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Trade  
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## EVALUATION REPORT

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# Midterm Evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) V Programme: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-term Socioeconomic Impact

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Independent Evaluation Unit

23 September 2024

This midterm evaluation report makes reference to the following SDGs:



## MIDTERM EVALUATION OF THE NETHERLANDS TRUST FUND V PROGRAMME: A NEW NETHERLANDS AND ITC PARTNERSHIP TO GENERATE LONG-TERM SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT

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.

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

The ITC Independent Evaluation Unit has carried out this evaluation under its 2024 Work Programme and is responsible for this publication.

This evaluation was conducted by an external evaluation team (Mainlevel Consulting AG) and managed by the ITC Associate Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (Marianne Schmitt). The Head of the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (Miguel Jiménez Pont) provided oversight and quality assurance.

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## Acronyms

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>A4A</b>      | Alliance for Action  |
| <b>AfCFTA</b>   | African Continental Free Trade Area  |
| <b>AGI</b>      | Association of Ghana Industries  |
| <b>AI</b>       | Artificiel Intelligence  |
| <b>ASEPEX</b>   | L'Agence Sénégalaise de Promotion des Exportations (Senegalese Agency for Export Promotion)  |
| <b>ATA</b>      | Agricultural Transformation  |
| <b>B2B</b>      | Business-to-Business   |
| <b>BMZ</b>      | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung   |
| <b>BPO</b>      | Business Process Outsourcing company   |
| <b>BSO</b>      | Business Support Organization  |
| <b>BSOD</b>     | Business Support Organizations Development   |
| <b>CACTITC</b>  | Coordination des Associations et Clubs pour la promotion des TICs  |
| <b>CBI</b>      | Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries  |
| <b>CFYE</b>     | Challenge Fund for Youth Employment  |
| <b>CI20</b>     | Côte d'Ivoire Innovation 20  |
| <b>COCOBOD</b>  | Ghana Cocoa Board  |
| <b>COVID-19</b> | Coronavirus disease of 2019  |
| <b>CRIG</b>     | Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana  |
| <b>CS3D</b>     | Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence   |
| <b>DAF</b>      | Dynamic agroforestry   |
| <b>DGGF</b>     | Dutch Good Growth Fund   |
| <b>ECOWAS</b>   | Economic Community of West African States  |
| <b>ECTA</b>     | Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority   |
| <b>EOA</b>      | Ethiopia Outsourcing Association   |
| <b>ESG</b>      | Environmental, Social and Governance   |
| <b>EU</b>       | European Union   |
| <b>EUDR</b>     | European Union Deforestation Regulation  |
| <b>FedSAEI</b>  | Fédération des Structures d'Accompagnement à l'Entrepreneuriat Innovant (Beninese Federation of Structures for Supporting Innovative Entrepreneurship) |
| <b>FGD</b>      | Focus group discussions  |
| <b>GDP</b>      | Gross domestic product   |
| <b>GDPR</b>     | General Data Protection Regulation   |
| <b>GEPA</b>     | Ghana Export Promotion Authority   |
| <b>GOTIC</b>    | Groupement des Opérateurs du Secteur des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication de Côte d'Ivoire   |
| <b>HQ</b>       | Headquarters   |
| <b>ICAS</b>     | Interprofession Cajou du Sénégal (Senegal Cashew Interprofession)  |
| <b>ICT</b>      | Information and communications technology  |
| <b>IEU</b>      | Independent Evaluation Unit  |
| <b>IMF</b>      | International Monetary Fund  |
| <b>IT</b>       | Information technology   |
| <b>ITC</b>      | International Trade Centre   |
| <b>ITU</b>      | International Telecommunication Union  |
| <b>KII</b>      | Key informant interviews   |
| <b>KKFU</b>     | Kuapa Kokoa Farmers Union  |
| <b>LDC</b>      | Least developed countries  |
| <b>M&amp;E</b>  | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| <b>mHREDD</b>   | Mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence   |
| <b>MNC</b>      | Multinational Cooperation  |
| <b>MoU</b>      | Memorandum of Understanding  |
| <b>MSME</b>     | Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise  |
| <b>NDP</b>      | National Development Plan  |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>NLP</b>    | Natural Language Processing   |
| <b>NPP</b>    | New Patriotic Party   |
| <b>NPSC</b>   | National Project Steering Committee   |
| <b>NTF</b>    | Netherlands Trust Fund  |
| <b>OECD</b>   | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |
| <b>OPTIC</b>  | Organisation des Professionnels des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication au Sénégal |
| <b>PADEO</b>  | Programmatic Approach Sustainable Economic Development  |
| <b>PAP2A</b>  | Accelerated priority action plan  |
| <b>PRACAS</b> | Acceleration of Senegalese Agriculture  |
| <b>PSC</b>    | Project Steering Committee  |
| <b>PSE</b>    | Plan Sénégal Emergent   |
| <b>RBM</b>    | Results Based Monitoring  |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goal  |
| <b>SE</b>     | Social Enterprises  |
| <b>SG</b>     | Steering Group  |
| <b>SME</b>    | Small, and medium-sized enterprise  |
| <b>TISIs</b>  | Trade and Investment Support Institutions   |
| <b>ToC</b>    | Theory of Change  |
| <b>ToR</b>    | Terms of Reference  |
| <b>ToT</b>    | Training of Trainers  |
| <b>UN</b>     | United Nations  |
| <b>UNDP</b>   | United Nations Development Programme  |
| <b>VSLA</b>   | Village Savings Loan Association  |
| <b>WAEMU</b>  | West African Economic and Monetary Union  |

# Midterm Evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund V Programme: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-term Socioeconomic Impact

Independent Evaluation Unit, International Trade Centre

## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction

1. This report presents the midterm evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase V Programme, managed by the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) of the International Trade Centre (ITC) and conducted by Mainlevel Consulting AG. The evaluation assesses the programme's performance across its seven projects from July 1, 2021, to February 29, 2024, focusing on relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential for impact, and potential for sustainability per the OECD-DAC criteria.

*Table 1: Focus of the evaluation (assessment dimensions)*

| Evaluation criteria     | Assessment dimensions  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Relevance</b>        | i. Responding to needs, policies, and priorities, ii. Being sensitive and responsive to the context, and iii. Integrating inclusion. |
| <b>Coherence</b>        | i. Internal and ii. External coherence.  |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>    | i. Achievement of the objectives and influencing factors and (2) Differential results.   |
| <b>Efficiency</b>       | i. Economic efficiency and timeliness and ii. Operational efficiency   |
| <b>Potential Impact</b> | i. Significance and unintended effects and ii. Transformational change   |
| <b>Sustainability</b>   | i. Building an enabling environment for sustainable development and ii. Prospective sustainability                                   |

2. The evaluation used a mixed-method approach, including document reviews, ecosystem analysis, big data techniques, and extensive primary data collection through interviews, focus group discussions, and an online survey. Data was gathered from various stakeholders, including programme team, beneficiaries, and representatives from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### 2. Global and programme overview

3. The NTF V programme aims to alleviate poverty and advance several Sustainable Development Goals by fostering systemic change and promoting robust business models in the agribusiness and digital technology sectors. Emphasizing the importance of global trade linkages for economic growth, the programme addresses the need for skilled labour, innovation, and regional value chains, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on trade. It seeks to create resilient, innovative, and sustainable value chains, enhancing employment and income opportunities for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and promoting equitable, ethical, and responsible trade in goods and services.
4. The programme is the fifth phase of a series<sup>1</sup> of sector development programmes funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry) and implemented by the ITC in collaboration with the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI). The agreement for NTF V was signed in July 2021, allocating a total budget of USD 15,000,000 to programme implementation and management until June 2025. NTF V is a multi-country programme implemented in Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Uganda.

<sup>1</sup> NTF V builds on a long-lasting cooperation between ITC and CBI established in the previous programmes NTF I (July 2005 – June 2008), NTF II (April 2009 - June 2013), NTF III (July 2013 - June 2017), and NTF IV (October 2017 – June 2021).

Table 2: Budget overview

| Country                                      | Project Focus              | Project budget in USD (planned) |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>NTF V Programme Coordination</b>          | Overall governance and M&E | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Uganda</b> | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Ethiopia</b>                              | Agribusiness               | 2,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Ghana</b>                                 | Agribusiness               | 2,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Senegal</b>                               | Agribusiness               | 1,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Myanmar*</b>                              | <i>Tourism*</i>            | 1,000,000.00*                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |                            | <b>15,000,00.00</b>             |

Note: \*The programme originally included a project in Myanmar which was later excluded from the programme.

5. The Ministry, CBI, and ITC manage the NTF V programme through a shared Steering Group (SG), which provides strategic guidance, decision-making, and progress monitoring. The SG collaborates with the NTF V programme management team to ensure effective implementation and coordination. At the project level, a dedicated management team oversees activities, outcomes, operations, budgets, resources, and partnerships. Nationally, projects are managed by coordinators who work with a national project steering committee (PSC) to oversee implemented NTF V projects within the same country.
6. The NTF V programme targets the digital technology and agribusiness sectors due to their complementary strengths in enhancing efficiency, productivity, and value creation, as well as their relevance to poverty alleviation and sustainable growth. Both sectors align with the institutional priorities of the Ministry and ITC. The programme emphasizes responsible production, commercialization, and partnerships, aiming to increase competitiveness and sustainability in agribusiness value chains in countries like Senegal, Ethiopia, and Ghana. In the tech sector, it seeks to improve resilience, effectiveness, and export market linkages in all seven African countries applying the FastTrackTech methodology, with a focus on the digitalisation of agriculture.
7. The programme's theory of change proposes that strengthened agribusiness and digital technology sectors lead to increased trade and investment contributing to systemic change in the target countries. These sectors were selected for their distinct yet complementary strengths: digital technology enhances efficiency and productivity, while agribusiness is particularly relevant for poverty alleviation and value creation. Similarly, agribusiness underscores the critical importance of support services, while the integration of digital technologies enhances efficiency, productivity, value addition, and traceability throughout the supply chain. The programme aims to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of tech ecosystems, fostering digital transformation across various sectors, increase competitiveness and sustainability in the agribusiness value chains and advance the digitalization of agribusiness value chains.

### 3. Findings

#### Relevance

8. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against three dimensions of relevance: (1) responding to needs, policies, and priorities (2) being sensitive and responsive to the context, and (3) integrating inclusion.
9. **Alignment with strategic priorities:** The programme objectives and overall design align well with the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC. While the programme objectives were well aligned with national sectoral priorities such as digital transformation, innovation and agribusiness development, the programme design has not been sufficiently effective in creating an overarching strategy that fosters policy change across all countries and target sectors. Effective policy change requires ongoing stakeholder engagement, advocacy, communication, and sustained resources, which were insufficiently reflected in the programme design. While several projects included activities targeted towards policy-making, most projects focused on supporting MSMEs and BSOs rather than policy change. This gap stems from inconsistencies in incorporating the objective of systemic change (programme outcome) into project designs, as is evidenced by a mismatch between the programme's definition of systemic change (i.e. long-term policy and regulatory change in the target sectors) and strategic decision-making. In particular, a prioritisation of activities and allocation of resources to MSMEs and BSOs was identified, as opposed to those directly targeting policy change.
10. **Alignment with national development plans and the SDGs:** The programme is closely aligned with national economic development plans in the target countries by contributing to key sectors and priority

areas. Similarly, it is closely aligned with and actively contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). However, the target SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), have not been consistently mainstreamed into the programme design, limiting the programme's ability to maximize its contributions to these key goals.

11. **Responding to the needs of all beneficiaries:** The programme effectively addresses the needs of young entrepreneurs in the agribusiness and technology sectors, particularly in areas related to business development and growth. While the programme has implemented several targeted interventions to support women-led and women-owned enterprises—such as gender-smart incubation programmes, digital marketing training for women, and policy initiatives like the AfCFTA Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan—there are still gaps in fully meeting the needs of these businesses, particularly in the technology sector. The current segmentation approach, which focuses primarily on enterprise maturity, may not fully capture the unique challenges women entrepreneurs face. This underscores the need for a more nuanced and intersectional approach in project design to ensure that all intended target groups are adequately supported.
12. **Understanding of the programme by its stakeholders:** Stakeholders' understanding of the projects and the programme varies significantly. While the programme team and steering group have a comprehensive understanding, external stakeholders possess knowledge pertinent to their roles, facilitated by a targeted communication strategy that prevents information overload. The National Project Steering Committees (NPSCs) have a limited understanding of their projects and how these contribute to the overall programme objectives, despite regular updates and meetings, and the requirements of their role in the programme. Additionally, the evaluation revealed varying levels of ownership among NPSC members across different countries, which could potentially affect the programme's long-term sustainability.
13. **Programme's responsiveness to national contexts:** The programme shows an effective approach to contextualizing the programme and project design. Approved in 2021 amidst challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme adopted an adaptive and flexible approach to maintain relevance in a volatile environment. Project-specific logframes were developed to address country- and sector-specific factors, with tailored targets. National stakeholders valued this contextualized approach, though feedback suggested the need for more locally relevant content in capacity-building activities, particularly for technology companies.
14. **Integration of cross-cutting issues and related results:** Cross-cutting issues are integrated into programme and project design to varying degrees, with gender equality, youth inclusion, and green growth more prominent. Human rights and social responsibility have been effectively integrated into the agribusiness sector, but their integration into the technology sector remains more limited due to lacking toolkits and expertise in this area by the programme team. Additionally, the evaluation highlights a lack of clarity in the programme on the intended level of integration of cross-cutting issues, which may also explain the uneven level of mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in the different target sectors. The evaluation suggests that a clearer articulation of the program's intentions is needed to ensure consistent and effective implementation of these issues. Nevertheless, the evaluation found evidence of project outcomes related to cross-cutting issues in both sectors and countries, particularly in social responsibility and green growth.

## Coherence

15. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of coherence: (1) internal coherence and (2) external coherence.
16. **Complementarity of NTF V projects:** Sectoral projects are highly complementary and aligned, sharing a strategic vision, common frameworks, and proactive knowledge sharing, which enhances creativity and operational efficiency. A conscious effort to align activities and strategies across the programme has significantly increased complementarity between projects in different sectors, moving from a siloed approach to a more integrated one. The evaluation shows that these deliberate efforts have yielded positive results in integrating the technology and agribusiness sectors. Despite successes, challenges remain in the adoption of digital tools due to high costs and varying levels of digital maturity among agribusiness actors.
17. **Alignment with programmes and initiatives of ITC:** The programme is highly aligned with other ITC initiatives, increasing its effectiveness in addressing the needs of MSMEs in implementing countries through strategic collaborations with SheTrades and One Trade Africa. It leverages institutional



knowledge from previous projects and works with various ITC divisions, programmes and country-level projects to ensure alignment with broader ITC strategies and objectives. By adopting proven ITC approaches and using internal resources and training materials, the programme ensures methodological consistency and effective application of organizational knowledge and expertise at country-level.

18. **Alignment with programmes of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs:** The programme aligns well with the work of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs, whose focus on private sector development, food and nutrition security, climate change, and gender equality closely relates to the programme. By focusing on digital technologies and promoting agritech, the programme complements the Ministry's efforts. The evaluation indicates that while agricultural value chains are a priority for the Ministry, digital transformation is a newer focus. Dutch Embassies in the target countries have shown strong interest in collaborating on agritech initiatives to leverage institutional strengths and foster innovation. Although coordination and communication between the programme and other Ministry initiatives are generally effective, there is room for improvement in linking and creating synergies with larger or overlapping initiatives, particularly concerning access to finance and investment.
19. **Alignment with other Dutch instruments:** The programme is aligned with the PADEO and 'combi tracks' instruments. Among the seven countries where the programme is implemented, three overlap with the 'combi tracks' instrument in terms of sectoral focus, target beneficiaries, and approaches, reflecting this alignment. The programme also promotes mutual benefits for both Dutch and local companies, further aligning with the objectives of Dutch instruments. Additionally, the programme is well aligned with other CBI implemented projects such as the IT Services project in Ghana or the IT Outsourcing project in Senegal.
20. **Coherence to other actors in the countries and sectors:** The evaluation indicates that the programme's sectoral focus and objectives are comparable to those of other significant international players such as the World Bank, GIZ and Mastercard Foundation, potentially leading to competition among interventions, particularly in smaller ecosystems where targeting the same beneficiaries is common. Nevertheless, the programme distinguishes itself by offering unique value to beneficiaries through comprehensive support for strengthening the agribusiness and technology sectors at different levels (policy, ecosystems, companies and markets), a focus on export readiness, and the promotion of digital transformation within the agribusiness sector.
21. **Complementarity with other trade-related interventions:** The programme demonstrates strong complementarity with various trade-related interventions in the implementing countries by aligning with SheTrades, DIGEAT, the UK Trade Partnerships Programme, MARKUP II, and PACAO collectively advancing trade, entrepreneurship, and economic integration. It supports African economic integration, empowers women in agriculture, facilitates cross-border mobility for tech start-ups and MSMEs, and promotes economic growth and export through capacity-building and market intelligence, in line with the objectives of these key interventions.
22. **Coordination mechanisms with other actors:** The evaluation shows that while national coordinators strive to participate in international donor coordination meetings and engage with international organizations priority is given to coordination with national stakeholders and partners. While this focus is understandable given the limited resources at national level and the resource-intensive nature of coordinating with multiple organizations simultaneously, it indicates an opportunity for the programme team at HQ to strengthen the collaboration and coordination efforts at a higher level.

## Effectiveness

23. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of effectiveness: (1) achievement of objectives and influencing factors and (2) differential results.
24. **Availability of baseline data:** The programme has established and continuously refined baseline data to ensure accurate and relevant targets, demonstrating its responsiveness and effort to realistic goal setting.
25. **Achievement of results along the pathways of change of the ToC:** The evaluation shows that the programme is on track to achieving or overachieving its intended objectives by the end of the programme implementation. The evaluation shows that most indicators across projects have achieved at least 50% of their intended targets by December 2023, with a significant portion of indicators exceeding 100% of their goals. The evaluation team found that the programme's achievements in the digital technology sector, particularly regarding BSOs' performance and MSMEs' competitiveness, are well-aligned with the pathways of change. However, weaker links were noted in enabling ecosystems and export market

linkages. Similarly, in the agribusiness sector, strong alignment was found with resilient business models and value chain competitiveness, but weaker links were seen in public-private alliances and access to funding. Challenges were noted in integrating agriculture and technology, with limited adoption of digital tools due to mismatched offerings and high costs. Although the programme has advanced digital transformation in agribusiness, more efforts are needed to align with the pathways of change especially regarding the digital maturity of actors along the agribusiness value change.

26. **Results related to cross-cutting issues:** The evaluation highlights several results related to cross-cutting issues at midterm. It shows the programme's significant contributions to increased awareness of inclusive trade practices and climate change measures among thousands of MSMEs, benefiting nearly 30,000 women and over 6,000 young people. Survey results indicate that over 60% of respondents in the digital sector and almost all in agribusiness report improved environmental awareness and sustainable production skills, with the programme also promoting gender equality through initiatives such as gender mainstreaming in the AfCFTA and gender-smart training for tech hubs.
27. **Differentiated results among target groups:** The evaluation indicates that company maturity significantly influences outcomes such as sales, investment, and job creation, with more mature companies benefiting from well-established processes, strategic vision, and financial resources, while less established companies gain long-term advantages through access to knowledge, improved processes, and skill development; specific achievements also include significant international transactions and operational improvements for women-led MSMEs, as well as enhanced access to technology for women and youth.
28. **Access to programme and project deliverables:** The programme design aligns beneficiaries with relevant activities to ensure that intended beneficiaries receive access to appropriate deliverables. Not all beneficiaries participate in every activity; instead, the programme targets specific activities to designated groups. The evaluation indicates that the approach followed by the programme successfully ensures the relevance of deliverables to participants' needs and is well-received by beneficiaries. However, several areas for improvement have been identified to enhance and broaden the programme's benefits. Beneficiaries suggested that companies participating in international events act as ambassadors for their cohorts, representing products from various organizations. They also proposed sharing their experiences with non-participants to enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange. Additionally, beneficiaries recommended providing open access to training materials to facilitate sector-wide learning and enhance the programme's impact.
29. **Barriers to programme deliverables and results:** Financial and time constraints limit some beneficiaries' access to programme results, with less financially mature companies struggling with the cost-sharing model and time commitments for capacity-building and training sessions.

## Efficiency

30. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of efficiency: (1) economic efficiency and timeliness and (2) operational efficiency.
31. **Cost-efficient conversion of inputs to outputs:** The NTF V Programme effectively converted inputs into outputs, outcomes, and impacts within the intended timeframe, leveraging flexible budgeting and local expertise. However, there were opportunities to optimize resource allocation in programme management over time, highlighted by incomplete budget management. Strategic reallocation of funds based on actual needs minimized wastage and directed investments toward high-impact activities, ensuring timely delivery and relevance.
32. **Quality requirements and workplans:** The programme maintained alignment of project implementation and outputs to quality standards through regular reviews and robust feedback mechanisms, despite occasional political and administrative delays. Its flexibility and iterative adjustments enabled timely adaptation to real-time challenges, maintaining high standards and impact. However, challenges in catering to diverse beneficiary groups and managing high administrative workloads for national coordinators hinder operational efficiency.
33. **Alternative ways of achieving programme objectives:** Compared to alternative delivery methods, the programme and projects demonstrated efficient implementation to achieve objectives. Flexible management approaches, including the integration of local and international expertise and hybrid training methods, proved effective in optimizing efficiency.

34. **Programme/projects operational efficiency:** The programme and projects are efficiently managed with robust support from tools, streamlined processes, and effective communication, demonstrating excellence with no identified areas for improvement. Hands-on processes and intensive project-level communication highlight strong on-site management. The evaluation underscores the critical role of the high-quality national team in achieving operational efficiency.
35. **Operational efficiency:** The programme demonstrates strong operational efficiency through effective management tools, streamlined processes, and robust communication, supported by hands-on project management and strong on-site national team capabilities. This ensures effective delivery and quality outcomes. Yet, administrative workload for national coordinators is very high, potentially creating bottlenecks and risking the alignment of project implementation and outputs with quality requirements.
36. **Effectiveness of management arrangements:** The programme's management arrangements are effectively aligned with project delivery, incorporating feedback mechanisms and adapting to local contexts for informed operational decisions. Stakeholder engagement and frequent, structured communication with beneficiaries contribute significantly to overall effectiveness, highlighting the coordinators' commendable communication efforts.
37. **Effectiveness of steering group:** The SG plays a pivotal role in strategic decision-making and programme management, supporting collaboration and providing oversight, although there is room to enhance meeting frequency and focus. In contrast, the NPSC's effectiveness varies across project countries due to inconsistent evaluations, reflecting challenges such as meeting structure inefficiencies and budget constraints. However, the NPSC's engagement with the SG in strategy development is positively evaluated.
38. **Monitoring system:** The programme effectively tracks SME performance using indicators to assess systemic change at the outcome level but lacks specific outcome-level indicators for assessing systemic change through policy adjustments. High-quality tools and evidence-based learning mechanisms support impact assessment and decision-making, enabling accurate data collection and strategic alignment with project objectives.
39. **Systematic change:** While the programme has established an operational monitoring system, design flaws and data integrity issues limit its effectiveness in supporting management, implementation, and accountability. The system's flexibility allows for real-time adjustments but suffers from reliability concerns, evidenced by frequent discrepancies and modifications to baseline data, undermining outcome credibility and accurate progress measurement.
40. **Implementation of recommendations:** While the programme has successfully implemented most recommendations aimed at enhancing efficiency, there are key areas that require attention for further improvement. Specifically, developing a clear exit strategy, enhancing detailed financial reporting practices, and strengthening the Results-Based Management (RBM) system and a more elaborate ToC are crucial steps. Addressing these challenges will not only bolster the programme's sustainability but also maximize its positive impact on outcomes.

## Potential impact

41. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of impact: (1) significance and unintended effects, and (2) transformational change.
42. **Contribution to higher-level effects:** The programme indicates significant positive impacts including the creation of jobs and improved livelihoods in agribusiness and digital technology sectors across seven countries. This is shown through the impact indicators (i) 'Percentage increase in income of beneficiary' and (ii) 'Number of jobs supported'. The programme has successfully fostered substantial business growth, enhanced market access, and improved skills development, highlighting its pivotal role in advancing economic development and entrepreneurial growth.
43. **Observed changes through programme intervention:** The programme has effectively enhanced business operations, management skills, and facilitated business expansion through targeted interventions. It successfully supported the internationalisation of select companies, resulting in international business deals. However, for most beneficiaries, improvements centred on enhanced business capacity and procedures rather than livelihood enhancement. Despite successes, challenges remain in access to finance for beneficiaries, crucial for scaling operations.
44. **Inclusive and sustainable development:** The programme has successfully fostered inclusive and sustainable development for some SMEs, though most beneficiaries have not experienced substantial

improvements in their livelihoods, but rather benefited from enhanced capacities. Many SME's and startups have enhanced their businesses through better organizational efficiency and strategic decisions. The programme shows a strong positive trajectory with substantial contributions, though the full economic impact will become more evident over time.

45. **Contribution to SDGs:** The programme excelled in both sectors in SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Conversely, only in the agricultural sector did the evaluation identified considerable impacts on poverty alleviation (SDGs 1), gender equality (SDG 5), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate action (SDG 13), whereas the impact in the technology sector is less pronounced.

## Potential sustainability

46. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of sustainability: (1) Building and enabling environment for sustainable development, and (2) prospective sustainability.
47. **Needed capacities to sustain benefits over time:** The NTF V programme has significantly strengthened institutional capacities among key partners, setting a foundation for social, environmental, and institutional sustainability. However, the evaluation notes a critical gap in ensuring long-term financial sustainability due to the absence of a detailed action plan for future funding. Additionally, institutionalized processes with partner BSOs are deemed insufficient to sustain programme outcomes post-conclusion.
48. **Exit strategy:** Despite progress, the programme lacks a formalized exit strategy, jeopardizing long-term sustainability. Ongoing discussions with partners have yet to yield concrete strategies, emphasizing the need for urgent development and stakeholder consensus on the exit plan's components and objectives.
49. **National ownership:** The programme has effectively fostered national ownership through extensive stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities. Robust capacity-building initiatives have solidified this achievement across participating countries.
50. **Factors influencing sustainability:** Supporting factors for achieving sustainability include scaling programme activities, engaging with local partners, and transferring knowledge to local trainers. However, challenges such as inadequate financing, political risks, and economic instability could hinder long-term sustainability. While the programme effectively engages with local partners and transfers knowledge, the evaluation highlights insufficient implementation in scaling project activities and knowledge sharing across countries to ensure sustainability.

## 4. Lessons learned

51. Over the first three years of implementation, the NTF V programme has demonstrated its potential for strengthening the agribusiness and digital technology sectors in Ghana, Ethiopia, Senegal, Mali, Benin, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire. The remainder of the programme implementation provides opportunities to consolidate and build on the success achieved to date while continuing to optimise processes and focus on areas that will contribute to the programme's impact in the long term.
52. **Alignment with national priorities and strategic objectives:** The programme's objectives were well-aligned with the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC, as well as the national economic development plans in the target countries. This alignment ensured relevance and facilitated effective implementation.
53. **Comprehensive stakeholder engagement:** Strong stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities fostered a sense of ownership among local partners. This approach facilitated the integration of local insights and needs into the programme, enhancing its relevance and sustainability.
54. **Effective capacity building:** The programme successfully built the capacities of local partners and stakeholders through tailored training and knowledge transfer initiatives. This empowerment enabled beneficiaries to sustain and expand the programme's benefits independently.
55. **Adaptive and flexible approach:** The programme demonstrated adaptability and flexibility, particularly in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This agility allowed for timely adjustments and maintained the programme's relevance in a rapidly changing environment.

56. **Inconsistent promotion of policy change:** Despite aligning with national sectoral priorities, the promotion of policy change within these sectors can be further improved. This gap was due to inconsistencies in incorporating the objective of systemic change into more detail into the project design.
57. **Lack of financial sustainability and exit strategy:** While project plans outline an exit strategy in their documentation, the programme lacks an updated formalized exit strategy and a detailed action plan for future funding, which are critical for ensuring long-term sustainability. To mitigate risks to the continuity and lasting impact of the programme's outcomes action is required in this regard
58. **Challenges in coordinating with other initiatives:** While the programme aligned well with other ITC and Dutch Ministry initiatives, there are opportunities for improved coordination and synergy with larger or overlapping initiatives. This could enhance the programme's effectiveness and reduce competition among similar interventions.
59. **Operational and administrative bottlenecks:** High administrative workloads for national coordinators and incomplete budget management hindered operational efficiency. These challenges are a risk to the programme's ability to deliver timely and quality outcomes consistently.

## 5. Evidence trail of findings, conclusions, and recommendations

| Findings   | Conclusions  | Recommendations  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>The NTF V programme design is anchored in systems thinking, recognising that strengthening each target sector requires a multi-level approach. By working at the policy, ecosystem, company, and market levels, the programme aims to comprehensively identify and address the needs of the agribusiness and digital technology sectors. Additionally, the programme has carved out a niche in the ecosystem by focusing on export readiness. The evaluation indicates that the programme has achieved a good balance by offering beneficiaries in both sectors a combination of training and practical business development support.</p>   | <p>The programme follows a relevant approach to the needs of the agribusiness and digital technology sectors in the seven implementing countries, offering a unique and relevant value to its beneficiaries while differentiating itself from other actors in the sectors.</p>   | <p><i>No recommendation.</i></p>   |
| <p>The programme has leveraged institutional knowledge from previous ITC projects and has actively collaborated with other ITC divisions and programmes such as SheTrade and OpenTrade to ensure alignment with broader ITC strategies and objectives related to sustainable value chains, digital transformation, gender equality, green transition and youth empowerment. Additionally, by adopting proven ITC approaches and using internal resources and training materials, the programme ensures methodological consistency and effective application of organizational knowledge and expertise at the country level.</p> <p>The Steering Group of the programme has enabled a close and strategic collaboration between the programme and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This has contributed to a good alignment between the programme and the work of the Ministry, whose focus on private sector development, food and nutrition security, climate change, and gender equality closely relates to the programme. By working on the digital technology sector and</p> | <p>The programme is effectively advancing the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC thereby contributing to their objectives of strengthened international trade, digital transition and climate resilience. This has been achieved by an appropriate mainstreaming of strategic priorities into the programme design and close collaboration with both organizations during programme implementation. There is an opportunity for the programme and the Ministry to build upon this strategic collaboration at national level to leverage institutional strengths and create synergies with overlapping initiatives, especially in areas such as access to finance and investment.</p> | <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Create stronger linkages with financial initiatives under the Ministry, particularly focusing on access to finance and investment.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. The representative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Steering Group can facilitate a strategic exchange between the programme management and key stakeholders in the DGGF, CFYE, and Orange Corners.</li> <li>1.2. Further identify potential areas of collaboration with regards to access to finance and investment for cohort members of the programme.</li> </ol> <p><b>Responsible:</b> Representative of Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Steering Group</p> <p><b>Period of implementation:</b> 2-3 months after evaluation</p> |



| Findings   | Conclusions | Recommendations |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| <p>promoting agritech, the programme complements the Ministry's efforts in the agribusiness sector. The evaluation indicates that while agricultural value chains are a priority for the Ministry, digital transformation is a newer focus. However, the evaluation also indicates that the collaboration between the Ministry can be enhanced at the local level, particularly with Embassies and other Dutch initiatives. This would allow both parties to leverage institutional strengths and create synergies, especially concerning access to finance and investment, and agri-tech.</p> |             |                 |

In 2021, the programme was approved amidst ongoing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, which included increased poverty, disruptions to global supply chains, commodity price volatility, rising public debt, inflation, and currency depreciation. Recognizing these challenges, the programme team adopted an adaptive and flexible approach to programme design to maintain relevance in an uncertain and highly volatile environment. This approach resulted in a continuous and dynamic project design process, with activities, priorities, resource allocation, and definition of targets adapted to changes in the national and sectoral landscapes.

Ensuring appropriate contextualisation heavily depends on the efforts of national coordinators, who are key implementers on the ground and have significantly established ITC's reputation in the countries. These coordinators possess extensive project knowledge and play a crucial role in representing the programme. The evaluation team found that their high level of engagement, support, and quality work demonstrates the significant impact this dedicated personnel has on the quality and

The programme has effectively tailored its design and implementation to meet the needs and realities of local contexts. The presence of a local team member has been instrumental in this success, enhancing and establishing the reputation of ITC locally, as well as ensuring the quality of the programme. However, the evaluation team suggests that the current level of human resources at the local level is insufficient to meet the programme's scope and needs.

**Recommendation 2:** Ensure a strengthened position of national coordinators.

**Actions:**

- 2.1. Redefine the responsibility profiles of national coordinators to assess how much each person can and should handle and possibly increase the number of personnel at the national level. This review should also identify which tasks can be delegated or managed elsewhere, ensuring a balanced workload and optimal efficiency.
- 2.2. Consider hiring assistants for the national coordinators.

**Responsible:** Programme management

**Period of implementation:** 2 months after evaluation

| Findings   | Conclusions   | Recommendations   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>success of the programme. However, the evaluation also noted that, given the programme's multi-level scope, numerous activities, and objectives, national coordinators often face high workloads and must respond to various demands constantly, indicating a mismatch between available resources on the ground and the ambitious goals of the programme.</p> <p>The evaluation shows that the programme is on track to achieving or overachieving its intended objectives by the end of the programme implementation. The evaluation shows that most indicators across projects have completed at least 50% of their intended targets, with a significant portion of indicators exceeding 100% of their goals.</p> <p>The programme's achievements in the digital technology sector are closely aligned with the pathways of change in the reconstructed ToC, enhancing the performance of BSOs and the competitiveness of MSMEs. By collaborating with BSOs and tech hubs, the programme has empowered these organizations to provide more efficient and tailored support, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation. Beneficiaries have gained tools and resources to improve business models, increase operational efficiency, and access international markets. However, challenges remain in achieving results along the intended pathways of change for enabling ecosystems due to external factors affecting policy-level impact and securing funding and investment for MSMEs.</p> <p>The evaluation team found that the programme's achievements in the agribusiness sector, particularly in resilient business models and value chain competitiveness, align well with the pathways of change in the reconstructed ToC. The programme's</p> | <p>At midterm, the NTF V programme is on track to achieve or surpass its intended objectives by the end of its implementation. The programme's results are well aligned with the programme's reconstructed theory of change, suggesting it is likely to achieve its goal of systemic change as a contribution to trade and competitiveness by the end of the implementation period. To ensure this, the programme will need to focus on specific pathways of change, particularly regarding its interventions at the policy level, access to finance and investment, and further enabling synergies in agri-tech.</p> | <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Improve (i) a streamlined and intentional approach to systemic change and (ii) effective mainstreaming of targeted SDGs at all levels of the programme.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1. Use the reconstructed theory of change developed for this evaluation to review and revise the interlinkages between impact-level objectives, outcome-level objectives, and expected outputs.</li> <li>3.2. Identify and document the critical assumptions that need to be met for each pathway of change. Put a focus on risks and assumption at the policy level approach and access to finance and investment. Also consider adding an outcome indicator to measure systemic change at the policy level (which is currently missing).</li> <li>3.3. Conduct workshops with national coordinators to validate the revised strategy in the theory of change and ensure a common understanding of the pathways of change and underlying assumptions, especially against the realities of national contexts.</li> <li>3.4. Use the identified assumptions and findings of the workshop to develop a detailed plan that addresses priority areas throughout the last year of programme implementation.</li> </ol> <p><b>Responsible:</b> Programme management</p> |



| Findings   | Conclusions | Recommendations  |
|--|-------------|--|
| <p>focus on policy alignment, capacity building, and awareness-raising fosters an environment conducive to sustainable practices and improves beneficiaries' competitiveness through digital technologies and export readiness. However, there are weaker links regarding public-private alliances and business investment opportunities. While the programme promotes public-private alliances and strengthens ecosystems, several assumptions—such as stakeholder commitment and political stability—must be met for regulatory changes to occur. Although the programme has enhanced MSMEs' exposure to international markets and investment readiness, access to funding remains a significant challenge.</p> <p>The programme aims to enhance agri-tech by increasing the digitalization of agribusiness value chains through awareness, strategic investment, and improved digital readiness. It has created platforms for exchange and improved collaboration between digital tech providers and agribusiness actors. However, the synergies have reached only a small portion of beneficiaries, with limited uptake of digital solutions due to mismatches in technological offerings and digital maturity, as well as high costs. Thus, while progress has been made in advancing digital transformation, more efforts are needed to align with the programme's pathways of change.</p> |             | <p><b>Period of implementation:</b> 1 month after evaluation</p> |

The programme adheres to an agile and pragmatic management and implementation approach. This methodology prioritizes practical solutions applicable to real-world scenarios and emphasizes continuous adaptation and improvement through iterative cycles. The primary objective of this approach is to deliver value both promptly and efficiently, ensuring a dynamic response to evolving

The programme follows a pragmatic and agile implementation approach which has significantly contributed to its relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. By focusing on practical solutions and maintaining a high degree of adaptability, the programme has consistently delivered significant value, demonstrating an exemplary model of responsive and efficient project management.

*No recommendation.*

| Findings   | Conclusions | Recommendations |
|--|-------------|-----------------|
| <p>circumstances and stakeholder feedback. The evaluation shows that this approach is significantly contributing to the overall success of the programme as it enhances its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.</p> <p>The evaluation team noted that the programme team has established formal and informal mechanisms to identify needs and priorities throughout the programme life cycle, ranging from in-depth company diagnostics during the inception phase of the programme, to an agile and feedback-driven implementation and design of activities. The evaluation showed that this ongoing effort has ensured that the programme remains responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of its beneficiaries.</p> <p>Funds were reallocated based on actual needs, allowing the project to respond to the evolving requirements of SMEs and BSOs. This approach minimized resource wastage and directed investments towards high-impact activities, ensuring resources were used where most needed. The ability to adjust budget allocations for unforeseen activities or higher-than-expected costs, such as consultant fees, highlights the project's adaptive financial management.</p> <p>The evaluation team found that the project's flexibility, particularly its emphasis on feedback-driven adjustments, ensured that activities remained relevant and effective. Continuous assessments and stakeholder engagement were integral to tailoring interventions to meet the highest quality standards. Feedback mechanisms, such as evaluation forms after training sessions and regular stakeholder consultations, allowed the project to continuously refine its activities. This approach enhanced the</p> |             |                 |

| Findings   | Conclusions   | Recommendations   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>project's impact and ensured it addressed the actual needs of beneficiaries.</p> <p>The monitoring system suffers from issues related to clarity and consistency in presenting indicators, as some indicators in the M&amp;E framework are absent from official reports. Moreover, the system exhibits shortcomings in data quality. During the evaluation, significant discrepancies were found between the reported figures and the results obtained from replicating calculations for the programme's main indicators. Agricultural and tech sectors maintain their own monitoring systems and dashboards, with data only aggregated on the ITC portal, opening the room for calculation errors and providing partial overview of programme progress to team members of each sector. The evaluation also identified a lack of comprehensive financial data which suggests the issues found for the monitoring system are also present in financial data management</p> | <p>To enhance the programme's accountability and facilitate learning, it is important to focus on the refinement and optimisation of the existing data management systems, encompassing both the monitoring and financial data management components.</p> | <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Improve the data quality by improving the M&amp;E system.</p> <p><b>Action 4.1:</b></p> <p>4.1.1 Develop comprehensive definitions and guidelines for all monitoring system components to standardize processes and data interpretation.</p> <p>4.1.2. Develop and implement a comprehensive programme level dashboard that integrates data from both sectors into a unified system, providing a better overview and ensuring that all relevant data is accessible at a higher, overarching level. Therefore, align the dashboards of both sector with each other.</p> <p>4.1.3. In the long term, a browser based digital system is recommended that allows to have different workspaces for the sector but can also aggregate data easily. With the current timeline, this is not seen as still possible but rather short-term adjustments are recommended.</p> <p><b>Responsible:</b> Programme's M&amp;E focal point.</p> <p><b>Period of implementation:</b> Immediately after the evaluation</p> <p><b>Action 4.2:</b></p> <p>4.2.1 Optimize financial planning at the programme level. Continuously plan, monitor, and evaluate resource allocation across different components.</p> <p>4.2.2 Reallocate underspendings from previous years to minimize wastage and direct investments towards high-impact activities more consciously</p> |

| Findings  | Conclusions   | Recommendations  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The NTF V programme has notably strengthened institutional capacities among key partners, establishing a foundation for social, environmental, and institutional sustainability. However, gaps remain in ensuring long-term financial sustainability due to the absence of a comprehensive action plan for future funding. Furthermore, the institutionalized processes with partner BSOs are deemed insufficient to maintain programme outcomes post-conclusion. The programme has effectively promoted national ownership through extensive stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities, with robust capacity-building initiatives reinforcing these achievements across participating countries. Despite these advancements, the programme lacks a formalized exit strategy, which jeopardizes its long-term sustainability. Although ongoing discussions with partners are in progress, they have not yet produced concrete strategies, underscoring the urgent need for the development and consensus on the exit plan's components and objectives.</p> | <p>The programme has laid a strong foundation for sustainability. However, it must allocate resources towards developing a deliberate exit strategy. This includes collaborating with key local and international stakeholders to ensure the programme's results are sustained over time.</p> | <p>4.2.3. Make a detailed financial planning for the remaining period to allow for financing regarding adapted approaches.</p> <p><b>Responsible:</b> Programme management and national coordinators</p> <p><b>Period of implementation:</b> Immediately after the evaluation</p> <p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> Create a comprehensive exit and sustainability plan for the remaining programme duration.</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <p>5.1. Continue developing an exit and sustainability strategy collaboratively with programme partners while focussing on how support can steadily be reduced. Furthermore, develop contingency plans in case of dramatic changes in political priorities or security situations in some countries. Focus on the financial sustainability of key partners and actions.</p> <p>5.2. Communicate the exit and sustainability strategy to all stakeholders involved to ensure mutual understanding and to increase ownership further.</p> <p>5.3. Implement the strategy within the programme to create ownership of future roles and responsibilities.</p> <p><b>Responsible:</b> Programme management and national coordinators</p> <p><b>Period of implementation:</b> 3-6 months after evaluation</p> |

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Context, purpose and objectives

60. This mid-term evaluation report assesses the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) V programme, covering its performance from 1 July 2021 to 29 February 2024. The evaluation was conducted by Mainlevel Consulting AG and managed by the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) of the International Trade Centre (ITC). The evaluation examines the programme and its seven national projects in terms of intended outcomes, alignment with the theory of change (ToC), and expected results. Using OECD-DAC criteria, it evaluates relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact potential, and sustainability, while also considering cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth, green growth, and social responsibility. The report aims to enhance institutional learning by offering recommendations for improvement, lessons learned, and best practices. The primary users of this evaluation are the programme team, ITC, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Centre for the Promotion of Imports (CBI). The evaluation was guided and supported by the contributions of various stakeholders (see Table below).

*Table 3: Evaluation Roles and Responsibilities*

| Role   | Responsibility  |
|--|---|
| <b>ITC Independent Evaluation Unit</b>             | The ITC IEU supervised and monitored the progress of the midterm evaluation. The evaluation was managed, and quality controlled by the IEU. The role of the IEU was to provide guidance and oversee the evaluation process. The IEU was the main focal point for the evaluation team.   |
| <b>NTF V programme and project management team</b> | The NTF programme and project management team supported the evaluation process by collecting and providing documentation, informing stakeholders about the midterm evaluation, ensuring accurate stakeholder contact details, facilitating meetings, offering logistical support, participating in interviews, providing feedback on draft reports, ensuring stakeholder involvement, supporting the implementation of recommendations, and disseminating evaluation findings to national project steering committees and stakeholders. |
| <b>NTF V Programme Steering Group</b>              | The responsibilities of the NTF V Programme Steering Group involved participating in interviews, offering feedback, providing comments on the draft evaluation report, and endorsing the final midterm evaluation report.   |
| <b>Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs</b>     | The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs is tasked with participating in interviews, offering feedback on the draft inception report, providing comments on the draft evaluation report, and endorsing the final midterm evaluation report.  |

### 1.2 Evaluation scope

61. During the evaluation process, the evaluation team aimed to answer various evaluation questions aligned with key assessment dimensions of the evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential impact, and potential sustainability.<sup>2</sup> The following table summarizes the focus of the evaluation while the full evaluation matrix can be found in Annex A.

*Table 4: Assessment dimensions*

| Evaluation criteria     | Assessment dimensions  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Relevance</b>        | i. Responding to needs, policies, and priorities, ii. Being sensitive and responsive to the context, and iii. Integrating inclusion. |
| <b>Coherence</b>        | i. Internal and ii. External coherence.  |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>    | i. Achievement of the objectives and influencing factors and (2) Differential results.   |
| <b>Efficiency</b>       | i. Economic efficiency and timeliness and ii. Operational efficiency   |
| <b>Potential Impact</b> | i. Significance and unintended effects and ii. Transformational change   |
| <b>Sustainability</b>   | i. Building an enabling environment for sustainable development and ii. Prospective sustainability                                   |

### 1.3 Evaluation approach and methodology

62. The evaluation process was structured in four phases. It began with an inception phase, laying the methodological groundwork and implementation plan. This was followed by the data collection or field phase, where information was gathered both remotely and in person through various methods. Subsequently, findings were synthesized and analysed, leading to the reporting phase. Finally, the key findings, lessons learned, and recommendations will be disseminated to programme stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation contributes to informed decision-making and action. To ensure alignment and coherence with the ITC Evaluation Policy and Guidelines,<sup>3</sup> the evaluation team applied a theory-

<sup>2</sup> As specified in the Inception Report.

<sup>3</sup> International Trade Centre (2015). ITC Evaluation Policy; International Trade Centre (2018). Evaluation Guidelines.

based approach to the midterm evaluation, drawing from theoretical approaches such as contribution analysis<sup>4</sup> and the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.4 Data collection and triangulation

63. The evaluation employed a mixed-method approach to gather and analyse data. This included an in-depth document review, ecosystem analysis, big data techniques, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and an online survey across the seven implementing countries and the programme's headquarters. Except for Mali, due to security concerns, the evaluation team gathered qualitative data during country visits to all implementing countries. A total of 145 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 8 FGDs with 27 companies were conducted, complemented by an online survey with a 53% response rate (N=86), ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's implementation and results.
64. Using a triangulation matrix, the findings from individual data collection processes were systematically compared and mapped against the specific indicators and judgment criteria outlined in the evaluation matrix. This rigorous approach ensured that the findings were robust and reliable, leading to well-substantiated conclusions.

## 1.5 Limitations

65. The main limitations faced during the evaluation process and related mitigation strategies are presented below.

*Table 5: Limitations and Mitigation Strategies*

| Limitation   | Description  | Mitigation Strategy  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Delays in access to M&amp;E data</b>  | The evaluation team required disaggregated data for all programme and project indicators. However, due to time constraints within the programme management team and the need of compiling this information into a usable format, there was a delay in providing the evaluation team with access to the data.   | Close collaboration with the IEU evaluation manager and programme management team to identify and make accessible relevant data.   |
| <b>Insufficient metadata and quality of M&amp;E data</b>   | The data provided to the evaluation team did not include metadata which limited the evaluations team visibility on sources of individual indicators, methodology used to calculate and process data, as well as quality and accuracy of the data.  | Review of key documentation and close collaboration with the programme management team to better understand the data.<br>Triangulation of raw data with reported results and primary data. |
| <b>Limited availability of key stakeholders during primary data collection</b>   | Due to time constraints, interviews with several key stakeholders could not occur during country visits as intended.   | Flexible coordination approach. Rescheduling of interviews and consultations to online meetings after country visits.  |
| <b>Underrepresentation of agribusiness MSMEs in survey results</b>   | After consulting with the national coordinators, only a limited number of MSMEs in the agribusiness sector were targeted with the online survey. This decision was based on their experience, which indicated that response rates are typically very low among this beneficiary group, largely due to connectivity issues in the areas where they operate. | Triangulation of quantitative with qualitative results to derive robust conclusions.   |
| <b>Delays in access to financial data and lack of availability of planned financial figures for programme management</b> | There was a delay in access to programme management financial data and only the actual figures were available to the evaluation team.  | Review of key documentation for additional input.  |

<sup>4</sup> Mayne, J. (2001). Addressing attribution through contribution analysis: using performance measures sensibly. *Canadian journal of programme evaluation*, 16(1), 1-24.

<sup>5</sup> Dart, J., & Davies, R. (2003). A dialogical, story-based evaluation tool: The most significant change technique. *The American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(2), 137-155.

## 2. Global context and programme overview

### 2.1 Global context

11. Promoting global trade linkages remains crucial for sustained economic growth, with a positive correlation between trade openness and GDP growth.<sup>6,7</sup> Recent trends, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have underscored the significance of international trade flows, particularly through integrated value chains. Strong value chains can offer the private sector access to markets, technology, knowledge, and capital, thereby contributing to inclusive economic growth. Over the last decade, structural shifts have led to goods-producing value chains becoming less trade-intensive, more services-oriented, and regionally focused. This evolution emphasizes the importance of skilled labour, innovation, and regional value chains. However, global value chains are vulnerable to external shocks, as evidenced by past crises, and particularly the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for coordination and resilience-building efforts to mitigate risks and support socioeconomic development, especially in developing countries.<sup>8</sup>
12. Against this backdrop, the main objective of the NTF V programme is to contribute to poverty alleviation and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular SDG 1 (Poverty Alleviation), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) – through fostering systemic change and promoting the adoption of robust business models by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), larger companies, and their respective support networks in the agribusiness and digital technology sectors. The intervention aims thereby to foster more resilient, innovative, and sustainable value chains, leading to more and improved employment opportunities and incomes for MSMEs, as well as fostering more equitable, ethical, and responsible trade (i.e., “better trade”) in both goods and services.

### 2.2 Programme structure

13. The programme is the fifth phase of a series<sup>9</sup> of sector development programmes funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry) and implemented by the ITC in collaboration with the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI). The agreement for NTF V was signed in July 2021, allocating a total budget of USD 15,000,000 to programme implementation and management until June 2025. NTF V is a multi-country programme implemented in Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, and Uganda.

Table 6: Budget overview

| Country                                      | Project Focus              | Project budget in USD (planned) |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>NTF V Programme Coordination</b>          | Overall governance and M&E | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Uganda</b> | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Ethiopia</b>                              | Agribusiness               | 2,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Ghana</b>                                 | Agribusiness               | 2,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Senegal</b>                               | Agribusiness               | 1,500,000.00                    |
|  | Digital Technology Sector  | 1,500,000.00                    |
| <b>Myanmar*</b>                              | <i>Tourism*</i>            | 1,000,000.00*                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                 |                            | <b>15,000,00.00</b>             |

Note: \*The programme originally included a project in Myanmar which was later excluded from the programme.

14. The Ministry, CBI, and ITC collaborate closely in strategically managing the programme through a shared Steering Group (SG). The SG aims to establish a unified governance structure, providing strategic guidance and decision-making on key aspects of project implementation. Additionally, the SG serves as a platform to monitor progress, potential risks, and opportunities. The SG directly collaborates with the NTF V programme management team, responsible for the effective and efficient implementation and coordination of all projects. At project level, a project management team is responsible for executing project activities, achieving, and monitoring outcomes, supervising daily operations, monitoring budget

<sup>6</sup> International Trade Centre. (2021). Project Proposal. *Netherlands Trust Fund V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact - Achieving systemic change in services sectors to make selected African countries more trade competitive.*

<sup>7</sup> International Trade Centre. (2023). ITC Terms of Reference. *2023-29-GB Midterm Evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact.*

<sup>8</sup> International Trade Centre. (2021). Project Proposal. *Netherlands Trust Fund V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact - Achieving systemic change in services sectors to make selected African countries more trade competitive.*

<sup>9</sup> NTF V builds on a long-lasting cooperation between ITC and CBI established in the previous programmes NTF I (July 2005 – June 2008), NTF II (April 2009 - June 2013), NTF III (July 2013 - June 2017), and NTF IV (October 2017 – June 2021).



and resources, conducting administrative supervision, and handling partnerships with collaborating organizations in the target countries. At national level, projects are implemented and coordinated by national project coordinators who additionally align with a national project steering committee (PSC) responsible for overseeing the ITC-implemented NTF V projects and CBI-implemented projects in the same sector.

### 2.3 Areas of action

15. The NTF V programme targets the digital technology and agribusiness sectors. These sectors were selected for their distinct yet complementary strengths: digital technology has the potential to enhance efficiency and productivity, while agribusiness is particularly relevant for poverty alleviation and value-added creation.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, agribusiness underscores the critical importance of support services, while the integration of digital technologies can enhance efficiencies, productivity, value-added creation, and traceability throughout the supply chain.<sup>11</sup>
16. Additionally, both sectors relate to the institutional priorities of the Ministry and ITC. For example, in the Policy Document on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation “Investing in Global Prospects” by the Ministry, digitalization is described as a key tool for advancing sustainable and inclusive growth worldwide.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, the document proposes that the responsible use of digital technologies can create unprecedented opportunities, speeding up the progress in achieving the SDGs and contributing to economic growth. Therefore, the Dutch government, based on national ambition, is supporting international SMEs in developing new digital technologies and applications and marketing them in other countries. Similarly, the Netherlands is seeking to raise its profile concerning digital innovation for international cooperation.
17. The agribusiness sector is also closely related to the objectives of ITC’s Alliance for Action (A4A) approach.<sup>13</sup> This is a market system and SME-producer-centred strategy aimed at enhancing value chain governance from farm to fork, promoting responsible production and commercialization, and ultimately improving the resilience and competitiveness of sectors. The approach emphasizes creating partnerships at various levels that promote responsible production and commercialization while adding value across the system.
18. Moreover, the programme highlights the potential of digital technology as an enabler of innovation and growth in the agribusiness sector, while recognizing the dynamic nature of creating opportunities for food-tech and agritech in developing countries.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the programme aims to build connections between sectors taking into consideration the contextual characteristics of the target countries and selected value chains, implementing a “digital-by-need” instead of a “digital-by-default” approach.
19. In the agribusiness sector, the programme aims at increasing competitiveness and sustainability in agribusiness value chains. This will be achieved by identifying and understanding resilient and sustainable business and production models, strengthening public-private alliances and support ecosystems, building the capabilities of value chain operators for more competitive and resilient commercialisation and production, and exposing SMEs, SEs, and Producers’ Associations to potential partners, business opportunities, and investment prospects. In Senegal, the programme focuses on the cashew nuts sector. The programme focuses on the cashew nut sector in Senegal, the coffee sector in Ethiopia, and the cocoa sector in Ghana.
20. In the technology sector, the programme aims to improve the resilience and effectiveness of tech ecosystems, thereby fostering digital transformation across various sectors. This will be achieved through improved enabling ecosystems, enhanced performance of partner BSOs, strengthened competitiveness of beneficiary SMEs, and better linkages to export markets and investors. The programme focuses on the digital technology sector of Senegal, Ethiopia, and Ghana, as well as in Benin, Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Uganda as part of the programme’s multi-country project “FastTrackTech”.

<sup>10</sup> International Trade Centre. (2021). Project Proposal. *Netherlands Trust Fund V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact - Achieving systemic change in services sectors to make selected African countries more trade competitive*.

<sup>11</sup> International Trade Centre. (2023). Terms of Reference. Midterm Evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. (2018). Policy Document on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation “Investing in Global Prospects”. Available from: <https://www.government.nl/documents/policy-notes/2018/05/18/investing-in-global-prospects>.

<sup>13</sup> International Trade Centre. (n.d.). Alliances for Action. *Partnerships for sustainable food systems*.

<sup>14</sup> International Trade Centre. (2021). Project Proposal. *Netherlands Trust Fund V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact - Achieving systemic change in services sectors to make selected African countries more trade competitive*.

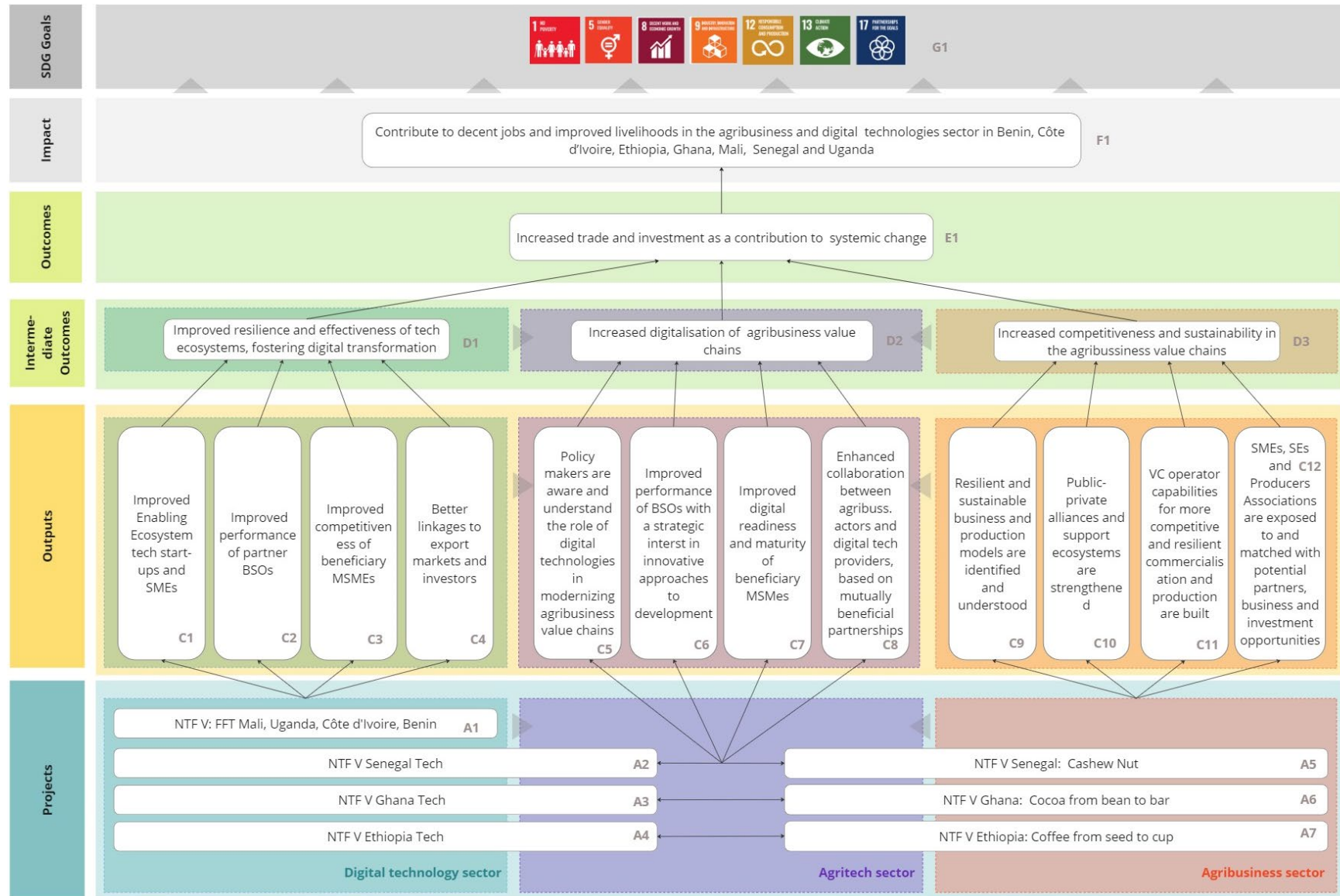


21. In both sectors, the programme beneficiaries include key government agencies and business support organizations, such as processing and production cooperatives and farmers' associations in the agribusiness sector, as well as tech hubs and incubators in the digital technology sector. The programme also targets MSMEs and startups.

## 2.4 Theory of change

22. The evaluation team reconstructed the programme's ToC to better reflect the ongoing efforts of the programme and intended interlinkages between projects and sectoral tracks of the programme. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the ToC and Annex B presents the full narrative of change. In a nutshell, the ToC proposes that strengthened agribusiness and digital technology sectors lead to increased trade and investment contributing to systemic change in the target countries. These sectors were selected for their distinct yet complementary strengths: digital technology enhances efficiency and productivity, while agribusiness is particularly relevant for poverty alleviation and value creation. Similarly, agribusiness underscores the critical importance of support services, while the integration of digital technologies enhances efficiency, productivity, value addition, and traceability throughout the supply chain. The programme aims to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of tech ecosystems, fostering digital transformation across various sectors, increase competitiveness and sustainability in the agribusiness value chains and advance the digitalization of agribusiness value chains.

Figure 1: Reconstructed Theory of Change



## 2.5 Results framework

23. The implementation of NTF V is guided by one aggregate programme results chain and individual results chains for the projects underlying each sectoral track (see Table 5). While both programme and tracks share common objectives at the outcome and impact levels, the expected outputs vary between the agribusiness and digital technology sectors.

Table 7: Results chains

| Programme  | Digital Technology Track   | Agribusiness Track  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Impact:</b> Contribute to decent jobs and improved livelihoods in the agribusiness and digital technologies sector in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and Uganda |  |   |
| <b>Outcome:</b> Increased trade and investment as a contribution to systemic change  |  |   |
| <b>Output 1:</b> Improved Enabling Ecosystem for MSMEs   | <b>Output 1:</b> Improved Enabling Ecosystem for MSMEs           | <b>Output 1:</b> Resilient and sustainable business and production models are identified and understood   |
| <b>Output 2:</b> Improved performance of BSOs  | <b>Output 2:</b> Improved performance of partner BSOs            | <b>Output 2:</b> Public-Private alliances and support ecosystems are strengthened   |
| <b>Output 3:</b> Improved competitiveness of MSMEs   | <b>Output 3:</b> Improved competitiveness of beneficiary MSMEs   | <b>Output 3:</b> VC operator capabilities for more competitive and resilient commercialisation and production are built                         |
| <b>Output 4:</b> MSMEs linked to international companies for sourcing and sustainable product/service and market development   | <b>Output 4:</b> Better linkages to export markets and investors | <b>Output 4:</b> SMEs, Ses and Producers Associations are exposed to and matched with potential partners, business and investment opportunities |

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Relevance

24. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against three dimensions of relevance: (1) responding to needs, policies, and priorities (2) being sensitive and responsive to the context, and (3) integrating inclusion.

#### Relevance dimension 1: Responding to needs, policies, and priorities

25. This section evaluates four key questions under Relevance Dimension 1. It examines whether the NTF V programme's objectives and design effectively address the needs of beneficiaries, and align with global, national, and partner strategies and priorities. Additionally, it assesses the project's support for national development plans and key SDGs. The section also evaluates if the programme results meet the needs of targeted beneficiaries, and whether programme stakeholders clearly understand the projects and programme.

#### Key findings relevance dimension 1

26. The programme objectives and overall design **align well with the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC. While the programme objectives were well aligned with national sectoral priorities** such as digital transformation, innovation and agribusiness development, **the programme design has not been sufficiently effective in creating an overarching strategy that fosters policy change across all countries and target sectors.** Effective policy change requires ongoing stakeholder engagement, advocacy, communication, and sustained resources, which were insufficiently reflected in the programme design. Most projects focused on supporting MSMEs and BSOs rather than policy change. This gap stems from **inconsistencies in incorporating the objective of systemic change (programme outcome) into project designs**, as is evidenced by a mismatch between the programme's definition of systemic change (i.e. long-term policy change in the target sectors) and strategic decision-making. In particular, a prioritisation of activities and allocation of resources to MSMEs and BSOs was identified, as opposed to those directly targeting policy change. To ensure the relevance and the achievement of intended outcomes, there is a need for a more streamlined and intentional approach to systemic change at all levels of the programme.
27. The programme is **closely aligned with national economic development plans** in the target countries by contributing to key sectors and priority areas. Similarly, it is **closely aligned with and actively contributes to** SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and

Infrastructure), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). This is due to the programme's focus on job creation, private sector development, innovation as a driver of resilient and sustainable agribusiness and tech sectors, as well as the fundamental role of partnerships in the programme design. However, the target SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), **have not been consistently mainstreamed into the programme design, limiting the programme's ability to maximize its contributions to these key goals.** A more deliberate integration of these SDGs will enhance the programme's impact, particularly on environmental sustainability, gender equality, and poverty reduction.

28. **The programme effectively addresses the needs of young entrepreneurs in the agribusiness and technology sectors, particularly in areas related to business development and growth.** While the programme has implemented several targeted interventions to support women-led and women-owned enterprises—such as gender-smart incubation programmes, digital marketing training for women, and policy initiatives like the AfCFTA Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan—there are still gaps in fully meeting the needs of these businesses, particularly in the technology sector. The current segmentation approach, which focuses primarily on enterprise maturity, may not fully capture the unique challenges women entrepreneurs face. This underscores the need for a more nuanced and intersectional approach in project design to ensure that all intended target groups are adequately supported.
29. **Stakeholders' understanding of the projects and the programme varies significantly.** While the programme team and steering group have a comprehensive understanding, external stakeholders possess knowledge pertinent to their roles, facilitated by a targeted communication strategy that prevents information overload. The programme team employs regular and varied communication formats, primarily focusing on short-term activities. However, beneficiaries will benefit from increased **visibility of long-term plans in order to better anticipate the need for internal resources (time and budget)** to participate in programme activities, especially those related to international forums and extended capacity-building modules. The **National Project Steering Committees (NPSCs) have a limited understanding of their projects and how these contribute to the overall programme objectives, despite regular updates and meetings, and the requirements of their role in the programme.** Additionally, the evaluation revealed varying levels of ownership among NPSC members across different countries, which could potentially affect the programme's long-term sustainability.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

[To what extent do the NTF V project and programme objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?](#)

30. The programme aims to contribute to decent jobs and improved livelihoods in the agribusiness and digital technologies sector in the seven target countries through increased trade and investment as a contribution to systemic change, as proposed by its reconstructed ToC. This, in turn, should be achieved by (i) improving the resilience and effectiveness of tech ecosystems, fostering digital transformation across various sectors, (ii) enhancing competitiveness and sustainability in the agribusiness value chains, and (iii) increasing the digitalisation of agribusiness value chains. Seven country-level projects target these objectives through sector-specific activities and outputs.
31. The programme objectives and overall design described above align well with the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands linked to trade, digital transition, and climate resilience. The programme supports the Dutch government's objectives in sustainable development, economic cooperation with Africa, and the promotion of women and youth in private sector development. Similarly, the programme reflects well the impact areas of ITC including the promotion of sustainable value chains and aligns with its strategic goals in digital transformation, gender equality, green transition, and youth empowerment.
32. The programme objectives and overall design largely respond to the needs and priorities of beneficiary companies and business support organizations (BSO) in both the tech and agribusiness sectors. The evaluation team found that the projects in the tech sector have been effective in addressing company needs by focusing on international market expansion and the professionalization of internal processes and business strategies. In the agribusiness sector, projects have effectively responded to beneficiary needs and priorities by focusing activities on enhancing competitiveness and promoting specialized knowledge of product marketing and financial management. The evaluation team noted that the programme team has established formal and informal mechanisms to identify needs and priorities throughout the programme life cycle, ranging from in-depth company diagnostics during the inception phase of the programme, to an agile and feedback-driven implementation and design of activities. The

evaluation showed that this ongoing effort has ensured that the programme remains responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of its beneficiaries.

33. However, the evaluation team found discrepancies between the compatibility of the programme objectives with national sectoral objectives and the relevance of the programme design to the needs and priorities of relevant policymakers. On the one hand, the objectives embedded in the intended programme effectively reflect national priorities - as evidenced by their alignment with objectives such as promoting digital transformation, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and supporting agribusiness development. On the other hand, the programme design has not been sufficiently effective in creating an overarching strategy that fosters policy change across all countries and target sectors.
34. Specifically, consultations with policy partners have highlighted that policy change in both the agribusiness and technology sectors requires the active engagement of key stakeholders - including policymakers, industry leaders, civil society and the public; effective advocacy strategies to influence decision-makers; clear and consistent communication to raise awareness and build public support; and adequate funding and resources to support the implementation and sustainability of policy changes. These activities are resource-intensive, require continuity and should ideally be accompanied by long-term support to ensure that policy implementation is sustained over time. However, the evaluation team found that these characteristics were not adequately reflected in the programme design.
35. Projects in both sectoral tracks have predominantly prioritised the design and implementation of activities related to MSMEs and BSOs in contrast to activities actively promoting policy change, such as contributions to Start-up Acts in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal or to the institutionalization of the dynamic agroforestry (DAF) approach by COCOBOD in Ghana. The evaluation team found that this gap was due to inconsistencies in how systemic change objectives were incorporated into the design of individual projects. In particular, the evaluation team found a mismatch between the prevailing definition of systemic change in the programme and the way in which strategic decisions were made regarding the prioritisation of activities and the allocation of resources. The evaluation suggests that the prevailing definition of systemic change within the programme refers to long-term policy or regulatory changes that sustainably improve the enabling environment for technology and agribusiness enterprises. According to the change hypothesis of the ToC, this should have been reflected in the design of projects by ensuring that mechanisms were put in place to ensure that activities and outputs contribute to systemic change consistently. However, the evaluation shows that the programme has lacked a strategic and streamlined approach to systemic change. This is evidenced not only by the lack of prioritisation in the work with policy partners across projects, but also by discrepancies in key stakeholders' understanding of the scope of systemic change at programme and project level, as well as a delayed emphasis by the programme management and steering group on the role of systemic change as a project outcome.

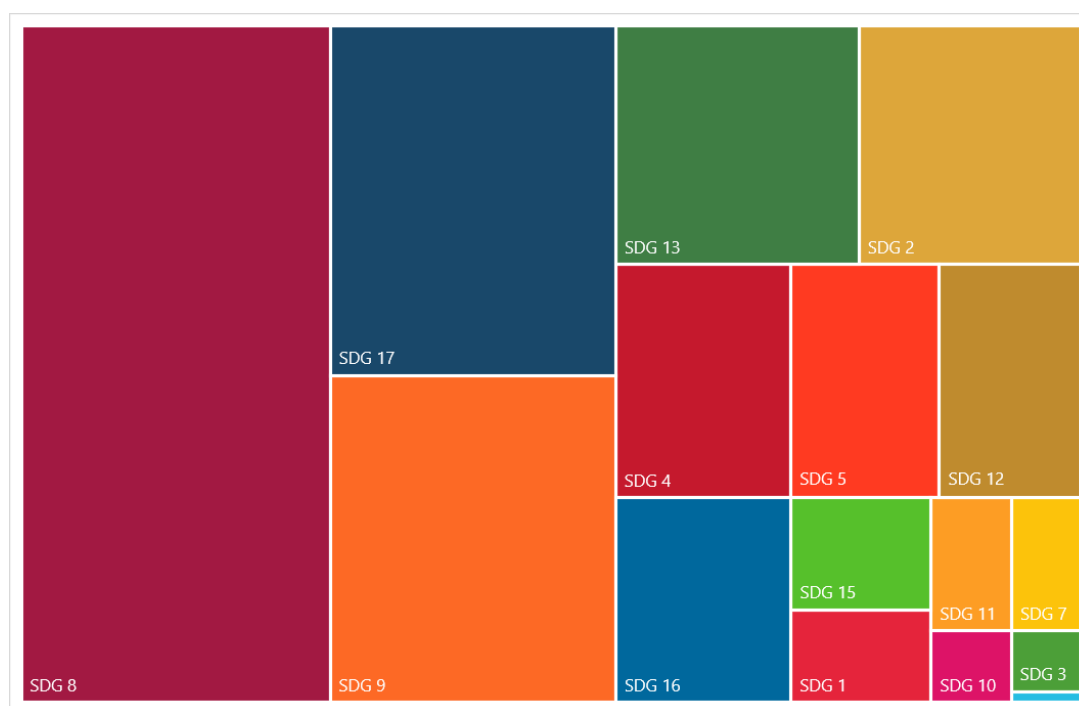
[Do the projects and the programme align with and support national development plans and priorities, including the SDG 1; SDG 5; SDG 8; SDG 9; SDG 12; SDG 13; and SDG 17?](#)

36. The programme is **closely aligned with national development plans** in the target countries by contributing to key sectors and priority areas such as strengthening the agribusiness sector, promoting digital transformation, enhancing international trade, and increasing youth employment, all of which contribute to economic growth and structural change.
37. The programme aims to contribute to SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
38. The evaluation found that the programme is closely aligned with and actively contributes to SDGs 8, 9, and 17. This is due to the programme's focus on job creation, private sector development, innovation as a driver of resilient and sustainable agribusiness and tech sectors, as well as the fundamental role of partnerships in the programme design. However, SDGs 1, 5, 12, and 13 are only indirectly mainstreamed into the programme design. SDG 12, 13, and 5 have been integrated into the programme design in relation to SDG 8 and 9. This is achieved by promoting sustainable production practices, climate resilience and gender equality within the context of private sector development and innovation activities. SDG 1 is indirectly addressed within the programme design through the assumption that increased trade and competitiveness will translate into enhanced livelihoods.
39. The evaluation team identified secondary contributions to other SDGs highlighting the potential for the **programme to have wide-ranging positive effects, even if these were not the primary focus** (see for instance Figure 1). The programme's focus on equipping companies with enhanced skills and capabilities aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education). The objective of contributing to institutional development relates to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The programme's goal of



strengthening the agribusiness sector mirrors some targets of SDGs 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), while the objective of contributing to gender equality and creating opportunities for youth aligns with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Figure 2: SDG-mainstreaming into programme design



Source: Mainlevel Consulting AG based on data from the SDG Mapper.

40. The **inconsistency in mainstreaming SDGs into the programme design suggests a need for a more systematic approach to fully integrate these goals**.<sup>15</sup> Without consistent mainstreaming, the programme may miss opportunities to maximize its contributions to the targeted SDGs. A more deliberate integration could enhance the programme's impact, particularly on environmental sustainability and gender equality (SDGs 12, 13, and 5). Additionally, the indirect approach to addressing SDG 1 may be insufficient for effectively tackling poverty as anticipated, indicating a need for more targeted strategies.

[Do the programme results respond to the needs of all stakeholders \(including women and youth, and the poor and disabled\) as identified at the design stage?](#)

41. The **programme was originally designed to target women and young people**, based on evidence that SMEs run by these groups have, on average, fewer resources and less access to markets, information and finance than other enterprises. In addition, women and youth are often in more vulnerable employment situations. In the agribusiness sector, the programme targets value chain actors with a focus on women and youth. In the digital technology sector, it aims to bridge the digital divide by connecting women entrepreneurs to the digital space and local youth to the global network.
42. The evaluation team found that the programme was effective in targeting and responding to the needs of young people in both the agribusiness and technology sectors. However, it identified gaps in the way the programme targeted and responded to the needs of women-led and women-owned enterprises, particularly in the digital technology sector. While the programme has taken steps to address these challenges—such as gender-smart incubation programmes, digital marketing training exclusively for women, and policy-level initiatives like the AfCFTA Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan—further adaptation may still be required to ensure more nuanced targeting of women-led businesses.
43. The evaluation suggests that the segmentation approach taken by the programme in designing and implementing activities may be contributing to these gaps. While the segmentation, which is based on the maturity of the enterprise, has successfully addressed the needs of younger entrepreneurs—who often start ventures in the early stages of business development—this approach may not fully capture the distinct challenges faced by women-led enterprises. The call for applications does include questions to identify women-led businesses, and needs assessments are conducted throughout the project

<sup>15</sup> See Annex C

lifecycle. However, these efforts may still benefit from further refinement to fully capture the unique business trajectories of women entrepreneurs.

44. Programmes designed to support companies based on their maturity naturally align with the needs of the young entrepreneurs, as they are often starting new ventures and are typically in the early stages of business development. Hence, programme activities targeting growth and business development are more likely to directly address the challenges younger entrepreneurs face while establishing their companies. However, to effectively address the needs of women-founded and led companies, a more nuanced approach may be needed. Women entrepreneurs often face challenges that extend beyond business maturity, such as systemic barriers and market access issues, which require targeted interventions. Although the programme has already deployed several gender-specific interventions aimed at achieving systemic change, the current segmentation approach may still inadvertently prioritize businesses that align with traditional growth metrics, potentially disadvantaging women-led businesses that innovate or grow differently.

#### Do stakeholders have a good understanding of the projects and/or the programme?

45. **Stakeholders' understanding of the projects and the programme varies.** While the programme team and steering group have a good understanding of both, external stakeholders have a good understanding of the aspects relevant to their role, thanks to the programme's deliberate and targeted communication strategy, which avoids information overload.
46. The programme team communicates regularly and in a variety of formats, focusing on short-term activities and information. However, the evaluation found that beneficiaries would benefit from greater visibility of long-term plans to better plan and allocate their internal resources for participation in the programme activities, especially those related to international fora and longer capacity-building modules.
47. The understanding of the National Project Steering Committees (NPSCs) is more limited than expected for their responsibility to oversee and provide strategic guidance on the implementation and progress of the programme at national level. Despite regular written updates and semi-regular meetings between project managers, national coordinators and NPSC members, these methods were not effective in ensuring an in-depth understanding of the full scope of national projects and their contribution to programme level objectives. The evaluation found that NPSC members in all countries have only partial knowledge of ongoing activities, beneficiaries and key results. NPSC members tend to know more about aspects of national projects or concrete activities related to the scope of their work and lack a comprehensive understanding of the interlinkages between projects within and between countries. Similarly, the evaluation team observed varying levels of ownership among NPSC members across countries as well as different understandings of their roles and responsibilities in the respective countries, which could significantly impact the overall sustainability of the programme. For example, in Ghana and Ethiopia, the evaluation team noted that NPSC members were actively involved in advising on strategic decisions. In contrast, in countries like Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal, NPSC members were perceived as taking a more passive role, primarily focused on information exchange rather than active engagement in decision-making.

### Relevance Dimension 2: Being Sensitive and Responsive to the Context

48. This section assesses one key question under Relevance Dimension 2. It examines whether the design of programmes and projects, including the Theory of Change (ToC), has been appropriately adapted to the countries' context.

#### Key findings relevance dimension 2

49. **The programme and projects were appropriately designed to suit the context** of the seven implementing countries. The programme team adopted an **adaptive and flexible approach to project design to maintain relevance in an uncertain and highly volatile environment** due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach resulted in a **continuous and dynamic project design process**, with activities, priorities, and resource allocation adapted to changes in the national and sectoral landscapes. This approach was accompanied by **the development of project-specific logframes**, which not only incorporated the logic of the programme into all seven projects but also considered country- and sector-specific factors that could influence project implementation, such as production and export dynamics, regulatory environments, and digital infrastructure among others.
50. The evaluation team found that **this contextualization approach is highly valued by national stakeholders** in the two target sectors, particularly by the companies benefiting from the programme.

Overall, companies in both sectors believe that the programme has been effective in integrating local needs and realities into project activities. However, several technology sector beneficiaries noted that key content of capacity-building activities was often overly focused on Europe and the United States due to these regions' leadership in technology development. This feedback highlights an opportunity for the programme team to better tailor training materials to the digital maturity of implementing countries, thereby ensuring greater relevance and effectiveness in diverse local contexts.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

Were the programme, project design, and theory of change (ToC) appropriately adapted to the contexts in each country?

51. The evaluation shows that the **programme and projects were appropriately designed to suit the context** of the seven implementing countries.
52. In 2021, the programme was approved amidst ongoing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, which included increased poverty, disruptions to global supply chains, commodity price volatility, rising public debt, inflation, and currency depreciation.<sup>16,17</sup> Recognizing these challenges, the programme team adopted an adaptive and flexible approach to programme design to maintain relevance in an uncertain and highly volatile environment. This approach resulted in a continuous and dynamic project design process, with activities, priorities, and resource allocation adapted to changes in the national and sectoral landscapes.
53. Another tool used to contextualize the programme and ToC was the development of project-specific logframes, which not only incorporated the logic of the programme into all seven projects, but also took into account country- and sector-specific factors that could influence project implementation. For example, for projects in the agribusiness sector, aspects related to production and export dynamics, digital integration, climate change, and the institutional and political landscape were considered. For projects in the technology sector, the programme team considered factors such as digital infrastructure, the regulatory environment, and socio-demographics. Additionally, each project plan includes project-specific objectives that reflect the environment in which each project takes place. In the case of some projects (e.g. Ghana agribusiness, Senegal agribusiness), these targets have been subject to revision in response to shifts in context, among other factors, thereby further underscoring the adaptive and flexible approach adopted by the programme team.
54. The evaluation team found that this approach to contextualization is highly valued by national stakeholders across **the two target sectors**, particularly by companies benefiting from the programme. Overall, companies believe that the programme has been effective in integrating local needs and realities into the content of events and capacity-building activities. In particular, they highlighted that project activities accurately reflect national market dynamics, while also providing participants with valuable insights into international examples and expertise. However, it is worth noting that several technology companies interviewed mentioned that key content used during capacity-building activities (e.g. practical examples and applications) was often overly focused on Europe and the United States, given these region's leadership in technology development. This feedback underscores the opportunity for the programme team to adapt training materials more closely to the digital maturity of the implementing countries, ensuring greater relevance and effectiveness in diverse local contexts.

### Relevance Dimension 3: Integrating Inclusion

55. This section assesses two key questions under Relevance Dimension 3. It examines whether the cross-cutting dimensions of human rights and gender equality, youth inclusion, green growth, and social responsibility are reflected in the design of the programme and projects. It also assesses whether integrating these issues was relevant to achieving the programme's objectives and results.

#### Key findings relevance dimension 3

56. Cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender equality, youth inclusion, green growth and social responsibility are **integrated to varying degrees into programme and project design**. Gender equality, youth inclusion and green growth are particularly prioritised. The programme aims to promote

<sup>16</sup> African Development Bank Group. (2021). *East Africa Economic Outlook 2021: Debt Dynamics: The Path to Post-COVID Recovery*. African Development Bank Group.

<sup>17</sup> African Development Bank. (2021). *West Africa Economic Outlook 2021: Debt Dynamics: The Path to Post-COVID recovery*. African Development Bank Group.



gender equality and youth inclusion through activities tailored to women entrepreneurs, women-led enterprises and the needs of young people. In addition, green growth considerations will be emphasised in both sectors, with initiatives such as the "Greening ICT" training for technology companies and activities to support the adaptation to sustainable production practices in agribusiness. The integration of social responsibility and human rights is more prominent in the agribusiness sector than in the digital technology sector.

57. The evaluation team **found a lack of clarity about the intended level of integration of cross-cutting issues**, which may explain the different levels of mainstreaming. For example, it is unclear whether the strong focus on human rights and social responsibility in the agribusiness sector compared to the technology sector was intentional. Furthermore, the programme's vision and approach to gender equality is ambiguous, particularly in terms of whether it aims to be gender-responsive or gender-transformative. This highlights the need for a clearer articulation of the programme's intentions regarding the integration of cross-cutting issues to ensure consistent and effective implementation across different sectors.
58. The evaluation found **some evidence of project outcomes related to cross-cutting issues but noted that these issues have not been the primary drivers of programme outcomes**. In Ghana's agribusiness sector, the project promoted gender equality, youth livelihoods, and environmental sustainability in the cocoa value chain, leading to empowered farmers, improved yields, and increased incomes. Ethiopian initiatives in the coffee value chain fostered inclusive growth and governance, benefiting women and youth. In the technology sector, Senegal's project emphasized gender mainstreaming in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), highlighting technology's role in supporting women farmers. Additionally, projects in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Uganda delivered Greening ICT training, with successful pilots of a Training of Trainers (ToT) for hubs in Ghana involving RecycleUp and Impact Hub.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

To what extent were cross-cutting dimensions (human rights and gender equality; inclusion of youth; green growth, and social responsibility) reflected in the design of the programme and projects?

59. **Cross-cutting** issues such as human rights, gender equality, youth inclusion, green growth, and social responsibility are integrated to varying degrees into programme and project design.
60. The programme focuses on women and youth in the agribusiness and technology sectors. Consequently, the evaluation team observed efforts to promote gender equality and youth inclusion within both sectors. This is evident through the design of activities specifically aimed at female entrepreneurs and women-led or founded companies, as well as initiatives tailored to meet the needs of younger people, ranging from capacity-building to business development activities.
61. The evaluation team found that green growth considerations have been increasingly prioritised across both target sectors, reflecting the broader global priorities of ITC and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the technology sector, the integration of environmental considerations is evident in activities such as the "Greening ICT" training, which focuses on how tech startups can incorporate environmentally friendly solutions into their business models, improve efficiency at lower operational costs, and align with international standards while ensuring customer satisfaction. Similarly, in the agribusiness sector, projects have focused on integrating environmental aspects by promoting sustainable production practices and designing differentiated activities for green crops and conventional crops. Additionally, the agribusiness projects support the compliance and adaptation to the EU CS3D (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence) thereby promoting climate-smart farming.
62. The integration of social responsibility and human rights issues appears to be more prominent in the agribusiness sector compared to the digital technology sector. By supporting compliance and adaptation to the EU CS3D (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence), the agribusiness projects integrate aspects of human rights, labour rights, and working conditions into their activities. Projects have also implemented a mHREDD (mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence) risk assessment tool to identify key priority areas for capacity building concerning human rights and environmental issues. The programme additionally supports organizations, for example Fair Trade Africa or certified producers, whose practices aim to contribute to the ethical treatment of workers, fostering community development, promoting sustainable practices, and upholding transparency and fairness in global trade. It remains unclear to the evaluation team the extent to which social responsibility and human rights aspects have been integrated into the design of digital technology projects.

63. Overall, the evaluation team identified a lack of clarity regarding the intended level of integration of cross-cutting issues which may explain the varying levels of mainstreaming. For example, the agribusiness sector shows a more pronounced focus on human rights and social responsibility compared to the technology sector. While acknowledging the lack of toolkit tailored to the technology sector in this regard, it expresses a strong interest in learning from the approaches adopted by other programmes outside of the ITC in addressing this gap. In addition, the programme's vision and approach to gender equality are unclear, particularly in terms of whether it intends to take a gender-responsive or gender-transformative approach.
64. This is especially important because the way these issues are approached and defined has different implications within **each sector, affecting the practical application of the programme's objectives**. For example, mainstreaming human rights in the agribusiness sector relates to fair labour practices, sustainable agriculture, and appropriate working conditions, among other aspects. In contrast, the technology sector prioritises digital privacy, equitable access to technology, and ethical considerations in AI and data use. Similarly, promoting gender equality in the traditionally male-dominated technology sector may require a more comprehensive approach. This could include addressing issues related to gender norms and representation, going beyond equal participation to broader systemic change.

The evaluation therefore highlights the need for a clearer articulation of the programme's intentions regarding the integration of cross-cutting issues to ensure consistent and effective implementation across different sectors.

[Has integrating these cross-cutting issues been relevant to achieving the goals and results of the programme so far?](#)

65. While the evaluation team **found some evidence of project outcomes related to cross-cutting issues**, the evaluation shows that the integration of these issues has not been the main driver of programme outcomes.
66. In the agribusiness sector, the Ghana project focuses on the cocoa processing value chain, promoting gender equality and empowerment by involving women and increasing their income. It also provides livelihood opportunities for youth and addresses environmental issues through an agroforestry model. Sustainable agricultural practices introduced in Ghana have empowered cocoa farmers, improved crop yields, reduced cultivation costs, and increased incomes. Additionally, empowering SMEs with certifications and good administrative practices has strengthened their market presence and enabled access to international markets. In Ethiopia, promoting value addition in the coffee value chain and compliance with EU CS3D has driven environmental and social governance initiatives, also creating new opportunities for women and youth and ensuring inclusive economic growth.
67. In the technology sector, the project in Senegal promotes gender mainstreaming in the Women & Youth Protocol of the AfCFTA with a focus on technology. In particular, while not explicitly addressing the youth dimension, the project highlights the role that technology can play in facilitating trade in the products of women farmers and processors through the AfCFTA. Regarding green growth, projects in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Uganda have delivered the Greening ICT training. In Ghana, this initiative led to pilot projects with two organizations, RecycleUP and Impact Hub. Additionally, in Ghana, the team partnered with Kosmos Innovation Centre (KIC), and Ignitia to organize a climate tech hackathon.

## 3.2 Coherence

68. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of coherence: (1) internal coherence and (2) external coherence.

### Coherence dimension 1: Internal Coherence

69. This section assesses four evaluation questions under Coherence Dimension 1. It examines whether the underlying projects of the programme fit together and create synergies to achieve the objectives of the programme. It also assesses the compatibility and synergies of the programme within ITC programmes of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including those at CBI. Furthermore, it evaluates the coherence of the programme with other Dutch instruments, such as the Programmatic Approach to Sustainable Economic Development (PADEO) and the 'combi tracks'.

#### Key findings coherence dimension 1

70. **Sectoral projects are highly complementary and aligned**, sharing a strategic vision, common frameworks, and proactive knowledge sharing, which enhances creativity and operational efficiency. A **conscious effort to align activities and strategies across the programme has significantly**

**increased complementarity between projects in different sectors**, moving from a siloed approach to a more integrated one. This shift involved restructuring reporting and planning processes to focus on overall results, emphasising joint activities and pooling resources to promote synergies, particularly in the agri-tech sector. The evaluation shows that **these deliberate efforts have yielded positive results in integrating the technology and agribusiness sectors**, such as matchmaking, joint field missions and knowledge sharing. Despite these successes, **challenges remain in the adoption of digital tools** due to high costs and varying levels of digital maturity among agribusiness actors, limiting the programme's ability to foster sector-wide synergies from the complementarity of different projects.

71. The **programme is highly aligned with other ITC initiatives**, increasing its effectiveness in addressing the needs of MSMEs in implementing countries through strategic collaborations with SheTrades and One Trade Africa. It leverages institutional knowledge from previous projects, such as Fast-Tracking Digital Entrepreneurship in Africa, and works with various ITC divisions, programmes and country-level projects to ensure alignment with broader ITC strategies and objectives. By adopting proven ITC approaches and using internal resources and training materials, the programme ensures methodological consistency and effective application of organizational knowledge and expertise at country-level.
72. The **programme aligns well with the work of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs**, whose focus on private sector development, food and nutrition security, climate change, and gender equality closely relates to the programme's objectives in the seven implementing countries. **By focusing on digital technologies and promoting agritech, the programme complements the Ministry's efforts.** The evaluation indicates that while agricultural value chains are a priority for the Ministry, digital transformation is a newer focus. **Dutch Embassies in the target countries have shown strong interest in collaborating on agritech initiatives** to leverage institutional strengths and foster innovation. Although coordination and communication between the programme and other Ministry initiatives are generally effective, **there is room for improvement in linking and creating synergies with larger or overlapping initiatives**, such as Orange Corners, the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF), and the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), particularly concerning access to finance and investment.
73. The programme **is aligned with the PADEO and 'combi tracks' instruments.** Among the seven countries where the programme is implemented, three overlap with the 'combi tracks' instrument in terms of sectoral focus, target beneficiaries, and approaches, reflecting this alignment. The programme also promotes mutual benefits for both Dutch and local companies, further aligning with the objectives of Dutch instruments. Additionally, the programme is well aligned with other CBI implemented projects such as the IT Services project in Ghana or the IT Outsourcing project in Senegal.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

[How do the different projects within the NTF V programme fit together and create synergies to achieve the programme's objective?](#)

74. The evaluation team identified a **high level of complementarity and alignment across projects** within the same sector. This complementarity has developed organically from the nature of the programme design and coordination mechanisms established since the beginning of implementation. All sector-specific projects share common results chains and similar conceptual frameworks for designing activities. Due to this shared logical framework, projects follow similar operational processes, such as reporting on progress and main results of common indicators. Additionally, projects proactively share institutional knowledge, experience, and best practices, contributing to an ongoing learning process among team members. This knowledge-sharing has moreover allowed projects to benefit from the ingenuity and creativity of team members in designing specific activities.
75. The evaluation shows that complementarity across projects from different sectors has significantly increased over time due to the deliberate efforts of the programme team to better align activities and strategies across the entire programme. Initially, the programme followed a siloed approach, with each project managed separately, having its own objectives, activities, and reporting mechanisms. This often resulted in a lack of coordination and missed opportunities for collaboration. Reporting and planning were conducted on a country-by-country basis, making it difficult to identify and exploit potential synergies between projects operating in different countries or sectors. Over time, the programme has moved towards a more integrated approach. This shift involved restructuring the reporting and planning processes to focus on overall programme outcomes and outputs rather than individual projects. Emphasis was placed on identifying and implementing joint activities that could benefit multiple projects,

and on pooling resources, experience, and knowledge to foster synergies across projects and particularly in the agritech sector.

76. The evaluation shows that these deliberate efforts have yielded positive results in integrating the technology and agribusiness sectors. Notable examples include the partnership with Bopinc, which links agribusiness beneficiaries with digital solutions from technology beneficiaries in Ethiopia, Ghana and Senegal. This collaboration improves operational efficiency, traceability, and compliance with EU CS3D, while training farmers in sustainable practices. In addition, agri and tech projects in these countries work with local organizations to host thematic events that promote the agri-tech partnerships and knowledge sharing. Co-organised field trips have also facilitated partnerships between technology and agribusiness companies. Similarly, an agri-tech community of practice has been established to promote peer-to-peer learning.
77. However, the evaluation team also identified challenges in integrating the agricultural and technology sectors during programme implementation, particularly concerning the adoption of digital tools by actors along the agricultural value chain. While the programme has successfully created platforms for exchange and increased technology providers' understanding of agribusiness actors' needs, the number of beneficiaries benefiting from these synergies remains small compared to the total beneficiary pool. The evaluation team found that the uptake of digital solutions by agribusiness actors has been limited, partly due to the mismatch between the technological offerings and the digital maturity of the agribusiness sector. High costs associated with acquiring and integrating these solutions have also been a barrier, limiting the number of beneficiaries who can fully capitalize on the programme's initiatives.
78. While the evaluation team recognizes that adjusting the cost of existing technology is beyond the programme's scope, **there is an opportunity to support agribusiness actors more intentionally in their path to digital maturity**. This involves not only raising awareness about the benefits and potential of digital technologies for the agribusiness sector but also enhancing the capabilities of agribusiness actors in ways that reduce adoption costs, for example through training and capacity building focus on digital literacy and the practical application of digital tools.

[What are the compatibility and synergies of the NTF V Programme within ITC with projects and programmes other than NTF V?](#)

79. **The programme has a high degree of alignment and consistency with other ITC programmes and projects**. This is evidenced by its strategic collaborations, shared resources and integrated methodologies, which enhance its overall effectiveness in addressing the needs of MSMEs in the implementing countries. For example, the programme has drawn on the expertise of initiatives such as SheTrades and One Trade Africa. SheTrades provides knowledge on sustainable business models and gender-responsive trade programming, while One Trade Africa supports the implementation of the AfCFTA, empowers MSMEs and facilitates intra-African trade, closely aligned with the cross-country nature of the programme.
80. The evaluation shows that the programme has benefited from the institutional knowledge gained from previous projects such as NTF IV and Fast-Tracking Digital Entrepreneurship in Africa. This previous experience has helped in the design and implementation of the NTF V projects, ensuring a smoother and more informed process. The programme also works closely with various ITC divisions, including Business Support Organizations Development (BSOD) (e.g. on ecosystem mapping and network analysis). This cross-divisional collaboration ensures that the programme is well integrated with broader ITC strategies and objectives. At country level, the programme collaborates with several ITC projects, such as the Sankofa project in Ghana, the PACAO project in Senegal and the STAR project in Uganda. These collaborations include joint activities such as trade fairs, training and joint market research, maximising the efficiency and reach of ITC interventions.
81. Additionally, the programme adopts proven approaches from other ITC divisions, ensuring a coherent strategy. During the design phase, input from other divisions on partner and country selection facilitated effective integration and collaboration, demonstrating methodological consistency. The programme integrates gender considerations by working with SheTrades and focusing on women's economic empowerment. It also aligns with ITC's Moonshot solutions, which include digital transformation, gender equality, green transition, and youth empowerment. The programme also leverages ITC's internal resources and training materials to avoid duplication. It uses tools from other ITC youth entrepreneurship training programmes and collaborates with colleagues to connect effectively with national teams.



### What are the compatibility and synergies of the NTF V Programme with the Ministry's programmes, including at CBI?

82. **The programme aligns well with the work of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs.** The Ministry is focusing on several key strategic sectors that are closely aligned with the programme's objectives and areas of work in the seven implementing countries of the programme. There is a predominant focus on private sector development, with efforts to strengthen regional trade networks, vocational training, employment, and trade and investment promotion very much in line with the programme's core initiatives. Food and nutrition security is another key area where the Dutch government aims to support sustainable agricultural practices, similar to the agribusiness track of the programme. In addition to these aspects, climate change and gender equality are important priorities, as they are for the programme. Climate change efforts focus on environmental protection, while women's rights and gender equality initiatives aim to increase women's participation in society.
83. The programme complements the work of the Ministry by focusing on digital technologies and promoting agritech. Consultations with representatives of Dutch Embassies in the implementing countries indicated that, while agricultural value chains are a key priority for the Ministry, supported by established structures and sector expertise, digital transformation is a relatively new focus area. The evaluation suggests a strong interest from the Embassies in engaging more actively with the programme to identify and develop complementary initiatives especially in the agritech field. Enhancing collaboration in these areas could leverage existing strengths and foster innovation, ultimately benefiting both the programme and the Embassies' objectives.
84. The evaluation team found that coordination and communication between the programme and other Ministry programmes are generally good and effective. However, there is room for improvement in linking and creating synergies with larger or more overlapping initiatives, such as Orange Corners, the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF), and the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE).
85. Orange Corners targets the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ghana, Senegal, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire, focusing on mentorship, market exposure, and access to finance through the Orange Corners Innovation Fund, with a particular emphasis on youth and women. Understanding how these initiatives can complement each other is crucial. For instance, the evaluation suggests that access to finance could be a valuable topic for collaboration, given the programme's more limited focus on direct financial access. The Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF) supplements private investments through guarantees and direct financing with repayment obligations, such as loans, and aims to support the investment of Dutch companies in emerging economies across all seven implementing countries. Closer collaboration with the DGGF could create a platform for investment matchmaking between Dutch companies and project cohort members. Additionally, the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) supports innovative businesses that create or improve jobs for youth, particularly young women. Greater collaboration between the CFYE and the programme could increase the visibility of the fund to cohort members, providing another channel for access to capital.

### What is the coherence with other Dutch instruments such as Programmatic Approach Sustainable Economic Development (PADEO) and the 'combi tracks' (e.g., PADEO in Ghana, and combi tracks in Senegal and Ghana)?

86. The programme **is aligned with the PADEO and 'combi tracks' instruments.** Among the seven countries where the programme is implemented, **three overlap with the 'combi tracks' instrument in terms of sectoral focus, target groups and approaches**, reflecting this alignment. In Senegal, the Dutch government is promoting solutions for saline farming, climate-smart agriculture, storage, and tackling youth unemployment. In Ghana, the focus is on transitioning to a sustainable and profitable cocoa value chain, free of child labor and deforestation, in cooperation with the Dutch cocoa sector. In Côte d'Ivoire, the initiative supports developing local cocoa processing capacity, using Dutch knowledge and technology to promote the sector's sustainable development. The **programme also promotes mutual benefits for both Dutch and local companies**, further aligning with the objectives of Dutch instruments. Examples of this broad coherence include buyers' trips for Dutch coffee roasters to Ethiopia and partnerships such as the one with Bopinc.

## Coherence Dimension 2: External Coherence

87. This section assesses three evaluation questions under Coherence Dimension 2. It examines the compatibility and consistency of the programme with interventions by other actors in the same countries and sectors. It also assesses the compatibility of the programme with other trade-related interventions

in each country. Finally, it evaluates complementarity, harmonisation, and coordination with other agencies, including efforts to avoid duplication.

### Key findings coherence dimension 2

88. The **evaluation indicates that the programme's sectoral focus and objectives are comparable to those of other significant international players** such as the World Bank, GIZ and Mastercard Foundation, **potentially leading to competition among interventions**, particularly in smaller ecosystems where targeting the same beneficiaries is common. Nevertheless, the programme **distinguishes itself by offering unique value to beneficiaries** through comprehensive support for strengthening the agribusiness and technology sectors at different levels (policy, ecosystems, companies and markets), a focus on export readiness, and the promotion of digital transformation within the agribusiness sector.
89. The programme **demonstrates strong complementarity with various trade-related interventions in the implementing countries** by aligning with initiatives such as SheTrades, DIGEAT, the UK Trade Partnerships Programme, and MARKUP II, collectively advancing trade, entrepreneurship, and economic integration. It supports African economic integration, empowers women in agriculture, facilitates cross-border mobility for tech startups and MSMEs, and promotes economic growth and export through capacity-building and market intelligence, in line with the objectives these key interventions.
90. The **evaluation shows that while national coordinators strive to participate in international donor coordination meetings and engage with international organizations, priority is given to coordination with national stakeholders and partners**. While this focus is understandable given the limited resources at the national level and the resource-intensive nature of coordinating with multiple organizations simultaneously, it indicates an opportunity for the programme team at HQ to strengthen the collaboration and coordination efforts at a higher level.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

Regarding external coherence, is the programme compatible and consistent with the interventions of other actors' interventions (aside from ITC and the Ministry) in the same countries and sectors?

91. The evaluation indicates that the programme's sectoral focus and objectives are comparable to those of other significant international players, potentially leading to competition among interventions, particularly in smaller ecosystems where targeting the same beneficiaries is common. Nevertheless, the programme distinguishes itself by offering unique value to beneficiaries through its holistic approach. This approach includes comprehensive support for strengthening the agribusiness and technology sectors, a focus on export readiness, and the promotion of digital transformation within the agribusiness sector.
92. In the technology sector, the evaluation team found alignment between the work of the programme and those of players such as the EU (e.g., Team Europe Initiative), World Bank (e.g., Digital Economy Acceleration Project), the African Development Bank (e.g., PARAE), GIZ (e.g., MakeIT Africa), and ITU (e.g., DUV).<sup>18</sup> The interventions carried out by these actors include enhancing digital governance and regulatory environments, expanding broadband access and digital infrastructure, and promoting digital literacy and skills development. They also support digital entrepreneurship through tech hubs and capacity-building initiatives, provide access to workspaces, mentoring, and training, digitalize public services, foster the development of digital solutions, and facilitate market access and digital financial inclusion.
93. However, the evaluation team noted that these interventions are often targeted at one or two components of the sector (i.e., government, ecosystem, companies), while the programme takes a more holistic approach to digital transformation and strengthening the digital technology sector. The evaluation also showed that the programme has found a niche in the market, effectively complementing existing initiatives and offering unique value. While similar programmes share common objectives, the NTF V programme stands out by combining tailored capacity building with practical business support. Beneficiaries across various countries and sectors particularly value its focus on export readiness, addressing areas not commonly covered by other actors. Additionally, its adaptability and responsiveness to market dynamics further distinguish it from other private sector programmes.
94. In the agribusiness sector, the evaluation identified alignment between the programme and the interventions of key actors such as the World Cocoa Foundation, the Federal Ministry for Economic

<sup>18</sup> A full list of the interventions considering during the analysis can be found in the Annex.

Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) (e.g., Business Scouts for Development), GIZ (e.g., AgriChains), and the Lavazza Foundation. The activities carried out by these actors include enhancing the sustainability of agricultural value chains, increasing the livelihoods of farmers and producers, reversing deforestation, strengthening networks in the sector, and identifying investment opportunities.

95. The holistic approach and focus on partnerships are defining features of the NTF V programme. Similar to the technology sector, exposure to international markets and export readiness are key characteristics of the projects in the agribusiness sector. The evaluation suggests that the programme's contribution to companies' preparedness to comply with international regulations sets it apart from other interventions. Advancing digital transformation stands out as a unique value proposition and beneficiaries of the sector have highlighted that in contrast to other actors in the sector, the support received from the projects seems to be more continuous and longer term.

How well does the programme complement other trade-related interventions in each country?

96. The evaluation **team identified complementarity between the NTF V programme and various trade-related interventions**, including DIGEAT, the UK Trade Partnerships Programme, and MARKUP II. The programme's efforts to link tech startups and MSMEs to international business opportunities resonate with DIGEAT's objective of facilitating cross-border mobility and digital data exchange in the East African Community. The UK Trade Partnerships Programme complements the NTF V programme by building capacity through training and market intelligence, helping SMEs and cooperatives improve trade outcomes. MARKUP II aligns with NTF V's goals of promoting economic growth and export promotion, enhancing sustainable and inclusive trade within Africa and with the EU.

Has there been complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with other entities? If so, to what extent do the projects and the programme add value while avoiding duplication of effort?

97. The **programme works closely with local organizations and partners** in the countries where it operates to ensure complementarity and reduce duplication. The programme harmonises its efforts with government ministries and national ecosystem actors by proactively engaging with them and regularly communicating planned activities and progress. The evaluation shows that while national coordinators strive to participate in international donor coordination meetings and engage with organizations such as UNDP, GIZ, Enabel, and Mastercard Foundation **priority is given to coordination with national stakeholders**. While this focus is understandable given the limited resources at national level and the resource-intensive nature of coordinating with multiple organizations simultaneously, it indicates an opportunity for the programme team at HQ to strengthen the collaboration and coordination efforts at a higher level.

### 3.3 Effectiveness

98. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of effectiveness: (1) achievement of objectives and influencing factors and (2) differential results.

#### Effectiveness dimension 1: Achievement of objectives and influencing factors

99. This section evaluates three key questions under Effectiveness Dimension 1. It assesses whether the programme has established baseline data to measure progress, the extent to which the programme is expected to achieve its results based on the causal pathways of the ToC, and whether there are outcomes related to human rights, gender equality, youth, environment, and social responsibility.

#### Key findings effectiveness dimension 1

100. The **programme has established and continuously refined baseline data to ensure accurate and relevant targets**, demonstrating its responsiveness and effort to realistic goal setting.
101. The **evaluation shows that the programme is on track to achieving or overachieving its intended objectives by the end of the programme implementation**. The evaluation shows that most indicators across projects have achieved at least 50% of their intended targets by December 2023, with a significant portion of indicators exceeding 100% of their goals. The evaluation team found that the programme's achievements in the digital technology sector, particularly regarding BSOs' performance and MSMEs' competitiveness, are well-aligned with the pathways of change. However, weaker links were noted in enabling ecosystems and export market linkages. Similarly, in the agribusiness sector, strong alignment was found with resilient business models and value chain competitiveness, but weaker links were seen in public-private alliances and access to funding. Challenges were noted in integrating agriculture and technology, with limited adoption of digital tools due to mismatched offerings and high

costs. Although the programme has advanced digital transformation in agribusiness, more efforts are needed to align with the change pathways.

102. The evaluation team found that the program's achievements in the digital technology sector, particularly **regarding BSOs' performance and MSMEs' competitiveness, are well-aligned with the pathways of change**. However, weaker links were noted in enabling ecosystems and export market linkages. Similarly, in the agribusiness sector, **strong alignment was found with resilient business models and value chain competitiveness**, but weaker links were seen in public-private alliances and access to funding. Challenges were noted in integrating agriculture and technology, with limited adoption of digital tools due to mismatched offerings and high costs. **Although the programme has advanced digital transformation in agribusiness, more efforts are needed to align with the pathways of change especially regarding the digital maturity of actors along the agribusiness value change.**
103. The evaluation highlights **several results related to cross-cutting issues at midterm**. It shows the programme's significant contributions to increased awareness of inclusive trade practices and climate change measures among thousands of MSMEs, benefiting nearly 30,000 women and over 6,000 young people. Survey results indicate that over 60% of respondents in the digital sector and almost all in agribusiness report improved environmental awareness and sustainable production skills, with the programme also promoting gender equality through initiatives such as gender mainstreaming in the AfCFTA and gender-smart training for tech hubs.

## Detailed Analysis & Findings

### Were baseline data established to measure progress?

104. The programme has established baseline data to measure progress. This data was collected during the due diligence process of onboarding cohort members in the inception phase. This baseline data has been retroactively modified on two occasions to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the figures, as indicated by Change Control Forms in 2023 and 2024, and a recent request for changes in the logframe in May 2024. This adaptive approach highlights the programme's responsiveness to new information and its dedication to ensuring that targets are realistic and reflective of the actual conditions.

### To what extent are the NTF V projects and the programme expected to achieve their objectives, and their attributable results along the causal pathways of the NTF V ToC?

#### Achievement of results at midline

105. The evaluation shows that the programme is on track to achieving or overachieving its intended objectives by the end of the programme implementation. Using raw project-level monitoring data provided by the programme, the evaluation team calculated the achievement of targets at midterm for all NTF V projects. These calculations show that most indicators across projects have achieved at least 50% of their intended targets by December 2023, with a significant portion of indicators exceeding 100% of their goals.
106. Following a similar approach, the evaluation team aimed to calculate the achievement of targets at the programme level. While the results of these calculations overall confirm the positive trend towards the achievement of targets by the end of programme implementation, it also highlighted the need to review the quality of the programme's monitoring system, to ensure the robustness and appropriate interpretation of results.
107. As shown in the table below,<sup>19</sup> the independent calculations of the evaluation team differ from those presented by the programme in the Annual Report 2023. The review of results compiled by the programme in the Annual Report 2023 revealed several inconsistencies compared to results derived from the raw M&E data by the evaluation team. The programme lacks a standardised method for calculating (percentage) changes in indicators, leading to inconsistent results, as some calculations used ratios<sup>20</sup> while others accounted for actual changes isolating baseline values.<sup>21</sup> There were discrepancies in reporting midline results, with some figures being cumulative from 2021 to 2023 and others reflecting only 2023 progress, complicating data interpretation and comparison. Additionally, the evaluation team faced challenges verifying results for several indicators against project-level data and

<sup>19</sup> Please note that Annex A presents an extended table with baseline

<sup>20</sup>  $\frac{\text{midline}}{\text{baseline}} \times 100$

<sup>21</sup>  $\frac{\text{midline} - \text{baseline}}{\text{baseline}} \times 100$



identified entry and calculation errors, raising concerns about the reliability and validity of the reported figures.

Table 8: Programme level results at midterm

| Objectives/Results  | Indicators  | Baseline    | Target*     | Midline     |
|---|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Impact: Contribute to decent jobs and improved livelihoods in the agribusiness and digital technologies sector</b> | Percentage increase in income of beneficiary MSMEs/farmers/cooperatives/individual service providers  | 0           | 20%         | -19%        |
|   | Number of jobs (formal and informal) supported  | 12,868      | 42,000      | 19,836      |
| <b>Outcome: Increased trade and investment as a contribution to systemic change</b>                                   | <b>C3:</b> Number of MSMEs having transacted international business, including national business, as a result of ITC support  | 0           | 80          | 5,577       |
|   | <b>C4:</b> Number of MSMEs that are owned, operated, and controlled by women having transacted international business, as a result of ITC support   | 0           | 40          | 598         |
|   | Value (in USD) of sales generated by MSMEs  | 449,866,745 | 151,336,191 | 365,207,114 |
|   | <b>C5:</b> Value (in USD) of international business transactions (including investments) of MSMEs, including national business transactions that are part of international or global value chains, as a result of ITC support | 0           | 40,000,000  | 46,482,914  |
|   | Value (in USD) of direct investment unleashed by digital technology companies and value chain alliances (SDG 17)  | 10,448,768  | 14,800,000  | 23,328,423  |
| <b>Output 1: Improved Enabling Ecosystem for MSMEs</b>  | <b>A3:</b> Number of trade related policies, strategies or regulations developed or changed with business sector input, as a result of ITC support, on which direct stakeholders have reached consensus                       | 0           | 6           | 4           |
|   | Number of Alliances for Action established (GOAL 17) <sup>1</sup>   | 0           | 36          | 61          |
| <b>Output 2: Improved performance of BSOs</b>   | <b>B1:</b> Number of BSOs and Producer Associations reporting improved operational and managerial performance as a result of ITC support  | 0           | 26          | 38          |
|   | <b>B2:</b> Number of MSMEs served by BSOs and Producer Associations through services in areas such as management, marketing, quality, supply chain management, packaging or finance   | 1,543       | 29,564      | 722,908     |
|   | Number of BSOs equipped with digital tools and skills to better serve their clients with demonstrated increase in knowledge and skills  | 0           | 16          | 29          |
| <b>Output 3: Improved competitiveness of MSMEs</b>  | <b>A1:</b> Male and female clients reporting greater awareness of international trade and including inclusive trade-development approaches  | 0           | 25,000      | 20,391      |
|   | <b>C1:</b> Number of MSMEs having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of ITC support  | 0           | 2,000       | 7,078       |
|   | <b>C2:</b> Number of MSMEs that are owned, operated and controlled by women having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of ITC support                           | 0           | 500         | 1,881       |
|   | Number of MSMEs reporting increased knowledge and skills to implement measures in relation to climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning (SDG 13)  | 0           | 240         | 5,888       |
|   | Number of individuals with improved access to digital technology and its applications (SDG 9)   | 958,377     | 1,187,247   | 3,751,438   |
|   | Number of women benefiting from support to enhance the use of enabling technology to promote their empowerment (SDG 5.b)  | 0           | 2,000       | 28,329      |

| Objectives/Results   | Indicators   | Baseline | Target* | Midline |
|--|--|----------|---------|---------|
|  | Number of youth benefiting from support to enhance the use of enabling technology to promote their empowerment | 0        | 3,000   | 6,201   |
| <b>Output 4: MSMEs linked to international companies for sourcing and sustainable product/service and market development</b> | Number of MSMEs with new or revised bankable investment projects   | 0        | 100     | 172     |
|  | Number of local, regional and international financial institutions/investors/partners engaged                  | 0        | 234     | 150     |
|  | Number of market linkages facilitated  | 0        | 2,000   | 5,697   |

108. Similarly, the evaluation team aimed to calculate the achievement of targets at the programme level in particular for the main indicators of the programme as presented in the Annual Report 2023:

- **Staff count:** Number of jobs (formal and informal) supported
- **Sales:** Value (in USD) of sales generated by MSMEs
- **Export sales:** *Value (in USD) of export sales generated by MSMEs*<sup>22</sup>
- **Investment:** Value (in USD) of direct investment unleashed by digital technology companies and value chain alliances (SDG 17)

109. While the results of these calculations overall confirm the positive trend towards the achievement of targets by the end of programme implementation, it also highlighted the need to review the quality of the programme's monitoring system, to ensure the robustness and appropriate interpretation of results.

110. The independent calculations of the evaluation team differ from those presented by the programme in the Annual Report 2023. The review of results compiled by the programme in the Annual Report 2023 revealed several inconsistencies compared to results derived from the raw M&E data by the evaluation team. The programme lacks a standardised method for calculating (percentage) changes in indicators, leading to inconsistent results, as some calculations used ratios<sup>23</sup> while others accounted for actual changes isolating baseline values.<sup>24</sup> There were discrepancies in reporting midline results, with some figures being cumulative from 2021 to 2023 and others reflecting only 2023 progress, complicating data interpretation and comparison. Additionally, the evaluation team faced challenges verifying results for several indicators against project-level data and identified entry and calculation errors, partly because the programme lacks comprehensive documentation or metadata that explains how indicators are calculated and aggregated, raising concerns about the reliability and validity of the reported figures.

111. The evaluation team identified more moderate results than those calculated by the programme. For instance, while the programme reports an increase of 154% in the jobs supported by its interventions (staff count), the calculation of the evaluation team indicates a 100% increase. Similarly, while the reported results for investment correspond to a 223% increase, the evaluation team only shows a 168% increase. Another important difference relates to the calculations for the sales indicator, which, once corrected, no longer shows negative results but rather slightly positive ones. These findings highlight the need for improved data management and standardisation practices to ensure the reliable interpretation and evaluation of programme results.

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the evaluation team was unable to ascertain which specific indicator of the results framework this is linked to.

<sup>23</sup>  $\frac{\text{midline}}{\text{baseline}} \times 100$

<sup>24</sup>  $\frac{(\text{midline} - \text{baseline})}{\text{baseline}} \times 100$

Table 9: Results of key performance indicators (calculations of the evaluation team)

| Project                   | Staff Count   |               | Δ           | Sales (USD)        |                    | Δ           | Export Sales (USD) |                    | Δ           | Investment (USD)  |                   | Δ             |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
|                           | 2021          | 2023          |             | 2021               | 2023               |             | 2021               | 2023               |             | 2021              | 2023              |               |
|                           | baseline      | midline       |             | baseline           | midline            |             | baseline           | midline            |             | baseline          | midline           |               |
| NTF V Ethiopia: Tech      | 690           | 2.864         | 315%        | 8.613.484          | 47.956.957         | 457%        | 1.533.057          | 6.144.271          | 301%        | 666.093           | 1.684.367         | 153%          |
| NTF V Ghana: Tech         | 698           | 1.178         | 69%         | 9.208.237          | 48.784.681         | 430%        | 1.303.060          | 10.789.211         | 728%        | 1.106.943         | 6.114.840         | 452%          |
| NTF V Senegal: Tech       | 1.377         | 2.707         | 97%         | 33.014.000         | 71.320.000         | 116%        | 12.766.451         | 13.561.220         | 6%          | 3.100.000         | 5.310.922         | 71%           |
| NTF V FastTrackTech       | 1.106         | 2.154         | 95%         | 9.443.075          | 29.245.429         | 210%        | 2.481.160          | 3.609.433          | 45%         | 5.496.768         | 13.832.564        | 152%          |
| NTF V Senegal: Cashew Nut | 648           | 849           | 31%         | 4.681.150          | 7.250.765          | 55%         | 2.862.938          | 4.688.929          | 64%         | 0                 | 265.855           | 265.855       |
| NTF V Ghana: Cocoa        | 4.872         | 8.457         | 74%         | 333.335.715        | 200.249.030        | -40%        | 331.814.976        | 172.257.769        | -48%        | 0                 | 589.411           | 589.411       |
| NTF V Ethiopia: Coffee    | 3.754         | 8.016         | 114%        | 51.600.585         | 46.562.296         | -10%        | 45.406.275         | 39.711.906         | -13%        | 0                 | 0                 | 0             |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>13.145</b> | <b>26.225</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>449.896.246</b> | <b>451.369.158</b> | <b>0,3%</b> | <b>398.167.917</b> | <b>250.762.739</b> | <b>-37%</b> | <b>10.369.804</b> | <b>27.797.959</b> | <b>168,1%</b> |

**Note:** Staff count corresponds to the indicator “Number of jobs (formal and informal) supported”; Sales (USD) refers to the indicator “Value of Sales (in USD) of supported companies”; Investment (USD) relates to the indicator “Value (in USD) of direct investment unleashed by digital technology companies and value chain alliances (SDG 17)”. The evaluation team was unable to match export sales with the indicators and self-reported data. Hence the values correspond 1:1 to those included in the Annual Report 2023. Change is calculated using the equation  $\Delta\% = \left(\frac{Midline - Baseline}{Baseline}\right) * 100$ . Please note that each country has individual targets for each specific indicator.

Table 10: Results of key performance indicators (Annual Report 2023)

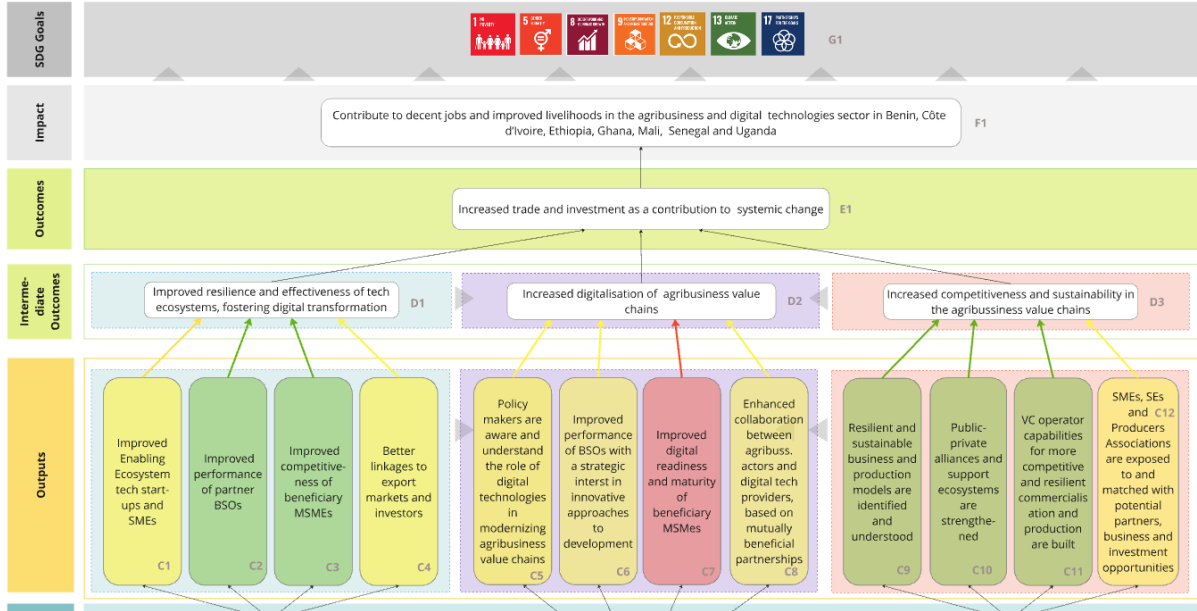
| Project                   | Staff Count   |                | Sales              |                     | Export Sales       |                    | Investment        |                   |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                           | 2021          | 2023           | 2021               | 2023                | 2021               | 2023               | 2021              | 2023              |
|                           | baseline      | midline        | baseline           | midline             | baseline           | midline            | baseline          | midline           |
| NTF V Ethiopia: Tech      | 690           | 2.119          | 8.613.484          | 35.132.748          | 1.533.057          | 6.144.271          | 666.093           | 1.684.367         |
| NTF V Ghana: Tech         | 698           | 1.178          | 9.208.237          | 36.075.375          | 1.303.060          | 10.789.211         | 1.106.943         | 6.092.840         |
| NTF V Senegal: Tech       | 1.377         | 1.423          | 33.014.499         | 38.315.446          | 12.766.451         | 13.561.220         | 3.178.964         | 4.310.922         |
| NTF V FastTrackTech       | 1.106         | 1.003          | 9.443.075          | 15.443.530          | 2.481.160          | 3.609.433          | 5.496.768         | 10.650.871        |
| NTF V Senegal: Cashew Nut | 648           | 849            | 4.681.150          | 7.250.765           | 2.862.938          | 4.688.929          | 0                 | 0                 |
| NTF V Ghana: Cocoa        | 4.872         | 5.494          | 333.305.715        | 186.426.953+        | 331.814.976        | 172.257.769        | 0                 | 589.411           |
| NTF V Ethiopia: Coffee    | 3.754         | 8.016          | 51.600.585         | 46.562.296          | 45.406.275         | 39.711.906         | 0                 | 0                 |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>13.145</b> | <b>19.863*</b> | <b>449.866.745</b> | <b>365.207.114*</b> | <b>398.167.917</b> | <b>250.762.739</b> | <b>10.448.768</b> | <b>23.328.411</b> |
| <b>Percentage change</b>  |               | <b>154%</b>    |                    | <b>-19%</b>         |                    | <b>-37%</b>        |                   | <b>223%</b>       |

**Source:** NTF V Programme Annual Report 2023, Table “NTF V Baseline and Midline Data: Main Indicators”, page 7. **Note:** Change is calculated using the equation  $\Delta = \left(\frac{Midline}{Baseline}\right) * 100$ . \* Please note that for reference purposes, the evaluation team used the same values as in the original table. However, the team identified a summation error in the total value for staff count, which should be 20.082, and an entry error in the sales total, which should be \$365,207,113. Values in orange correspond to results of 2023. + Value only corresponds to Q4 2023. Values in blue correspond to cumulative results of 2021-2023. Values in green could not be verified against the raw M&E data.

*Attributable results along the causal pathways of the ToC*

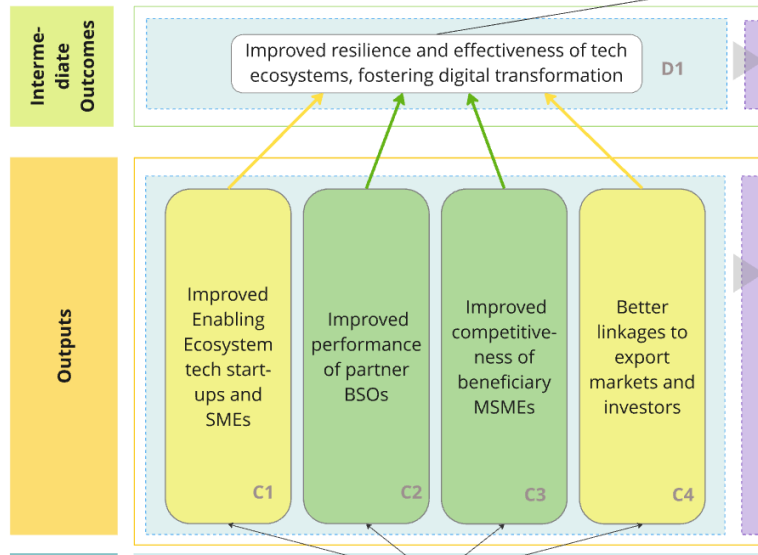
112. In addition to the above quantitative analysis along the indicators, the evaluation team focused its qualitative contribution analysis on the interlinkages between outputs and outcomes, considering that the objective of the midterm evaluation is to assess the progress made by the programme towards achieving intended outcomes, thereby determining whether the programme is on the right track.

*Figure 3: Partial capture of the visual ToC – Outputs-Outcome Linkages (compressed)*



113. For the **digital technology sector**, the programme aims to improve the resilience and effectiveness of tech ecosystems, thereby fostering digital transformation across various sectors (D1). This should be achieved through improved enabling ecosystems (C1), enhanced performance of partner BSOs (C2), strengthened competitiveness of beneficiary SMEs (C3), and better linkages to export markets and investors (C4).

*Figure 4: Partial capture of the visual ToC – Outputs-Outcome Linkages (digital technology sector)*



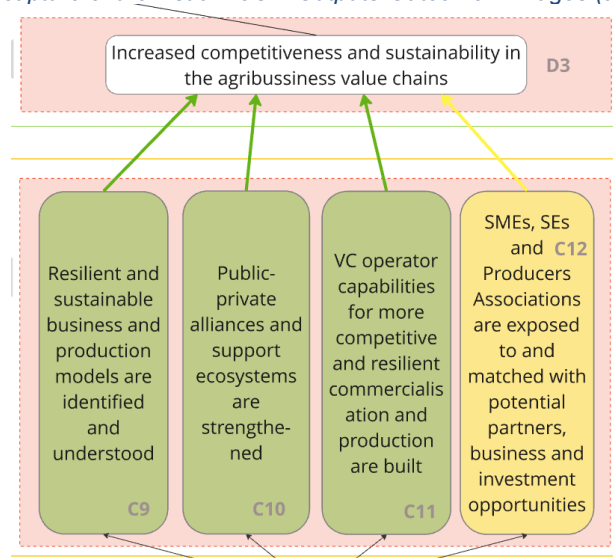
114. The evaluation team **identified that the results achieved by the programme in the digital technology sector** related to the performance of BSOs (C2) and the competitiveness of beneficiary MSMEs (C4) are strongly linked to the pathways of change defined by the reconstructed ToC.

115. By collaborating with BSOs and tech hubs, the programme has empowered these organizations to deliver more efficient and tailored support, addressing the needs of tech startups and SMEs effectively. Similarly, the evaluation team found evidence for strengthened BSO business models, which are contributing to continuous ecosystem growth and sustainability. Positive outcomes include the strategic

development of organizations like OPTIC and SenStartUp in Senegal, and GEPA in Ghana, alongside the support to the establishment of the Ethiopia Outsourcing Association (EOA) and the Fédération des Structures d'Accompagnement à l'Entrepreneuriat Innovant (FedSAEI) in Benin. The evaluation also suggests that the programme contributes to a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation in the implementing countries by equipping businesses with enhanced skills and capabilities. In particular, beneficiaries across countries noted that the programme has given them the tools and resources necessary to access and strengthen their business models, leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness in their operations. Similarly, they confirmed that the projects have provided them with the tools and resources necessary to access international markets, including export strategies and certifications.

116. However, a weaker link was identified concerning enabling ecosystems (C1) and the linkages to export markets and investors (C4). At the policy level, the programme is significantly contributing to the development and implementation of key tech-related policies. Notably, it is supporting the design and implementation of Start-up Acts in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal. In Ethiopia, the programme is developing an implementation strategy for the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy and has conducted policy dialogues to raise awareness about the role of the digital technology sector in the country. Additionally, it has facilitated evidence-based decision-making through the development of Ecosystem Mappings in Uganda and Ghana. While these activities contribute valuable inputs toward building a more resilient digital ecosystem, their impact can be constrained by several factors. The success of policy changes heavily relies on a stable political environment, as political instability or shifting priorities can hinder the passage and implementation of supportive bills. Moreover, the effectiveness of resources containing valuable data and information depends on their adoption and use by stakeholders. Furthermore, raising awareness must be followed by sustained stakeholder commitment and concrete action to effect actual change.
117. Regarding linkages to export markets and investors, the evaluation team found that the programme has successfully provided companies with resources and exposure to international markets and potential partners through technical assistance, participation in international forums, and matchmaking events. However, this exposure has not necessarily been translated into business deals or access to funding for most beneficiary companies. This remains a significant challenge for programme beneficiaries across countries, with positive results in this area limited to a select number of companies.
118. For the agribusiness sector, the programme aims to increase competitiveness and sustainability in the agribusiness value chains of coffee, cacao and cashew nuts (D3). This will be achieved by identifying and understanding resilient and sustainable business and production models (C9), strengthening public-private alliances and support ecosystems (C10), building the capabilities of value chain operators for more competitive and resilient commercialisation and production (C11), and exposing SMEs, SEs, and Producers' Associations to potential partners, business opportunities, and investment prospects (C12).

Figure 5: Partial capture of the visual ToC – Outputs-Outcome Linkages (agribusiness sector)



119. The evaluation team identified that **the results achieved by the programme in the agribusiness sector** related to resilient and sustainable business and production models (C9), and the

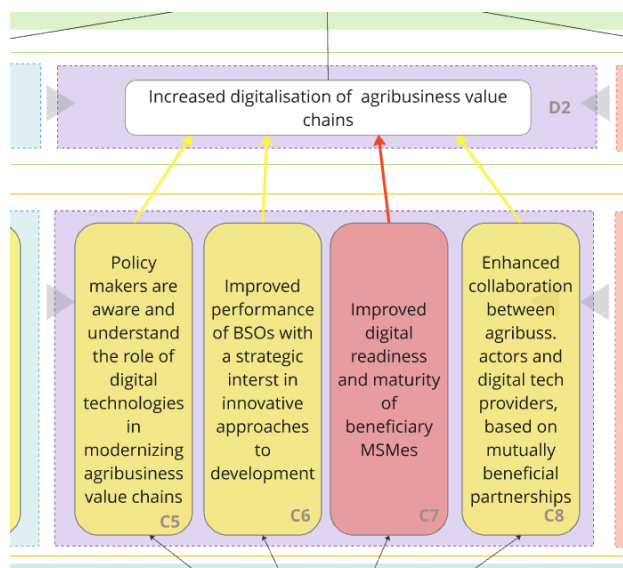
competitiveness of value chain operators (C11) are strongly aligned with the pathways of change defined by the reconstructed ToC.

120. The programme's focus on policy alignment, capacity building, and awareness-raising is contributing to an enabling environment conducive to sustainable business practices. In particular, the programme is aiding the national adoption of international directives for corporate sustainability and due diligence. In Ghana and Ethiopia, the programme supports measures such as cocoa value chain mapping, assessing the risks and readiness of value chain actors to meet new international sustainability requirements, and conducting awareness-raising and dissemination activities on new EU Directives. Additionally, the programme supports the adoption of regenerative agriculture (agroforestry) in Ghana, aiming to help companies meet international export requirements, particularly in Europe. Furthermore, the programme is promoting gender mainstreaming in the AfCFTA National Strategy in Senegal. The evaluation shows that these activities have enhanced stakeholders' understanding and facilitated collaboration to address sustainability and inclusivity gaps.
121. The programme is effectively contributing to the capabilities of value chain operators enhancing their competitiveness while fostering innovation and the adoption sustainable practices. In Ghana, the programme has trained MSMEs in finance, marketing, product packaging, and food safety, while also providing capacity building for Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (mHREDD) and conducting ESG assessments. Additionally, the project in Ghana built the capacity of the SMEs in e-commerce. In Ethiopia, it integrates digital farming solutions to promote climate-smart techniques and supports MSMEs in improving their business models. In Senegal, the programme aids cashew processing MSMEs in product innovation, digitalization, and EU compliance, offering packaging training, business coaching, and international event participation. Additionally, the programme conducted digital assessments in Senegal, Ethiopia, and Ghana to identify and address the digital needs of their agribusiness sectors. The evaluation team found that these activities have enhanced beneficiaries' understanding of how digital technologies can improve their business competitiveness, provided insights into the requirements for exporting to international markets, and helped them acquire new skills in sustainable production practices.
122. However, a weaker link was identified concerning public-private alliances (C10) and business and investment opportunities (C12).
123. The programme employs a multi-stakeholder approach to facilitate the creation of public-private alliances and enhance the capabilities of BSOs through various activities strengthening the ecosystem. It collaborates with associations, unions, and key policy agencies to strengthen the agribusiness ecosystem in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Senegal. In Ghana, the programme supported KKFU with workshops on strategy development, digitalization, and policy advocacy. Similarly, the programme the project in Ghana supported KKFU to develop an ESG plan and built their capacity on mHREDD. In Ethiopia, it established a strong relationship with the Coffee and Tea Authority, enabling the authority to lead action plans related to the CS3D process. In Senegal, the programme organized public-private strategic workshops, launched a dialogue platform with value chain stakeholders to better coordinate the support to ICAS and MSMEs of the value chain. .
124. The theory of change posits that activities promoting public-private alliances and strengthening ecosystems enhance the governance and leadership capabilities of Business Support Organizations (BSOs). This enhancement leads to improved coordination and representation, which in turn fosters better policymaking and regulatory frameworks. While there is evidence supporting the effectiveness of the programme in promoting public-private alliances and ecosystem strengthening, the evaluation suggests that several assumptions must be met for these activities to result in regulatory changes that create a more enabling environment, including stakeholder commitment, resource availability, political stability, among others.
125. Concerning access to business and investment opportunities, the programme enhanced exposure to international markets, investment readiness, and financial opportunities for MSMEs in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Senegal through trade fairs, B2B tours, capacity-building workshops, international events, and facilitating strategic partnerships. However, challenges remain when it comes to actual access to funding and investment, suggesting that the activities have not been as effective in overcoming financial barriers and securing sustainable investment sources. The evaluation team found that while some companies, particularly more established and mature ones, reported securing funding or investment as a result of their participation in the programme, this has not been the case for all cohort members across the technology and agribusiness sectors.
126. In addition the objectives in the digital technology and agribusiness sectors, the programme strives to create **synergies in the agri-tech field** increasing the digitalization of agribusiness value chains (D2)



through increased awareness and understanding of the role of digital technologies in the modernization of agribusiness value chains by policymakers (C5), strategic investment in innovation by BSOs (C7) improved digital readiness and maturity of beneficiary MSMEs (C7) and enhanced collaboration between digital tech providers and agribusiness actors (C8).

Figure 6: Partial capture of the visual ToC – Outputs-Outcome Linkages (agri-tech synergies)



127. As already discussed under the coherence analysis, the evaluation team noted several challenges in integrating the agricultural and technology sectors during the programme's implementation, especially in relation to the adoption of digital tools by stakeholders along the agricultural value chain. Despite the program's success in creating platforms for exchange and enhancing technology providers' understanding of agribusiness actors' needs, the synergies created have reached only a small portion of the total beneficiary pool. The evaluation revealed that the uptake of digital solutions by agribusiness actors has been limited, primarily due to a mismatch between the available technological offerings and the digital maturity of the agribusiness sector. Additionally, the high costs associated with acquiring and integrating these solutions have posed significant barriers, preventing many beneficiaries from fully capitalizing on the program's initiatives. Hence, while the programme has made progress towards advancing digital transformation in the agribusiness sector, more deliberate efforts are needed to ensure closer alignment with the underlying pathways of change of the programme.

Are there any results related to cross-cutting issues related to human rights and gender equality, youth, environment, and social responsibility that can be highlighted at midterm?

128. The evaluation highlights several results related to cross-cutting issues at midterm. As presented in Table 1, the monitoring data suggests that the programme has contributed to the increased awareness of inclusive trade development practices, as well as enhanced knowledge and skills about measures concerning climate change of thousands of MSMEs. This data also shows that almost 30,000 women and over 6,000 young people benefit from the programme's support to enhance the use of enabling technology to promote their empowerment. Survey results further support these findings with over 60% of respondents in the digital technology sector reporting that the projects have increased their awareness of how their company can operate in a more environmentally friendly way. Similarly, almost all respondents from the agribusiness sector report having acquired new skills in sustainable production practices. As mentioned before, the programme is aiding the national adoption of international directives for corporate sustainability and due diligence thereby contributing to the advancement of the cross-cutting issues. Similarly, it is promoting gender equality, through gender mainstreaming in the AfCFTA and gender-smart acceleration training for tech hubs.

### Effectiveness Dimension 2: Differential results

129. This section assesses three evaluation questions under Effectiveness Dimension 2. It examines whether results can be distributed across different groups, in particular youth and women. It also assesses whether all beneficiaries have access to programme deliverables and potential limiting factors.



## Key findings effectiveness dimension 2

130. The evaluation indicates **that company maturity significantly influences outcomes such as sales, investment, and job creation**, with more mature companies benefiting from well-established processes, strategic vision, and financial resources, while less established companies gain long-term advantages through access to knowledge, improved processes, and skill development; specific achievements also include significant international transactions and operational improvements for women-led MSMEs, as well as enhanced access to technology for women and youth.
131. The **programme design aligns beneficiaries with relevant activities to ensure that intended beneficiaries receive access to appropriate deliverables. Not all beneficiaries participate in every activity; instead, the programme targets specific activities to designated groups.** The evaluation indicates that the approach followed by the programme successfully ensures the relevance of deliverables to participants' needs and is well-received by beneficiaries. However, several areas for improvement have been identified to enhance and broaden the programme's benefits. Beneficiaries suggested that companies participating in international events act as ambassadors for their cohorts, representing products from various organizations. They also proposed sharing their experiences with non-participants to enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange. Additionally, beneficiaries recommended providing open access to training materials to facilitate sector-wide learning and enhance the programme's impact.
132. **Financial and time constraints limit some beneficiaries'** access to programme results, with less financially mature companies struggling with the cost-sharing model and time commitments for capacity-building and training sessions.

## Detailed Analysis & Findings

### Can the results be distributed across different groups, in particular youth and women?

133. The evaluation suggests that results, especially those related to sales, investment, and the number of jobs supported, largely depend on the level of maturity of the company. More mature companies typically have well-established internal processes, a strategic vision, and the financial and human resources necessary for growth, which enable them to capitalize on opportunities provided by the programme. Specifically, mature companies have efficient and effective internal processes that allow them to implement new strategies and innovations quickly. These companies often possess a clear strategic vision, enabling them to align programme opportunities with long-term goals. Mature companies have greater financial and human resources, which can be leveraged to drive growth and maximize the benefits of the programme.
134. Less established companies benefit significantly from intangibles provided by the programme. These include access to valuable information and best practices that can enhance their business operations. Improvement in internal processes, making them more efficient and effective. Enhanced skills and capabilities of their workforce through training and capacity-building activities. While these benefits might not immediately translate into financial profits, they position less mature companies for long-term success. Over time, the knowledge, improved processes, and upskilling gained from the programme should result in financial growth and increased competitiveness.
135. While the monitoring data available to the evaluation team does not disaggregate results by gender or age comprehensively, some indicators specifically highlight achievements by women and youth. For instance, 598 women-led or owned MSMEs have transacted internationally due to ITC support. Additionally, 1,181 women-led or owned companies have made operational changes to increase their international competitiveness with ITC's assistance. Moreover, both women and youth have gained enhanced access to enabling technology through the program's support.

### Do all beneficiaries have access to the project/programme's deliverables (trainings, publications, etc.) and are they being used as intended?

136. The **programme design aligns beneficiaries with relevant activities to ensure that intended beneficiaries receive access to appropriate deliverables.** Not all beneficiaries participate in every activity; instead, the programme targets specific activities to designated groups. The evaluation indicates that the approach followed by the programme successfully ensures the relevance of deliverables to participants' needs and is well-received by beneficiaries. However, several areas for improvement have been identified to enhance and broaden the programme's benefits.

137. One frequently mentioned suggestion to the evaluation team concerns international events. These events are currently targeted at more mature companies with processes ready for export or international presentation. Participation in these events involves a thorough selection process, resulting in only a few companies attending. Beneficiaries proposed that participants in these events should act as ambassadors for the sector or cohort, representing and presenting the solutions of fellow cohort members when necessary, thereby strengthening collaborations both nationally and internationally. Additionally, beneficiaries suggested that non-participating members could benefit from learning about the experiences of those who attended, sharing lessons learned for future opportunities during timely knowledge exchange sessions.
138. Another recommendation was to provide open access to the learning materials used in training and capacity building, extending access beyond cohort members or beneficiaries. Beneficiaries believe this could facilitate a sector-wide learning process, thereby enhancing the overall impact of the programme.

Are there any factors that prevent beneficiaries from accessing the results or services of the project/programme?

139. **Financial and time constraints limit the access to the programme results of some beneficiaries.** The programme design includes co-investment in activities by cohort members, intended to ensure their commitment and ownership of the program's outcomes. While beneficiaries largely agree with this approach, financial constraints often limit the participation of less financially mature companies in key events. It was frequently noted during primary data collection that the cost-sharing model, especially for international events, is not always proportional, with companies bearing the most significant portion of the costs. Additionally, specific capacity-building and training sessions often require a longer time commitment, which is not always compatible with the responsibilities of company employees or leadership.

### 3.4 Efficiency

140. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of efficiency: (1) economic efficiency and timeliness and (2) operational efficiency.

#### Efficiency dimension 1: Economic efficiency and timeliness

141. This section evaluates three key questions under Efficiency Dimension 1. It examines whether the NTF V programme's inputs have been converted into outputs, outcomes and impacts in the most cost-effective way possible and if activities and outputs have been delivered according to quality requirements and the workplans. Additionally, it assesses if the projects and the programme could have been delivered in a more cost-efficient way comparing with alternative ways of achieving the objectives.

#### Key findings efficiency dimension 1

142. The NTF V Programme **has effectively converted inputs into outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a cost-effective manner** within the intended timeframe. The programme's flexible budgeting, feedback-driven approach, and strategic use of local expertise have been pivotal in enhancing its efficiency. Nevertheless, **resources in programme management could have been applied or allocated more effectively over the years.** The evaluation found the budget management of the programme to be incomplete, missing all planned expenditures over the programme's duration. Despite some overspendings in the agricultural sector, these were necessary for effective management and were partly offset by underspending in other areas. The programme's ability to reallocate funds based on actual needs, leverage local insights, and maintain cost-effectiveness has minimized wastage and directed investments toward high-impact activities. Careful planning, strategic resource allocation, and regular feedback-driven adjustments have ensured the timely delivery of high-quality results, maintaining relevance and effectively addressing beneficiaries' needs.
143. The programme **successfully maintained the alignment of project implementation and outputs to quality requirements.** This is supported by regular reviews and robust feedback mechanisms. These continuous assessments ensured high standards and adaptability to beneficiary needs. Despite some political and administrative delays, the timeliness of delivery compared to planned milestones was commendable. The programme's flexibility and iterative adjustments enabled it to adapt to real-time challenges, maintaining both relevance and impact. Feedback-driven adjustments, continuous assessments, and stakeholder engagement were integral to tailoring interventions to meet the highest standards of quality. This allowed the programme to continuously refine its activities ensuring they addressed the actual needs of beneficiaries. However, **operational efficiency is hindered by**

**challenges in catering to diverse beneficiary groups, establishing strong local networks, and obtaining timely feedback.** The evaluation found that the most significant hindering factor to operational efficiency is that the **administrative workload for national coordinators is very high.** The current resources allocated to national coordinators are creating a bottleneck, making it challenging for them to align project implementation and outputs with quality requirements. Given their extensive range of tasks, they are challenged to consistently meet the programme's quality standards, particularly in areas such as reporting. Furthermore, the local coordinators possess a wealth of local project knowledge that is concentrated in a single person and could be lost with staff changes. Enhancing support and resources for national coordinators is essential to ensure sustained high-quality outcomes and to address potential risks in the future.

144. Compared with alternative delivery methods, **the programme and projects are implemented most efficiently to meet the programme objectives.** Flexible and responsive management approaches allow for the exploration and adoption of the most efficient delivery methods. The evaluation shows that combining local and international expertise, employing hybrid training methods, and leveraging existing structures have been particularly effective in optimizing efficiency.

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

At midterm, have inputs (funds, expertise, human resources, time, etc.) been converted into outputs, outcomes and impacts (relative to the entire results chain), in the most cost-effective way possible, within the intended timeframe?

145. As foreseen in the NTF V programme design each project within the agricultural and tech sectors is allocated a total budget of USD 1.5 million, except for the agribusiness projects in Ethiopia and Ghana, which have a total budget of USD 2.5 million. The “FastTrackTech” Project, with a total budget of USD 1.5 million, distributes approximately USD 400,000 to each of its four project countries over the programme duration. Additionally, programme management is budgeted at USD 1.5 million, while the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D)<sup>25</sup> component is allocated USD 1 million. This brings the overall budget for the NTF V Programme to USD 15 million.
146. The programme has effectively converted inputs into outputs, outcomes, and impacts in a cost-effective manner within the intended timeframe by flexible budgeting, a feedback-driven approach, and strategic use of local expertise. The evaluation team analysed NTF V financial data from the years 2022 and 2023. Since the spending for 2024 and 2025 is not yet complete, the evaluation’s focus remains on the initial two years. The data encompass planned and actual spendings by outputs for each country within the agricultural and tech sectors.
147. The evaluation team found that resources in the programme management could have been better used or allocated throughout the years. The financial figures for 2021-2023 indicate some underspending in the programme management component. The planned budget for programme management, including communication and monitoring, was not fully spent in 2021 and 2022, with a difference of around USD 160,000. However, in 2023, there was an overspend of only USD 12,000, which may lead to significant overspends in the coming years.
148. For the budget components of personnel costs, contractual services, operating and other direct costs, travel and equipment, which are presented separately from programme management costs, only the actual figures were available, hindering a thorough evaluation of the budget's effectiveness. The evaluation identified a lack of comprehensive financial data management, specifically the absence of planned figures alongside actual figures. The budget by component shows that most of the costs are allocated to staff and other personnel costs, with the highest expenditure of over USD 430,000 in the project year 2022 and around USD 226,000 in 2023. The remaining components range from around USD 58,000 in 2022 to USD 79,000 in 2023.
149. The main programme management activities include project design, which was carried out in the fourth quarter of 2021, and programme coordination, M&E as well as communication activities. The latter includes the organization of bi-weekly HQ meetings and monthly meetings of all teams, the preparation and dissemination of monthly and annual reports, and coordination activities with the Dutch Ministry of Finance, in particular annual financial reporting, annual trench requests, drafting of NTF agreements and amendments. Programme management activities also include planning and coordination of SG

<sup>25</sup> The CS3D is an EU directive aiming at fostering sustainable and responsible corporate behaviour in companies' operations and across their global value chains. The new rules will ensure that companies in scope identify and address adverse human rights and environmental impacts of their actions inside and outside Europe. Available from: [https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/sustainability-due-diligence-responsible-business/corporate-sustainability-due-diligence\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/sustainability-due-diligence-responsible-business/corporate-sustainability-due-diligence_en)

meetings, preparation of SG briefings, organization of SG field visits and programme-level communication, i.e. newsletter, website, and social media.

150. The evaluation team found that project budgets were managed flexibly and cost-efficiently, which was crucial for ensuring overall cost-effectiveness. In the agricultural sector, significant overspendings occurred in 2022 and 2023, ranging from USD 289,000 to USD 440,000. These overspendings were primarily due to higher-than-expected personnel needs and travel expenses for stakeholder engagement and project coordination. The increased staff costs were a result of planned local partner contracts falling through, leading to the need for more expensive consultancy contracts or ITC expertise. As a result, overspendings were seen in the staff component, balanced by underspendings in contractual services. Funds were reallocated based on actual needs, allowing the project to respond to the evolving requirements of SMEs and BSOs. This approach minimized resource wastage and directed investments towards high-impact activities, ensuring resources were used where most needed. The ability to adjust budget allocations for unforeseen activities or higher-than-expected costs, such as consultant fees, highlights the project's adaptive financial management.
151. The analysis of financial data in the tech sector shows no significant under or overspending. In Ghana and Ethiopia, there are mostly underspendings, none exceeding USD 70,000 in the first two years of intervention. In Senegal and "FastTrackTech", some overspendings are noted during the same period, also not exceeding USD 78,000. These can be partly attributed to general project management costs, with the remaining overspendings not indicating a clear pattern. Looking at the four different outputs in the Tech sector, it is evident that the overspendings are most pronounced under output 3, 'Improved competitiveness of beneficiary MSMEs.' However, these overspendings are generally balanced out by underspendings in other outputs or in project management across most Tech countries.
152. The evaluation team found that the project's flexibility, particularly its emphasis on feedback-driven adjustments, ensured that activities remained relevant and effective. Continuous assessments and stakeholder engagement were integral to tailoring interventions to meet the highest quality standards. Feedback mechanisms, such as evaluation forms after training sessions and regular stakeholder consultations, allowed the project to continuously refine its activities. This approach enhanced the project's impact and ensured it addressed the actual needs of beneficiaries.
153. Moreover, the evaluation team found that leveraging local insights and expertise has significantly reduced costs related to external consultancy. By integrating local knowledge, the project not only fosters local ownership and relevance but also ensures that solutions are well-aligned with the local context and conditions. This approach has proven beneficial in maintaining cost-effectiveness and ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes.

#### Are the activities and outputs being delivered according to the quality requirements and the workplans?

154. The evaluation team found that **the alignment of project implementation with quality requirements is generally well-maintained**. Weekly meetings and bi-annual workplan reviews ensure adherence to timelines and milestones, with flexibility for adjustments based on feedback and the real-time needs of beneficiaries. Activities are carried out as planned, with a focus on delivering high-quality outputs. Feedback mechanisms, such as evaluation forms after training sessions, assess and ensure the relevance and impact of activities. Continuous assessments from SMEs and BSOs help tailor activities to meet high-quality standards. The projects successfully adapt global objectives to local contexts, reinforcing existing structures for sustainability. However, political and security constraints in countries like Mali pose challenges. This iterative process ensures the project evolves to meet quality standards and stakeholder expectations, maintaining relevance and impact.
155. However, the evaluation team found that catering to a diverse group of beneficiaries with varying needs and capacities presents significant constraints to operational efficiency. Tailoring interventions to meet all beneficiary needs was complex and sometimes posed risks of inefficiencies in resource allocation and activity planning. Specifically, the evaluation found that while more mature companies sought specific, individualized training, other startups benefitted from basic business support measures. This diversity in needs posed challenges for the projects in effectively aligning their interventions to prevent dissatisfaction among beneficiaries. Additionally, some projects initially struggled to establish strong connections and engagement within local tech ecosystems. The absence of pre-existing relationships and fragmented ecosystems made it challenging to implement activities that relied on robust local networks effectively. Another constraint was the difficulty in obtaining timely and detailed feedback from businesses. Project coordinators highlighted that constantly reminding and chasing businesses for data was time-consuming and affected the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation processes. This issue underscored the need for improved mechanisms to ensure prompt and comprehensive feedback, which is crucial for effective project management and adjustments.



156. The evaluation team found the timeliness of delivery compared to planned milestones to be largely consistent in the programme. However, the projects entail substantial administrative duties, including report preparation, event coordination, logistical management and extensive follow-ups with beneficiaries. Moreover, within the UN system, the management of public funds necessitates strict checks and balances, leading to lengthy processes and an even greater administrative workload. This administrative workload often overwhelms project coordinators, who are key implementers on the ground and possess extensive project knowledge. The workload is diverting their focus from direct project activities and thereby hindering overall operational efficiency. The evaluation found that additional support and sufficient resource allocation to national coordinators are necessary to enhance their sustainability and alleviate some of their administrative responsibilities. Addressing these challenges is crucial for optimizing project implementation, ensuring smoother operational outcomes and preventing frustrations among national coordinators, thereby fostering long-term collaboration and strengthening the sustainability of the programme staff at the national level.
157. Moreover, delays on partner side in supporting policy changes, such as the Startup Act in the digital technology sector, hindered the timely implementation of activities. The lengthy process of passing bills or implementing policy changes proved slower than anticipated, delaying certain project outputs and affecting the overall timeline and efficiency of project implementation. **Frequent changes in leadership in key partner ministries posed challenges to project continuity, and political instability sometimes hindered progress.** In Mali this instability has often resulted in a lack of consistent support and direction from key governmental partners, complicating the implementation of long-term strategies and the alignment of project goals with national policies. Additionally, political unrest in Mali and Senegal sometimes hinders progress, creating an unpredictable environment that affects both the planning and execution of project activities.

Could the project/programme be delivered in a more efficient way, comparing with alternative ways of achieving the objectives?

158. **Compared to alternative methods of achieving objectives, the programme and projects are delivered most efficiently.** The evaluation team found that the programme's adaptability and flexibility allowed for exploring various delivery methods and ultimately selecting the most efficient strategies.
159. The flexibility in delivery methods is evident through the proactive adjustments of activities based on ongoing feedback and changing circumstances, such as frequent revisions of the annual work plans and the introduction of revised training sessions based on direct feedback from beneficiaries.
160. Additionally, the consideration of alternative delivery methods is reflected in the inclusion of both online and onsite activities in the project implementation. Conducting activities solely online eliminates travel requirements, which can lead to higher participation rates and broader reach. However, this method may lack the personal touch that onsite activities provide, which is crucial for building strong relationships and trust with beneficiaries. The evaluation shows that the current hybrid approach adopted by the programme, combining both online and onsite methods, is the most efficient. This approach allows for greater flexibility and adaptability based on the specific needs of SMEs and BSOs.
161. The evaluation also indicates that leveraging local and international expertise, as the project does, is the most efficient way of implementing the project activities. The programme employs both local and international consultants to balance cost and quality. Local consultants provide context-specific insights, while international experts bring advanced regional knowledge. This mixed approach helps manage costs and ensures high-quality project management and support. Additionally, the evaluation shows that the programme working directly with national consultants is highly efficient as these consultants have direct access to the beneficiary companies and possess specific sector knowledge of the country.

## Efficiency Dimension 2: Operational Efficiency

162. This section assesses six key questions under Efficiency Dimension 2. It examines how well the projects and programme are managed to enhance operational efficiency within ITC as well as the local project coordination teams. It also considers the effectiveness of management arrangements in delivering the projects and programme outcomes, it examines the effectiveness of the Steering Group in supporting and guiding programme management, and it assesses whether a monitoring system was established to enable effective management, implementation, and accountability. Furthermore, it evaluates the suitability of the NTF V projects and programme results chains and indicators for a systemic change approach and assesses the implementation rate of recommendations from the NTF IV final evaluation and their contribution to the efficiency of the NTF V Programme.

## Key findings efficiency dimension 2

163. The **programme and projects are managed very well ensuring operational efficiency**. The good management is supported by management tools, streamlined processes, and effective communication, indicating no need for improvement. Hands-on processes and intensive communication at the project level characterize the strong on-site management. The evaluation shows that the high quality of the national team on site is key to achieve operational efficiency.
164. The programme has **successfully aligned its management arrangements with effective programme and project delivery**. The incorporation of feedback mechanisms and adaptations to local contexts have been evaluated positively, enhancing the programme's ability to make informed operational decisions. Effective programme management has been achieved through robust stakeholder engagement, supported by structured, direct, and frequent communication with beneficiaries, which has proven instrumental in achieving overall effectiveness. The intentionality and accessibility demonstrated by the coordinators in their communication efforts are commendable and contribute significantly to the programme's success.
165. The **SG successfully contributes to strategic decision-making and programme management, effectively supporting and guiding decision-making**, fostering collaboration, and providing strategic oversight. While their engagement with programme management is strong, there is room for improvement in meeting frequency and focus. In contrast, the NPSC's efficiency in project countries lacks a unified evaluation. The evaluation shows mixed opinions about the NPSC's effectiveness in shaping project activities and impact. The **NPSC's effectiveness is limited by challenges such as inefficient meeting structures and budget constraints**. However, the NPSC's engagement with the SG is evaluated positively, with active involvement in strategy creation.
166. The programme **effectively tracks SME performance in its indicators to assess systemic change** at the outcome level, but it **lacks outcome-level indicators specifically designed for assessing systemic change through policy adjustments**. The programme developed high-quality tools and mechanisms for evidence-based learning, crucial for assessing impact and informed decision-making. These tools facilitate accurate data collection and effective information sharing, fostering continuous improvement and strategic alignment with project objectives. The monitoring system's flexibility is evaluated positive allowing for real-time adjustments, ensuring responsiveness to beneficiary needs and maintaining quality standards.
167. The programme **successfully established an operational monitoring system, but shortcomings in its design and data integrity issues limit its ability to fully support effective management, implementation, and accountability**. The evaluation team found that the monitoring system effectively enables timely adjustments and supports the continuous alignment of project activities with beneficiary needs. It adequately captures and uses performance data for informed decision-making. However, the system is **inadequate in data reliability and accuracy**. This is evidenced by frequent discrepancies and modifications to baseline data, which undermine the credibility of reported outcomes. These inconsistencies significantly impede accurate progress measurement and assessment of the programme's impact, posing a risk of making misguided management decisions. Additionally, the **structure of the monitoring system is moderate**, and the lack of integration between the agricultural and digital technology sectors diminishes overall coherence and effectiveness.
168. The programme **implemented most recommendations, thereby significantly enhancing its efficiency**. Mapping external projects and establishing collaborative structures improved coordination and synergy, fostering a more integrated approach to project implementation. Partnerships and joint activities also strengthened coherence with external actors, ensuring the sustainability of programme activities. However, the programme faces challenges in areas such as the absence of a defined exit strategy, detailed financial reporting, and an improved RBM system and a ToC that lacks depth at outcome level, as identified in the NTF IV evaluation and repeated in this NTF V evaluation. These issues pose risks to the long-term sustainability of programme benefits and could potentially diminish the impact of programme outcomes. Addressing these concerns is crucial to maintaining the programme's effectiveness and ensuring its continued positive impact.

## Detailed Analysis & Findings

How well are the projects and programme managed in order to address operational efficiency, within ITC as well as the local project coordination teams?

169. The evaluation shows a **very high level of satisfaction with the management structures at both the programme and project levels**. Standardized processes are firmly established at the programme level, facilitated by the use of digital tools such as Asana for regular check-ins and updates. These tools streamline operations and enable quick resolution of issues. At the ITC headquarters, programme-level workflows are highly streamlined, supported by feedback forms and comprehensive dashboards that track all activities and their status, ensuring transparency and accountability. Moreover, the evaluation shows **significant satisfaction within the programme regarding the responsiveness and efficiency of management structures**. There is effective collaboration with international colleagues at the programme level in Geneva, along with supportive leadership from programme managers.
170. Similarly, at the project level, the evaluation indicates high satisfaction with the efficiency of management structures and the responsiveness of national coordinators. Projects are executed with monthly activity plans communicated well in advance to beneficiaries. WhatsApp groups facilitate real-time interaction and updates, ensuring a streamlined and transparent workflow. The use of evaluation and diagnostic tools like "360 diagnostics" underscores a commitment to detailed and consistent assessments of company needs and strengths.
171. The evaluation team found that projects employ proactive and personalized communication strategies, such as phone calls and follow-ups, demonstrating a strong dedication to engaging and informing beneficiaries. The evaluation shows an effective use of feedback mechanisms and swift decision-making on sponsorships. The project team's flexibility and willingness to adapt to beneficiary needs are particularly valued, as this accommodation helps better meet their busy schedules and specific requirements. Furthermore, the evaluation team found that the level of engagement, support, and high-quality work of the project coordinators illustrates the significant impact that dedicated personnel can have on the overall quality of management structures. The evaluation shows the crucial role of high-quality national coordinators on the ground, particularly underscored by beneficiary dissatisfaction in Côte d'Ivoire with management structures. For a brief period, there was no local coordinator, and the position was temporarily filled by a coordinator from another country who was also managing two positions simultaneously.

How effective have the management arrangements been in the delivery of the projects and the programme?

172. The evaluation shows that **management decisions are generally consistent with programme objectives, particularly within the ITC headquarters, where streamlined workflows ensure alignment with objectives**. Feedback plays a significant role in shaping project activities, potentially outweighing the influence of the originally defined project objectives in certain aspects of project execution. The evaluation also demonstrates the importance of structured monitoring and evaluation processes, ensuring activities meet quality standards and objectives while allowing for necessary adjustments based on regular feedback. Strategic meetings and close coordination with stakeholders further contribute to maintaining alignment with project goals.
173. The evaluation shows that stakeholder engagement is crucial for the effective project management, with structured communication aimed at fostering clarity and collaboration. Monthly activity plans and WhatsApp groups ensure timely coordination, which is essential for maintaining transparency and engagement with beneficiaries. Collaboration with ITC headquarters aligns project activities with broader programme goals, leveraging available expertise to inform local implementation strategies. Regular updates, feedback forms, and evaluation sessions contribute to maintaining strong coordination and responsiveness. Additionally, weekly meetings enhance collaboration and transparency within the project management team by facilitating updates and addressing challenges. The frequent, almost daily communication via WhatsApp and Teams between project managers and coordinators demonstrates high engagement and responsiveness, facilitating real-time problem-solving and decision-making. Close communication ensures the relevance of actions.
174. The evaluation shows a high level of proactiveness and engagement of project coordinators, along with flexibility in adapting to feedback. Their effort in conveying the importance of beneficiaries' input and keeping cohort members well informed about ongoing opportunities is seen as highly beneficial. This approach is evaluated as a key factor in ensuring the success of the projects and fostering a strong connection with the beneficiaries. However, the evaluation team found that there are areas for improvement, as digital technology companies frequently delayed responding to information requests



from the projects. This requires multiple follow-up calls from the national coordinators, highlighting the need for enhancements to improve efficiency.

#### Is the Steering Group effective in its role of supporting and guiding the programme management?

175. The Steering Group is **largely effective in its role of supporting and guiding programme management**. The SG's defined responsibilities include overseeing overall implementation, monitoring risks, and providing strategic guidance. The evaluation shows that the SG follows a democratic decision-making process, ensuring open discussions before the Dutch Ministry makes the final decision. The SG meets approximately every three months, offering an insightful and comprehensive understanding of the projects. However, these meetings are labour-intensive, and there is a suggestion that more frequent, focused meetings could improve efficiency. The evaluation shows that the SG has been instrumental in promoting collaboration between different projects, ensuring efforts are complementary rather than duplicative. This is particularly noted in its collaboration with the Orange Corners programme. The evaluation shows the SG's significant contribution to strategic decision-making. At the programme level, the engagement between programme management and the SG is robust, featuring regular meetings and strategic discussions to ensure alignment and effective decision-making. Collaborative planning sessions and frequent updates help keep the programme on track and enable it to adapt to emerging needs or challenges.
176. The evaluation reveals mixed results regarding the effectiveness of the NPSC in shaping project activities and impact. The roles of the NPSCs include providing strategic oversight, contributing to problem-solving, and offering support. However, a detailed explanation of how the NPSCs actively fulfil these roles was not provided. The evaluation shows that the NPSCs have effective engagement mechanisms, with structured processes for regular updates and feedback integration, ensuring alignment with the programme's goals and activities. The NPSCs are kept continuously informed through monthly progress reports. In some projects NPSC's members were also partners of NTF V, facilitating their contribution to programme implementation through practical experience and concrete feedback. The NPSC is effective in providing feedback, addressing new requests, and clarifying issues, acting as a forum for stakeholders to collaborate and align the project with beneficiary needs. The active engagement with the SG, including involvement in strategy creation and regular evaluations, ensures their input is consistently incorporated into programme execution. Ministries and agencies represented on the NPSC play a significant role in shaping project activities, highlighting the interconnection between government bodies and project directives.
177. However, there are doubts regarding the overall effectiveness of the NPSC in supporting and guiding programme management. Meetings **can be hampered by lengthy government monologues, detracting from focused discussions and actionable outcomes**. The evaluation shows that the NPSC often acts more as a communication body due to members' busy schedules, limiting their participation in frequent meetings, decision-making processes, and active steering. There is potential for improvement through more active participation, better synchronization with government plans, and enhanced support structures to ensure meaningful and continuous engagement.

#### Was a monitoring system put in place that enabled effective management, implementation, and accountability?

178. The programme has **effectively implemented a monitoring system that captures relevant performance data and uses it for informed decision-making and accountability but the structure of the system and the quality of data management needs improvement**. This system ensures that the project activities are continuously aligned with the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries, enhancing the project's efficiency and impact. The evaluation shows satisfaction from the programme management team across all countries with the monitoring system, praising it for being operational and robust. The system's detailed dashboard available in the ITC Projects Portal facilitates real-time monitoring of indicators such as job creation, business growth, and training effectiveness, enabling timely adjustments.
179. Upon analysing the monitoring framework, the evaluation team concludes that the system is capable of capturing relevant data. However, the system lacks complementarity between the agricultural and digital technology sectors, as their data are presented separately without clear connections, diminishing the system's overall coherence. It has been noted that both, the tech and the agri-sector implemented own dashboards that provide for up-to-date data. However, these can be considered double structures in maintenance and data analysis. These issues complicate accurate progress measurement over time. Further complicating matters is the lack of detailed background documents that precisely specify how and when measurements should be taken, how indicators are defined, and how data should be aggregated.

180. Despite the management team's satisfaction with the M&E system, the evaluation shows significant shortcomings regarding the reliability and accuracy of monitoring data. Upon replicating the calculations for the programme's four indicators, the evaluation found substantial discrepancies from the reported figures (see Effectiveness Dimension 1). The evaluation team could not find any plausible explanations for these discrepancies. This undermines the effectiveness of programme and project management, casting doubt on the utility of M&E data for monitoring and accountability.
181. Despite the quality of the monitoring data the evaluation shows that monitoring data is integral to the project's operation and accountability. Data collected through various tools and mechanisms is systematically analysed to inform decision-making and enhance accountability. This includes tracking the performance of SMEs and making necessary adjustments based on the findings. The project uses these insights to adjust activities and ensure they meet the needs of the beneficiaries effectively. By continuously integrating this feedback, management can make informed decisions that align with the project's goals and address emerging challenges effectively. This responsiveness helps ensure that the project remains relevant and effectively managed.

[Are the NTF V project and programme results chains and indicators fit-for-purpose for systemic change approach, with an emphasis on learning and reflexive monitoring?](#)

182. The programme **effectively tracks SME performance to measure impacts on systemic change but lacks outcome-level** indicators specifically designed to assess systemic change through policy adjustments. The programme focuses its indicators on the improved competitiveness of MSMEs, tracking the performance of SMEs and their influence on systemic change at the outcome level. Outputs 3 and 4 are directly connected to these outcome indicators. These five key outcome indicators target (i) the number of MSMEs engaging in international and national business transactions due to ITC support, (ii) the number of women-owned, -operated, and -controlled MSMEs engaging in international business as a result of ITC support, (iii) the value of sales generated by MSMEs, (iv) the value of international business transactions, including investments and national transactions linked to global value chains, and (v) the value of direct investment driven by digital technology companies and value chain alliances (SDG 17).
183. However, systemic change related to policy is assessed only at the output level under Output 1, highlighting the need for an additional outcome indicator dedicated to measuring and driving systemic change in policy. The evaluation team does not yet have a clear vision of what this indicator should look like.
184. The quality of tools and mechanisms for evidence-based learning is highly evaluated. These tools, including surveys, feedback forms, real-time dashboards, shared folders and documentation, data analytics software, reporting frameworks, and knowledge exchange sessions, are essential for assessing the impact of project activities and making informed decisions. They provide accurate data, helping to understand what works and what needs adjustment. Additionally, shared folders, documentation, and evaluation reports facilitate effective information sharing and collaboration.
185. The evaluation also highlights a feedback-driven approach to evidence-based learning, integrating continuous learning and improvement into strategies. Regular check-ins and knowledge exchange sessions facilitate the sharing of best practices and addressing challenges, ensuring that the project remains aligned with its goals and responsive to evolving needs.
186. Despite criticism, the evaluation shows that the monitoring **system is flexible, allowing for real-time adjustments based on collected data**. Monitoring tools and mechanisms enable the projects to tailor their support services to meet quality standards. This adaptability ensures that the project remains responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and can make timely adaptations to its strategies.

[What is the rate of implementation of the recommendations from the NTF IV final evaluation? Have these recommendations contributed to the efficiency of the NTF V Programme?](#)

187. **NTF IV Recommendation 1 – Extension of programme lifecycle:** The first recommendation directed to the NTF V Steering Committee was to extend the programme lifecycle to five or six years to allow for a thorough participatory design phase before activities commence.<sup>26</sup>
188. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted, although it could not be fully implemented since the programme had already been approved before the recommendations were

<sup>26</sup> Baastel. (2022). Final Evaluation of The Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase IV-Export Sector Competitiveness Programme. International Trade Centre (2022a). Management Response and Implementation Follow-Up. Final Evaluation Of The Netherlands Trust Fund (NTF) Phase IV – Export Sector Competitiveness Programme Management Response, Action Plan, Results, And Means Of Verification.

issued. The NTF team indicated in its management response to the recommendations that NTF V includes a six-month inception phase, with in-depth needs assessments across the four levels of intervention: policy, BSOs, MSMEs, and market partners. The inception phase is followed by baseline data collection, which enables the gathering of additional information on specific support needs.

189. The evaluation shows that the in-depth needs assessment took place and baseline data was collected. The evaluation team found that the in-depth needs assessment significantly influenced the programme's understanding of the demands and constraints of beneficiaries in the two sectors, shaping their activities accordingly. However, the evaluation noted that the baseline data collection, while necessary for measuring programme progress, was compromised by multiple retroactive modifications, thereby reducing its initial impact.
190. **NTF IV Recommendation 2 – Project Mapping:** Directed to the NTF V Programme Coordination, the recommendation included ensuring that by December 2022, ITC programme and project managers and their partners achieved mapping out external projects for coordination, establish official project management structures and teaming arrangements within ITC, mobilize internal ITC services for collaboration and synergy, and conduct in-depth gender, human rights, and environmental analyses to inform programme design and implementation.
191. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. The actions to be taken included (i) Map out other, external projects and programmes with which it could co-ordinate activities with the same beneficiaries or capitalize on complementarity. The expected result is the mapping being part of each project plan, (ii) Establish official project management structures and teaming arrangements within ITC, as well as identifying and mobilizing internal ITC services (e.g., SheTrades and AIM for Results) to mobilize useful collaboration and synergy in an organized and timely fashion, through financed service delivery. The expected result is that each project includes a documented project team on the portal, including ad-hoc and formally engaged colleagues. The NTF V programme team consists of all continuously funded project team members. The involvement of internal teams, such as SheTrades and AIM for Results, is documented through NTF V Teaming Arrangements, (iii) Conduct in-depth gender, human rights, and environmental analysis, with results clearly presented in evidenced documentation and used to inform the design of programme and project results, indicators, baseline (or midline), targets, and activities. The expected result is that the e retro-active analysis will be undertaken under the guidance of the IEU team and the ITC focal points for gender, social responsibility, and green growth.
192. The evaluation found that the NTF V team effectively mapped external projects and established collaborative structures, significantly enhancing external coherence. This recommendation was implemented by each project team and at the SG level. At the SG level, measures included organizing joint activities, and holding monthly NTF V meetings to debrief on activities and highlight joint efforts within other programmes. These efforts facilitated coordination and synergy across various programmes. Additionally, joint programming sessions were held to plan activities for the coming year, ensuring a coordinated workflow between the agricultural and tech sectors. These actions led to improved coordination within the programme and fostered synergies with different programmes, thereby enhancing the integrated approach to project implementation.
193. Project management structures and teaming arrangements within ITC have been established, with a strong focus on collaborations with SheTrades. These partnerships have notably bolstered the program's initiatives aimed at achieving systemic change, such as integrating gender mainstreaming into the AfCFTA national strategy in Senegal.
194. Regarding the recommended in-depth gender, human rights, and environmental analysis, in the NTF V concept note<sup>27</sup> reference is made to the mainstreaming guidelines set by ITC and the UN for gender, youth, green growth, and social responsibility. The implementation of Recommendation 2 had a significant impact on integrating gender, human rights, and environmental considerations into the NTF V programme. These guidelines provide practical guidance on how to apply these standards in project design, implementation, and evaluation, setting a definitive direction for their incorporation throughout project activities.<sup>28</sup> Based on the available data, it is not possible for us to make a definitive statement on whether a retroactive analysis for gender, social responsibility, and green growth has been conducted.

<sup>27</sup> International Trade Centre. (2021). Project Proposal. Netherlands Trust Fund V: A New Netherlands and ITC Partnership to Generate Long-Term Socioeconomic Impact - Achieving systemic change in services sectors to make selected African countries more trade competitive.

<sup>28</sup> International Trade Centre (2019). Mainstreaming sustainable and inclusive trade: Guidelines for International Trade Centre projects, <https://www.intracen.org/publication/Mainstreaming/>.

195. **NTF IV Recommendation 3 – Policy Dialogue Partnerships:** Directed to the NTF V Programme Coordination, the recommendation included developing official and concrete partnerships with other programmes and projects focused on policy dialogue and institutional strengthening by December 2022. This would allow ITC to focus on its strengths in working with the private sector while remaining connected to efforts at policy and institutional levels.
196. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. Actions to be taken included developing official and concrete partnerships with other programmes and projects that work on policy dialogue and institutional strengthening to allow ITC to focus on its particular areas of strength (i.e., working with the private sector) while remaining connected to, and gaining opportunities to inform efforts at policy and institutional level, for better coverage of this segment of the ecosystem. The expected results are clearly defined partnerships in each project to work on improved policies for systemic change.
197. Efforts were made to build partnerships with other programmes focusing on policy dialogue across different countries. For instance, collaboration with the Agricultural Transformation Institute in Ethiopia led to the design of an Agritech Strategy. Additionally, with the Ministry of the Digital Economy, Deloitte was approached to contribute to the launch and facilitate the implementation of the Startup Act.. While the adoption process of the Startup Act is ongoing in most countries, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali have already adopted and implemented the law, demonstrating the positive impact of the programme's joint efforts. In Senegal, cooperation with ITC's SheTrades initiative has advanced the integration of gender mainstreaming into the AfCFTA national strategy. These partnerships aimed to enhance policy dialogue and institutional strengthening across various regions. The observed impact of these efforts includes strengthened coherence with external actors and increased sustainability of programme activities.
198. **NTF IV Recommendation 4 – Programme Level ToC Development:** Directed to the NTF V Programme Coordinator, the recommendation included developing a full ToC at the programme level by December 2022. This ToC should clearly outline expected change pathways, assess risks and assumptions, and establish linked results statements and indicators to ensure shared understanding and ownership of expectations among all stakeholders.
199. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. Actions to be taken included (i) developing a comprehensive ToC at the programme level through an inclusive and collaborative process, clearly outlining expected change pathways and demonstrating how each project contributes. The entire programme team will engage in this action with the support of an external Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) expert to ensure full alignment and ownership. (ii) Assess risks and assumptions at both programme and project levels and document them in a risk ledger accessible on the project portal. The expected result is the development of a separate programme-level risk ledger supported by an external expert. (iii) Provide detailed explanations of results statements and indicators before proceeding from programme inception to full implementation, ensuring shared understanding and ownership of expectations among all relevant stakeholders. The expected result is the inclusion of a detailed glossary in the yearly reports, starting with the 2021 report.
200. The programme created project-specific logframes to contextualize and implement the ToC within each of the seven projects. These logframes not only incorporated the overall programme logic but also accounted for country- and sector-specific factors that could influence project implementation, such as export dynamics and digital integration in the agricultural sector, or digital infrastructure in the digital technology sector. The programme developed a ToC at the programme level through a collaborative process, establishing a unified framework for aggregating results across various projects. Although the ToC supported aligning activities with project goals and facilitating progress measurement, it was necessary to reconstruct and refine the ToC for the evaluation, indicating initial gaps. The ToC developed by the programme was incomplete, particularly at the outcome level, where it lacks depth. Enhancements are needed to ensure it fully addresses the unique challenges and opportunities in each country and sector, thereby driving more meaningful and sustainable impacts.
201. Due to insufficient data, precise statements regarding the risk ledger and indicator sharing cannot be made.
202. **NTF IV Recommendation 5 – User-friendly RBM Tool:** Directed to NTF V managers fulfilling Results-Based Management (RBM) roles, the recommendation included investing more time and resources in developing robust, user-friendly RBM tools to support effective programme and project management, monitoring, and reporting by December 2022. Additionally, baseline data should be used to set realistic targets before implementation starts, and simple reporting tools should be systematically designed and used at every reporting stage.



203. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. Actions to be taken included (i) developing a robust, user-friendly RBM tools to enhance programme and project management, monitoring, reporting, and adaptive management. The expected outcome was the implementation of NTF V RBM tools focusing on real-time results monitoring and reporting, aligned with ITC's project portal. (ii) Collecting baseline data to establish realistic yet ambitious targets before programme and project implementation begins. Baseline data collection commenced in Q1 2022 and continues into Q2 2022 following beneficiary selection. (iii) Designing and implementing simple programme and project-level reporting tools for each stage of the reporting cycle, including baseline and monitoring data compared to targets. The expected outcome was the development of tools that facilitate effective communication among team members to ensure a realistic and achievable toolkit.
204. The recommendation for a RBM tool has been implemented. The monitoring system effectively captures relevant data for informed decision-making. Additionally, the programme collected baseline data during the inception phase. However, the monitoring system and the baseline data present several challenges. The monitoring system suffers from issues related to clarity and consistency in presenting indicators, as some indicators in the M&E framework are absent from official reports. Moreover, the system exhibits shortcomings in data quality. During the evaluation, significant discrepancies were found between the reported figures and the results obtained from replicating calculations for the programme's main indicators (refer to Effectiveness Dimension 1). The expected outcome was not fully achieved as the agricultural and tech sectors maintain their own monitoring systems and dashboards, with data only aggregated on the ITC portal, hindering effective communication among team members.
205. **NTF IV Recommendation 6 – Midterm Evaluation:** Directed to the NTF V Steering Committee, the recommendation included conducting a formative (learning-oriented) midterm evaluation by an external, independent team, planned well in advance. This evaluation would promote learning and ownership, allowing for necessary course corrections.
206. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted, and plans were made to conduct a formative (learning-oriented) midterm evaluation for NTF V. This evaluation is intended to be carried out by an external, independent evaluation team and has been planned well in advance. The expected result is an external midterm evaluation.
207. The recommendation to conduct a midterm evaluation of the programme has been implemented through this evaluation, which assesses the performance of the programme and its seven projects in achieving their intended outcomes. The midterm evaluation and its recommendations to the programme will inform the programme management team about successful and challenging factors in the design and implementation of the NTF V Programme, providing recommendations for improvement, lessons learned, and best practices.
208. **NTF IV Recommendation 7 – Detailed Financial Reporting:** Directed to NTF V ITC staff responsible for financial and administrative management, the recommendation included establishing protocols to generate detailed financial reporting linked to the budget by December 2022. This would enable a robust demonstration of value for money, with financial data available by intermediate outcome and type of investment at both project and programme levels.
209. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. The actions to be taken are making financial data available by output and by type of investment (e.g., international or national consultants), both at the project level and aggregated to the programme level. The expected result is a pivot table containing financial data for each project, organized based on documented delivery items.
210. Despite the recommendation directed to the NTF V ITC staff responsible for financial and administrative management, no detailed financial reporting has been shared with the evaluation team. Financial data provided followed templates from the evaluation team, rather than a programme-owned standardized financial reporting system. Additionally, only actual financial figures, and no planned financial figures at the programme level, were shared, suggesting these were not created. However, while financial data was collected and shared, no comprehensive system or standardized reporting framework was provided. This results in a mixed picture with varying findings, making it difficult to draw a clear conclusion on whether the recommendation has been fully implemented. The lack of comprehensive financial monitoring and reporting undermines effective financial management, planning, and the optimal allocation of resources where they are most needed.
211. **NTF IV Recommendation 8 – Sustainability Mechanisms:** Directed to NTF V managers, this recommendation included building sustainability mechanisms based on improved planning achieved by December 2022. This included identifying barriers and enabling factors for sustainability, defining and

regularly updating exit strategies at programme and project levels, and ensuring these mechanisms are operational before the midterm evaluation.

212. According to the management response, the recommendation was accepted. The actions to be taken are to clearly define exit strategies, at programme and project levels, and update them on a regular basis considering the changing circumstances. The expected result is an exit strategy for each project defined ahead of the mid-term evaluation
213. Efforts have been made to ensure sustainability by transferring knowledge and support from individual companies to broader organizations, such as the Ghana Export Promotion Agency. The evaluation highlights measures like Training of Trainers (ToT), collaborations with BSOs and the private sector, and policy support as essential for sustaining project and programme activities. Despite these efforts, the programme has not proactively updated an exit strategy for the programme and its projects. The absence of a defined and current exit strategy could negatively impact the long-term sustainability of the programme's benefits. Without a clear plan for transitioning responsibilities and maintaining activities post-programme, there may be challenges in ensuring that the positive outcomes and impacts are sustained over time. Additionally, stakeholders lack a clear vision for the future and their responsibilities within it, already affecting their ownership of the measures.

### 3.5 Potential impact

214. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of impact: (1) significance and unintended effects, and (2) transformational change.

#### Potential Impact dimension 1: Significance and unintended effects

215. This section evaluates two key questions under Impact Dimension 1. It examines to what extent the programme generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Furthermore, it evaluates if observed changes be linked to the programme's interventions.

#### Key findings potential impact dimension 1

216. Regarding the magnitude and significance of programme-level positive, negative, and unintended results the evaluation team found that **the NTF V programme has successfully generated a positive potential impact across its target groups, with distinct variations among different sectors and beneficiary groups**. The programme has successfully achieved its impact goal of 'contributing to decent jobs and improved livelihoods in the agribusiness and digital technologies sector across the seven programme countries' as show through the overachievement of the impact indicator 'Number of jobs supported' and the positive trend in the impact indicator 'Percentage increase in income of beneficiary'. The NTF V programme has achieved commendable success in fostering substantial business growth, enhancing market access, and improving skills development. These accomplishments underscore its robust positive trajectory and its pivotal role in advancing economic development and fostering entrepreneurial growth.
217. The programme **succeeded in bring about changes in improved business operations, management skills, and business expansion**. They can directly be linked to the programme's interventions. The programme successfully supported the internationalisation of some companies, resulting in international business deals. However, the evaluation team found that for the majority of beneficiaries, positive changes primarily involved enhanced business capacity and procedures rather than improved livelihoods. The evaluation team found **that the programme has not succeeded in facilitating sufficient access to finance**, working capital and investments which are crucial for businesses to scale operations.

#### Detailed Analysis & Findings

At midterm, to what extent has the programme generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?

218. The evaluation shows **enhanced business skills and operations, improved market access, and increased revenue generation**. Trainings in areas such as marketing, financial management, and packaging, alongside with continuous process improvement have led to better business practices and market positioning in both sectors.



219. Resulting from capacity building, evaluations highlight significant positive impacts in direct job creation. Several tech companies expanded their workforces due to programme support and training, leading to 8,903 jobs supported in the digital technology sector, compared to the baseline of 3,871. This increase is reflected in the impact indicator 'Number of jobs supported'. In the agricultural sector, the programme notably increased employment with 17,322 jobs supported, compared to the baseline of 9,274 jobs. This growth in decent jobs, particularly among women, addresses social issues such as unemployment and enhances household financial stability. This empowerment enables women to contribute economically, fostering greater financial independence and social cohesion. Indirect impacts include improved livelihoods for farmers through agribusiness startups, enhancing employment conditions and market access. By digitizing processes and improving access to credit and markets, these startups positively impact the livelihoods of 17,322 farmers and small businesses, measured by the impact indicators 'Number of jobs (formal and informal) supported' and 'Value (in USD) of sales generated by MSMEs'.
220. The evaluation team found that the programme significantly supports regional expansion and fosters international business deals and market linkages. Participation in international trade fairs enabled companies to negotiate substantial deals, ranging from USD 80,000 to USD 300,000. Additionally, the programme has facilitated businesses in obtaining ISO certification, which is essential for meeting international standards and enhancing credibility. This certification has opened doors to new markets and clients, allowing participating companies to attract international clients and secure contracts, thereby boosting their market reach and revenue potential.
221. Additionally, the evaluation shows that the programme's involvement in policy-making processes has contributed to creating a more supportive environment for entrepreneurs. Collaborations with governmental bodies, such as the Coffee and Tea Authority in Ethiopia, the development of the Startup Bill in Uganda, and the Startup Act in Ghana, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, have allowed the NTF V programme to deliver immediate benefits to participating companies. In programme countries where there was previously no financing available for startups, enterprises can now receive loans for the first time. Moreover, these collaborations have laid a robust foundation for sustained economic development and entrepreneurial growth in the programme countries.
222. The programme has significantly contributed to the internationalisation and market exposure of participating businesses. The evaluation team found that participation in international trade fairs and expos has opened new markets and established valuable business contacts. Networking opportunities provided by the programme have also been instrumental in establishing partnerships with international firms, investors, and diaspora communities, fostering significant business expansion.
223. Whereas the evaluation does not show any unintended negative results, positive unintended outcomes were reported by agribusinesses, such as increased community involvement and improved social ties. The involvement of local communities and women in business activities has strengthened social ties and advanced community development. This has indirectly fostered a sense of unity and collective effort towards economic improvement.
224. The evaluation highlights notable progress achieved through dynamic agroforestry and value addition initiatives. These efforts have bolstered cooperative production, diversified income sources, and enhanced market access for farmers. Agricultural beneficiaries of the programme have adopted dynamic agroforestry models, resulting in additional income streams and increased cocoa sales despite global shortages. Agriculture extension officers have also embraced this model, using it to train other farmers, thereby demonstrating widespread adoption and scaling of programme activities. The programme has additionally supported the establishment of VSLAs, empowering cocoa farmers, particularly women and youth, to enhance their farm management and investment capabilities. Through value addition training and product development, SMEs have been able to launch new products and access larger markets.

#### Can observed changes be linked to the programme's interventions?

225. The evaluation shows that **all positive changes mentioned above can be attributed to the programme's interventions**. Significant impacts encompass enhanced business skills, job creation, expanded regional presence, a more supportive entrepreneurial environment, increased internationalisation and market exposure, and advancements in dynamic agroforestry. The programme facilitated direct job creation, supporting 8,903 decent jobs in tech and 17,322 jobs in agriculture, particularly benefiting women and improving household financial stability. Moreover, the programme's involvement in policy-making processes and international trade fairs enabled significant achievements in market expansion and policy advocacy.
226. To achieve these impacts the evaluation found that effective collaboration and tailored support were supportive factors in addressing beneficiaries' needs and ensuring successful outcomes directly

attributable to the programme's activities. Regular meetings with stakeholders and significant investments in human resources at both the national and programme level in Geneva played a crucial role. Customized support and access to high-quality expertise, including coaching from renowned international firms, significantly contributed to achieving programme goals. Direct beneficiary support through practical activities like fundraising coaching, pitch deck reviews, and dynamic agroforestry training ensured that support was immediate and relevant. These trainings equipped participants with essential skills to enhance their business operations and expand into new areas.

227. Moreover, market access and networking opportunities facilitated by the programme were instrumental in opening new business opportunities and fostering international exposure, offering connections to investors and partners. Support in business strategy and development helped beneficiaries refine their business models and operations, leading to business growth and job creation. Clear communication and coordination in the agribusiness and tech projects built trust and reliability among startups, leading to better engagement and outcomes. Continuous evaluation and responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs allowed the project to adjust and meet specific requirements effectively, resulting in positive outcomes. Training and networking opportunities, along with the presence of local coordinators well-connected within their ecosystems, fostered engagement and participation. The ambition and proactiveness of participants further enhanced the programme's success, as these individuals actively sought growth and international market engagement.
228. The evaluation identified several hindering factors for achieving programme outcomes, some within the programme's influence and others outside of it. External factors like security and geopolitical issues, such as the need for remote project activities due to safety concerns, posed significant barriers. The lack of vision and clarity among government authorities, stemming from political transitions and changes in personnel and priorities, disrupted ongoing collaborations and hindered long-term policy impacts. Macro-economic trends, including hyperinflation, market instability, commodity price fluctuations, and climate impacts on crops, negatively affected SME operations, particularly in the agribusiness sector.
229. Limited access to capital, which was a primary constraint in both sectors, preventing businesses from scaling operations or initiating new projects. In the agricultural sector, the lack of direct financial support for essential equipment and materials posed significant challenges. Many businesses required modern machinery and technology to enhance productivity, which the programme did not support sufficiently. Financial constraints, such as limited access to working capital and investment funds, hindered the ability to scale operations and invest in necessary upgrades. Regulatory and bureaucratic barriers, such as difficulties in obtaining necessary licenses, stalled business growth. The lack of direct matching of SMEs with adequate investors at international events was also a constraining factor. Additionally, limited resources to cover hotel or visa costs hindered some companies from participating in international events.

## Potential Impact Dimension 2: Transformational change

230. This section assesses two key questions under Impact Dimension 2. It examines whether the programme has generated inclusive and sustainable development and to what extent the programme already contributed to SDGs?

### Key findings potential impact dimension 2

231. The programme has demonstrated examples of successfully fostering inclusive and sustainable development through improved livelihoods. However, **for the majority of beneficiaries, sustainable and inclusive development in terms of livelihood improvement, is not successful yet.** While many SME'S have enhanced their businesses through improved organizational efficiency and strategic decision-making, the impact on livelihoods has not been uniformly positive. Nevertheless, the programme shows a strong positive trajectory and has made significant contributions to inclusive and sustainable development, through increased business figures, enhanced internationalisation, and higher employee numbers. The full economic impact is positive but is expected to become more evident over an extended period.
232. The programme's impact on SDGs is overall positive, though it varies between sectors, with more pronounced achievements observed in agriculture compared to technology. Notably, **in agriculture, the programme has excelled in fostering sustainable farming practices, enhancing gender equality (SDG 5), and promoting responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).** Initiatives such as dynamic agroforestry and support for women in cocoa processing have significantly advanced these goals. In contrast, while the programme has facilitated decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) in

the **technology sector, its impact on specific SDGs like gender equality (SDG 5) and climate action (SDG13) has been less impactful.**

### Detailed Analysis & Findings

Has the programme already generated inclusive and sustainable development through improved livelihood of communities / farmers / MSMEs / households (particularly for women and youth) through income generation and an increased share of the additional wealth created?

233. The evaluation team found notable improvements in the livelihoods and business operations of companies supported by the programme. However, sustainable development through improved livelihoods has not yet been achieved for the majority of beneficiaries. Significant growth in both employee numbers and operational scale was observed, with companies expanding into neighbouring countries, facilitated by the programme's assistance in internationalisation and export strategies. Financial capacity building measures, including securing bank loans, also facilitated internationalisation efforts, enabling some companies to expand from two to six agencies and significantly enhance their market share. The moderate quality of the M&E data does not allow for quantifying the impact on improved livelihoods but shows a clear positive trend (see Efficiency, dimension 2). Therefore, the evaluation team mainly relies on qualitative and survey data for assessing livelihoods.
234. In the agricultural sector, the programme has also contributed positively to the livelihoods of farmers and businesses. For instance, the programme enabled cocoa farmers to save and to acquire loans through VSLAs, enabling them to access revolving funds for farm investments or new income-generating activities. Additionally, the programme has helped businesses improve their value addition processes, expand market reach, and increase sales. Companies expanded operations from local manual setup to an industrial level, significantly boosting their market presence and sales. The programme's focus on job creation and formalization has also been notable, with including enterprises working with 450 women, providing them with stable income and improving their socioeconomic status.
235. Despite these successes, the evaluation shows that most beneficiaries primarily benefited from enhanced strategic and capacity-building support rather than immediate wealth creation thus far. Improved organizational efficiency, strategic decision-making, and enhanced contract acquisition capabilities were the predominant outcomes of the project activities. Survey data further corroborates these findings, showing that 34% of respondents in the agribusiness sector reported increased salaries for existing jobs, compared to 31% in the digital technology sector.

To what extent has the programme already contributed to SDG 1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 17?

236. **SDG 1 – No Poverty:** The evaluation team found that the programme has contributed to poverty reduction by creating job opportunities and supporting entrepreneurship. It has facilitated connections with key stakeholders and provided support for internationalisation and export strategies, resulting in substantial business growth and job creation. Nevertheless, the evaluation shows that **the programme has made a more substantial contribution to SDG 1 in the agricultural sector compared to the digital technology sector.** In the agricultural sector, the evaluation shows that the programme has effectively reduced poverty by creating stable income opportunities for local communities, addressing a critical need in rural areas. Initiatives such as dynamic agroforestry and VSLAs have not only increased productivity but also provided financial stability, significantly contributing to poverty alleviation. Through working with cooperatives, NTF V interventions have enhanced productivity and leveraged partnerships to pay the living income differential, significantly contributing to poverty eradication.
237. **SDG 5 – Gender Equality:** The evaluation shows that in the tech sector, the programme has promoted gender equality by supporting women-led businesses and providing gender-sensitive trainings. Companies co-founded by women have received significant support in a predominantly male-dominated field. However, the scale of gender equality measures in the tech sector is less pronounced due to the underrepresentation of women compared to the agricultural sector. In the agricultural sector, the programme has focused on empowering women through economic activities. It has significantly supported women in the cocoa processing space, with 2 out of every 3 processors directly supported by ITC being women, thus bridging the gender gap in the cocoa industry. Formalizing small-scale producers into structured business entities has provided a stable income for women, improving their economic stability and elevating their social status within their communities. Programme activities have empowered women to save funds and invest in their farms or start new income-generating activities.
238. **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:** The evaluation shows that the programme has driven economic growth and provided decent work by enhancing production capacities, improving market

access, and creating jobs. The training provided has enabled businesses to enhance their technical and strategic capabilities, contributing to better job quality and business expansion, thereby enhancing the employability and skills of the workforce. By defining and supporting startups, the project contributes to sustained, inclusive economic growth and supports decent job creation, particularly through entrepreneurship and innovation. In the agricultural sector, the programme has helped farmers raise and diversify their incomes, addressing SDG 8. Farmers are earning more, producing more, and having access to technology.

239. **SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** The evaluation shows that the programme has significantly contributed to building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation. By providing necessary infrastructure, such as office space, and facilitating innovative practices through technological integration, the programme has laid a strong foundation for business growth. The programme supports technological innovation by providing resources and training for digital marketing, export development, and internationalisation strategies, leading to new platforms and improved operational efficiency. Additionally, the focus on supporting tech startups and improving business models directly contributes to sustainable industrialization and innovation. Expansion plans, including establishing a physical presence in new regions, demonstrate the programme's commitment to industrial growth and innovation. In the agricultural sector, the programme supports industrial development and innovation by providing businesses with the tools and knowledge to improve their production processes. This includes adopting modern equipment and technologies, such as semi-automated machinery, which has enhanced production efficiency and product quality.
240. **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production:** The evaluation shows that while specific environmental impacts or sustainability practices were not detailed extensively in the digital technology sector, the project encourages startups to focus on sustainability and responsible production methods. Examples include businesses promoting recycling and sustainability among startups, aligning directly with fostering responsible consumption and production patterns. Additionally, workshops on climate change and green growth underline the programme's commitment to environmental sustainability. In the agricultural sector, the **programme has contributed to environmental protection by introducing sustainable farming practices and providing additional income sources** beyond cocoa. The programme encourages sustainable practices by promoting zero-waste policies and eco-friendly packaging solutions. Companies have implemented practices to recycle and repurpose waste materials, such as transforming fruit waste into cosmetic products or animal feed. This not only reduces environmental impact but also adds value to by-products, contributing to more sustainable consumption and production.
241. **SDG 13 – Climate Action:** In the tech sector, the programme has contributed to climate action through **various initiatives aimed at reducing CO2 emissions and addressing climate change**. Beneficiaries have participated in workshops and initiatives focused on understanding and mitigating their environmental impact. Training sessions on the intersection of climate and technology have also been organized, making these topics relevant to tech companies. In the agricultural sector, the programme's emphasis on sustainable practices has significantly contributed to climate action. Businesses have adopted environmentally friendly production methods, such as using renewable energy sources and implementing pyrolysis systems to recycle waste into energy. These practices help reduce carbon footprints and promote greener production processes. Activities like climate-smart cocoa and agroforestry practices have addressed climate change problems.
242. **SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals:** The evaluation shows that the programme has underscored the critical role of partnerships in advancing sustainable development goals. In the digital technology sector, it has effectively fostered collaboration among government, private sector, and international entities such as ITC, establishing a robust partnership model. Participation in global networks and fairs as well as exposure to best practices have underscored the importance of these partnerships, contributing significantly to broader economic and developmental objectives. Networking opportunities, joint ventures, and international collaborations have proven pivotal in advancing sustainable development goals. Similarly, in the agricultural sector, the programme has fostered partnerships at both local and international levels, enhancing collaboration, knowledge sharing and technical support through organizations like GIZ. These efforts have bolstered public-private alliances, particularly in the cocoa production and processing ecosystem.



### 3.6 Potential sustainability

243. The evaluation team assessed the NTF V programme against two dimensions of sustainability: (1) Building and enabling environment for sustainable development, and (2) prospective sustainability.

#### Potential Sustainability dimension 1: Building and enabling environment for sustainable development

244. This section evaluates three key questions under Sustainability Dimension 1. It examines whether the necessary financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities are in place to sustain the net benefits and if management sufficiently engages with partners to agree on an exit strategy. Additionally, it examines the steps taken by the projects/programme to establish national ownership.

#### Key findings sustainability dimension 1

245. The NTF V programme has **successfully established a basis for social, environmental, and institutional sustainability**. The evaluation team found that the programme significantly strengthened the institutional capacities of key partners, thereby enhancing the potential sustainability of programme activities. However, **ensuring long-term financial sustainability of programme activities remains not sufficiently addressed**, lacking a detailed action plan for future years. Additionally, the evaluation found that while the programme successfully imparted a high level of knowledge, ownership, and skills among beneficiaries and partners, the institutionalized processes with partner BSOs intended to ensure their continuation of programme activities after its conclusion are **insufficient to sustain programme outcomes**.
246. The programme has **not sufficiently advanced in defining and formalizing an exit strategy**. The ongoing discussions and preparatory steps with partners have yet to result in concrete strategies or concepts that need to be internalised by the stakeholders involved for successful continuation. Despite the programme's focus on sustainability at the beneficiary level, the lack of a formal exit plan endangers the sustainability of the programme. The **current focus on ongoing beneficiary support must not jeopardize the long-term planning and implementation of the programme exit**. Nonetheless, a strong consensus among key partners on the exit strategy's components and objectives highlights a shared commitment to sustaining the programme's outcomes. As the processes of jointly defining, sharing, accepting, and owning the strategy take time for all stakeholders, the development and formalization are urgently needed.
247. The NTF V programme has **successfully achieved a high level of national ownership through its multifaceted approach**. By extensively engaging stakeholders, aligning with national priorities, and implementing robust capacity-building initiatives, the programme has achieved the goal of establishing national ownership across the involved countries.

#### Detailed Analysis & Findings

Are financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain the net benefits over time in place?

248. The evaluation found that the **programme successfully established a basis for social, environmental, and institutional sustainability, but financial capacities are needed** to sustain the net benefits over time in place. The evaluation found that funding for programme implementation has been stable, with no delays in releasing funds for project activities. The budget allocated to each activity has remained consistent, ensuring that financial resources are available as planned. However, the evaluation shows that the financial sustainability post-project is neither planned nor assured. While specific strategies, such as an allocated budget of USD 70,000 per country to maintain activities and support missions, have been confirmed, the long-term financial sustainability beyond this allocation is not defined. The programme has embedded sustainability within its activities, such as the ToT initiatives aimed at equipping local experts and training future startups. Despite these efforts, the sustainability of individual support to companies, startups, and farmers is not assured, indicating a need for more robust financial strategies.
249. The programme has made significant strides in building social capacities through extensive training and capacity-building initiatives, focusing on women and young entrepreneurs. The evaluation found that these efforts contribute to social development by enhancing skills and creating job opportunities. The project has also transferred expertise to local partners, ensuring that they possess the necessary skills to sustain outcomes post-project. Through well-structured training sessions, the programme

fostered the integration of commercial management and digital marketing into daily operations, enhancing long-term capacity and sustainability at the company level.

250. The evaluation found that the programme actively promoted environmental sustainability, particularly through dynamic agroforestry models and value-addition initiatives in the agricultural sector. These sustainable farming practices have increased productivity and provided financial stability, contributing to poverty alleviation. The programme's emphasis on sustainable practices, such as climate-smart cocoa and agroforestry, addresses climate change issues and introduces sustainable farming methods, contributing to additional income sources beyond traditional crops.
251. The programme has strengthened institutional capacities for startups, companies and BSOs and fostered collaborations among various stakeholders, including local partners and international organizations. These efforts include supporting governance restructuring for BSOs and providing guidance on sustainability for companies. Efforts to institutionalize training programmes and networking opportunities, such as through participation in international forums, have been instrumental in embedding sustainability within local institutions. The long-term sustainability of these efforts depends on the commitment and follow-through of the local partners.
252. The evaluation found that relevant institutions and stakeholders are well-prepared and capable of effectively managing and maintaining the programme's outcomes. Their active participation from the onset has fostered a strong sense of ownership and commitment towards the project's goals. The evaluation identified that capacities have been strengthened in areas such as operational practices, business plans, internal management, and sustainable farming practices. These enhanced capacities have significantly improved companies' internal procedures and efficiency, ensuring lasting benefits over time.
253. The programme has contributed to the strengthening of BSOs, which are now more established and actively collaborating with similar BSOs in other African countries. However, the evaluation shows that while the programme has contributed to the strengthening of BSOs, **there is still a need to better coordinate and include them in programme procedures and activities.** This would enable BSOs to independently sustain programme activities post-project.

*Is management successfully engaging into preparatory steps with key partners to agree on the terms of an exit strategy to ensure sustainability?*

254. The evaluation found that **the programme is not sufficiently advanced in defining an updated exit strategy.** While economic, social, and environmental sustainability has been a focus, the formalization of an exit strategy remains underdeveloped. A primary challenge for sustainability is ensuring that local partners continue the efforts initiated by the project. Although preparatory steps have been taken and discussions with partners are ongoing, the process of defining, sharing, and establishing the strategy has not yet occurred.
255. However, the efforts of the programme management, national coordinators, and programme partners regarding an exit strategy have not progressed beyond discussions. While project partners provided input during the formulation phase, detailed strategies or concepts have yet to be defined. The evaluation criticizes that in most countries, NTF V interventions focused more on ongoing support rather than formalizing an exit plan. Nevertheless, there is a strong consensus among key partners in the project countries on the components and objectives of the exit strategy, achieved through consultation and collaboration. This consensus is crucial as it ensures that all stakeholders are aligned and committed to the sustainability of the programme's outcomes.
256. The programme has implemented capacity-building measures to support the sustainability of activities at the beneficiary level. Activities such as internationalisation roadmaps help companies become more financially sustainable, and establishing associations and federations is crucial for institutionalizing the programme's outcomes. Extensive training programmes have been conducted to equip farmers, cooperatives, and SMEs with the skills needed for sustainability, covering topics like good agricultural practices, business management, digital tools, and compliance with international standards. Local staff have been trained to manage digital systems, embedding these solutions within local institutions. Measures such as ToT sessions for local institutions have been implemented to ensure sustainability through institutional support.

*What steps are the projects/programme taking to establish national ownership in each country?*

257. The evaluation found that the **programme employs a multifaceted approach to establish national ownership, emphasizing extensive stakeholder engagement, alignment with national priorities, and capacity-building initiatives.** By actively engaging various government bodies, local institutions,



and private sector stakeholders, the programme ensures its goals are aligned with national strategies and priorities. This collaborative approach guarantees that the project's objectives resonate with the broader economic and social goals of the participating countries. Involving stakeholders from the outset fosters a sense of national ownership and commitment to long-term engagement.

258. Furthermore, significant stakeholder buy-in indicates a promising move towards national ownership. The programme is establishing strong collaborations with local and regional organizations to create a lasting network and structure within the ecosystem. Efforts to build relationships with private companies are encouraged through regular stakeholder workshops and meetings, promoting continued investment and participation.
259. The programme also aligns with national priorities related to economic inclusion, gender equality, and digital transformation. Regular sessions with the programme team and national stakeholders focus on discussions about programme **improvement and co-creation, ensuring alignment with national goals**. By facilitating the co-creation of objectives with local partners through workshops and collaborative forums, the programme ensures that these objectives reflect unique national challenges and opportunities.

### Potential Sustainability Dimension 2: Prospective sustainability

260. This section assesses one key questions under Sustainability Dimension 2. It examines the factors that may influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project/programme.

#### Key findings potential sustainability dimension 2

261. **Supporting factors for achieving sustainability consist of (i) scaling programme activities, (ii) engaging with local partners, and (iii) transferring knowledge to local trainers.** However, challenges such as **inadequate financing, political risks and economic instability** are factors that may impede long-term sustainability. The programme demonstrates strong engagement with local partners and knowledge transfer, but the evaluation shows that scaling project activities and knowledge sharing throughout countries is not sufficiently implemented to achieve sustainability. While providing financing is not an explicit objective of the programme, the evaluation shows a critical gap in adequately addressing the substantial financial needs of SMEs and startups for their daily operations, investments, and scaling of businesses. Not addressing these issues may hinder the sustainability of programme activities on company level.

#### Detailed Analysis & Findings

[What are the factors that may influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project/programme including cross-cutting issues?](#)

262. **Scaling programme activities, engaging with local partners, and transferring knowledge to local trainers** are crucial factors for achieving sustainability. However, challenges such as inadequate financing, political risks and economic instability may impede long-term sustainability.
263. The evaluation shows that scaling programme activities and adopting them across different countries are crucial factors contributing to sustainability. Learning from diverse national experiences and integrating successful practices are essential for achieving long-term sustainability. Moreover, disseminate these insights to broader agendas are deemed necessary. Institutionalizing project outcomes within local government frameworks and dedicated organizations is vital for long-term sustainability.
264. Continued engagement and support from local partners are pivotal factors in achieving sustainability. Creating synergies with local startups, NGOs, and other organizations helps sustain the momentum. Improved coordination among stakeholders and leveraging shared resources can enhance the sustainability of project outcomes by aligning activities with national priorities.
265. The evaluation shows the importance of effective capacity building and knowledge transfer to local trainers and consultants. Equipping local stakeholders with the necessary skills and knowledge to further support businesses after the project concludes is a crucial factor for achieving long-term sustainability.
266. However, a critical threat to sustainability found by the evaluation team is the lack of continuous funding for companies and startups. Securing consistent financial resources is essential for sustaining project activities and scaling impact. Budget constraints often limit the scope of activities, impacting company's

ability to implement initiatives and sustain results over time. Insufficient direct financing for beneficiaries remains a significant barrier to scaling operations and meeting immediate financial needs.

267. Additionally, political risks, such as government policy changes, pose significant challenges to sustainability efforts, particularly initiatives like the startup act. It's important to note that the programme or project has no influence over these external factors. Despite these risks, the skills and knowledge imparted to participants are expected to retain value. On a micro level, economic instability, including fluctuations in input costs and market conditions, presents additional obstacles to SME sustainability. High input costs, limited access to resources, and economic uncertainties can hinder long-term viability.

## 4. Lessons Learned

268. This chapter synthesizes the key lessons learned across various dimensions of the programme's implementation. They are structured along both the success factors that contributed to its achievements and the weaknesses that hindered its full potential.

269. **Alignment with national priorities and strategic objectives:** The programme's objectives were well-aligned with the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC, as well as the national economic development plans in the target countries. This alignment ensured relevance and facilitated effective implementation.

270. **Comprehensive stakeholder engagement:** Strong stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities fostered a sense of ownership among local partners. This approach facilitated the integration of local insights and needs into the programme, enhancing its relevance and sustainability.

271. **Effective capacity building:** The programme successfully built the capacities of local partners and stakeholders through tailored training and knowledge transfer initiatives. This empowerment enabled beneficiaries to sustain and expand the programme's benefits independently.

272. **Adaptive and flexible approach:** The programme demonstrated adaptability and flexibility, particularly in response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This agility allowed for timely adjustments and maintained the programme's relevance in a rapidly changing environment.

273. **Inconsistent promotion of policy change:** Despite aligning with national sectoral priorities, the promotion of policy change within these sectors can be further improved. This gap was due to inconsistencies in incorporating the objective of systemic change into more detail into the project design.

274. **Lack of financial sustainability and exit strategy:** While project plans outline an exit strategy in their documentation, the programme lacks an updated and formalized exit strategy and a detailed action plan for future funding, which are critical for ensuring long-term sustainability. To mitigate risks to the continuity and lasting impact of the programme's outcomes action is required in this regard.

275. **Challenges in coordinating with other initiatives:** While the programme aligned well with other ITC and Dutch Ministry initiatives, there are opportunities for improved coordination and synergy with larger or overlapping initiatives. This could enhance the programme's effectiveness and reduce competition among similar interventions.

276. **Operational and administrative bottlenecks:** High administrative workloads for national coordinators and incomplete budget management hindered operational efficiency. These challenges are a risk to the programme's ability to deliver timely and quality outcomes consistently.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

277. Over the first three years of implementation, the NTF V programme has demonstrated its potential for strengthening the agribusiness and digital technology sectors in Ghana, Ethiopia, Senegal, Mali, Benin, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire. The remainder of the programme implementation provides opportunities to consolidate and build on the success achieved to date while continuing to optimise processes and focus on areas that will contribute to the programme's impact in the long term.

278. **Conclusion: The programme follows a relevant approach to the needs of the agribusiness and digital technology sectors in the seven implementing countries, offering a unique and relevant value to its beneficiaries while differentiating itself from other actors in the sectors.**

279. The NTF V programme design is anchored in systems thinking, recognising that strengthening each target sector requires a multi-level approach. By working at the policy, ecosystem, company, and market levels, the programme aims to comprehensively identify and address the needs of the agribusiness and digital technology sectors. Additionally, the programme has carved out a niche in the ecosystem by focusing on export readiness and internationalisation. The evaluation indicates that the programme has achieved a good balance by offering beneficiaries in both sectors a combination of training and practical business development support.
280. **Conclusion: The programme is effectively advancing the strategic priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and ITC thereby contributing to their objectives of strengthened international trade, digital transition and climate resilience. This has been achieved by an appropriate mainstreaming of strategic priorities into the programme design and close collaboration with both organizations during programme implementation to leverage institutional strengths and create synergies with overlapping initiatives, especially in areas such as access to finance and investment.**
281. The programme has leveraged institutional knowledge from previous ITC projects and has actively collaborated with other ITC divisions and programmes such as SheTrade and OpenTrade to ensure alignment with broader ITC strategies and objectives related to sustainable value chains, digital transformation, gender equality, green transition and youth empowerment. Additionally, by adopting proven ITC approaches and using internal resources and training materials, the programme ensures methodological consistency and effective application of organizational knowledge and expertise at the country level.
282. The Steering Group of the programme has enabled a close and strategic collaboration between the programme and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This has contributed to a good alignment between the programme and the work of the Ministry, whose focus on private sector development, food and nutrition security, climate change, and gender equality closely relates to the programme. By working on the digital technology sector and promoting agritech, the programme complements the Ministry's efforts in the agribusiness sector. The evaluation indicates that while agricultural value chains are a priority for the Ministry, digital transformation is a newer focus. However, the evaluation also indicates that the collaboration between the Ministry can be enhanced at the local level, particularly with Embassies and other Dutch initiatives. This would allow both parties to leverage institutional strengths and create synergies, especially concerning access to finance and investment, and agri-tech.
283. **Recommendation 1: To create stronger linkages with financial initiatives under the Ministry, particularly focusing on access to finance and investment**, the evaluation team recommends to:
284. **Actions:**
- 1.1 The representative of Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Steering Group can facilitate a strategic exchange between the programme management and key stakeholders in the DGGF, CFYE, and Orange Corners.
  - 1.2 Further identify potential areas of collaboration with regards to access to finance and investment for cohort members of the programme.
285. **Responsible:** Representative of Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Steering Group
286. **Period of implementation:** 2-3 months after evaluation
287. **Conclusion: The programme has effectively tailored its design and implementation to meet the needs and realities of local contexts. The presence of a local team member has been instrumental in this success, enhancing and establishing the reputation of ITC locally, as well as ensuring the quality of the programme. However, the evaluation team suggests that the current level of human resources at the local level is insufficient to meet the programme's scope and needs.**
288. In 2021, the programme was approved amidst ongoing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, which included increased poverty, disruptions to global supply chains, commodity price volatility, rising public debt, inflation, and currency depreciation. Recognizing these challenges, the programme team adopted an adaptive and flexible approach to programme design to maintain relevance in an uncertain and highly volatile environment. This approach resulted in a continuous and dynamic project design

process, with activities, priorities, resource allocation, and definition of targets adapted to changes in the national and sectoral landscapes.

289. Ensuring appropriate contextualisation heavily depends on the efforts of national coordinators, who are key implementers on the ground and have significantly established ITC's reputation in the countries. These coordinators possess extensive project knowledge and play a crucial role in representing the programme. The evaluation team found that their high level of engagement, support, and quality work demonstrates the significant impact this dedicated personnel has on the quality and success of the programme. However, the evaluation also noted that, given the programme's multi-level scope, numerous activities, and objectives, national coordinators often face high workloads and must respond to various demands constantly, indicating a mismatch between available resources on the ground and the ambitious goals of the programme.
290. **Recommendation 2: To ensure a strengthened position of national coordinators**, the evaluation team recommends to:
291. **Actions:**
- 2.1 Redefine the responsibility profiles of national coordinators to assess how much each person can and should handle and possibly increase the number of personnel at the national level. This review should also identify which tasks can be delegated or managed elsewhere, ensuring a balanced workload and optimal efficiency.
  - 2.2 Consider hiring assistants for the national coordinators.
292. **Responsible:** Programme management
293. **Period of implementation:** 2 months after evaluation
294. **Conclusion: At midterm, the NTF V programme is on track to achieve or surpass its intended objectives by the end of its implementation. The programme's results are well aligned with the programme's reconstructed theory of change, suggesting it is likely to achieve its goal of systemic change as a contribution to trade and competitiveness by the end of the implementation period. To ensure this, the programme will need to focus on specific pathways of change, particularly regarding its interventions at the policy level, access to finance and investment, and further enabling synergies in agri-tech.**
295. The evaluation shows that the programme is on track to achieving or overachieving its intended objectives by the end of the programme implementation. The evaluation shows that most indicators across projects have completed at least 50% of their intended targets, with a significant portion of indicators exceeding 100% of their goals.
296. The programme's achievements in the digital technology sector are closely aligned with the pathways of change in the reconstructed ToC, enhancing the performance of BSOs and the competitiveness of MSMEs. By collaborating with BSOs and tech hubs, the programme has empowered these organizations to provide more efficient and tailored support, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation. Beneficiaries have gained tools and resources to improve business models, increase operational efficiency, and access international markets. However, challenges remain in achieving results along the intended pathways of change for enabling ecosystems due to external factors affecting policy-level impact and securing funding and investment for MSMEs.
297. The evaluation team found that the programme's achievements in the agribusiness sector, particularly in resilient business models and value chain competitiveness, align well with the pathways of change in the reconstructed ToC. The programme's focus on policy alignment, capacity building, and awareness-raising fosters an environment conducive to sustainable practices and improves beneficiaries' competitiveness through digital technologies and export readiness. However, there are weaker links regarding public-private alliances and business investment opportunities. While the programme promotes public-private alliances and strengthens ecosystems, several assumptions—such as stakeholder commitment and political stability—must be met for regulatory changes to occur. Although the programme has enhanced MSMEs' exposure to international markets and investment readiness, access to funding remains a significant challenge.
298. The programme aims to enhance agri-tech by increasing the digitalization of agribusiness value chains through awareness, strategic investment, and improved digital readiness. It has created platforms for exchange and improved collaboration between digital tech providers and agribusiness actors. However, the synergies have reached only a small portion of beneficiaries, with limited uptake of digital solutions

due to mismatches in technological offerings and digital maturity, as well as high costs. Thus, while progress has been made in advancing digital transformation, more efforts are needed to align with the programme's pathways of change.

299. **Recommendation 3: To improve (i) a streamlined and intentional approach to systemic change and (ii) effective mainstreaming of targeted SDGs at all levels of the programme**, the evaluation team recommends to:

300. **Actions:**

3.1 Use the reconstructed theory of change developed for this evaluation to review and revise the interlinkages between impact-level objectives, outcome-level objectives, and expected outputs.

3.2 Identify and document the critical assumptions that need to be met for each pathway of change. Put a focus on risks and assumption at the policy level approach and access to finance and investment. Also consider adding an outcome indicator to measure systemic change at the policy level (which is currently missing).

3.3 Conduct workshops with national coordinators to validate the revised strategy in the theory of change and ensure a common understanding of the pathways of change and underlying assumptions, especially against the realities of national contexts.

3.4 Use the identified assumptions and findings of the workshop to develop a detailed plan that addresses priority areas throughout the last year of programme implementation.

301. **Responsible:** Programme management

302. **Period of implementation:** 1 month after evaluation

303. **Conclusion: The programme follows a pragmatic and agile implementation approach which has significantly contributed to its relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency. By focusing on practical solutions and maintaining a high degree of adaptability, the programme has consistently delivered significant value, demonstrating an exemplary model of responsive and efficient project management.**

304. The programme adheres to an agile and pragmatic management and implementation approach. This methodology prioritizes practical solutions applicable to real-world scenarios and emphasizes continuous adaptation and improvement through iterative cycles. The primary objective of this approach is to deliver value both promptly and efficiently, ensuring a dynamic response to evolving circumstances and stakeholder feedback. The evaluation shows that this approach is significantly contributing to the overall success of the programme as it enhances its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

305. The evaluation team noted that the programme team has established formal and informal mechanisms to identify needs and priorities throughout the programme life cycle, ranging from in-depth company diagnostics during the inception phase of the programme, to an agile and feedback-driven implementation and design of activities. The evaluation showed that this ongoing effort has ensured that the programme remains responsive and relevant to the evolving needs of its beneficiaries.

306. Funds were reallocated based on actual needs, allowing the project to respond to the evolving requirements of SMEs and BSOs. This approach minimized resource wastage and directed investments towards high-impact activities, ensuring resources were used where most needed. The ability to adjust budget allocations for unforeseen activities or higher-than-expected costs, such as consultant fees, highlights the project's adaptive financial management.

307. The evaluation team found that the project's flexibility, particularly its emphasis on feedback-driven adjustments, ensured that activities remained relevant and effective. Continuous assessments and stakeholder engagement were integral to tailoring interventions to meet the highest quality standards. Feedback mechanisms, such as evaluation forms after training sessions and regular stakeholder consultations, allowed the project to continuously refine its activities. This approach enhanced the project's impact and ensured it addressed the actual needs of beneficiaries.

308. **Conclusion: To enhance the programme's accountability and facilitate learning, it is important to focus on the refinement and optimisation of the existing data management systems, encompassing both the monitoring and financial data management components.**

309. The monitoring system suffers from issues related to clarity and consistency in presenting indicators, as some indicators in the M&E framework are absent from official reports. Moreover, the system exhibits shortcomings in data quality. During the evaluation, significant discrepancies were found between the



reported figures and the results obtained from replicating calculations for the programme's main indicators. Agricultural and tech sectors maintain their own monitoring systems and dashboards, with data only aggregated on the ITC portal, opening the room for calculation errors and providing partial overview of programme progress to team members of each sector. The evaluation also identified a lack of comprehensive financial data which suggests the issues found for the monitoring system are also present in financial data management.

310. **Recommendation 4:** To improve the data quality by improving the M&E system, the evaluation team recommends to:

311. **Action 4.1:**

4.1.1 Develop comprehensive definitions and guidelines for all monitoring system components to standardize processes and data interpretation.

4.1.2 Develop and implement a comprehensive programme level dashboard that integrates data from both sectors into a unified system, providing a better overview and ensuring that all relevant data is accessible at a higher, overarching level. Therefore, align the dashboards of both sector with each other.

4.1.3 In the long term, a browser based digital system is recommended that allows to have different workspaces for the sector but can also aggregate data easily. With the current timeline, this is not seen as still possible but rather short term adjustments are recommended.

312. **Responsible:** Programme's M&E focal point.

313. **Action 4.2:**

4.2.1 Optimize financial planning at the programme level. Continuously plan, monitor, and evaluate resource allocation across different components.

4.2.2 Reallocate underspendings from previous years to minimize wastage and direct investments towards high-impact activities more consciously.

4.2.3 Make a detailed financial planning for the remaining period to allow for financing regarding adapted approaches.

314. **Responsible:** Programme management and national coordinators

315. **Period of implementation:** Immediately after the evaluation

316. **Conclusion:** The programme has laid a strong foundation for sustainability. However, it must allocate resources towards developing a deliberate exit strategy. This includes collaborating with key local and international stakeholders to ensure the programme's results are sustained over time.

317. The NTF V programme has notably strengthened institutional capacities among key partners, establishing a foundation for social, environmental, and institutional sustainability. However, gaps remain in ensuring long-term financial sustainability due to the absence of a comprehensive action plan for future funding. Furthermore, the institutionalized processes with partner BSOs are deemed insufficient to maintain programme outcomes post-conclusion. The programme has effectively promoted national ownership through extensive stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities, with robust capacity-building initiatives reinforcing these achievements across participating countries. Despite these advancements, the programme lacks a formalized exit strategy, which jeopardizes its long-term sustainability. Although ongoing discussions with partners are in progress, they have not yet produced concrete strategies, underscoring the urgent need for the development and consensus on the exit plan's components and objectives.

318. **Recommendation 5:** To create a comprehensive exit and sustainability plan for the remaining programme duration, the evaluation team recommends to:

319. **Actions:**

5.1 Continue developing an exit and sustainability strategy collaboratively with programme partners while focussing on how support can steadily be reduced. Furthermore, develop contingency plans in case of dramatic changes in political priorities or security situations in some countries. Focus on the financial sustainability of key partners and actions.

5.2 Communicate the exit and sustainability strategy to all stakeholders involved to ensure mutual understanding and to increase ownership further.

5.3 Implement the strategy within the programme to create ownership of future roles and responsibilities.

320. **Responsible:** Programme management and national coordinators

321. **Period of implementation:** 3-6 months after evaluation

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## Annex B: Evaluation Matrix

| Dimension   | Evaluation questions   | Judgment criteria (evaluation issue)  | Evaluation Indicators   | Data Collection and Sources   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Evaluation criteria: Relevance</b>                                       |  |   |   |   |
| <b>Relevance dimension 1: Responding to needs, policies, and priorities</b> | 1. To what extent do the NTF V project and programme objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities?                        | 1.1. Alignment of NTF V programme design with beneficiary needs   | 1.1.1. Extent to which programme objectives and activities directly address identified beneficiary needs<br>1.1.2. Existence and quality of mechanisms to gather beneficiary feedback   | <b>Document review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy and institutional documents</li> <li>- Programme documents</li> <li>- Project documents</li> </ul> <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG</li> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> <li>- NPSC</li> <li>- Beneficiaries</li> <li>- Dutch government staff</li> <li>- ITC staff</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>NLP (SDG Mapper)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project documents</li> </ul> |
|   |  | 1.2. Alignment of NTF V programme design with the policy priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and programmatic priorities of ITC. | 1.2.1. Extent to which programme objectives are directly linked to key policy priorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands<br>1.2.2. Extent to which programme objectives are directly linked to strategic/programmatic priorities of ITC |   |
|   |  | 1.3. Alignment of the NTF V programme design with national sectoral needs, policies, and development priorities   | 1.3.1. Degree of consistency between programme objectives and national development priorities as outlined in official documents (e.g., national development plans, sectoral policies)   |   |
|   | 2. Do the projects and the programme align with and support national development plans and priorities, including the SDG 1; SDG 5; SDG 8; SDG 9; SDG 12; SDG 13; and SDG 17?                           | 2.1. Alignment of the NTF V programme design with national economic development plans   | 2.1.1. Extent to which programme objectives and activities are directly linked to national economic development priorities.   |   |
|   |  | 2.2. Level of SDG mainstreaming in the NTF V programme design   | 2.2.1. Extent to which SDGs are explicitly addressed in programme objectives and activities.  |   |
|   | 3. Do the programme results respond to the needs of all stakeholders (including women and youth, and the poor and disabled) as identified at the design stage?   | 3.1. Inclusivity and equity considerations in the programme design  | 3.1.1. Existence of specific programme activities and outputs targeting the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized and underrepresented groups   |   |
|   | 4. Do stakeholders have a good understanding of the projects and/or the programme?   | 4.1. Stakeholders' understanding of the programme and project scope, objectives, activities, and expected results   | 4.1.1. Level of stakeholders' knowledge and awareness of the programme and project objectives and activities<br>4.1.2. Stakeholders' perceptions of the relevance and importance of project activities  |   |
| <b>Relevance Dimension 2: Being Sensitive and Responsive to the Context</b> | 5. Was the programme and project design and theory of change (ToC) appropriately adapted to the contexts in each country?  | 5.1. Consideration of national contexts in the overall programme and project design   | 5.1.1. Extent to which contextual factors (e.g., political, social, economic) have been incorporated into programme design documents.   |   |
| <b>Relevance Dimension 3: Integrating Inclusion</b>                         | 6. To what extent were cross-cutting dimensions (human rights and gender equality; inclusion of youth; green growth, and social responsibility) reflected in the design of the programme and projects? | 6.1. Level of integration of cross-cutting dimensions in the NTF V programme design and implementation  | 6.1.1. Extent to which cross-cutting themes have been integrated into programme objectives and activities   |   |
|   | 7. Has integrating these cross-cutting issues been relevant to achieving the goals and results of the programme so far?  | 7.1. Contribution of integrating cross-cutting issues to advancing the programme's goals and objectives   | 7.1.1. Perceived relevance of cross-cutting issues to the achievement of outcomes   |   |

| Dimension   | Evaluation questions   | Judgment criteria (Evaluation issues)   | Evaluation Indicators  | Data Collection and Sources  |   |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Evaluation Criteria: Coherence</b>   |  |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Dimension Coherence 1: Internal Coherence</b>  | 1. How do the different projects within the NTF V programme fit together and create synergies to achieve the programme's objective?  | 1.1. Complementary and synergies between the programme's agribusiness and technology tracks and their contribution to the programme's objectives  | 1.1.1. Level of collaboration and exchange between stakeholders involved in the agribusiness and technology tracks.<br>1.1.2. Evidence of knowledge or resource sharing between agribusiness and technology components leading to enhanced outcomes. | <b>Document review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy and institutional documents</li> <li>- Programme documents</li> <li>- Project documents</li> </ul> <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG</li> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> <li>- NPSC</li> <li>- Beneficiaries</li> <li>- Dutch government staff</li> <li>- ITC staff</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Ecosystem Mapping</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project documents</li> <li>- Interview data</li> </ul> |   |
|   |  | 1.2. Complementarity and synergies between projects and their contribution to the programme's objectives  | 1.2.1. Degree of alignment between individual project objectives and overall programme goals.  |  |   |
|   | 2. What are the compatibility and synergies of the NTF V Programme within ITC with projects and programmes other than NTF V?   | 2.1. Alignment and consistency of the NTF V programme with other projects and programmes at ITC   | 2.1.1. Extent to which there are shared objectives or thematic areas between the NTF V programme and other programmes of ITC.  |  | 2.1.1. Degree of collaboration and coordination between the NTF V programme and other projects and programmes within ITC.   |
|   |  |   | 3.1. Alignment and consistency between the NTF V programme and other programmes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and CBI  |  | 3.1.1. Extent to which there are shared objectives or thematic areas between the NTF V programme and other programmes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CBI.<br>3.1.2. Degree of coordination and communication between the NTF V programme and other programs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CBI. |
|   | 3. What are the compatibility and synergies of the NTF V Programme with the Ministry's programmes, including at CBI?   | 4.1. Alignment of the NTF V programme with other Dutch instruments such as Programmatic Approach Sustainable Economic Development (PADEO) and the 'combi tracks' (e.g., PADEO in Ghana, and combi tracks in Senegal and Ghana)? | 4.1.1. Level of compatibility and consistency between the NTF V programme and other Dutch instruments  |  |   |
| <b>Coherence Dimension 2: External Coherence</b>  | 5. Regarding external coherence, is the programme compatible and consistent with the interventions of other actors' interventions (aside from ITC and the Ministry) in the same countries and sectors? | 5.1. Compatibility and consistency of the NTF V programme with interventions of other actors in the same countries and sectors  | 5.1.1. Comparison between the NTF V programme and interventions of other actors in terms of objectives, approaches, target beneficiaries and expected results.   |  |   |
|   |  |   | 6.1. Alignment and complementarity of the NTF V programme with other trade-related interventions in each country   | 6.1.1. Comparison between the NTF V programme and other trade-related interventions in terms of objectives and target sectors  |   |
|   | 6. How well does the programme complement other trade-related interventions in each country?   | 7.1. Complementarity and harmonization with other relevant actors   | 7.1.1. Identification of areas of complementarity between the NTF V programme and other relevant actors in terms of objectives and activities.   |  |   |
|   |  |   | 7.2. Mitigation of duplicated efforts  | 7.2.1. Level of collaboration and coordination mechanisms established at programme and project level to enhance complementarity and harmonization with other relevant actors.<br>7.2.2. Mechanisms in place to identify and mitigate duplicated activities or resources between the NTF V programme and other relevant actors.   |   |
| 7. Has there been complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with other entities? If so, to what extent do the projects and the programme add value while avoiding duplication of effort? |  |   |  |  |   |

| Dimension  | Evaluation questions  | Judgment criteria (Evaluation issues)  | Indicators  | Data Collection and Sources   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Evaluation Criteria: Effectiveness</b>  |   |  |   |   |   |
| <b>Dimension Effectiveness 1: Achievement of the objectives and influencing factors</b>                              | 1. Were baseline data established to measure progress?  | 1.1. Availability of baseline monitoring data  | 1.1.1. Existence of baseline data for key indicators.<br>1.1.2. Degree of completeness and accuracy of baseline data.<br>1.1.3. Timeliness of baseline data collection in relation to programme and project start date. | <b>Document review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme documents</li> <li>- Project documents</li> </ul> <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Secondary data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project M&amp;E data</li> </ul> |   |
|  | 2. To what extent are the NTF V projects and the programme expected to achieve their objectives, and their attributable results along the causal pathways of the NTF V ToC?             | 2.1. Existing progress in project outcomes   | 2.1.1. Level of progress as measured by outcome-level indicators  |   |   |
|  |   | 2.2. Contribution of project activities and outputs to existing outcomes   | 2.2.1. Relationship between project activities and outputs and identified outcomes  |   |   |
|  |   | 2.3. Enabling factors of identified outcomes   | 2.3.1. Reported and type of enabling factors  |   |   |
|  |   | 2.4. Constraining factors to potential outcomes  | 2.4.1. Reported and type of constraining factors  |   |   |
|  | 3. Are there any results related to cross-cutting issues related to human rights and gender equality, youth, environment, and social responsibility that can be highlighted at midterm? | 3.1. Project contribution to cross-cutting issues related to human rights and gender equality, youth, environment, and social responsibility     | 3.1.1. Extent to which stakeholders report stories of change related to cross-cutting issues  |   |   |
|  | <b>Dimension Effectiveness 2: Differential results</b>  | 4. Can the results be distributed across different groups, in particular youth and women?  | 4.1. Equity of results across different target groups   |   | 4.1.1. Level of progress as measured by outcome-level indicators disaggregated by gender, age, and other key socio-demographic indicators |
|  |   | 5. Do all beneficiaries have access to the project/programme's deliverables (trainings, publications, etc.) and are they being used as intended? | 5.1. Access to project activities and outputs by all relevant beneficiaries   |   | 5.1.1. Extent to which target beneficiaries have accessed project activities or outputs   |
|  |   |  | 5.2. Perception and value-added of project activities by all relevant beneficiaries   |   | 5.2.1. Extent to which target beneficiaries report satisfaction with project activities and outputs                                       |
|  |   | 5.2.2. Extent to which target beneficiaries report positive outputs as a result of project activities  |   |   |   |
| 6. Are there any factors that prevent beneficiaries from accessing the results or services of the project/programme? |   | 6.1. Equity and inclusion consideration in project implementation  | 6.1.1. Reported and quality of barriers or challenges preventing certain groups from accessing project benefits   |   |   |
|  |   | 6.2. Barriers to access and participation in project activities and outputs  | 6.2.1. Nature and success of efforts to ensure equitable access to project activities and outputs   |   |   |

| Dimension   | Evaluation questions   | Judgment criteria (Evaluation issues)  | Evaluation Indicators   | Data Collection and Sources  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Evaluation criteria: Efficiency</b>  |  |  |   |  |
| <b>Dimension Efficiency 1: Economic Efficiency and Timeliness</b>   | 1. At midterm, have inputs (funds, expertise, human resources, time, etc.) been converted into outputs, outcomes and impacts (relative to the entire results chain), in the most cost-effective way possible, within the intended timeframe? | 1.1. Transformation of inputs to outputs (production efficiency)   | 1.1.1. Difference between planned budget figures and actual figures (production allocation)   | <b>Document review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme documents</li> <li>- Project documents</li> </ul> <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG</li> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> <li>- Beneficiaries</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Secondary data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project M&amp;E data</li> </ul> |
|   |  | 1.2. Transformation of outputs to outcomes (allocation efficiency)   | 1.2.1. Difference between planned budget figures and actual figures (production allocation)   |  |
|   | 2. Are the activities and outputs being delivered according to the quality requirements and the workplans?   | 2.1. Alignment of project implementation and outputs to quality requirements   | 2.1.1. Level of adherence to predefined quality standards for project activities and outputs  |  |
|   |  | 2.2. Timeliness of delivery compared to planned milestones.  | 2.1.2. Adherence to project workplans in terms of timelines and milestones<br>2.1.3. Level of flexibility in adjusting workplans to accommodate changing circumstances or priorities  |  |
|   | 3. Could the project/programme be delivered in a more efficient way, comparing with alternative ways of achieving the objectives?  | 3.1. Identification of alternative outcome delivery methods and comparative cost-effectiveness of alternative delivery methods.  | 3.1.2. Reported number and nature of alternative outcome delivery methods<br>3.1.3. Stakeholder feedback on the feasibility and suitability of identified alternative delivery methods  |  |
|   | <b>Dimension Efficiency 2: Operational Efficiency</b>  | 4. How well are the projects and programme managed in order to address operational efficiency, within ITC as well as the local project coordination teams?                         | 4.1. Adequacy of management structures and processes in promoting operational efficiency.   |  |
| 4.1.2. Level of stakeholder satisfaction with the responsiveness and efficiency of management structures and processes. |  |  |   |  |
| 5. How effective have the management arrangements been in the delivery of the projects and the programme?               |  | 5.1. Alignment of management arrangements with project and programme objectives<br>5.2. Effectiveness of communication and coordination mechanisms within management arrangements. | 5.1.1. Degree of consistency between management decisions and project/programme objectives.   |  |
|   |  |  | 5.2.1. Stakeholder perception and feedback about communication and coordination mechanisms  |  |
| 6. Is the Steering Group effective in its role of supporting and guiding the programme management?                      |  | 6.1. Contribution of the Steering Group to strategic decision-making and programme management team.  | 6.1.1. Level of engagement between programme management and the Steering Group<br>6.1.2. Stakeholder perception and feedback about engagement mechanisms and nature between programme management and the Steering Group   |  |
| 7. Was a monitoring system put in place that enabled effective management, implementation, and accountability?          |  | 7.1. Adequacy of monitoring system design in capturing relevant performance data.<br>7.2. Utilization of monitoring data for informed decision-making and accountability.          | 7.1.1. Alignment of monitoring data to ToC and logical frameworks<br>7.1.2. Data includes all necessary and relevant information without any gaps or missing elements.<br>7.1.3. Data is up-to-date and available within a suitable timeframe for decision-making and analysis. |  |
|   |  |  | 7.2.1. Level and nature of the use of monitoring data for learning and accountability   |  |

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
|  | 8. Are the NTF V project and programme results chains and indicators fit-for-purpose for systemic change approach, with an emphasis on learning and reflexive monitoring?       | 8.1. Alignment of results chains and indicators with systemic change objectives.              | 8.1.1. Number and nature of indicators directly linked to anticipated systemic change outcomes.   |
|  |   | 8.2. Incorporation of mechanisms for learning and adaptation within the monitoring framework. | 8.2.1. Type and perceived quality of tools and mechanisms to enable evidence-based learning such as reports, knowledge exchange sessions, etc.<br>8.2.2. Level of flexibility in the monitoring framework to accommodate changes and adaptations. |
|  | 9. What is the rate of implementation of the recommendations from the NTF IV final evaluation? Have these recommendations contributed to the efficiency of the NTF V Programme? | 9.1. Implementation rate of NTF IV recommendations.   | 9.1.1. Extent to which NTF IV recommendations have been implemented.<br>9.1.2. Stakeholder perception about the effectiveness of implemented NTF IV recommendations.  |
|  |   | 9.2. Impact of implemented recommendations on the efficiency of the NTF V Programme.          | 9.2.1. Perceived changes in programme efficiency and delivery as a result of recommendation and lessons learned from NTF IV   |



| Evaluation criteria  | Evaluation questions   | Judgment criteria (Evaluation issues)  | Evaluation Indicators  | Data Collection and Sources  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Evaluation criteria: (potential impact)</b>                 |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Dimension Impact 1: Significance and unintended effects</b> | 1. At midterm, to what extent has the programme generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?   | 1.1. Magnitude and significance of aggregate (programme-level) positive, negative, and unintended results  | 1.1.1. Extent to which impact level indicators that show progress as anticipated by the programme's monitoring system<br>1.1.2. Perceived and/or reported unintended and negative results        | <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> <li>- Beneficiaries</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Secondary data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project M&amp;E data</li> </ul> |
|  | 2. Can observed changes be linked to the programme's interventions?  | 2.1. Contribution of project interventions (incl. activities, outputs, and outcomes) to programme-level results  | 2.1.1. Relationship between programme level outcomes and activities as proposed by the ToC<br>2.1.2. Enabling factors to programme level outcomes<br>2.1.3. Barriers to programme level outcomes |  |
| <b>Dimension Impact 2: Transformational change</b>             | 3. Has the programme already generated inclusive and sustainable development through improved livelihood of communities / farmers / MSMEs / households (particularly for women and youth) through income generation and an increased share of the additional wealth created? | 3.1. Alignment of positive results to defined programme objectives of improved livelihoods of beneficiaries through income generation and increased wealth | 3.1.1. Extent to which beneficiaries report improved livelihoods and additional wealth as a result of programme interventions.   |  |
|  | 4. To what extent has the programme already contributed to SDG 1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 17?   | 4.1. Contribution of the programme to key SDGs   | 4.1.1. Extent to which outcome-level indicators related to specific SDGs show progress   |  |

| Evaluation criteria   | Evaluation questions   | Judgment criteria (Evaluation issues)  | Evaluation Indicators   | Data Collection and Sources  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Evaluation criteria: (potential sustainability)</b>  |  |  |   |  |
| <b>Dimension Sustainability 1: Building an enabling environment for sustainable development</b> | 1. Are financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain the net benefits over time in place?    | 1.1. Presence and adequacy of financial resources allocated for sustaining programme outcomes<br>1.2. Capacity of relevant institutions and stakeholders to effectively manage and maintain the programme's outcomes | 1.1.1. Extent to which budget has been allocated or secured for sustaining programme outcomes.<br>1.2.1. Extent to which processes and structures have been institutionalized to maintain programme outcomes.             | <b>Document review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme documents</li> <li>- Project documents</li> </ul> <b>Key Informant Interview</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme staff</li> <li>- Project staff</li> <li>- Beneficiaries</li> </ul> <b>FGD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Online Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beneficiaries (BSOs and MSMEs)</li> </ul> <b>Secondary data collection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme and project M&amp;E data</li> </ul> |
|   | 2. Is management successfully engaging into preparatory steps with key partners to agree on the terms of an exit strategy to ensure sustainability?      | 2.1. Level of collaboration and coordination between programme management and key partners in developing an exit strategy  | 2.1.1. Degree of involvement of key partners in the development of the exit strategy.<br>2.1.2. Level of consensus among key partners regarding the components and objectives of the exit strategy.                       |  |
|   | 3. What steps are the projects/programme taking to establish national ownership in each country?   | 3.1. Efforts to involve national stakeholders in programme design decision-making processes and project implementation   | 3.1.1. Extent to which mutual objectives have been defined to promote national ownership.   |  |
| <b>Dimension Sustainability 2: Prospective sustainability</b>                                   | 4. What are the factors that may influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project/programme including cross-cutting issues? | 4.1. Potential risks and challenges to programme sustainability, including social, economic, and environmental factors   | 4.1.1. Identification and categorization of potential risks and challenges to programme sustainability.<br>4.1.2. Existence of mitigation strategies or contingency plans for addressing identified risks and challenges. |  |

## Annex C: SDG Mainstreaming

**Background:** To facilitate the assessment of SDG mainstreaming into the programme's design and implementation, Mainlevel used the European Commission's 'SDG Mapper'.<sup>29</sup> This Natural Language Processing (NLP)-based tool was developed to assist in contextualizing policies and interventions within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. The tool examines the text of documents in relation to the SDGs and their interlinkages, offering statistical insights and visualizations regarding the occurrence and significance of a particular goal within the document's context.

**Hypotheses of change:** The main objective of the NTF V programme is to contribute to poverty alleviation and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular SDG 1, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12, SDG 13, and SDG 17 – through fostering systemic change and promoting the adoption of robust business models by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), larger companies, and their respective support networks.

**Paths of change:** According to its ToC, the programme contributes to SDG 1 by creating decent jobs and income-generating opportunities, lifting people out of poverty. Secondly, it promotes SDG 5 by fostering inclusive economic growth and providing equal opportunities for men and women in the workforce. Thirdly, it aligns with SDG 8 by generating employment and fostering entrepreneurship, leading to sustainable economic development. Fourthly, it supports SDG 9 by driving innovation and building resilient infrastructure in the agribusiness and digital technology sectors. Moreover, it addresses SDG 13 by promoting sustainable practices and technologies that mitigate environmental impact and promote climate resilience. Lastly, it advances SDG 17 by fostering collaboration between governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to achieve common development objectives. Overall, this outcome plays a crucial role in promoting inclusive and sustainable development, contributing to the achievement of multiple SDGs in the target countries.

**Analysis rationale:** Against this background, the evaluation team analysed key documentation using the SDG Mapper to understand the extent to which the design and implementation of the programme and project are aligned with the SDGs as originally intended. The underlying assumption is that project and programme activities are more likely to contribute to the SDGs if their design and implementation is compatible with the SDG framework.

**Assumptions:** This analysis operates under the assumption that the degree of SDG mainstreaming can be approximated by the prevalence of words and phrases directly tied to the SDG framework, including its goals and indicators. In other words, if a document contains a significant amount of text that is very compatible with the language and concepts of the SDG framework, it will be regarded as corresponding to a high level of SDG mainstreaming.

**Contribution to Evaluation Matrix:** The analysis will contribute to the data collection and analysis with insights for the following evaluation questions and corresponding judgement criteria and indicators:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Evaluation criteria</b>  | Relevance  |
| <b>Evaluation questions</b> | 2. Do the projects and the programme align with and support national development plans and priorities, including the SDG 1; SDG 5; SDG 8; SDG 9; SDG 12; SDG 13; and SDG 17?                           |
| <b>Judgment criteria</b>    | 2.1. Level of SDG mainstreaming in the NTF V programme design  |
| <b>Indicator</b>            | 2.1.1. Extent to which SDGs are explicitly addressed in programme objectives and activities.   |
| <b>Evaluation questions</b> | 6. To what extent were cross-cutting dimensions (human rights and gender equality; inclusion of youth; green growth, and social responsibility) reflected in the design of the programme and projects? |
| <b>Judgment criteria</b>    | 6.1. Level of integration of cross-cutting dimensions in the NTF V programme design and implementation   |
| <b>Indicator</b>            | 6.1.1. Extent to which cross-cutting themes have been integrated into programme objectives and activities  |
| <b>Evaluation criteria</b>  | Impact   |
| <b>Evaluation questions</b> | 4. To what extent has the programme already contributed to SDG 1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, and 17?   |
| <b>Judgment criteria</b>    | 4.1. Contribution of the programme to key SDGs   |
| <b>Indicator</b>            | 4.1.1. Extent to which outcome-level indicators related to specific SDGs show progress   |

<sup>29</sup> European Commission (2024). SDG Mapper, <https://knowsdgs.jrc.ec.europa.eu/sdgmapper>.

**Data sources:** To measure the target indicators of the analysis the evaluation team used the following documents:

| Target Indicators  | Document type  |
|--|--|
| <b>2.1.1. Extent to which SDGs are explicitly addressed in programme objectives and activities.</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme proposal: programme design</li> <li>• Project plans: project design</li> <li>• Annual reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023: implementation design</li> <li>• Steering group meetings: strategic decisions</li> <li>• Change control forms: modification in objectives</li> </ul>   |
| <b>6.1.1. Extent to which cross-cutting themes have been integrated into programme objectives and activities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme proposal: programme design</li> <li>• Project plans: project design</li> <li>• Annual reports for 2021, 2022 and 2023: implementation design</li> <li>• Steering group meetings: strategic decisions</li> <li>• Change control forms: modification in objectives</li> </ul>   |
| <b>4.1.1. Extent to which outcome-level indicators related to specific SDGs show progress</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024: summary of activities and outputs</li> <li>• Studies conducted in the context of the programme: output               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Tech Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Uganda”</li> <li>- BOPINC Digital Assessments</li> <li>- Value Chain Reports</li> <li>- Field trip reports and tech directories</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

Once all documents relevant for the different indicators were identified and collected, they were sorted into folders based on their relevance for an indicator. As the documents relevant for the analysis of evaluation indicators 2.1.1. and 6.1.1. were the same, they were stored together in one folder. However, as the documents necessary for the analysis of indicator 4.1.1. differed from those required to analyse the other indicators, these documents were stored in a second, separate folder.

Following this, in a subsequent step, the documents relevant for the analysis of evaluation indicator 2.1.1. and 6.1.1. were brought into formats that were accepted by the SDG mapping tool, and then uploaded to the tool’s online platform. As mentioned previously, the tool then applied basic natural language processing and text mining techniques, where-in based on a set of pre-specified keywords, the frequencies of the keywords in the documents were determined and then aggregated across the documents, to finally detect mentions of SDG goals, targets and indicators.

## Annex D: List of participants in the data collection process

### GHANA

#### Tech

| No | Company / Institution                                   | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|---|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (project manager)                                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | ITC (national coordinator)                              | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Embassy of the Netherlands                              | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Ministry of Environment Science Technology & Innovation | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme      | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | Ghana Young Entrepreneurship Chamber                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Kosmos Innovation Centre                                | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | The Enterprise Village                                  | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Npunto  | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Sustainable Energy Technologies Limited                 | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Hatua Technology  | Interview | 2                      |
| 12 | Recycle Up Ghana  | Interview | 1                      |
| 13 | Motito  | FGD       | 1                      |
| 14 | Think! Data   | FGD       | 1                      |
| 15 | Big Data Ghana  | FGD       | 1                      |
| 16 | Grow For Me   | FGD       | 1                      |
| 17 | Suku Technology   | FGD       | 1                      |
| 18 | ZuZo Technology   | FGD       | 1                      |

#### Agribusiness

| No | Company / Institution                               | Method | Number of participants |
|----|---|--------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (Ghana)   | KII    | 1                      |
| 2  | ITC (national coordinator)                          | KII    | 1                      |
| 3  | Adansi Sweet Ltd                                    | KII    | 1                      |
| 4  | Bioko Treats  | KII    | 2                      |
| 5  | 57 Chocolates                                       | KII    | 1                      |
| 6  | Midunu Chocolates                                   | KII    | 1                      |
| 7  | Niche Cocoa   | KII    | 2                      |
| 8  | Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG)            | KII    | 1                      |
| 9  | Cocoa Value Addition Artisans Association of Ghana  | KII    | 1                      |
| 10 | Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA)             | KII    | 1                      |
| 11 | Association of Ghana Industries (AGI)               | KII    | 1                      |
| 12 | Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Cooperative and marketing Union | KII    | 1                      |
| 13 | Plot Enterprise Ghana Limited                       | KII    | 1                      |
| 14 | NTF V - Geneva                                      | KII    | 1                      |
| 15 | Chocolate Mall                                      | FGD    | 2                      |
| 16 | Chocoluv  | FGD    | 2                      |
| 17 | Edible Treats                                       | FGD    | 1                      |
| 18 | Flexy Foods   | FGD    | 1                      |
| 19 | All Save Chocolates                                 | FGD    | 1                      |
| 20 | FairAfric   | FGD    | 2                      |

### ETHIOPIA

#### Tech

| No | Company / Institution      | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (project manager)      | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | ITC (national coordinator) | Interview | 1                      |



| No | Company / Institution                 | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 3  | Ministry of Innovation and Technology | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Ministry of Labor and Skills          | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Africom                               | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | ICT-ET                                | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Orbit Innovation Health               | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | Orbit Innovation Hub                  | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Outsourcing Association / R&D Group   | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Quanomic Engineering Services         | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Etech S.C.                            | Interview | 3                      |
| 12 | BeSingularity                         | Interview | 1                      |
| 13 | Task Moby                             | Interview | 1                      |

### Agribusiness

| No | Company / Institution                               | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|---|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (project manager)                               | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | Fair Trade Africa                                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority                  | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Ethiopian Coffee Association                        | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | ITC, national project coordinator                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | Ethiopian Women in Coffee Association               | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Limu Inara Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union        | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | Bench Maji Forest Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Oromia Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union            | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Kafa Forest Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union       | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Yirga Chefe Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union       | Interview | 1                      |
| 12 | Jeroccia Coffee Export                              | FGD       | 1                      |
| 13 | TYPICA Coffee                                       | FGD       | 1                      |
| 14 | Hadero Coffee                                       | FGD       | 1                      |
| 15 | Bethura's Coffee Roastery                           | FGD       | 1                      |
| 16 | Edido Coffee  | FGD       | 1                      |
| 17 | Aster Bunna   | FGD       | 1                      |
| 18 | Diamond Coffee Enterprise                           | FGD       | 1                      |
| 19 | Signature Addis                                     | FGD       | 1                      |

### SENEGAL

#### Tech

| No | Company / Institution                      | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|--|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination and management) | Interview | 2                      |
| 2  | Baamptu                                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Yowit                                      | Interview | 2                      |
| 4  | Kiwi                                       | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Yux design                                 | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | Polaris                                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Call Me                                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | EMC2                                       | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Tolbi                                      | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Lengo                                      | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Proxalys                                   | Interview | 2                      |
| 12 | SetTIC                                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 13 | Ambassade NL                               | Interview | 1                      |
| 14 | OPTIC                                      | Interview | 1                      |
| 15 | Ministère du Commerce/ ASEPEX              | Interview | 1                      |
| 16 | Ministère du Commerce/DCE                  | Interview | 1                      |

| No | Company / Institution | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|-----------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 17 | Senstartup            | Interview | 1                      |

**Agribusiness**

| No | Company / Institution            | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination)      | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | Casadeliz (TM & SARL)            | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | SCPL                             | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | GIE La casamancaise notre fierté | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Zena Exoticfruits                | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | Acasen                           | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Lysa & Co (SENAR)                | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | Idel Business Center             | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Ethicajou SA                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | FNDASP                           | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | ICAS                             | Interview | 1                      |

**FAST TRACK TECH****Uganda**

| No | Company / Institution       | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination) | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | Xente                       | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | NITA                        | Interview | 3                      |
| 4  | UEPB                        | Interview | 2                      |
| 5  | ICTAU                       | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | gnuGrid                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | ATIS                        | Interview | 3                      |
| 8  | Data Care                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Start-Up Uganda (Outbox)    | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Ensibuuko                   | Interview | 2                      |
| 11 | Hamwe                       | Interview | 3                      |
| 12 | Akello Banker               | Interview | 3                      |
| 13 | Chap Chap                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 14 | MobiPay                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 15 | Embassy of the Netherlands  | Interview | 1                      |
| 16 | Japotech                    | FGD       | 1                      |
| 17 | 3D Services                 | FGD       | 2                      |
| 18 | Clinic Master               | FGD       | 2                      |
| 19 | Zeenode Tech                | FGD       | 1                      |
| 20 | Tubayo                      | FGD       | 1                      |
| 21 | Waape                       | FGD       | 1                      |
| 22 | Sumic IT                    | FGD       | 2                      |

**Benin**

| No | Company / Institution       | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination) | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | AchataCredit                | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Agrosfer                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Aliment Benin               | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Azowato                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | BioLifeTechnologies         | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Fedapay                     | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | IziGroupe                   | Interview | 1                      |

| No | Company / Institution   | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|---|-----------|------------------------|
| 9  | Jinukun   | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Raynis  | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Rema  | Interview | 1                      |
| 12 | SliAfrica   | Interview | 1                      |
| 13 | TechnologyForever   | Interview | 1                      |
| 14 | Xobo  | Interview | 1                      |
| 15 | Ylomi   | Interview | 1                      |
| 16 | Epitech   | Interview | 1                      |
| 17 | FedSAEI   | Interview | 2                      |
| 18 | Technoserve   | Interview | 2                      |
| 19 | Conseiller Technique de la Ministre du numérique et de la digitalisation        | Interview | 1                      |
| 20 | Directeur de la Digitalisation (Ministère du numérique et de la digitalisation) | Interview | 1                      |
| 21 | Embassy of the Netherlands  | Interview | 1                      |

### Côte d'Ivoire

| No | Company / Institution        | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination)  | Interview | 2                      |
| 2  | Ahoko                        | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Homega                       | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Tenon Corporate              | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Yoli Brand                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | ICT4Dev                      | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Soutramarket                 | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | Oasis Corporate              | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Etudesk                      | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Mon Artisan                  | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Afrikapps                    | Interview | 1                      |
| 12 | CI20 (BSO)                   | Interview | 1                      |
| 13 | Fondation Jeunesse Numérique | Interview | 1                      |
| 14 | Ministère du digital         | Interview | 1                      |

### Mali

| No | Company / Institution   | Method    | Number of participants |
|----|---|-----------|------------------------|
| 1  | ITC (national coordination)   | Interview | 1                      |
| 2  | Jokkolabs Bamako  | Interview | 1                      |
| 3  | Mali Startups Association   | Interview | 1                      |
| 4  | Ancien chef de cabinet du ministere de l'economie numerique et conseiller a la presidence | Interview | 1                      |
| 5  | Prodevma  | Interview | 1                      |
| 6  | Yeratube  | Interview | 1                      |
| 7  | Passion Digitale  | Interview | 1                      |
| 8  | Ewaati  | Interview | 1                      |
| 9  | Agribox   | Interview | 1                      |
| 10 | Embassy of the Netherlands  | Interview | 1                      |
| 11 | Directeur national de l'economie numérique  | Interview | pending                |

## Annex E: Survey questionnaire

**Background:** For the implementation of the survey, the evaluation team used Kobo Toolbox, an open-source digital survey tool known for its versatility in both online and offline data collection. The decision to employ Kobo Toolbox rested on three primary factors. Firstly, it aligned with data protection standards, being fully GDPR compliant as its servers were hosted in Ireland. Secondly, Kobo Toolbox offered a robust suite of features for survey customization and translation, facilitating the adaptation of surveys to diverse respondent groups and languages. Thirdly, its compatibility with various data analysis tools such as Excel, R, and Power BI ensured a simple integration into the data analysis workflow.

Utilizing accessible digital tools like Kobo Toolbox enhanced the likelihood of achieving a high response rate and minimized missing data and effort during data cleaning. To optimize participation, several key considerations guided the survey design. Survey fatigue, a common challenge in populations previously surveyed, was addressed by developing concise and easily understandable questions. Most questions were closed-ended, simplifying response options, and, where applicable, the evaluation team employed a five-point Likert scale to capture nuanced attitudes and perceptions efficiently. Additionally, filter logic tailored the survey experience for different respondent groups, ensuring relevance and engagement. Voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were emphasized to foster honest feedback, particularly regarding sensitive project aspects.

The survey questionnaire was developed collaboratively with stakeholders at ITC, aligning with pertinent questions from the Evaluation Matrix and the defined target audience. Iterative feedback loops with stakeholders refined question phrasings, logic, and translations to make the survey available in English and French. Testing preceded the survey rollout to ensure functionality and user-friendliness.

The survey was implemented across five countries through a structured approach designed to maximize response rates and data quality. A three-week data collection period was initiated, during which respondents were invited to participate in the survey. Throughout the survey duration, proactive measures were taken to sustain respondent engagement and minimize attrition. Mid-point reminders were sent to prompt those who had not yet participated, while pre-closure reminders served as a final call to action. The survey is presented below:

*Survey implementation*

| Country       | Track | Survey |
|---------------|-------|--------|
| Ghana         | Tech  | Yes    |
| Ghana         | Agri  | Yes    |
| Ethiopia      | Tech  | Yes    |
| Ethiopia      | Agri* | -      |
| Senegal       | Tech  | Yes    |
| Senegal       | Agri  | Yes    |
| Uganda        | Tech  | Yes    |
| Benin         | Tech* | -      |
| Mali          | Tech  | Yes    |
| Côte d'Ivoire | Tech* | -      |

**Note:** \* These projects were excluded from the survey either based on the recommendation of the project management team or because all beneficiaries participated in the interviews/focus group discussions.

In the online survey targeting 160 companies, the evaluation team received 84 responses, reflecting a robust response rate of 52.50%. Only two companies did not grant consent for recording their information, opting out from the survey.

*Survey Responses*

| Country           | Track | Target | Responses |
|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------|
| Ghana             | Tech  | 38     | 20        |
| Ghana             | Agri  | 16     | 13        |
| Ethiopia          | Tech  | 40     | 11        |
| Ethiopia          | Agri  | -      | 1         |
| Senegal           | Tech  | 48     | 27        |
| Senegal           | Agri  | 1      | 2         |
| Uganda            | Tech  | 5      | 4         |
| Benin             | Tech  | -      | -         |
| Mali              | Tech  | 12     | 6         |
| Côte d'Ivoire     | Tech  | -      | -         |
| <b>Total</b>      |       | 160    | 84        |
| <b>No consent</b> |       |        | 2         |

## Midterm Evaluation of the Netherlands Trust Fund V Programme

Dear participant,

We thank you for contributing to this survey. Your feedback is invaluable to assess to what extent the Netherlands Trust Fund V programme has achieved its desired objectives to date (the programme is planned to conclude by June 2025).

This survey aims to gather insights into your experience with the programme activities in your country and whether these activities have contributed to the success of your companies.

We encourage you to be open and honest in your feedback, as it will directly contribute to shaping the activities carried out by the programme in your country.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Rest assured that your responses will be anonymized. All data collected will be used solely for the purpose of the evaluation. In case you have any questions about the use and storage of the data, please contact this email address [daniela.arregui-coka@mainlevel.de](mailto:daniela.arregui-coka@mainlevel.de).

Thank you for your participation.

Best regards,  
Mainlevel Consulting AG

---

### I consent to participating in this survey

- Yes  
 No

### About you

#### 1.01 Country

- Benin                       Côte d'Ivoire                       Ethiopia  
 Ghana                       Mali                       Senegal  
 Uganda

#### 1.02 When did you join the project?

- before 2022  
 2022  
 2023  
 2024

#### 1.03 Sector

- Agribusiness  
 Digital Technology

1.04 Please select the project activities in which you have participated

1.04a Please indicate the topic(s) of the capacity buildings/trainings

---

1.04b Please, specify "other"

---

1.05 Have you participated in similar activities or received similar support from other international organisations in the past year?

- Yes  
 No

1.05a Please list the organisations:

---

## About your company

2.01 In terms of age demographics, would you describe your company as primarily led by individuals under 35?

- Yes  
 No

2.02 Regarding gender representation in leadership roles, would you say your company's leadership is predominantly composed of women?

- Yes  
 No

2.03 When was your company established?

- Less than 2 years ago       2 to 5 years ago       5 to 10 years ago  
 11 to 20 years ago       More than 20 years ago

2.04 How many people are currently employed by your company?

- 1-9 employees       10-49 employees       50-249 employees  
 250 or more employees

2.05 How would you categorize your company?

## Satisfaction with the project activities

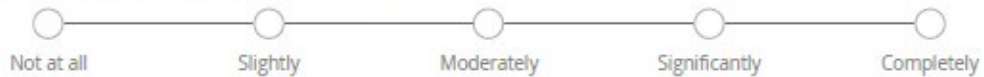
3.01 What were the main reasons for you and your company to participate in the project?

3.01a Please explain "other":

---



**3.02 How well do the activities fit your needs or priorities**



**3.03 How satisfied are you with the activities you have participated in?**



**Results and impact**

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

**4.01 The project has given me a better understanding of the potential of digital technologies to improve the competitiveness of my business.**



**4.02 The project has given me a better understanding of the requirements for exporting to international markets.**



**4.03 The project has given me the tools and resources necessary to export to international markets.**



**4.04 The project has given me the tools and resources to strengthen the competitiveness of my company/organisation.**



**4.05 The project has provided my company/organisation with access to new funding opportunities.**



**4.06 I have secured new business/clients/partners because of the project.**



**4.07 The revenue of my company has increased because of the project.**



**4.08 My company has created new jobs since we joined the project.**



- 4.09 My company has been able to increase the salaries of existing jobs since we joined the project.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.10 My company has acquired a better understanding of sustainability standards and requirements
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.11 My company has acquired new skills in sustainable production practices.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.12 The project has allowed my company/organisation to strengthen its relationship with other actors in the sector.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.01 The project has allowed my company to better understand the digital needs of companies in the agribusiness sector.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.02 The project has given me the tools and resources necessary to access international markets.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.03 The project has given me the tools and resources to strengthen my company's business model.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.04 The project has provided my company with access to new funding opportunities.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.05 I have secured new business/clients/partners because of the project.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.06 The revenue of my company has increased because of the project.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply
- 4.07 My company has created new jobs since we joined the project.
- Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly agree   Does not apply

4.08 My company has been able to increase the salaries of existing jobs since we joined the project.

Strongly disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly agree     Does not apply

4.09 The project has allowed my company to strengthen its relationship with other actors in the sector.

Strongly disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly agree     Does not apply

4.10 The project has increased my awareness of how my company can operate in a more environmentally friendly way.

Strongly disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly agree     Does not apply

4.11 The project is contributing to gender equality in the digital technology sector.

Strongly disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly agree     Does not apply

4.13 Have you identified any further positive results?

Yes  
 No

4.13a Please specify these results:

---

4.14 Have you identified any unanticipated negative results?

Yes  
 No

4.14a Please specify these results:

---

4.12 Have you identified any further positive results?

Yes  
 No

4.12a Please specify these results:

---

4.13 Have you identified any unanticipated negative results?

Yes  
 No

4.13a Please specify these results:

---

## Satisfaction with project implementation

5.01 Have you encountered any difficulties participating in the project activities?

- Yes  
 No

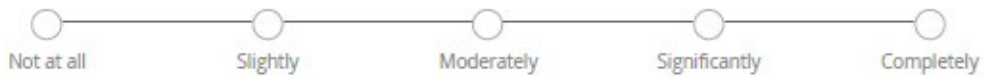
5.01a Please specify these difficulties:

---

5.02 How satisfied are you with the communication with the project implementation team?



5.03 To what extent do you feel adequately informed about the ongoing and upcoming project activities?



5.04 How often do you receive information about ongoing or upcoming project activities?

- Weekly       Monthly       Quarterly  
 Other

5.04a Please specify "other"

---

5.05 Have you provided feedback before about the project activities or implementation (e.g. through an evaluation survey, networking breakfast, or directly to the project managers)?

- Yes  
 No

5.05a How do you rate the possibility of providing feedback about the project activities or implementation?



5.05b To what extent do you think your feedback has been acknowledged?



## Recommendations

Do you have any suggestions for improving the project or the performance of the project team?

Please add as many as you can. We ask you to write one recommendation per box and if you wish to add another one click on the "+" sign to add another one.

---

## Annex F: Targets

### Indicators and achievement of targets (digital technology sector)

| Digital Technology Sector |  | Ethiopia: Tech   | Ghana: Tech  | Senegal: Tech  | "FastTrackTech": Tech  |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Impact</b>             | <b>Contribute to decent jobs and improved livelihoods</b>                  | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 2<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 5 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 3<br>>50% of target achieved: 3<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 6<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1 |
| <b>Outcome</b>            | <b>Increased trade and investment as a contribution to systemic change</b> | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of target achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1  | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |
| <b>Output 1:</b>          | <b>Improved Enabling Ecosystem for MSMEs</b>                               | Total: 3 indicators<br>100% of target achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 2  | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 3<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 3 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 2<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |
| <b>Output 2:</b>          | <b>Improved performance of partner BSOs</b>                                | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of target achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0  | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 3<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 5 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |
| <b>Output 3:</b>          | <b>Improved competitiveness of beneficiary MSMEs</b>                       | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 4<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of target achieved: 8<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 1  | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 3<br>>50% of target achieved: 5<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 9<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |
| <b>Output 4:</b>          | <b>Better linkages to export markets and investors</b>                     | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 6<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 6<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 2<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 7<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |

*Indicators and achievement of targets (agribusiness sector)*

| Agribusiness Sector |  | Ethiopia: Coffee   | Ghana: Cacao   | Senegal: Cashew Nuts   |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Impact</b>       | <b>Contribute to decent jobs and improved livelihoods</b>                  | Total: 3 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 2<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 3 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 1 | Total: 3 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 1 |
| <b>Outcome</b>      | <b>Increased trade and investment as a contribution to systemic change</b> | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 2 | Total: 7 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 2 | Total: 6 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 3<br>>50% of target achieved: 2<br><50% of target achieved: 1 |
| <b>Output 1:</b>    | <b>Improved Enabling Ecosystem for MSMEs</b>                               | Total: 6 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 6 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 6<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 6 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 0 |
| <b>Output 2:</b>    | <b>Improved performance of partner BSOs</b>                                | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 4<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 0 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 2 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 2<br><50% of target achieved: 1 |
| <b>Output 3:</b>    | <b>Improved competitiveness of beneficiary MSMEs</b>                       | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 5<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 3 | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 2<br>>50% of target achieved: 3<br><50% of target achieved: 4 | Total: 9 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 0<br>>50% of target achieved: 0<br><50% of target achieved: 9 |
| <b>Output 4:</b>    | <b>Better linkages to export markets and investors</b>                     | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 0<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 3 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 0<br>>50% of target achieved: 1<br><50% of target achieved: 3 | Total: 4 indicators<br>100% of targets achieved: 1<br>>50% of target achieved: 2<br><50% of target achieved: 1 |



## Annex G: Related Interventions

### Box 1: Selected interventions in the target countries

To complement the primary data collected during the country visits and from the online survey, the evaluation team conducted desk research to map other relevant interventions carried out in the target countries and at pan-African level. By doing so, the team aims to highlight additional potential areas for complementarity and synergies in the countries for the remaining time of programme implementation.

#### Country-level Interventions

##### Ethiopia

###### Tech

- **Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2024-2027:**<sup>30</sup> A strategic EU initiative that focuses on active political and policy dialogue with the Ethiopian government, aiming to foster exchanges on shared political, policy, and multilateral agendas to support Ethiopia's development.
- **Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) on Job Creation and Digitalization:** Spearheaded by the EU in line with Ethiopia's 'Digital Ethiopia 2025' strategy, these initiatives seek to mobilize resources for Ethiopia's stability, reconstruction, and economic recovery through job creation and digital transformation.
- **EU's Global Gateway Strategy:**<sup>31,32</sup> A pivotal EU strategy to support sustainable and smart transitions in green and digital sectors, and enhance connectivity, trade, economic growth, and job creation, while also investing in human development and state capacity building to foster mutual benefits and strengthened partnerships.

###### Agribusiness

- The **Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2024-2027**<sup>33</sup> supports Ethiopia's agricultural sector by focusing on sustainable agri-food systems and value chains, including coffee. It aims to enhance agricultural potential, stimulate investment, and promote sustainable growth. This initiative seeks to create resilient, green jobs while holistically addressing food and nutrition security.
- Initiatives like the **Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA)** and the **Agricultural Growth Programme (AGP)**<sup>34</sup> – implemented by the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock – aim at focusing on areas with high agricultural potential. AGP and ATA are supported variably by several other donors, World Bank, EU, Canada, USAID, Italy, Spain and Denmark, Norway, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

##### Senegal

###### Technology

- The African Development Bank's development of **Senegal's Digital Technology Park** aims to make Senegal an ICT hub through world-class infrastructure, boosting economic diversification and modernization.<sup>35</sup> This initiative supports the creation of ICT jobs, promotes innovation, and benefits a wide range of stakeholders including youth, women, entrepreneurs, and government agencies, similar to the NTF Project's goals of developing tech ecosystems and enhancing private sector growth within the ICT industry.
- The World Bank's **Digital Economy Acceleration Project** (2023-2028) in Senegal aims to expand affordable and climate-resilient broadband connectivity and enhance adoption of online services and electronic records.<sup>36</sup> The project includes a component focused on supporting digital adoption to accelerate broadband uptake and increase population participation in the digital economy by addressing key demand-side barriers, including enhancing basic and intermediary digital literacy and skills.

###### Agribusiness

- The initiative **Business Scouts for Development (BSfD)** – implemented by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) aims to facilitate the building of networks and knowledge platforms in Senegal to support the development of new ideas and the implementation of projects and investments in the cashew value chain.<sup>37</sup> Similarly to the NTF V programme the project aims to identify potential worthwhile investments to generate profits in the cashew agribusiness sector, with potential of powerful impact on employment opportunities for women and young people.

##### Ghana

###### Technology

- The **e-Transform Ghana (2019)** project, implemented by the Government of Ghana (GoG), Ministry of Communications and Digitalization (MOC), and the World Bank (WB) aims to foster entrepreneurship and increase jobs through ICT-enabled entrepreneurship by strengthening business support organizations such as the Ghana Innovation Hub.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>30</sup> European Union (EU) 2024. Multiannual Indicative Programme (2024-2027) [Ethiopia].

<sup>31</sup> The Global Gateway stands for sustainable and trusted connections that work for people and the planet. It helps to tackle the most pressing global challenges, from fighting climate change, to improving health systems, and boosting competitiveness and security of global supply chains. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en)

<sup>32</sup> European Union (EU) 2024. Multiannual Indicative Programme (2024-2027) [Ethiopia].

<sup>33</sup> European Union (EU) 2024. Multiannual Indicative Programme (2024-2027) [Ethiopia].

<sup>34</sup> European Union (EU) 2024. Multiannual Indicative Programme (2024-2027) [Ethiopia].

<sup>35</sup> African Development Bank Group Senegal (April 2024). Digital Technology Park [Senegal]. Available from: <https://projectsportal.afdb.org/dataportal/VProject/show/P-SN-G00-004>

<sup>36</sup> World Bank (March 2024). Senegal Digital Economy Acceleration Project [Senegal]. Available from: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P172524>

<sup>37</sup> GIZ (July 2021). Sector Brief Senegal: Cashews [Germany]. Available from: [https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/SectorBrief\\_Senegal\\_Cashews.pdf](https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/SectorBrief_Senegal_Cashews.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Communication and Digitalization (April 2024). Digital Ghana [Ghana]. Available from: <https://moc.gov.gh/e-transform/>

Additionally, the project aims to assist individuals and teams in advancing their business ideas from the conceptual stage to successfully entering the market. The intervention also includes promoting better access to online transactions, financial and other services, which implies better opportunities for trade and market linkages.

- The **Digital Acceleration Project (2022–2027)** of the World Bank aims to strengthen the digital innovation ecosystem in Ghana.<sup>39</sup> The NTF V programme and Component 3 of the project both aim to support digital transformation in strategic sectors such as Ghana's digital entrepreneurship ecosystem, agriculture, and digital skills development, with a focus on linking tech businesses to markets and enhancing skills training to meet industry needs.

#### Agribusiness

- The **World Cocoa Foundation (WCF)**<sup>40</sup> aims to catalyse a thriving and equitable cocoa sector by improving farmer incomes, combating deforestation and child labour, fostering collaborations, and supporting systemic reforms through strategic relationships and impactful programs, alongside developing new methodologies for income measurement in partnership with international organizations. The WCF partners with notable international organizations such as the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), German Development Cooperation (GIZ), and the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO) to enhance its research and development efforts in the cocoa sector.

#### “FastTrackTech” – Uganda, Benin, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire

- The **Beninnovation – Strengthening digital transformation in Benin (2022 – 2025)** is a collaborative project between BMZ and the Benin Ministry of Digital Affairs (MND) aimed at leveraging the innovative potential of the local private sector for the digitalization of public services. Within the framework of the 'Digital Transformation Centre Benin', the project establishes a project pipeline tailored to the local private sector to showcase business potential and provide methodological guidelines for digitalization processes.<sup>41</sup> It fosters co-creation proposals for institutions to develop innovative solutions for public administration's digital transformation, enabling digital companies to contribute effectively to this process and develop user-oriented services.
- The World Bank's **Digital Rural Transformation Project (2019 – 2025)**<sup>42</sup> aims to boost broadband access in rural Benin, enhance digital solutions for agricultural efficiency, financial inclusion, and market access, with a focus on promoting digital financial services among rural women, developing climate-smart agriculture through digital infrastructure, and improving market connectivity for smallholder farmers through infrastructure upgrades and digital tools.
- The **E-Government Strengthening Support Project (PARAE) (2023 – 2027)**,<sup>43</sup> led by the African Development Bank and Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, aims to enhance governance and public service delivery through digitalization, focusing on boosting the productivity of individuals, companies, and various administrative levels. It supports the governance of the digital economy, minimizing paper use, and improving service quality for citizens and businesses, while also facilitating the implementation of the National Innovation Strategy 2021-2025 through the operationalization of the Ivorian Innovation Fund.
- The **Digital Uganda Vision (DUV)** project,<sup>44</sup> a collaboration between the Government of Uganda and the ITU, aims to enhance the ICT policy framework to transform Uganda into a digitally enabled society that promotes innovation and competitiveness. Integrating ICT across sectors like trade, government, and education, the project supports the Third National Development Plan by developing policy, building capacity, and implementing pilot projects to boost connectivity and sectoral integration, driving digital transformation and sustainable development.
- The **Malian Digital Transformation Project (2021)**,<sup>45</sup> driven by the World Bank and the Ministry of Communication Digital Economy and Modernisation de Administration (MCDEMA), aims to improve broadband connectivity and public service access, especially for underserved populations. This project focuses on leveraging technology to foster social and economic development by expanding digital access and modernizing administrative systems to advance Mali's digital economy and enhance citizen services.
- The **Bamako Digital Complex Support Project (2011 – 2017)**, spearheaded by the African Development Bank (AfDB), aimed to construct and operate a Digital Complex in Mali as a centre for ICT skills training to boost productivity and competitiveness. The project established the complex as a developmental hub for enhancing ICT skills, providing training to Malians and potentially to individuals from neighbouring countries, thus fostering regional digital advancement and economic growth.

#### Pan-African Interventions

- The **Smart Africa Digital Academy (SADA)**<sup>46</sup> is a pan-African initiative launched in 2022 to enhance digital skills, qualifications, and employability across Africa. It focuses on meeting the talent needs of policy and regulatory decision-makers, employers, and industry players through the creation of National Digital Academies. These academies, established in partnership with various national ministries including ICT, Education, Youth & Employment, and others, aim to build fair, inclusive, and sustainable digital societies. SADA promotes collaboration among government, the private

<sup>39</sup> World Bank (March 2024). Ghana Digital Acceleration Project. Available from: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P176126>

<sup>40</sup> World Cocoa Foundation (April 2024). Cocoa household income study methodology [Ghana]. Available from: <https://worldcocoafoundation.org/news-and-resources/press-release/cocoa-household-income-study-methodology-press-release>

<sup>41</sup> GIZ (July 2023). Supporting digital transformation in Benin [Germany]. Available from: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/127949.html>

<sup>42</sup> World Bank (November 2023). Digital Rural Transformation Project [Benin]. Available from: <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P162599?lang=en>

<sup>43</sup> African Development Bank (June 2023). E-Government Strengthening Support Project (PARAE) [Côte D'Ivoire]. Available from: <https://www.ictworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/cote-divoire-e-overnment-strengthening-support-project.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> International Communication Union (ITU). Technical assistance and Training to Uganda on National ICT development strategy. Available from: <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/projects/2023/uganda-digital-transformation.aspx>

<sup>45</sup> World Bank (June 2021). Mali Digital Transformation Project: Project Information Document (PID) [Mali]. Available from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/631931626354396324/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Documents-PID-Mali-Digital-Transformation-Project-P176174.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Smart Africa Digital Academy. Available from: <https://sada.smartafrica.org/>

sector, and academia to foster digital innovation and economic growth. Currently, it operates in six African countries, namely The Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Ghana, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, with plans to expand further, providing a range of digital skills training from basic to advanced levels.

- The **Orange Digital Centres (ODC)**,<sup>47</sup> funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ), is a regional initiative launched between 2020 and 2022 aimed at boosting digital skills and creating employment opportunities for the youth. Operating across multiple countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, and others, ODC targets the training of 20,000 young people, with a specific focus on ensuring 20% female participation. These centres are designed to develop a skilled workforce, ready to meet the demands of local businesses and contribute to digital innovation and economic growth.
- The GenerationDigital! initiative, running from 2022 to 2025 and implemented by BMZ/GIZ, is designed to boost digital skills among children and youth across 25 African countries. The initiative partners with African ministries, civil society, and the private sector to strengthen the digital education ecosystem through technical and financial advice, regional networking, and access to funding for digital projects. By equipping young people with digital skills and preparing them for future jobs or entrepreneurship, GenerationDigital! aims to enhance the sustainability of MSMEs, foster innovation, and fuel economic development in the digital economy.

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<sup>47</sup> GIZ (November 2021). Orange Digital Centres: Digital Skills for Employment [Germany]. Available from: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/107500.html>