experience; Number of employees, firm structure; Details on the entrepreneurial project		Regional focal points	
3	Training statistics (in-person trainings)	Attendance records from in-person trainings and CEF coaching.	Number of youths trained in person	Collected continuously, supervision & aggregation monthly; reporting quarterly	National experts (Trainers and CEF Coaches)	
4	Regional focal points’ statistics	Records of the coaching / “accompagnement” sessions (tab “Suivi des échanges” of the excel documents “Plan d’accompagnement”.	Number of youths who receive coaching, who apply for a loan, of plans d’accompagnement		Regional focal points	
5	Online training statistics	For trainings / other activities conducted online (through Nimba), basic measurements are automatically created.	Number of youths completing the “bilan”, of youths trained online	Extraction monthly; reporting quarterly	Created by Nimba; Extracted by Nimba team	M&E expert, reports to Project coordination

Data collection table, Part 2: Monitoring and evaluation through beneficiary follow-up and surveys (outcomes, impacts)

	HOW - data type	HOW - data type description	WHAT - indicator examples (full list in MP, cols E, G, H)	WHEN to measure	WHO creates / collects information	WHO supervises
6	Survey J1: Youths	Quick follow-up of coaching element of the Parcours Integra; phone survey	Level of completion of plan d'accompagnement, number and type of internships obtained; Amount of grant and/or loan	6 months after benef. starts coaching; Aggregation monthly, reporting quarterly	Regional focal points (phone)	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination
7	Survey J2: Youths follow-up	Main follow-up surveys with youths; phone or online survey.	Beneficiaries declare improved knowledge, employa-bility, financial planning; Beneficiaries employed, job quality; number of firms or self-employment created; firm durability; wellbeing	Survey conducted quarterly; benef. to be surveyed 3* times each, around 6/12/24 months after start of Integra involvement	Regional focal points (phone) or online	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination
8	Survey E1: Firms/ co-operatives	Quick follow-up with firms / co-operatives on coaching activities; phone surveys.	Level of completion of plan d'accompagnement; amount of grant and/or loan	6 months after benef. starts coaching; Aggregation monthly, reporting quarterly	Regional focal points (phone)	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination
9	Survey E2: Firms/ co-operatives	Main follow-up surveys with firms / co-operatives; phone or online surveys.	Beneficiaries declaring to have improved capacities, financial planning; increased revenues or profit margin; number of jobs created; firm durability; wellbeing	Survey conducted quarterly; benef. to be surveyed 3* times each, around 6/12/24 months after start of Integra involvement	Regional focal points (phone) or online	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination
10	Survey E3: Firms of R6	Follow-up survey with firms who have benefitted from networking activities only (not coaching/financial); by phone or online.	Beneficiaries declaring to have new business opportunities; institutional linkedness within the network	Survey conducted once; benef. to be surveyed once around 6 mths after start of Integra involvement	Regional focal points or M&E expert (phone) or online	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination

	HOW - data source	HOW - data source description	WHAT - indicator examples (full list in MP, cols E, G, H)	WHEN to measure	WHO creates / collects information	WHO supervises
11	Survey E4: Firms of R7-12	Follow-up visits and monitoring of accounts documents for the 40 firms of R7-12; in person visits.	Revenues, profit margin, production capacity, number of jobs created (full-time equivalent), or consolidated	Survey conducted bi-annually for all 40 firms, around 12/18/24 months after activity start	Regional focal points (in person)	M&E expert Lead experts Project coordination
12	Survey I1: Institutions R8	Short follow-up with (micro-) finance institutions receiving loan applications from beneficiaries; by email, by phone or online	IF/IMF loan amounts	Survey conducted once, after loan applications are processed (put approx. date)	M&E expert (phone) or online	Lead experts, Project coordination
13	Survey I2: Institutions	Qualitative questionnaire to be filled by the training institutes and BSOs; by email, by phone or online.	Trainings' relevance with respect to economic needs; Fit of support (equipment, website etc.) with institute's needs; capacity to locally maintain them	Survey conducted twice, Jan 2021 and 6 months before project end date	M&E expert (phone or email) or online	Lead experts Project coordination
14	Survey O1: Other	Survey of financial management coaches on own situation; by phone.	Whether they continue work self-employed as financial management coaches	Survey conducted once, 6 months before project end date	M&E expert (phone)	Lead experts Project coordination

Data for line 1 is to be collected at the project component / résultat level; all other data at the beneficiary level.

4. **Data management** (How is the data stored/managed/processed?)

This section describes the conceptual setup of Integra's data management system. Work is still ongoing to make the plateforme Nimba operational to fulfill this role.

The crucial function of the data management system is to enable project coordination, lead experts and the M&E expert to, the one hand, follow and monitor individual beneficiaries through their involvement with Integra and to, on the other hand, extract relevant overall statistics.

This means, firstly, that it should function as an up-to-date beneficiary database that contains all individuals and firms / cooperatives that have been involved with Integra activities, regardless of which activity was their first point of contact with the project. Secondly, it should contain each beneficiary's contact information – necessary for all beneficiary-level follow-up – as well as simple baseline data (sign-up / application questionnaire, see data collection table, line 2a). Thirdly, it should centralize the information on all Integra activities each beneficiary participated in and on all other support received (see data collection table, lines 3-5).

In short, the data management system should contain all information from beneficiary-level monitoring of project implementation (Part 1 of the data collection table, except for line 1); this will facilitate monitoring of, and reporting on, activities and outputs.

If this is technically possible, the data management system could also serve as repository of beneficiary-level follow-up and survey data (Part 2 of the data collection table, lines 6-11); this would simplify monitoring of, and reporting on, results further down the results chain (outcomes and impacts).

5. **Monitoring timeline**

Periodicity	**Tasks**
Continuously	- Collection of data created in the process of project implementation (Part 1 of the data collection table) - Collection of quick follow-up surveys (Surveys J1 and E1) six months after a given beneficiary has started coaching
Monthly	- Supervision and aggregation of project implementation data (Part 1 of the data collection table) - Supervision and aggregation of quick follow-up survey data (Surveys J1 and E1)
Quarterly	- Reporting on project implementation data (Part 1 of the data collection table) - Reporting on quick follow-up survey data (Surveys J1 and E1) - Collection rounds for main follow-up survey (Surveys J2 and E2) - Reporting on all other surveys - Sharing of information across project components / résultats
Biannually	- Survey E4 for the 40 firms of résultat 7-12, for a total of three surveys (around 12/18/24 months after activity start)

	- Survey E3 for enterprise network firms
6 months before project end	- Surveys I2 (institutions supported) and O1 (financial management coaches) to assess sustainability

6. Appendix: How to read Integra's detailed results chain (RC) and monitoring plan (MP) excel sheet

There are two RCs and MPs for Integra ("ITC-INTEGRA_results-chains.xlsx"), one each for the beneficiary group youths and one for the beneficiary group SMEs; activities targeting the project's third beneficiary group, institutions, are integrated within these two RCs because the ultimate beneficiaries are youths and/or SMEs. These RCs and MPs for Integra are the synthesis of the RCs and MPs constructed for each project component with the respective focal points. Youths are covered in the RC and MP tabs "RC transversale 1-jeunes" and "Plan de suivi transv 1-jeunes" of "ITC-INTEGRA_results-chains.xlsx", while SMEs are covered in the RC and MP tabs "RC transversal 2-PME" and "Plan de suivi transv 2-PME".

The RCs are the graphical representation of the chain of results that can be read in logical / chronological order from the bottom up, from activities, to outputs, to outcomes, to impacts. Each element of change in these four dimensions is presented in a numbered box, and arrows are used to show logical /chronological relationships between them. In the RC for youths, additional red arrows highlight the "Parcours Integra", that is the progression through Integra activities from the beneficiary point of view. Both RCs include blue boxes that highlight points of collaboration and possible synergies between the two RCs, such as the possible placement of youths from RC 1 in internships with firms from RC 2.

The corresponding MPs describe how progress on each of the elements of change will be measured; each RC box or element of change (repeated in col C) is represented in a separate set of rows using the same numbering (col B). Cols E and F list the component-level quantitative indicators of change with their target values (col D indicates the relevant project component), allowing to monitor the extent and scale of change achieved; where applicable, qualitative and sustainability indicators (cols G and H) allow to measure the nature and sustainability of change. Finally, cols I and J indicate when and how the information on quantitative and qualitative change will be collected, col K indicates where it will be stored and/or reported on, and col L shows links with the logframe indicators.