Evaluation of the ITC Programme 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions'

Independent Evaluation Unit

January 2020

This evaluation report makes reference to the following SDGs:

EVALUATION OF THE ITC PROGRAMME 'STRENGTHENING TRADE AND INVESTMENT SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS'

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

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

The ITC Independent Evaluation Unit has carried out this evaluation under its 2019 Work Programme and is responsible for this publication.

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Contents

Acronyms

AFD	Agence française de dévelopment
AESR	Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report
AIM	Assess-Improve-Measure
DCP	Division of Country Programmes
DEI/TISI	ITC's TISI section
EPC	Export Promotion Council
E-Survey	Electronic Survey
ET	Evaluation team
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GE	Gender Equality
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
IR	Inception Report
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least-Developed Country
MOPSE	Management opérationnel des programmes de soutien à l'exportation (French project title)
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PIRM	Performance Improvement Roadmap
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
RBM	Results-Based Management
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institution
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TIPO	Trade and Investment Promotion Organization
TPO	Trade Promotion Organization
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institutions
TSI	Trade Support Institution
TRTA	Trade Related Technical Assistance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNEG	UN Evaluation Group
USD	United States Dollar
WTPO Conference	World Trade Promotion Organizations Conference and Awards

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'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions'
Independent Evaluation Unit, International Trade Centre

Executive summary

Purpose and approach

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the quality and inform the future implementation of the ITC Programme 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions' (herein referred to as 'the programme'). Two specific purposes guide this evaluation: to assess (i) the programme's effectiveness in improving the performance of trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and (ii) its effectiveness in supporting other ITC interventions to deliver results.

The evaluation has adopted a mixed-methods design, relying on different evaluative techniques and both qualitative and quantitative data to address the evaluation questions. Furthermore, the findings were assessed against the programme's theory of change to verify the expected causality links. In doing so, the evaluation combined elements of *theory-based, goal-free* and *collaborative evaluation approaches.* Data and collection methods used by the evaluation included document review, interviews, an online survey and two field visits to assess the implementation of programme activities. The evaluation was guided by the ITC Evaluation Guidelines, the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines.

Programme overview and context

For the International Trade Centre, the institutions that support businesses to grow, innovate and improve competitiveness, are an important multiplier of effort by expanding the reach and scale of project interventions, and providing strong local partners for long term results.

The programme aims to improve the managerial and operational performance of these institutions so they can better assist micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) internationalize. It is carried out by ITC's Institutional Strengthening section.

With regard to the scope, the evaluation encompasses activities in the programme's portfolio, with a specific focus on the latest years (2018 and the first half of 2019). The following main components of the programme[1] were considered:

- **I 4 IMPACT (AIM, Assess-Improve-Measure)** which is the umbrella project under which most of the programme's interventions are delivered;
- **World Trade Promotion Organizations Conference and Awards** (WTPO Conference), the 2016 & 2018 WTPOs are integrated in the evaluation's scope); and
- **MOPSE** (a standalone project based on the programme's overall approach, supporting TPOs in 21 Sub-Saharan African countries).

At the heart of the programme is the AIM for Results methodology, which is delivered through advice, training and information sharing either through modular interventions or under a full-fledged customized approach to meet the needs of institutions. The 'I 4 Impact – (AIM)' project is formed around this core methodology. It was created in 2013 and since then, ITC has supported over 100 institutions through this initiative to develop clearer strategies, improve their service portfolio, establish results measurement systems, strengthen networks and optimize the use of their resources.

Main activities delivered under the programme include Benchmarking and re-Benchmarking, CUBED, Entrepreneurship Ecosystem mapping and the WTPO Conference (all of which are further described below), as well as a wide range of capacity building interventions designed to improve institutional performance, deliver more value to businesses and entrepreneurs and improve competitiveness.

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[1] The Youth and Trade Programme, although it lies within the Institutional Strengthening section, was not evaluated.

Benchmarking

The Benchmarking process is an assessment and diagnostic of the institutional performance of organizations using a set of indicators. The data on these indicators is collected through interviews and desk review, analysed and then compared to the full database of previous Benchmarking exercises with other institutions.

CUBED

CUBED is an institutional mapping tool. Based on a similar approach to the Benchmarking process, this tool is based on a set of core and customizable indicators, questions and observations. Although it can be used for the benefit of the client institutions, its primary purpose is to inform interested parties – usually ITC project managers – on the capacities and service offering of institutions in the trade ecosystem of a given country or region. CUBED can be implemented in a shorter timeframe than a Benchmarking process.

Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem is a mapping tool to describe institutions in the entrepreneur-ship ecosystem of a country. This is a new methodology that has just been introduced recently. The resulting report shows the different types of support given by institutions to entrepreneurs and at which levels of the business lifecycle. It also analyses the types of linkages or collaborations that occur between various institutions in the ecosystem. With this mapping, the programme intends to help client institutions to better understand the nature of the ecosystem they work in. Moreover, this information is also thought to be useful for ITC project managers as it enables them to better adapt the design of their projects to fit well within these ecosystems.

WTPO Conference

The WTPO Conference brings together Trade Promotion Organization (TPOs) from around the world. It is organized by ITC every two years and also integrates a best practices contest among the participating TPOs. The WTPO was born from the desire of some Latin American TPOs that wanted to organize conferences regularly. ITC was requested to participate in the conferences to administratively organize them. Since then, it has done so and carried it out under the umbrella of the TISI Programme.

Capacity building

Alongside the assessment and networking activities described above (Benchmarking, CUBED, Entre-preneurship Ecosystem mapping and WTPO) **the programme provides a wide range of capacity building measures**, including institution-specific workshops, expert advice and coaching, regional workshops, and the development of case studies. It is mainly through delivering such capacity building interventions that the programme accompanies institutions in their process of performance improvement.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations

Role of the programme within ITC

The programme forms a central and important link in the ITC value chain. Its main objective is to improve the management and networking capacities of TISIs. Targeted institutions are usually important partners for ITC as they work, among other things, to support MSMEs in their internationalization process and to improve their national business and trade environments. Therefore, the programme is relevant for all three main corporate goals of ITC, namely (i) improving national business and trade environments for MSMEs; (ii) improving the performance of TISIs; and (iii) improving the international competitiveness of MSMEs. The programme focuses on the middle one of these goals, and supports achievements of both the other two.

Results achieved by the programme have positive effects, which benefit other ITC activities. The relevance of the programme's results for ITC's work – and even for that of other development partners – can enhance their effectiveness and sustainability. In other words, once an institution has improved its capacities and performance, it becomes a stronger partner in working with ITC on other projects, thereby

supporting their effectiveness. Moreover, the fact that they can use their enhanced capacities in other projects promotes the sustainability of results achieved through and for these institutions. In fact, the programme includes the factor 'critical partners to other ITC projects' as a criterion for selecting the institutions with which it will be working.

The programme also actively supports and strengthens other ITC projects. One of the criteria for selecting institutions that will benefit from the programme is the potential for strengthened institutions to be more effective project partners, thereby providing a strategic contribution with unearmarked programme funds to earmarked project funding. Moreover, the programme tools inform and speed up planning processes of other projects through some of its methodologies. For example, ITC project teams appreciate the usefulness of what the CUBED assessment (and more and more the Ecosystem analysis which is a more recent methodology) can bring to the design phase of their initiatives. This exercise informs the teams about the suitability of potential partners as well as their needs and hence increases the relevance and efficiency of ITC's projects.

Furthermore, the programme contributes to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By improving the performance and service offering of institutions, the programme contributes to developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (SDG 16.6). It also enhances institution's ability to enable higher levels of economic productivity (SDG 8.2), thus indirectly also contributing to beneficial effects for small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3), and youth (SDG 4.4).

The programme's specific expertise and service offering

Through its various activities, the programme has gathered a wealth of insights into institutional practices. In fact, collecting best practices and lessons learned forms the core of the Benchmarking methodology as it enables the programme to assess and score the institutional performance of clients against these standards. These best practices collected worldwide by the programme are one of its main attraction for institutions demanding their services.

Moreover, the programme has a large toolbox of different training and services at its disposal. The contents of these more than 50 topics for capacity building are guided by the insights into institutional best practices and cover different areas of managerial and operational performance, such as leadership and direction; resources and processes; products and service delivery; or measurement and results. Most recently, the programme has enhanced its offering on Commercial Diplomacy, combining a detailed guide, e-learning modules and a practical workshop, targeted at national governments at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Client institutions particularly appreciate the programme's ability to provide comprehensive support beyond individual capacity building measures, while drawing on global experience. All stakeholders consulted for this evaluation considered that the systematic approach rooted in the Benchmarking methodology was a unique service offering that no other organization provides.

The programme's highly specialised expertise in institutional strengthening gives ITC a distinctive position in this area. The experience and insights gained enable the programme to assess and compare institutions from a local to a global level. The scope of the programme is indeed global as even institutions from prosperous countries also request and (for a fee) use the services of the programme. The Benchmarking, mapping tools and the recently introduced Entrepreneurship Ecosystems allow the compilation and provision of comprehensive and coherent information on the sphere of institutions, which also represent important contributions to the organization's country intelligence.

As a neutral UN and WTO agency, ITC is viewed as a valuable and serious partner to gather and 'stock' these lessons learned and best practices. ITC is also trusted to disseminate practices and provide training on a global scale, whereby the programme – in line with corporate priorities – has a specific focus on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked LDCs (LLDCs), Small Island and Developing States (SIDS), Sub-Saharan Africa, small vulnerable economies, and post-conflict states.

The programme's different levels of intensity of engagement

The programme interacts with institutions at different levels of intensity of engagement, which are characterized by a client segmentation approach. Particular hallmarks of the programme are the categories of 'substantive' and 'intensive' support, which go far beyond one-off capacity building measures. In these cases, the interaction with institutions is based on a comprehensive analysis of their

strengths and weaknesses (either through Benchmarking or CUBED). Building on this diagnostic, they then receive targeted support for key areas and needs identified.

Longer-term and close engagement with institutions is likely to strengthen their commitment and, for some activities, their networking. The case study of this evaluation demonstrates that undergoing the full Benchmarking and associated performance improvement process will lead to more engaged and committed staff of the beneficiary institution. Also, participant institutions of the MOPSE project (which is based on a similar approach) were highly satisfied with the related activities and benefit generated, even though the extent of results achieved was not as noticeable and rooted as those obtained through the full Benchmarking process. Instead, the MOPSE project succeeded to foster connectivity among the participating institutions thus establishing a network for peer support.

With TPOs there is a particularly strong sense of community and special relationship because the programme has been working with them for some time and because it provides them with a dedicated event (the WTPO Conference) which enables them to maintain and strengthen their network. Even though ITC's role in the WTPO was initially administrative and logistical, the organization nowadays (in consultation with the host) identifies the theme, designs the agenda and secures the speakers. In this way, the conference reinforces ITC's thought leadership and allows it to use the resulting dialogue to position its service offering with TPOs, some of which can eventually become beneficiaries or project partners. The conference also allows for experience sharing and peer to peer exchanges between different lines of maturity levels, which is particularly attractive for many TPOs.

The programme's effectiveness

The programme has generated strong results in terms of institutional strengthening, whether through its own activities, indirect delivery for other ITC projects or paid services to institutions from prosperous countries. **However, there are differences in effectiveness depending on a number of factors.** The programme does not use a unified classification to group potential client institutions according to their suitability for specific interventions (and instead uses different classifications that may affect proposed interventions, such as the institution's size, type or country). However, programme staff also consider that some of the programme's methods are more suitable for certain institutions than for others. In this context, the aspects of institutions' commitment and maturity seem to play a significant role.

The evaluation shows that institutions committed to the programme's interventions (e.g. the Benchmarking) will improve their overall performance and hence their support to members or client MSMEs. As an example, the institution analysed in the case study more than doubled its benchmarking score during a subsequent re-Benchmarking, substantially attributing it to the programme's technical assistance and training. Of the seven institutions which have undergone a full cycle of support, including a Re-benchmarking after several years, all of them have improved their scoring. However, these improvements differ significantly – from marginal improvements of less than one point on the rating scale (from 0 to 100) to leaps of more than 30 points (and with an overall average increase of 12 rating points).

Programme results depend to a large extent on the leadership, commitment and absorption capacity of the institutions. Results achieved are somewhat fragile in case of changes in institutions' leadership or low commitment. In addition, in between intensive programme support periods and visits by the ITC team, institutions often tend to slow their pace of implementing suggested measures for improvement. Moreover, the Benchmarking process is considered as heavy for some of the less mature institutions, which have trouble absorbing the full-fledged diagnostic the programme provides and the accompanying recommendations provided through PIRMs and training.

Some institutions are not able to assimilate the support provided. The programme normally does not work with institutions that do not commit themselves to fully implement the proposed methodology, regardless of their level of maturity. But less mature institutions can struggle to absorb the full Benchmarking process, because it can be too much at once for them. With such institutions, lighter processes or versions of the Benchmarking would generate better results by focusing on fewer and more basic aspects of what needs to be improved. Tailored and hands-on support would then help these institutions improve their performance slowly but surely.

> **Overview of the recommendations of this evaluation**
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> This evaluation makes a total of eight recommendations. The first four are of a strategic nature and aim to strengthen programme results through adjustments in its service offering. Specifically, they advise 1) to increase the focus and flexibility for certain interventions, in particular with less mature institutions; 2) to work with different types of institutions, thereby expanding the programme's reach within business ecosystems; 3) to further strengthen institutional networks; and 4) to review the programme's name and terminology used.
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> The second set of recommendations is of a managerial nature, aimed at preserving the programme's ability to carry out its work, which is a core function of ITC. These recommendations are related to 5) having adequate funding for the programme, in particular to cover research and development (R&D) activities; 6) ensuring the availability of senior team members for strategic and staff guidance; and 7) making sure that knowledge is being transferred within the team.
>
> Finally, the evaluation also makes a recommendation 8) to strengthen the consideration of gender and other focus areas of sustainable and inclusive development.

Optimization of the offer and focus of efforts

The programme has a wide range of tools and services at its disposal, which must be used with different approaches depending on the needs and capacities of the clients. The programme's choice of activities and deliverables are generally aligned with institutions' needs. The main reason for this alignment is that the services provided by the programme are demand driven and thereby informed and customized based on institutions' needs. However, the adaptation of products and services to the specific and differentiated needs of the participating institutions needs to be further optimised, in particular with regard to institutions' maturity and their capacity to absorb the programme's support.

More intensive support generates better results, all the more with less mature institutions. However, there is still a need to use the right client approach for different types of institutions. Using somewhat less time-consuming approaches — technical or even light touch — with less committed institutions can be more feasible and appropriate. Eventually it can also generate sufficient interest to help move the institutions towards buy-in into more intensive support.

For less mature institutions, the programme should use simpler, more flexible and case-by-case adapted products (strategies, action plans, PIRMS, etc.). It then also needs to invest in more hands-on support and frequent follow up to ensure the implementation of proposed action plans. In the case of institutions from developing countries and more importantly LDCs – ITC's priority countries –, it has been found that the programme sometimes targets adjustments that are unattainable for the beneficiaries in their current state. In such cases, the programme should instead focus on simple advances, which over time may also lead to major changes.

Recommendation 1: *Increase the focus and flexibility of interventions, in particular for less mature institutions. Mainly for the full 'AIM for Results' methodology, it is recommended that the programme ensures more continuous support to selected institutions over the next three years. Depending on available resources, this may require to reduce the number of institutions with which the programme is working most intensively.*

This focused approach should particularly take into account the absorption capacity of client institutions. To that end, it is also recommended to break down the capacity building approach into smaller components which can then be offered periodically to ensure that the programme achieves progressive results. This would mean to start with more fundamental challenges and move upwards as needed and suitable. This will be more aligned with the absorption capacities of main programme clients from developing countries and LDCs.

Leveraging potential by expanding the programme's reach

Working with only a narrow range of institutions can limit the programme's results. Carrying out a full benchmarking process with committed and at least moderately mature institutions has proven to be relevant and effective. However, for some of the client institutions' MSMEs, even with improved performance, no specific results or effects are noticed, because the institutions still do not have the full ability or knowledge to effectively serve their needs. At the same time, other institutions may have beneficial complementary abilities and knowledge that will be able to make a difference for MSMEs.

Moreover, factors outside the institutions' control may have more effects on MSMEs' capacities to internationalize than the work of institutions itself. For example, although the programme is changing the way TPOs operate to render them more effective and efficient, their performance does not necessarily translate into better context for SMEs as other factors and players also greatly affect them and their environment. These elements may nullify the results TPOs generate.

Recommendation 2: *Intensify the work with different types of institutions in the business ecosystem, since engaging with only a narrow range of institutions can hinder the programme's ability to achieve results. Ensure that insights gained by the programme are effectively shared within ITC.*

    a) *It is recommended to increase the intensity of the programme's work with the full range of organizations in the business support ecosystem to be able to influence and connect its different actors. As the programme continues to expand its reach, it should also collect best practices with new types of client institutions. To support this expansion, an improved use of digital tools could complement the more in-depth and face to face relationship with selected institutions.*

    b) *By expanding its reach and being able to gather information on entire business ecosystems, the programme can significantly feed into the essential function of corporate country intelligence. It is therefore recommended to ensure that, as the programme's insights continue to grow, this information is effectively shared within the organization, in particular with country managers. In turn, country and project managers need to be aware of and incorporate the knowledge and service offering of the programme.*

Fostering learning through networks

Enhanced networking provides an opportunity for the beneficiary institutions to themselves seek best practices among peers. The programme can compare institutional performance nationally, regionally and globally. The Benchmarking process is a comparative exercise and the calculated score has exactly this objective: comparing the performance of a given institution against all other similar institutions. However, strictly speaking it is not the programme's objective to compare performance. The exercise is rather to ensure a given institution can improve its own score with support provided by the programme. The programme also sometimes tries to achieve this by fostering connections between a client institution and other similar institutions that might be able to provide inputs as to how they have improved or uniquely perform on a particular aspect of institutional management. However, this targeted networking approach to achieving programme results is not yet in full motion.

Networking, as a component of the programme, becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements upon which institutions can rely to find new and upcoming best practices among their peers. It is clear that the programme has achieved a lot in terms of enhancing institutions' management capacity. And it has been doing so for a longer period than the work on networking. To complement this, the programme should focus more on generating results through networking.

Recommendation 3: *Strengthen institutional networks so that results can be achieved by institutions helping each other. Facilitate networking among institutions as it allows them to share best practices, for example through events or communications channels that the programme can help develop. This will help to address the strongly expressed needs and requests for international best practices from beneficiary institutions, in particular those from developing countries and LDCs, which are the core of the programme's clientele.*

Preserving and strengthening the programme's unique service offering

Beyond the Benchmarking, the programme has developed other methodologies over the years to adapt to new needs and contexts – e.g. the CUBED and Ecosystem approaches. At the same time, although at the core of the programme lies a specific service offering in institutional strengthening, it has become highly complex with many names (e.g. AIM, I 4 Impact, TISI or Institutional Strengthening Programme, etc.) and many contexts (working globally, with different types of institutions, different levels of maturity, etc.). This plurality reduces the recognition value of the program.

Recommendation 4: *To strengthen the programme's identity and recognition value, it should consider updating, standardizing and possibly simplifying the institutional and programme terminology used.*

The evaluation considers both i) the collection of good practices for the different methodologies and types of institutions and ii) the development and refinement of new methodologies as research and development (R&D) activities of the programme. This R&D work has different and longer-term objectives beyond the concrete short-term implementation of activities. On the one hand, the objective is to further develop and refine methodologies and, on the other hand, to better reach developmental results.

The programme does not explicitly divide their activities between R&D and implementation. This is also due to the nature of how the programme works, as it combines and mixes R&D with overall service provision (e.g. doing a Benchmarking is on the one hand the delivery of a service, and on the other the collection of data points and best practices which feed into the methodology). When working with institutions, the programme directly implements its methodologies with these clients. There is usually no project context or particular outside relevance; it solely serves the institutions' demands and needs and also benefits the programme's R&D process.

About half of programme activities based on the methodologies above are delivered using unearmarked programme funds (i.e. so-called 'Window 1' funds). It is these unearmarked resources that enable the programme to sustainably carry out R&D activities and to collect best practices - both of which are elements that significantly characterise the unique selling proposition of the programme.

Recommendation 5: *Ensure that the programme has a sufficient base of unearmarked resources (through Window 1 funding) to sustainably carry out R&D activities and thus maintain its creative nature and competitive advantage. This is all the more important in view of the pending or ongoing adjustments, and since focusing the programme's offer to specific needs (recommendation 1), extending it to different types of institutions (recommendation 2) as well as enabling networks (recommendation 3) will all require dedicated time and resources.*

Thereby, it would be beneficial to have a targeted and well-planned approach to the more research-oriented activities of the programme, including a regular review of R&D spending and achievements.

Ensuring sustainability and expertise of the team

The programme's senior staff is renowned for its expertise in being able to apply its wide range of tools and methodologies in a customized manner. Therefore, they are an important asset and added value that the programme can bring to institutional performance enhancement processes. Institutions that have received support from the programme praise the staff's work and abilities.

But staff is considerably stretched, resulting in various bottlenecks. It has become increasingly difficult to ensure that the size of the team and the availability of senior personnel are aligned with evolving external demand as well as with internal supervision and support needs. As delivery has increased in recent years, many have tight schedules and are travelling frequently. Since the programme must also adapt its implementation to client institutions' planning and implementation pace, these bottlenecks prevent it from being able to adapt to the phases and waves of demand. In addition, not all programme staff are able to implement the full spectrum of services available to different types of institutions. In this context, there is a high risk linked to institutional memory loss if a senior staff leaves, falls ill or is no longer available for other reasons.

Senior staff, which could mentor new(er) staff, are travelling extensively and are therefore less present. Junior and intermediate staff are partly experts in niches but not always in a position to apply the programme's methodologies in specific situations outside their 'comfort zones'. In addition, further expanding the programme, which is one of its objective, requires strategic planning which should involve senior staff, many of which do not have the time to dedicate to this task as they are busy implementing the activities of the programme.

Recommendation 6: *Over the next two years, it is recommended to ensure that the programme's core staff can dedicate more time and energy to design, supervision, peer support and steering the programme at the strategic level. This is all the more necessary if the programme further extends its range while customizing its offer (see recommendations 1-3), which requires high expertise and time-consuming needs assessments.*

The section could alleviate the pressure on core staff by preparing a staffing plan for consideration by senior management, increasing the size of the team (e.g. by adding positions at the mid-level), and by increasing the pool of senior, capable and knowledgeable consultants with which the programme works.

Furthermore, expertise needs to be acquired and shared within the team. The programme aims to ensure that each type of methodology can be applied in different settings by different team members whereby staff should be enabled to pick up these skills in a learning by doing approach. So far, this objective has only been achieved to a limited extent, also due to the limited availability of senior staff. Developing section plans for knowledge transfer would be part of the solution.

Recommendation 7: *It is recommended to develop, over the next year, clear knowledge transfer plans for each team member to help them assimilate methodologies in different contexts. The programme staff also needs to develop experience and expertise aligned to new types of clients. Some of the key elements which form the programme's methodologies can be extended to new clients (i.e. best practices from member-based institutions can be used for different types of clients, as long as they are membership based), but more experience within the team will be needed.*

As training by doing can be resource consuming – as it normally involves travelling – simulations, using past and present situations, could be used to reduce costs. For staff to learn, providing online services to more advanced institutions, who do not necessarily need face to face support, could also be a less costly solution for hands-on training. While providing such online services, staff to be trained could be present and involved, which would provide them with opportunities for learning.

Mainstreaming sustainable and inclusive development

The programme integrates elements of sustainable and inclusive development to varying degrees in its interventions, depending on the characteristics of projects. It does not systematically do so, however. As an example, the programme has guidelines on how client institutions can integrate gender in their strategies, activities and projects but it lacks a systematic integration of gender equality in all of its interventions. Considering the importance of gender equality – and many other SDG themes and issues – within the UN and ITC, the programme needs to do more specific work in this area across its projects and activities.

Recommendation 8: *It is recommended to strengthen the gender equality component of the programme as well as the consideration of other relevant mainstreaming areas for sustainable and inclusive development. This could for example take the form of a refresher of the Benchmarking, CUBED and Ecosystem methodologies as well as of all types of support tools and content.*

Evidence trail of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy (chapter 3.1): The programme is highly relevant for ITC's mission and all three main corporate goals. In addition, ITC has a unique approach to institutional strengthening through its programme. **Alignment to needs (chapter 3.1):** The programme's design, choice of activities and deliverables are generally aligned with the participating institutions' needs. The main reason for this alignment is the fact that the programme's services are demand driven. However, there is still a need to perfect the adaptation of the products and services provided to the specific and differentiated needs of the institutions involved, mainly in terms of maturity of the institutions and their capacity to absorb the programme's support. The less mature institutions need more intensive follow-up support. **Effectiveness (chapter 3.2):** The programme is achieving strong overall results, mainly in terms of enhancing the client institution's management and operational capacities and performance. Yet these results are somewhat fragile because they rely on beneficiary institutions' leadership and commitment. In addition, between intensive support periods and visits by the programme team, institutions tend to slow activity implementation pace	For less mature institutions, the programme should use simpler, more flexible and case-by-case adapted products (strategies, action plans, PIRMS, etc.). It then also needs to invest in more hands-on support and frequent follow up to ensure the implementation of proposed action plans. In the case of institutions from developing countries and more importantly LDCs – ITC's priority countries –, it has been found that the programme sometimes targets adjustments that are unattainable for the beneficiaries in their current state. In such cases, the programme should instead focus on simple advances, which over time may also lead to major changes.	Recommendation 1: *Increase the focus and flexibility of interventions, in particular for less mature institutions. Mainly for the full 'AIM for Results' methodology, it is recommended that the programme ensures more continuous support to selected institutions over the next three years. Depending on available resources, this may require to reduce the number of institutions with which the programme is working most intensively.* *This focused approach should particularly take into account the absorption capacity of client institutions. To that end, it is also recommended to break down the capacity building approach into smaller components which can then be offered periodically to ensure that the programme achieves progressive results. This would mean to start with more fundamental challenges and move upwards as needed and suitable. This will be more aligned with the absorption capacities of main programme clients from developing countries and LDCs.* *Responsibility for implementation: chief, TISI*
Programme structure and areas of action (chapter 2.1): The Benchmarking, mapping tools and the recently introduced Entrepreneurship Ecosystems allow the compilation and provision of comprehensive and coherent information on the sphere of institutions. **Alignment to needs (chapter 3.1):** In the context where the programme wants to expand the service offer beyond TPOs, there is still a gap in terms of available best practices on the other types of institutions to enhance the quality of the work it conducts. The programme can transfer elements of the methodologies, which are mainly based on TPO experience and knowledge, to other institutions because of similarities in modus operandi yet the one-size-fits-all approach does not work.	Working with only a narrow range of institutions can limit the programme's results. Although the programme is changing the way TPOs operate and renders them more effective and efficient, their performance does not necessarily and always translate into better context for SMEs as other factors and actors affect them and their environment, in some cases more than TPOs can. These external factors, elements or actors can nullify the results TPOs generate or lessen the potential positive outcomes the programme would have if it would also work with other institutions Working with other institutions can render the programme's approach more holistic and help stabilize some of these external factors. The Ecosystem approach is also now seen as part of the answer as it integrates organizations in the programme that are not necessarily beneficiaries.	Recommendation 2: *Intensify the work with different types of institutions in the business ecosystem, since engaging with only a narrow range of institutions can hinder the programme's ability to achieve results. Ensure that insights gained by the programme are effectively shared within ITC.* a) *It is recommended to increase the intensity of the programme's work with the full range of organizations in the business support ecosystem to be able to influence and connect its different actors. As the programme continues to expand its reach, it should also collect best practices with new types of client institutions. To support this expansion, an improved use of digital tools could complement the more in-depth face to face relationship with selected institutions.*

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Changes in how beneficiary institutions operate (chapter 3.2): The Ecosystem approach is also at the centre of outcome 2. It can indeed help the institutions find themes (e.g. youth, climate smart production, gender, the service sector) in which peers are known to be active and so allow them to network with one another. **Effectiveness – case study (chapter 3.2):** For some MSMEs, there have been no specific results or effects because the present client institutions do not have the ability or knowledge to effectively serve their needs (other institutions, not yet clients of the programme, might have these abilities and knowledge). In addition, factors outside the institutions' control have more effects on the SMEs capacities to internationalize than the institutions work itself.	The programme is at an important crossroad as it needs to manoeuvre and adapt itself to new ranges of institutions, each with their own particularities, in addition to their different level of maturity. Although the programme's uniqueness and comparative advantage is defined through the systematized nature of its methodologies, it needs to start tailoring its methodologies on a case-by-case basis, if it wants to expand towards other-than-TPOs.	b) *By expanding its reach and being able to gather information on entire business ecosystems, the programme can significantly feed into the essential function of corporate country intelligence. It is therefore recommended to ensure that, as the programme's insights continue to grow, this information is effectively shared within the organization, in particular with country managers. In turn, country and project managers need to be aware of and incorporate the knowledge and service offering of the programme.* *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TISI
Scaling up and replicability (chapter 3.4): Networking, as a component of the programme, becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements upon which institutions can rely to find new and upcoming best practices among their peers. Networking can foster something like auto-benchmarking among institutions. As institutions strengthen links among each other, they can begin gathering information on how others function and compare (benchmark) their own approaches. It becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements — networking events, contacts among institutions, online community platforms— upon which institutions can rely to search for new and upcoming best practices. Among project beneficiaries, within the context of programme activities: some respondents mentioned that thanks to the programme, including the MOPSE project as well as being involved in the WTPO events, they have developed links with other TPOs.	It is clear that the programme has achieved a lot in terms of enhancing institutions' management capacity. It has been doing so for a longer period than the work on networking. The programme needs to build up more experience in and generate more networking results. **Enhanced networking provides an opportunity for the beneficiary institutions to themselves seek best practices among peers.** The Benchmarking process is intended to ensure a given institution can improve its own score with support provided by the programme. The programme also sometimes tries to achieve this by fostering connections between a client institution and other similar institutions that might be able to provide inputs as to how they have improved or uniquely perform on a particular aspect of institutional management. However, this targeted networking approach to achieving programme results is not yet in full motion.	**Recommendation 3:** *Strengthen institutional networks so that results can be achieved by institutions helping each other. Facilitate networking among institutions as it allows them to share best practices, for example through events or communications channels that the programme can help develop. This will help to address the strongly expressed needs and requests for international best practices from beneficiary institutions, in particular those from developing countries and LDCs, which are the core of the programme's clientele.* *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TISI

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Programme structure and areas of action (chapter 2.1): Beyond the Benchmarking, the programme has developed other methodologies over the years to adapt to new needs and contexts – e.g. the CUBED and Ecosystem approaches. The evaluation considers both i) the collection of good practices for the different methodologies and types of institutions and ii) the development and refinement of new methodologies as research and development (R&D) activities of the programme. This R&D work has different and longer-term objectives beyond the concrete short-term implementation of activities. On the one hand, the objective is to further develop and refine methodologies and, on the other hand, to better reach developmental results. **Programme funding (2.2):** Most of the programme's activities are delivered using unearmarked programme funds. Activities under AIM have been covered with these unearmarked resources. **The programme's theory of change (chapter 2.4):** The finding, conclusions and recommendations sections of the report do not use the term TISI. After discussions with all relevant respondents, it became clear that acronym TISI is only used and understood within the ITC. The present report uses the general terms "institutions" or "client institutions" as it rallied the most agreement from stakeholders and mainly ITC staff.	**Unearmarked resources enable the programme to sustainably carry out R&D activities and to collect best practices** - both of which are elements that significantly characterise the unique selling proposition of the programme. The programme does not explicitly divide their activities between R&D and implementation. This is also due to the nature of how the programme works, as it combines and mixes R&D with overall service provision (e.g. doing a Benchmarking is on the one hand the delivery of a service, and on the other the collection of data points and best practices which feed into the methodology). Although at the core of the programme lies a specific service offering in institutional strengthening, it has become highly complex with many names (e.g. AIM, I 4 Impact, TISI, Institutional Strengthening Programme, etc.) and many contexts (working globally, different types of institutions, different levels of maturity, etc.). This plurality reduces the programme's recognition value.	**Recommendation 4:** *To strengthen the programme's identity and recognition value, it should consider updating, standardizing and possibly simplifying the institutional and programme terminology used.* *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TISI and Senior Management Committee (SMC) **Recommendation 5:** *Ensure that the programme has a sufficient base of unearmarked resources (through Window 1 funding) to sustainably carry out R&D activities and thus maintain its creative nature and competitive advantage. This is all the more important in view of the pending or ongoing adjustments, and since focusing the programme's offer to specific needs (recommendation 1), extending it to different types of institutions (recommendation 2) as well as enabling networks (recommendation 3) will all require dedicated time and resources.* *Thereby, it would be beneficial to have a targeted and well-planned approach to the more research-oriented activities of the programme, including a regular review of R&D spending and achievements.* *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TISI
Adequacy of human resources (chapter 3.3): There are difficulties in terms of making sure the team's size and availability are aligned with demand as well as programme's staff that need supervision and support, because of agendas and travel schedules of staff, among other things. Because the programme needs to adapt its implementation to the beneficiary institutions' planning and execution pace and agenda, the programme is not always able to adapt to the phases and "waves" of demand. Not all programme staff are able to implement the full spectrum of services available to different types of institutions. In this context, the risks linked to institutional memory loss is present if a senior staff leaves or is no longer available.	**Staff is considerably stretched, resulting in bottlenecks.** It has become increasingly difficult to ensure that the size of the team and the availability of senior personnel are aligned with evolving external demand as well as with internal supervision and support needs. As delivery has increased in recent years, many have tight schedules and are travelling frequently. Senior staff, which could mentor new(er) staff are travelling extensively and so are less present. Junior staff are experts in niches but are not always in a position to apply the programme's methodologies in certain specific situations outside of their "comfort zones." In addition, expanding the programme requires strategic planning which should involve senior staff, many of which do not have the time to dedicate to this task as they are implementing the activities of the programme.	**Recommendation 6:** *Over the next two years, it is recommended to ensure that the programme's core staff can dedicate more time and energy to design, supervision, peer support and steering the programme at the strategic level. This is all the more necessary if the programme further extends its range while customizing its offer (see recommendations 1-3), which requires high expertise and time-consuming needs assessments.* *The section could alleviate the pressure on core staff by preparing a staffing plan for consideration by senior management, increasing the size of the team (e.g. by adding positions at the mid-level), and by increasing the pool of senior, capable and knowledgeable consultants with which the programme works.* *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TISI

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Team members' ability to apply methodologies (chapter 3.3): As the programme has more than one methodology, it is also working to ensure that as many programme staff as possible are able to implement the spectrum of services available. At the moment, not all staff members are able to apply all methodologies in different settings, sectors and with different types of institutions. In addition, some of the team members are on a steep learning curve. Even the intermediate staff still have a lot to learn as the programme has many ramifications and specificities and is constantly evolving. Although the majority of missions are conducted with a pair of employees present, and usually one of them senior, there is still a voiced lack of supervision and mentorship because of overburdened staff (whether senior, intermediate or junior).	**Expertise needs to be acquired and shared within the team.** The programme aims to ensure that each type of methodology can be applied in different settings by different team members whereby staff should be enabled to pick up these skills in a learning by doing approach. So far, this objective has only been achieved to a limited extent, also due to the limited availability of senior staff. Developing training plans for staff would be part of the solution.	**Recommendation 7:** *It is recommended to develop, over the next year, clear knowledge transfer plans for each team member to help them assimilate methodologies in different contexts. The programme staff also needs to develop experience and expertise aligned to new types of clients. Some of the key elements which form the programme's methodologies can be extended to new clients (i.e. best practices from member-based institutions can be used for different types of clients, as long as they are membership based), but more experience within the team will be needed.* *As training by doing can be resource consuming – as it normally involves travelling – simulations, using past and present situations, could be used to reduce costs. For staff to learn, providing online services to more advanced institutions, who do not necessarily need face to face support, could also be a less costly solution for hands-on training. While providing such online services, staff to be trained could be present and involved, which would provide them with opportunities for learning.* *Responsibility for implementation: chief, TISI*
Gender equality (chapter 3.5): The programme integrates gender equality in its interventions to varying degrees, depending on projects. It does not systematically do so, however. The programme has guidelines on how client institutions can integrate gender in their strategies, activities and projects but there lacks a systematic integration of gender equality in everything the programme does.	**Considering the importance of gender equality** — and many other SDG themes and issues — within the UN and within the ITC, **the programme needs to do more specific work in this area across its projects and activities.** At a strategic level, as the ITC is a UN agency, it needs to commit to SDGs.	**Recommendation 8:** *It is recommended to strengthen the gender equality component of the programme as well as the consideration of other relevant mainstreaming areas for sustainable and inclusive development. This could for example take the form of a refresher of the Benchmarking, CUBED and Ecosystem methodologies as well as of all types of support tools and content.* *Responsibility for implementation: chief, TISI*

1. Introduction and methodology

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The broad purpose of this evaluation is to determine the quality and inform the future implementation of the Programme "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions" (herein referred to as the programme). Two specific purposes guide this evaluation: to assess (i) the programme's effectiveness in improving the performance of trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and (ii) its effectiveness in supporting other ITC interventions to deliver results. In particular, the evaluation is supposed to meet the following objectives:

- assess **to what extent the programme's theory of change (ToC) is valid and to what extent the interventions achieve the intended outcomes (and possibly impact)**;
- provide indications as to in which **areas of work the programme is most effective** or provides most added value to ITC's work and mandate;
- serve as a **basis for future improvements by providing recommendations** for a refined ToC and/or operational aspects for the implementation of the programme;
- provide **lessons learned, examples of good practice or transferable findings** that may benefit the design, implementation and results of other ITC projects and programmes; and to
- **ensure accountability towards partners and funders** by reviewing the programme's performance.

In order to meet these objectives, the evaluation examines the programme according to a set of criteria[2] and related high-level evaluation questions. These are listed in the table below.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria and related evaluation questions.

Criteria	High-level evaluation questions
RELEVANCE	▪ How and to what extent is the programme contributing to ITC's work and mandate?
EFFECTIVENESS & IMPACT	▪ To what extent does the programme achieve its objectives? What is the potential and actual contribution of each of the projects to the achievement of the programme's objectives? ▪ What are the main results achieved in each of the categories of the TISI client approach? In which of these categories has the programme been most relevant, effective or efficient (and in which of them less)?
EFFICIENCY & SYNERGIES	▪ To what extent has the programme been efficiently managed and delivered? ▪ How successful is the programme in supporting other ITC initiatives? ▪ How successful is the programme in drawing in the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve the performance of TISIs?
SUSTAINABILITY	▪ To what extent are the programme's positive effects likely to continue after the end of its interventions?

With regard to the scope, the evaluation encompasses **all activities in the programme's portfolio, with a specific focus on the latest years (2018 and the first half of 2019)**. From January 2014 to December 2019 and through its different initiatives, the programme has a total estimated budget of $6.7 million (US-Dollars).

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[2] Which correspond to the OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance.

The programme is composed of the following initiatives, three of which were considered during the evaluation:

- **I 4 IMPACT (Assess-Improve-Measure)** which is the main umbrella for the programme's interventions;[3]

- **World Trade Promotion Organizations Conference and Awards** (WTPO Conference, which brings together TPOs from around the world and integrates a best practices contest among the participating TPOs), the 2016 & 2018 WTPOs are integrated in the evaluation's scope);

- **MOPSE** (a standalone project based on the AIM overall approach, supporting TPOs in 21 Sub-Saharan African countries); and a

- **Standard on impact reporting** (a pilot concept the programme is testing since the end of 2018 to help client institutions better report on results and impact; this component of the programme is not in the evaluation's scope).

The main intended users of this evaluation are:

- the **TISI Programme team**, given that the evaluation will provide insights about the programme's process, performance as well as recommendations for improvement;

- **Senior Management**, as the evaluation will provide evidence that can serve as an information base for organizational decisions and management, in relation to ITC's programmatic approach in general and the TISI Programme in particular;

- **ITC staff**, as the evaluation will demonstrate ITC achievements and may likely provide insights that are transferable to other projects or areas. In particular for ITC staff who work with TISIs as multipliers to provide technical assistance, it will be highly relevant to gain a better understanding of the logic and tools of the TISI programme;

- **Partners and funders**, who want to learn more about the programme's performance; and

- the **general public** interested in learning more about ITC interventions or the TISI programme.

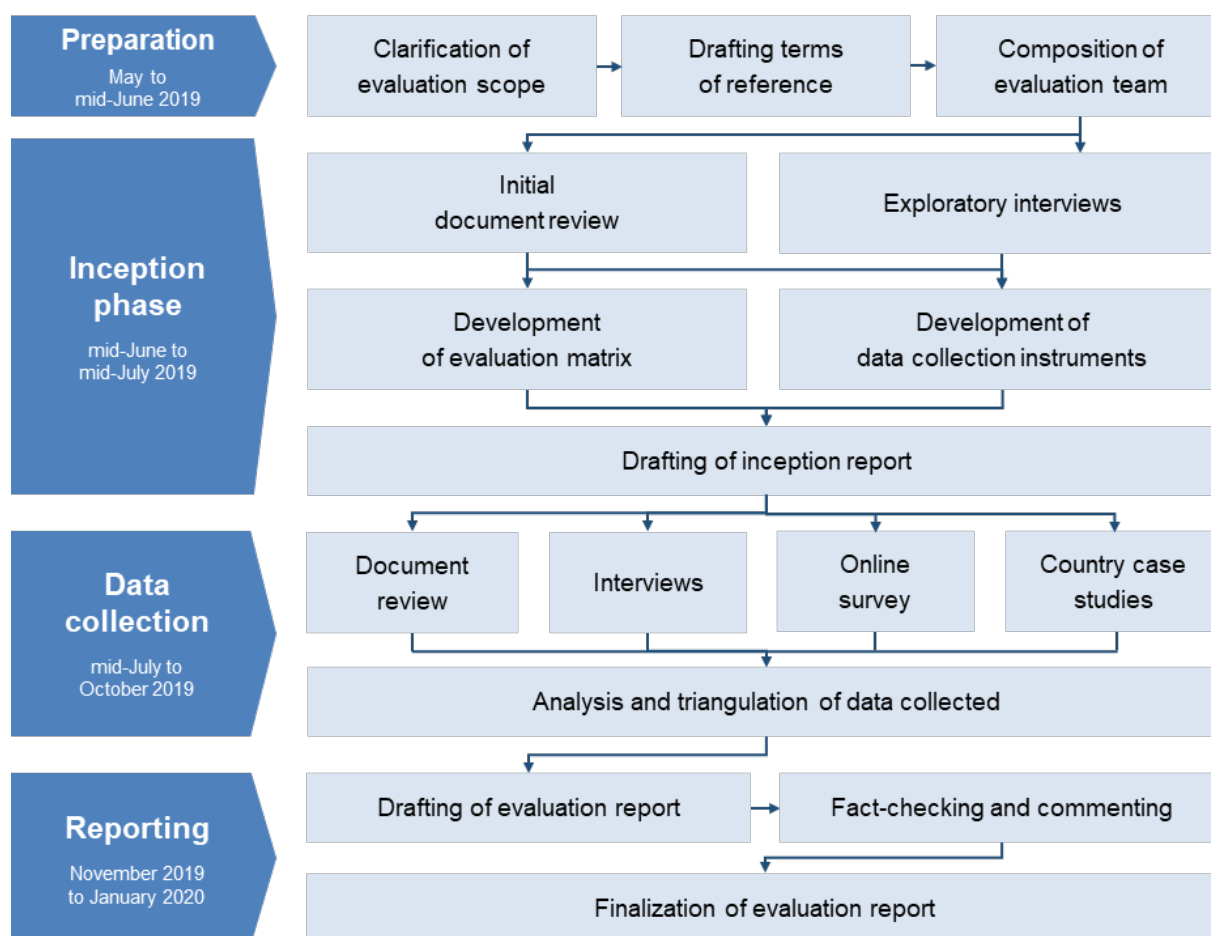## 1.2. Evaluation process and approach

The evaluation was carried out over a period of nine months (see Figure 1 below). It consisted of four main phases. During the preparation phase, the cornerstones of the evaluation were laid by preparing the terms of reference (ToR) and compiling the evaluation team. This was followed by the inception phase, which served to develop a solid initial understanding and a detailed operational plan for the evaluation's main data collection. The inception phase concluded with the finalization of the inception report that set out the conceptual framework to be used in the evaluation, the evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources and instruments for their collection. This was then followed by the data collection phase, and the reporting phase during which this report was produced.

The evaluation served as a *formative* process due to its timing, meaning that it was geared towards learning and improving programme implementation and its effectiveness in the upcoming years by examining implementation to date.

The evaluation approach was geared to ensuring: i) stakeholder participation from a wide range of types of programme actors, to capture multiple points of view and improve relevance; ii) independence, to ensure that the evaluation findings are accepted as rigorous and unbiased by all stakeholders, iii) respect for gender equality and diversity, including in respondents themselves iv) protection, safety, and confidentiality of all respondents, and v) utility, to ensure users can translate findings into practical actions for future initiatives.

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[3] See below, in chapter 2, for more information and details on the programme.

Figure 1. Overview of the evaluation process

Preparation May to mid-June 2019	Clarification of evaluation scope → Drafting terms of reference → Composition of evaluation team
Inception phase mid-June to mid-July 2019	Initial document review / Exploratory interviews Development of evaluation matrix / Development of data collection instruments Drafting of inception report
Data collection mid-July to October 2019	Document review / Interviews / Online survey / Country case studies Analysis and triangulation of data collected
Reporting November 2019 to January 2020	Drafting of evaluation report → Fact-checking and commenting Finalization of evaluation report

The Evaluation Team (ET) used a mixed-methods design that uses a variety of evaluative methods and techniques to address the key evaluation questions set out in the ToR. The evaluation approach was intended to be flexible so that it could be adjusted to take into consideration different country contexts as well as the different projects under the programme's umbrella and better understand how the programme has adapted to these different circumstances and the multiple client institutions' specificities. In other words, the interview protocol was built on the same building blocks—i.e. the key evaluation questions—to allow for data collected to be compared during its analysis but while using the tool, it was very specifically adapted to the context and type of respondent.

Using a mixed methods design enabled the ET to adapt the best features of several approaches to follow the evidence, include stakeholder perspectives, and provide useful information to management on all elements of the mandate. The quantitative data collected mainly through the survey and document review was used to flesh out the general trends in respondents' impression about the programme and then the qualitative information from document review, the survey's open-ended questions as well as interview answers substantiated, evidenced and nuanced the trends.

The programme ToC was assessed as part of the analysis of its relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. In other words, all the while assessing these criteria, the ET investigated the causality links of the findings with the logic behind the ToC. To do so, the evaluation combined *elements* from the Goal Free (exploring expected and unexpected results), Theory Based (based on the pre-defined ToC), and Collaborative (fostering extensive participation) approaches.[4]

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[4] See Barbara Kahan (2008). Excerpts from Review of Evaluation Frameworks. Saskatchewan, Ministry of Education. p. 26

The methodology used is developed on innovative participatory techniques, described here, that are effective for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Combining multiple and complementary methods' elements, including Outcome Harvesting (OH)[5], Most Significant Change (MSC)[6], and Theory of Change (ToC), lead to a more holistic and audience-friendly framework for learning and management decision-making. OH shifts the focus from assessing an intervention's intended impact and considers the behaviours, relationships, actions, and/or activities of those whom the intervention works directly with (e.g. TISIs' and government departments' staff). It takes the perspective of those stakeholders living in the reality of the intervention to see what they consider to be the real results. MSC is then used to consider these personal accounts of change and identify which of these accounts is most significant, and why. These methods were adapted to dynamic, either grouped or individual interviews with the key informants.

Furthermore, the evaluation was guided by normative guidelines and principles based on good practices in managing, conducting and using evaluations. The evaluation process and methodological approach followed the principles set forth in the ITC Evaluation Guidelines[7]. Moreover, it has been performed in line with the Norms and Standards for Evaluation and respecting the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation published by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

1.3. Data collection and sampling

In order to facilitate a rigorous and independent evaluation, and in accordance with the ToRs, the ET used an evaluation matrix (see Annex A). This overarching tool is built on the basis of:

- the seven key evaluation questions presented in the ToR and sub questions, and indicators developed by the ET to inform answers to these questions;
- the outcomes and outputs (for effectiveness), along with their accompanying indicators presented in the programme's logical framework, as well as some additional performance indicators and availability of the baseline and targets; and
- Information sources and information-gathering methods.

The evaluation matrix guides the analysis and ensures that all data collected is analysed, triangulated and then used to compile the main findings, which in turn lead to conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation approach, data collection and analysis techniques were all selected with regard to their respective suitability to answer the key evaluation questions (and therefore fulfilled requirements such as gender-responsiveness).

The evaluation relied on a variety of data collection methods and sources, which are listed below:

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[5] Outcome Harvesting is a utilisation-focused, participatory tool that enables evaluators to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes that a programme has influenced when relationships of cause-effect are not always known. Unlike most other evaluation methods, Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change. For more information about the Outcome Harvesting method, see Wilson-Grau, R., Britt, H. (2013). Outcome Harvesting, Ford Foundation. p. 31

[6] MSC is a form of qualitative, participatory monitoring and evaluation. MSC involves the collection and systematic participatory interpretation of stories of significant change. Because of its qualitative focus, it is sometimes referred to as "monitoring without indicators".

[7] ITC (2018). ITC Evaluation Guidelines. Second edition.

Table 2. Data and collection methods used by the evaluation

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA	Primary and secondary data from a variety of sources were gathered through literature searches, document review, consultations, and expert opinion during the field mission. Sex, urban-rural, and ethnicity-disaggregated data was collected from all sources available.
DOCUMENT REVIEW	The document review comprised ITC strategic reports and TISI programme annual plans and reports. It provided a historical perspective on the TISI programme and identified key issues to be assessed. In addition, the ET reviewed the training material, financial data, advisory board meeting minutes, WTPO reports, and relevant M&E reports.
INTERVIEWS	Interviews were semi-structured and for the most part conducted face-to-face, a few of them by Skype or phone calls. During the inception phase of the evaluation, interviews (and discussions) were conducted with ITC representatives. Key informant interviews (individual or small groups) were conducted in ITC headquarters in Switzerland as well as in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. The main groups for interviews were the programme's main beneficiaries (TISIs), indirect beneficiaries such as Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) representatives, the TISI programme team and other ITC staff, as well as national government partners, development partners and funders. In certain circumstances, TISI staff and representatives that have benefited from the programme's indirect delivery have been grouped to make the interview processes more efficient and allow for analysis of the dynamics between different staff members. A generic interview protocol is attached in Annex E. A list of people interviewed is available in Annex C.
DIRECT OBSERVATION	Direct observation was used during the field mission as programme activities were taking place and the evaluators had the chance of being present. A member of the evaluation team also participated in the annual Advisory Board[8]. The information collected helped understand the programme itself as well as the context in which it is being implemented. Furthermore, a member of the evaluation team attended a MOPSE workshop[9] where he conducted interviews with the great majority of the participants and with Business France, the implementing partner. However, it should be noted that direct observation is only a 'supporting' line of inquiry that can contribute to sociological understanding of the environment in which the project is implemented.
ONLINE SURVEY	An electronic survey was conducted to capture the opinions of TISI representatives who have participated in the programme. The electronic survey was intentionally kept short and focussed on transforming learning into action (see Annex E for survey questionnaires). The e-survey can be considered a census since the full population of potential respondents were invited to answer. The survey was bilingual (English and French) and was online for a total of three weeks. The profile of the respondents and some specific results of the online survey are presented in Annex D.

With regard to the consultation of different stakeholders, the evaluation aimed to adequately cover all relevant groups through the different data collections. Table 4 gives an overview of how different stakeholders groups were reached.

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[8] This meeting took place in Geneva on 26–27 June 2019.
[9] The workshop took place in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 23–26 September 2019.

Table 3. Distribution of stakeholders consulted by the evaluation

Stakeholder groups	Interviews	Online survey	Total	Men (of total)	Women (of total)	Unknown gender (of total)
TISI client institutions[10]	24	18	**42**	26	15	1
Programme partners	4	-	**4**	3	1	-
Companies	8	17	**25**	14	7	4
Academic sector	1	-	**1**	-	1	-
ITC staff	24	-	**24**	12	12	-
Grand total	**61**	**35**	**96**	**55 (57%)**	**36 (38%)**	**5 (5%)**

1.4. Evaluation team and quality control

The evaluation was commissioned and managed by ITC's Independent Evaluation Office (IEU). The IEU established an evaluation team formed by an ITC evaluation officer (Simon Bettighofer) and an external evaluation consultant (Alexandre Daoust).

The IEU internally reviewed and validated the design of the ToR, the inception report, as well as the final evaluation report for quality assurance, ensuring that the process and deliverables met the relevant principles and guidelines. In addition, the head of IEU provided guidance and oversight throughout the evaluation process.

For fact checking as well as to ensure their ownership and participation, the TISI team was consulted regularly and had the opportunity to provide comments at the drafting stages of the terms of reference, for the inception report as well as for this final report. In addition, a wider group of stakeholders was consulted to comment on the draft final report.

1.5. Limitations

The short timeline determined for the scope of the evaluation posed a challenge. This limitation has been discussed with the ITC's IEU and the programme's management team during the preparation phase. In fact, the TISI programme is an ambitious, changing, global and ITC-central programme with which the ET became increasingly familiar over time. It was important for the team members to understand this complexity to adequately analyse, assess, and evaluate the results reached. To mitigate this issue, changes in programme's management were taken into consideration while using the contextual, historical information going back beyond 2018.

Still, with the set timeline, collecting data to adequately and fully understand and grasp different contexts in which the programme is being implemented was not a straightforward task. The balanced approach selected was to conduct a case study, to have a deep dive understanding of a unique case, and a mission to a MOPSE event to efficiently meet representatives from as many institutions as possible from a diversity of countries. This helped cover a larger geographical landscape. The survey helped in that sense as well. Still, there are gaps in the completeness of data representativeness of everything the programme is doing. The programme has a global reach and even with two missions and an advisory board meeting presence from one of the ET's representatives, impressions, ideas and levels of satisfaction from Asian and Latin American and Caribbean stakeholders are scarce as they only have been collected through the survey.

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[10] Of which 11 were participants of the MOPSE project, 12 from the Zimbabwe case study (all of which were interviewed) and 18 from other client institutions consulted through an online survey.

2. Global context and programme overview

2.1. Programme structure and areas of action

TISIs, in their many forms, play an important role in overall economic growth and specifically in private sector development and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs') internationalization. TISIs support and promote trade. Trade can have strong positive effects on economic growth and even increase GDP. The ITC hence considers that by supporting TISIs, it can have a multiplier effect in that sense and contribute to reducing poverty and attaining the agency's goals, including its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The programme aims to improve the managerial and operational performance of TISIs so they can better assist micro, MSMEs internationalize. The TISI Programme is carried out by the TISI section (DEI/TISI) and represents ITC's focus area 3 'Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions'.

At the heart of the programme is the Assess-Improve-Measure (AIM) for Results methodology, which is delivered through advice, training and information sharing either through modular interventions or under a full-fledged customized approach to meet the needs of institutions. The "I 4 Impact – (AIM)" project is formed around this core methodology. It was created in 2013 and since then, ITC has supported over 100 institutions through this initiative to develop clearer strategies, improve their service portfolio, establish results measurement systems, strengthen networks and optimize the use of their resources. Since the beginning of the programme, the TISI section has carried out and documented benchmarking exercises with more than 70 organizations, of which 10 were done in 2018[11] and 13 in 2017[12].

The following paragraphs describe the main activities of the programme.

Benchmarking

The Benchmarking process is at the core of the AIM methodology. As shown in Figure 2 below, Benchmarking comes with intensive support to the client institutions. Basically, a benchmarking process is an assessment and diagnostic of the institutional performance of the client using a set of indicators. The data collected on these indicators through interviews and focus groups is validated through the programme's analysis and then compared to the full database of previous Benchmarking exercise, hence its name. Using the benchmark and the wealth of best practices from similar institutions, the institutional strengthening section team, in close coordination with the institutions' staff and decision makers, then provides a delivery package of advisory services—normally in the form of a performance improvement road map (PIRM) – and training support designed to bring performance to a higher level. The support is tailored to the PIRM. The client institutions also learn how to continuously measure their improvement. When the process comes to a full circle, the client will undergo a Re-Benchmarking to fully measure the extent of their improvement. Since the beginning of the programme, five re-Benchmarking have been conducted[13].

Workshops are also organized within the programme, to provide training and capacity development as well as to foster networking opportunities among participating institutions. In 2018, three regional workshops were organized[14] where in 2017, four were delivered.[15]

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[11] ITC (2019). 2018 Annual Report. Window 1 Funding for Institutional Strengthening. p. 13
[12] ITC (2018). Annual Report. AIM for results project 2017. p. 9
[13] This description is based on the content of the 2018 annual report: ITC (2019). 2018 Annual Report. Window 1 Funding for Institutional Strengthening. p. 9-13
[14] Ibid, p.15.
[15] ITC (2018). Annual Report. AIM for results project 2017. p. 10

CUBED

CUBED is an institutional mapping tool. Based on a similar approach to the Benchmarking process, it used a set of core and customizable indicators, questions and observations. Although it can be used for the benefit of the client institutions, its primary purpose is to inform interested parties—many times ITC project and programme managers—on the service offerings, influence and resources existing in the trade ecosystems of a given country or region. CUBED can be implemented in a shorter timeframe than a Benchmarking process. In 2017, four CUBED assessments were conducted[16]. In 2018, the annual report mentions, "a few more remote CUBED assessments".[17]

WTPO Conference

Under the umbrella of the overall programme, the TISI section also organizes the biennial WTPO Conference. The conference was first established in 1996 with the purpose of providing a forum for Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) from around the world to gather and discuss issues that are important for their work agenda. Lately, it is described by the programme as the global networking event on their agendas to foster new ideas, future collaborations and positive outcomes of their efforts.

Every two years, ITC organizes the WTPO in a different country. Within the conference, there is a best practices award (the WTPO Awards). The TPOs interested in participating to the contest are asked to describe an export development initiative that they consider as innovative. Over the years, the selection process has evolved as the ITC tried to stay objective within the process. For example, it increased the number of indicators for the selection process, further categorised the proposals based on the development levels of the countries and stopped voting. The selection of the country where the event takes place is also voted by the participating country representatives.

Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The programme has recently introduced a new methodology called the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, which is a mapping tool to describe institutions in the entrepreneurship ecosystem of a country. The resulting report shows the different types of support given by institutions to entrepreneurs and at which levels of the business lifecycle. It also analyses the types of linkages or collaborations that occur between various institutions in the ecosystem. With this mapping, the programme intends to help client institutions to better understand the nature of the ecosystem they work in. Moreover, this information is also thought to be useful for ITC project managers as it enables them to better adapt the design of their projects to fit well within these ecosystems.

Capacity building

Alongside the assessment and networking activities described above (Benchmarking, CUBED, Entrepreneurship Ecosystem mapping and WTPO) the programme provides a wide range of capacity building measures, including institution-specific workshops, expert advice and coaching, regional workshops, and the development of case studies. It is mainly through delivering such capacity building interventions that the programme intends to accompany institutions in their process of performance improvement.

Target institutions

Originally, much of the programme's support targeted TIPOs. However, since 2018 the scope of work started expanding to a broader range of institutions including Chambers of Commerce, national, regional

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[16] The description of the CUBED methodology and the number of CUBED assessments are inspired and taken from the 2017 annual report: ITC (2018). Annual Report. AIM for results project 2017 (description p. 11 and number of workshops p. 24). In addition, the CUBED scoring template, an Excel document used during CUBED assessment, was reviewed.
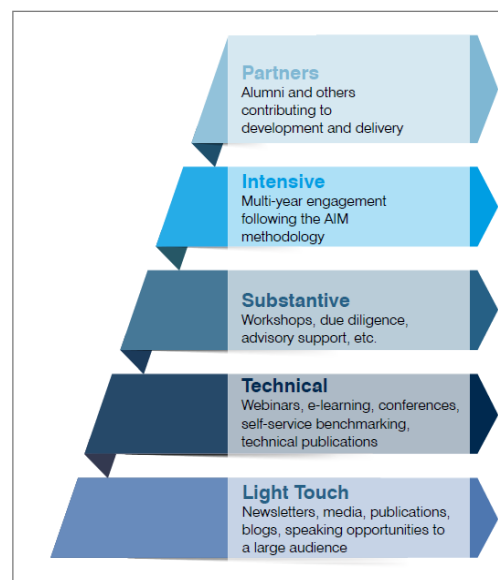
[17] ITC (2019). 2018 Annual Report. Window 1 Funding for Institutional Strengthening. p. 14

and sub-regional TISIs, membership-based business associations, incubators and other sector specific and functional associations (see Box 1 on following page for a categorization of the different types of institutions the programme supports[18]).

TISIs benefiting from interventions under the project are split into five categories according to the TISI client approach (see Figure 2:

- **Partners:** TISIs that contribute to development and delivery. These institutions work and partner with the ITC to implement the programme's activities;

- **Intensive:** TISIs benefiting from intense, proactive multi-year engagement (account managed). This type of support is linked to the traditional approach of Benchmarking to TPOs but that is now used with other institutions;

- **Substantive:** TISIs benefiting from substantive, on-demand support. Normally, the client institutions can ask for ad hoc, specific advisory services in key areas of intervention including strategy, service portfolio design and performance measurement among others. The assistance is more limited in scope, either focused on assessing the client's institutional situation or on providing support in one particular area of weakness. The regional workshops are included in this category of support;

Figure 2: TISI Client Approach

Source: ITC Annual report 2017

- **Technical:** TISIs benefiting from technical, general presentations. These are mainly linked to lighter version of the self-assessments or other types of e-learning or webinar events in which clients participate; and

- **Light Touch:** TISIs benefiting light touch advice, accessing TISI Strengthening information & research. The institutions can access tools or information on good practices and case studies offered through the programme's newsletter or the TISI Benchmarking Platform.[19]

The programme currently also includes a **project that focuses on building the managerial and operational capacities of TPOs** in 21 Sub-Saharan African countries (MOPSE — the acronym comes from the French "*management opérationnel des programmes de soutien à l'exportation[20]*"). This project is co-implemented with Business France (a French TIPO) and funded by the French Development Agency (AFD).

Furthermore, in 2018 the institutional strengthening section ran a **pilot project to develop a new international standard on impact reporting for TISI**. This pilot was conducted with five TIPOs (SGE Switzerland, EPB Sri Lanka, ASEPEX Senegal, Procomer Costa Rica and Dubai Exports). In 2019, this stand-alone project was integrated in the I 4 Impact – (AIM) project.

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[18] ITC (2015). Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions: Programme Document, p. 1
[19] www.tisibenchmarking.org
[20] ITC (2019). Annual Report 2018. p. 36

Finally, **the programme is contributing to a wide number of other ITC initiatives**. Under these projects, the institutional strengthening section usually provides support ranging from the so-called CUBED or Benchmarking assessment, which is specifically designed to help project managers assess the capacity, capability and commitment of partners/ beneficiaries, to general capacity building and advisory services to strengthen institutions and networks to deliver against project objectives. In some of these cases, the financing for the TISI component in these projects is clearly defined (a portion of the budget is dedicated to the strengthening of the TISIs), in some others less so. Ideally, the programme supports the delivery of these ITC programmes or projects by conducting assessments in advance to inform their subsequent implementation.

An **Advisory Board** is in place to provide strategic guidance and advice for the programme. It consists of CEOs of TISIs appointed by the Executive Director of ITC on the basis of their individual experience and contribution to the institutional strengthening work of ITC and with due consideration to diversity. The Board meets maximum twice a year at ITC headquarters in Geneva, or in an alternate location decided by the members.

> **Box 1: What does TISI, as a concept, cover?**
>
> The definition of TISIs covers many institutions which may differ in function, form and funding.
>
> Official TISIs are key vehicles through which governments implement their export and investment strategies alongside other development objectives. Private sector TISIs provide advocacy as well as useful services to their SME members and beneficiaries.
>
> All TISIs enable and encourage exporters to engage with and survive in international markets. Public or private, TISIs can be placed into one of three categories:
>
> - **General**: Trade and Investment Promotion Organisations (TPOs, TIPOs), Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Economic Groupings, etc.
> - **Sector-specific**: Exporter/Business Associations, Women Associations, Sector Chambers and associations, etc.
> - **Function-specific**: Export credit and Financing bodies, Standard and Quality Agencies, Export Packaging Institutes, Training Institutions, etc.
>
> All these categories of TISIs are potential direct beneficiaries of the programme.

At ITC level, enhancing the capacity of TISIs is the key feature for *all ITC interventions* whose results require coordination of activities and mutually reinforcing strategies with TISIs. Highly performing TISIs ensures that improvements of the business ecosystem, to which ITC contributes, are sustainable. Therefore, from the corporate ITC perspective, the direct and indirect role of the programme in improving the managerial and operational performance of those TISIs belonging to the ITC portfolio is expected to have an impact on the performance of all ITC interventions.

2.2. Programme funding

Activities under the AIM project have been covered with Window I (W1) funds[21] of about $1 million annually for the past two years. Services under the project[22] are provided free of charge to beneficiaries in ITC programme countries, while clients from prosperous countries pay for them. The TPO Network World Conference and Awards used to be funded from ITC's regular budget but are now also covered by W1 funds. In addition, the pilot on impact reporting standards was financed through W1 funds.

The MOPSE project and the programme's indirect delivery to other projects are financed through earmarked Window II (W2) funds. The MOPSE project is the first W2 project focused solely on TISI strengthening directly managed by the section. It has a budget of $1.6 million for the two-year period 2018-19.

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[21] ITC relies on two sources of funding: regular budget (RB) and extrabudgetary funding (XB). The regular budget is approved on a biennial basis by the United Nations General Assembly and the World Trade Organization (WTO) General Council. Extrabudgetary funds are voluntary contributions, which include two categories of funds known as windows. Window I (W1) consists of unearmarked and soft-earmarked contributions from funders, while Window II (W2) is composed of earmarked bilateral contributions for specific projects and programmes.

[22] Which includes the development of tools and methodologies as well as piloting.

The table below provides an overview of the project portfolio directly managed by the TISI section in recent years, and the project budgets.

Table 4. Programme budget including past and ongoing projects

Project	Start Date	End Date	Budget (in $)
I 4 IMPACT (AIM)	Jan 2018	Dec 2019	2 100 000
MOPSE	Jan 2018	Dec 2019	1 600 000
Standard on impact reporting	Sep 2017	Dec 2018	76 637
WTPO Conference and Awards (2018)	Jan 2018	Dec 2018	294 935
WTPO Conference and Awards (2016)	Jan 2016	Dec 2017	150 000
AIM for Results (Phase I)	Jan 2014	Dec 2017	2 460 247
		Total	**6 681 819**

Source: data extracted from ITC's corporate project portal (at May 2019)

In addition to AFD's MOPSE funding, the programme has been financed by Finland and Germany[23] as well as unearmarked funding from W1 funders.

2.3. Geographical scope of programme activities

Depending on the intensity of support provided linked to the client approaches described above, the selection of countries involved depends more on the TISIs' profiles than on national contexts and characteristics. As mentioned in the 2018 AIM project plan, the project is *"[…] mandated to invest where there is need for our help, high levels of engagement and commitment to performance improvement, adequate levels of absorption capacity and the potential for economic and social impact."*[24] Although the programme is present all over the world, with more than 100 TISIs having benefited from one activity or another, it focuses on Least-Developed Countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries, small island developing states, small vulnerable economies, post-conflict states, and sub-Saharan Africa. Africa remains the centre of the programme's effort with renewed outreach work in Southeast Asia and small island states in the Caribbean.

2.4. The programme's theory of change and key performance indicators

The programme has a ToC visualisation (Figure 2) and a ToC intervention logic (Figure 3). These two ToC elements were presented in the 2015 programme document[25] and were confirmed to still both be valid today. Both describe the ToC in different ways but using similar components. Figure 2 below represents the ToC's visualisation. The description below, accompanying the two figures, was developed by the ET and validated by the programme team, including the simplified logic model that is fully the product of the ET's work (it did not exist before). Together, the descriptive text below and the logic model now should form the basis of the revisited ToC for the programme.

Figure 2's logic flow is **vertical**. At the top are the main programme assumptions for the political and TISI levels. The programme hence **assumes** that there is minimum political will as well as stability in the targeted regions and countries to sustain the higher-level changes it targets. It is also expected that the TISIs will be willing and able to continuously engage with ITC. On the other hand, the programme

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[23] ITC (2015). Programme Document. FOCUS Area 4 Programme: Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions. p. 40

[24] ITC (2019). AIM Project Plan 2018. I 4 IMPACT (AIM): Improving institutional performance for SME internationalization (B633), p. 10

[25] ITC (2015). Programme Document. FOCUS Area 4 Programme: Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions. p. 43

considers that there are many **drivers of change** which are putting pressure on the TISIs' overall socio-economic environment. With these assumptions and drivers of change in mind, the programme presents its **desired impact** as "Inclusive and Sustainable Development," in line with ITC's overall results framework. The **outcome** is "TIPOs and TISIs provide more effective support to and on behalf of SMEs for increased internationalization."

To understand the programme's methodology to reach these high-level results, it is important to look at the issues it intends on tackling. That is why the visualisation presents the many common **internal and external barriers to performance** TISIs face (see the middle of Figure 2), including poor governance, unclear mandates, and declining budgets, as well as the challenges of a highly competitive, increasingly complex global market.

As for the **outputs**, the programme follows a **four-step approach** which intends to assist the TISIs in implementing positive **changes** and sustaining improvements across all dimensions of their performance. This is to ensure that MSMEs receive the help they need from the TISIs to grow and benefit from advocacy efforts on their behalf. The four steps consist of raising TISIs' **awareness** on needs and opportunities in their area of work; foster TISIs' **learning** of their organization service offering's gaps (see box at the bottom of Figure 2 for examples of such gaps); generate **consensus** among TISI representatives to ensure commitment to a programme change; and ensuring the **implementation** of their Performance Improvement Roadmaps (PIRM) specifically developed for the TISIs within the programme. Each of these four steps and **accompanying assumption**, is presented as an output. These outputs and their logical links are at the core of the programme's AIM methodology. At the same time, TISIs, as beneficiaries of the programme, are critical **multipliers** of ITC's work, because they are important service providers to MSMEs[26]. In the best scenario, the four-step cycle restarts once the PIRM is implemented to ensure continuous improvement in TISIs' management.

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[26] ITC (2015). Programme Document. FOCUS Area 4 Programme: Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions. p. 3

Figure 3: Theory of Change—Visualisation
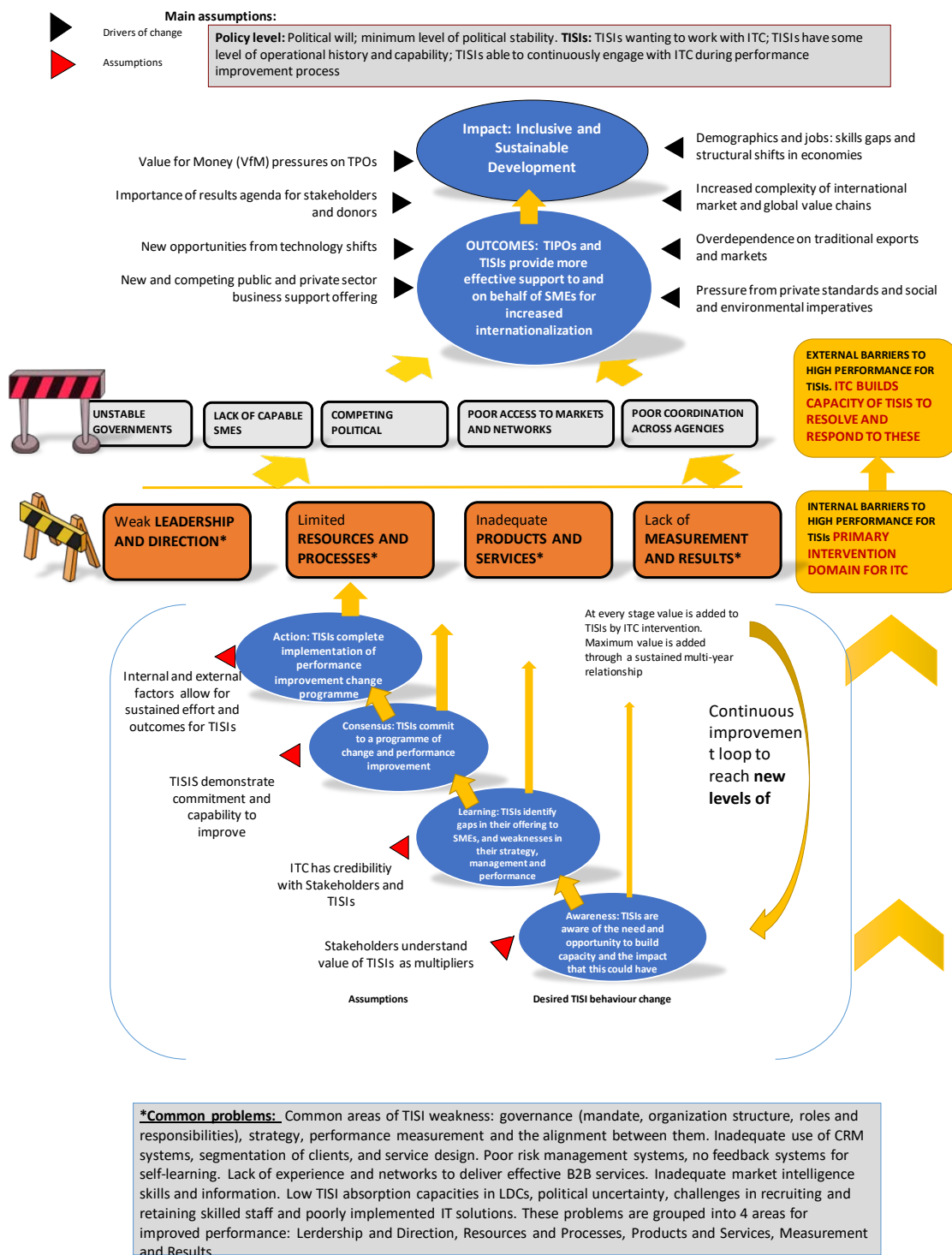
Figure 3 below is built on the same logic as Figure 2 but is presented differently. To start, the logic flow is **horizontal** instead of vertical. At the right end, the impact statement is an "economic and social impact, by contributing to job creation, increase in average income and improved inclusiveness." The impact is above the programme's **accountability ceiling** and in this context, many other programme **indirect beneficiaries** affect the potential of achieving the result. For example, by focusing the programme's efforts on helping beneficiary TISIs measure and demonstrate results (through the Standard and Impact Reporting Project), the idea is to influence governments, donors, private sector representatives and beneficiaries to champion its business support activities (see macro and market

level indirect beneficiaries). As another example, through the WTPO Conference (meso level indirect beneficiaries), the programme endeavours to put in place a trade support network to allow for sharing of information and best practices among TPOs.

By working with **direct beneficiaries**, the programme intends on ensuring "TIPOs and TISIs provide more effective support to and on behalf of SMEs for increased internationalization" (see rectangle below the title "Direct Beneficiaries"). Moving to the left of Figure 3, the four-step logic described in Figure 2 above are replicated and leads to the direct beneficiary overall result.

The programme seeks to improve TISIs performance through an **iterative process** of raising awareness and fostering learning, commitment and action, leading to a new level of maturity with each **cycle of change**. Figure 3 also presents three **key assumptions** which need to materialize if the programme's operations are to be effective. At every **stage**, value is added to the TISI as they act on opportunities for improvement. The iterative process is demonstrated with the return arrows from the action stage to the awareness-raising stage. The programme supports a deep multi-year engagement for high-impact institutions, while also delivering a broader service offering to improve awareness and knowledge for all TISIs (see Figure 1 above).

Figure 4: Theory of Change — Programme Intervention Logic
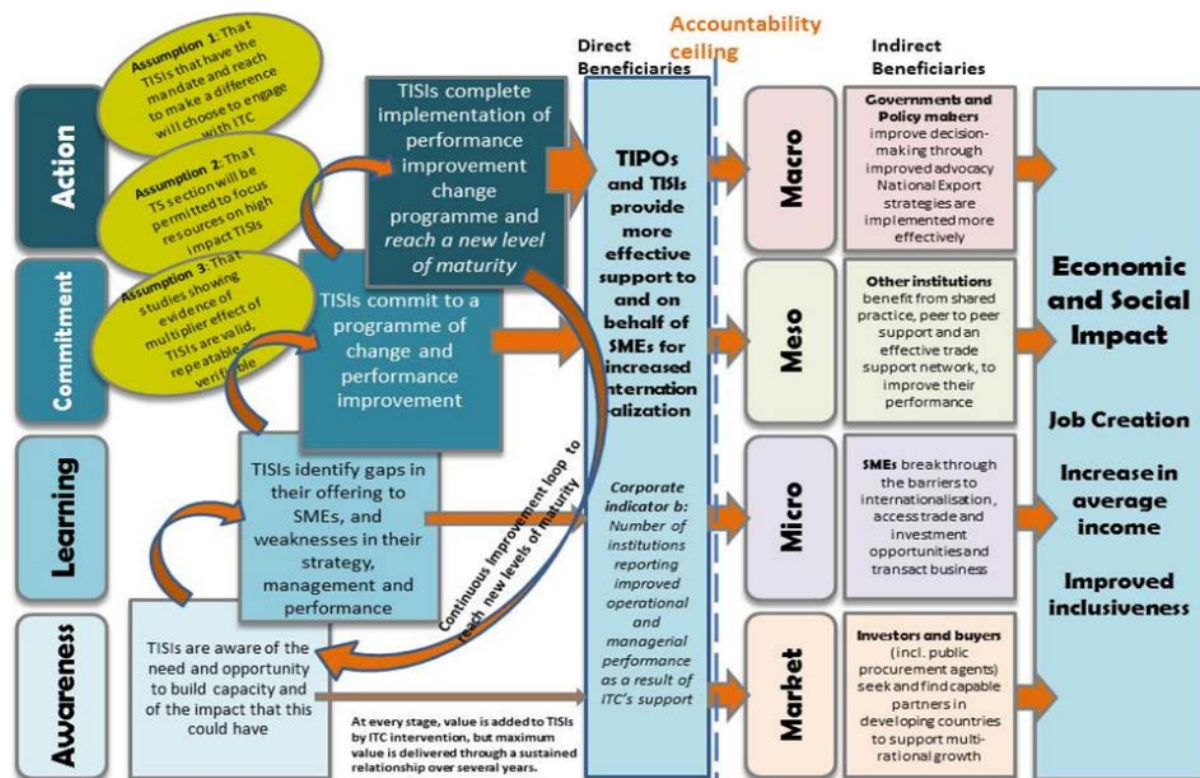
It is to be noted that the 2015 programme document also states that the successful delivery of this programme is foreseen to contribute to a variety of **SDGs**, including targets of SDG 1, 8, 16 and 17.

As mentioned, these two figures have been confirmed to be still valid to this day. However, one additional element the programme management brought to the ToC after the 2015 programme document is a results-chain. Building on the chain, the ET sourced and used information from different documents provided by the programme to complete its own logic model presented in Figure 4 below, which brings together the ToC visualisation, its intervention logic as well as the results chain. The intention behind this exercise is to simplify the ToC and still keep the main elements of what is described above.

The results chain forms the basis of the logic model which is itself well related to the two figures above. The ET made one change to the outcome level result statement: the AIM Project Plan 2018 results chain's outcome reads, "Overall performance of TISIs and TISIs Networks is improved for the benefit of enterprises." This outcome is related to the impact statements in the two figures above but differs in the sense that some elements are missing and more importantly, that the concept of "networks" was added. To ensure the outcome contains only one idea, the ET divided it into two separate outcomes for ease of understanding and to ensure they relate well to the other outcome statements from above. Outcome 1 in Figure 4 below hence reads: "Improved overall performance of TISI support to and on behalf of MSMEs for increased internationalization." Outcome 2 reads: "Enhanced and strengthened TISI networks allowing for exchange of knowledge and best practices in delivery of services to MSMEs."

Another change was made to the results statements by the ET: the impact in the programme's logical framework matrix in the AIM Project Plan 2018 was kept integrally but renamed "ultimate outcome" to allow the addition of the impact statement from the programme document's ToC, which is different. The logic model's impact now reads: "Contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth and development." This is the result of a merge between the two impact statements from the two figures above.

Finally, to further align the logic model to the ToC, the different levels of indirect beneficiaries were added as factors influencing the links between outcomes 1 & 2 and the ultimate outcome, hence ensuring the different programme's projects are taken into consideration. The description above of the macro, meso, micro and market indirect beneficiaries still stands here.

Figure 5: Logic Model[27]

Impact: "Contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth and development"

Ultimate outcome: "Contribute to the international competitiveness of SMEs"

Indirect Beneficiaries: **Market** (Investors and Buyers) **Micro** (SMEs) **Meso** (Other institutions) **Macro** (Government and Policy makers)

Outcome 1: "Improved overall performance of institutions support to and on behalf of MSMEs for increased internationalization"

Outcome 2: "Enhanced and strengthened institutions networks allowing for exchange of knowledge and best practices in delivery of services to SMEs"

Output 4: "Action - institutions operational and/or managerial capacity improved"

Output 5: "Action - institutions networks created and/or strengthened"

Output 3: "Commitment - Institutional performance improvement roadmap (PIRM) finalized and validated by the beneficiary institutions"

Output 2: "Learning - institutions Key areas for improvement identified through ITC assessment methodologies"

Output 1: "Awareness – institutions' access to information and tools on good trade and investment promotion and related development practices enhanced"

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[27] This model also integrates into the overall ITC results framework as strengthened TISIs are the conveyor belt / multiplier for ITC interventions.

Table 5: Key Performance Indicators adopted by the Programme

Objectives	Project Indicators	Corporate Indicators
Ultimate Outcome: Contribute to the international competitiveness of SMEs	Contribute to SDG 8.3.2.	GOAL 8: Decent work and economic growth— TARGET 8.3 (2): Encourage formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
	Percentage of client SMEs reporting improved internationalization further to TISI support (once they have gone through the full AIM approach)	
Outcome 1: "Improved overall performance of TISI support to and on behalf of MSMEs for increased internationalization"	Number of TISIs reporting improved operational and/or managerial performance as a result of ITC's support through this project	B1: Number of institutions reporting improved operational and managerial performance as a result of ITC support
Outcome 2: "Enhanced TISI networks for the benefit of enterprises."	Number of TISIs reporting having improved networking skills and capacities as a result of ITC's support through the project	
Output 1: Awareness — TISIs access to information and tools on good trade and investment promotion and related development practises enhanced.	Number of case studies on good practices developed	Number of publications, web applications or newsletters produced or updated
	Number of TS newsletters published	
	Number of new or adapted TISI Strengthening tools	N/A
Output 3: Commitment — Institutional performance improvement roadmap (PIRM) finalized and validated by the beneficiary TISI	Number of PIRMs prepared and validated by TISIs	Number of advisory services provided
Output 4: Action — TISI operational and/or managerial capacity improved	Number of institutions reporting improved capacities in the various areas of intervention (governance, strategy, HRM, Performance Measurement, Service Portfolio, Communications & PR, Client Management…)	Number of advisory services provided
	Number of TISI staff trained on various areas of intervention (governance, strategy, HRM, Performance Measurement, Service Portfolio, Communications & PR, Client Management…)	Number of participants to group trainings.
	Number of female TISI staff trained on various areas of intervention (governance, strategy, HRM, Performance Measurement, Service Portfolio, Communications & PR, Client Management…)	Number of female participants to group trainings.
Output 5: Action—TISI networks created and/or strengthened.	Number of partnerships established/strengthened.	N/A
	Number of national/regional/international TISI networking events facilitated and organized.	
	Number of donors met to promote TISI Strengthening programme.	

As indicated in the table, the KPIs adopted by the programme include the SDG 8 "Decent work and economic growth" and more specifically, the programme aims at contributing to target 8.3 (2): Encourage formalization and growth of MSMEs.

However, after further consideration of the programme's intended SDG contributions, the evaluation team found out that the programme's had only used a portion of the official 8.3 target indicator statement. In fact, the SDG target indicator 8.3 states: "# of strategies that have been implemented addressing job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation and encourage formalization and growth of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (A2)." So the indicator relates to strategies but not actually to work on formalization of MSMEs. Therefore, the evaluation team encouraged the programme to adjust this reference.

Instead, after comparison with ITC's corporate results framework, the following three SDG targets were also being considered:

- 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment

- 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

- 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

Please note that the finding, conclusions and recommendations sections of the report do not use the term TISI. After discussions with all relevant respondents, it became clear that acronym TISI is only used and understood within the ITC. The present report uses the general terms "institutions" or "client institutions" as it rallied the most agreement from stakeholders and mainly ITC staff.

3. Findings

3.1. Relevance

Are the programme objectives and design relevant to the development needs of participating countries and consistent with government priorities?

Did the project design, choice of activities and deliverables properly reflect and address the primary needs of TISI stakeholders?

Alignment with government priorities

The programme objectives and design are relevant to the development needs of participating countries and government priorities because those that do participate in the programme have the increase in trade and exports as strategic priorities to boost economic growth.

Simply put, helping the institutions involved in one way or another in trade helps push forward related issues at the national level. First, it has been demonstrated that working on trade issues and promotion with TPOs and other trade-related organizations, has a direct effect on increased trade and even on **augmented GDP**. A study conducted in 2015 shows that for every dollar invested in trade promotion, 87 are generated in additional exports and the GDP of a country is increased by 385 dollars in average (median).[28] In this context, developing countries and LDCs with trade strategies welcome TPO institutional strengthening support to reach their targets. Relevant respondents consulted on the subject during the evaluation concur with this argument. This **reinforces the logic behind the programme's ToC** up to the highest level of results. Indeed, the idea is that the programme will work at the meso level — i.e. the client institutions — and theoretically, there should be a positive impact on the targeted countries' economic growth. In this section, the evaluation finds that the theory is aligned with what the beneficiary government think should happen.

To provide an example from the evaluation's case study, **looking into Zimbabwe's economy**, since the 1990s' the country's policies have been working towards promoting: "… higher growth and to reduce poverty and unemployment by (1) reducing fiscal and parastatal deficits and instituting prudent monetary policy; (2) liberalizing trade policies and the foreign exchange system…"[29] Trade hence comes second in terms of means to reaching higher growth. The country's 2012 – 2016 national trade policy also closely links trade and growth. The policy's vision is: "To have trade function as the engine for sustainable economic growth and development of Zimbabwe.[30]"

Second, the programme's targeted institutions have the potential of helping **create a bridge** between i) the government, international partners and any other interested parties on one side and ii) the national private sector on the other. As indicated by many respondents from the ITC staff as well as the Zimbabwe case study and MOPSE stakeholders and beneficiaries, institutionally strengthening these clients will enhance their capacity to better organize and represent the private sector organizations they represent. This boosts trust through better communication which has the potential of having the private sectors' concerns better understood by government ministries which can then develop more aligned trade policies. If applied, these policies can boost trade and increase economic prosperity for the population (for an example of this situation, see Box 2 below, in section 3.2).

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[28] Marcelo Olarreaga, S. S. (2015). Export promotion: What works? A study carried out by Geneva School of Economics and Management on behalf of the European cluster of Trade Promotion Organisations ETPO and with ITC support.

[29] Wellington Garikai Bonga (2014). Economic Policy Analysis in Zimbabwe: A Review of Zimbabwe Economic Policies: Special Reference to Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (Zim Asset). p. 7

[30] Ministry of Industry and Commerce (2012). National Trade Policy (2012-2016). p. 6

Another factor that renders the programme's support relevant at the government level is that there is usually an effort on the part of the institutional strengthening section team to align all services to **national policies and strategies**, the most important being the National Export Strategy (NES when they exist). By itself, this action renders the support all the more relevant to the national context of the beneficiary countries. However, some respondents mentioned the programme should do more in that sense.
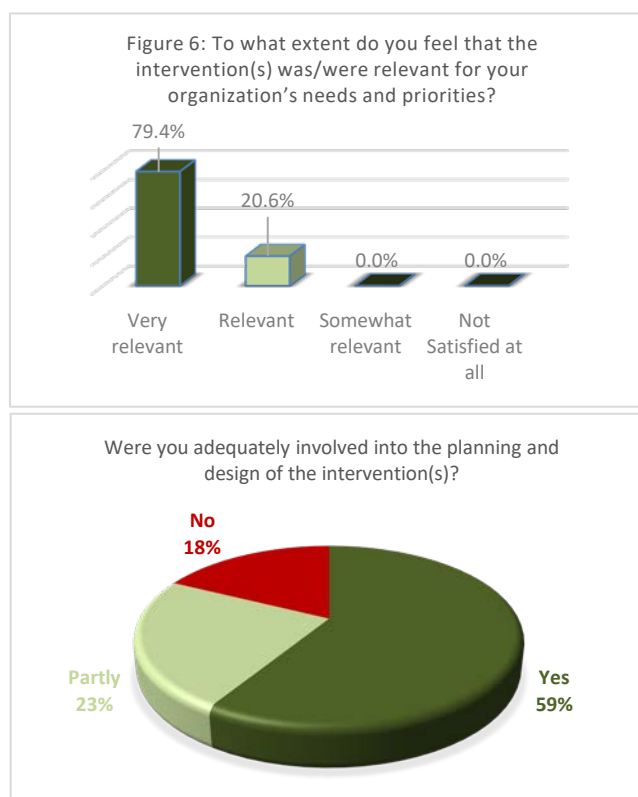
All this being said, as shown in the ToC subsection above (2.4), the programme is aware that working only with such institutions is of limited relevance. Instead, **the programme must be implemented alongside other projects and programmes** which focus on working with i) government entities to develop performant trade policies (i.e. the macro level) and ii) the private sector to develop trade and internationalization readiness and SMEs' competitiveness (the micro level). The programme itself, positioned at the meso-level, is, however, a pertinent link between the two other levels, giving it a particular importance. ITC, through other projects and sections, works extensively with the private sector to support the internationalization of MSMEs. It also works with government entities but to a lesser extent.

Alignment to the primary needs of stakeholders

The programme's design, choice of activities and deliverables are generally aligned with the participating institutions' needs. The main reason for this alignment is the fact that the services provided by the programme are demand driven and therefore are informed and customized based on institutions' needs.

There is still a need to perfect the adaptation of the products and services provided to the specific and differentiated needs of the institutions involved, mainly in terms of maturity of the institutions and their capacity to absorb the programme's support. The less mature institutions need more intensive follow-up support.

As shown in Figure 6, all survey respondents consider the programme's interventions to be relevant (79.4% very relevant and 20.6% relevant). Yet when it comes to the respondents' involvement in the planning and design of the interventions, which renders them more aligned to the institutions' needs, there is an 18% of them that consider their involvement was not adequate. Survey respondents that gave more qualitative explanations to support their answer mentioned good involvement during activity implementation but so much during the planning of the activities. Still, 59% of survey respondents answered that they were adequately involved and 23 % considered they were partly involved in the planning and design of the interventions (see Figure 6 to the left). These 82% of respondents confirm that overall, the programme is demand driven and responds to client institutions' needs.

Figure 6: To what extent do you feel that the intervention(s) was/were relevant for your organization's needs and priorities?

Were you adequately involved into the planning and design of the intervention(s)?

One point that renders the programme's support adapted to beneficiary countries' needs is the fact that it is either **free for LDCs** or payable for the most advanced economies involved institutions. This makes the service available to LDCs and the majority of developing countries who normally do not have access

to such services and allows collecting good practices from all involved countries but more specifically the developed countries' institutions of which the beneficiaries want to hear from. Indeed, the consulted representatives from LDCs and developing countries mention that they value ITC's support because many of the best practices shared with them through the programme have been collected with some of the most advanced institutions in the world. Moreover, the programme has a large toolbox of different training and services at its disposal. The contents of these more than 50 training sessions are guided by the insights into institutional best practices and cover different areas of managerial and operational performance, such as leadership and direction; resources and processes; products and service delivery; or measurement and results.

Among other approaches used to present the services to potential beneficiary countries, programme staff implement pilot events where they test the benchmarking with potential beneficiaries and then **the countries decide** if they want to continue or not. For example, for MOPSE, 45 African TPOs were invited to be part of the project and 25 answered positively. From these 25 leader organizations four were not selected because they lacked the needed commitment to be involved. The project ended up working with 21 of these TPOs. Four institutions were not selected even though they had responded positively to the invitation because of their small size and lack of absorption capacities.

Types of institutions that can benefit from the programme

The range of types of institutions that can benefit and that are benefiting from the programme is wide but **there are some limits**. The main limits mentioned by many respondents, but not all, are i) ministries and ii) SMEs. The opinions on these limits vary but there is a majority of respondents that mention they are "off-limits". These respondents consider that ministries are too big to be involved in the programme; they have strict parameters and do not have the needed flexibility to adjust their rules and regulations to what the programme can suggest. In addition, they are normally too big for ITC to efficiently assess using the programme's approaches and methodologies in a given timeframe of a programme or project. There has been some work done with sections of ministries in a very limited manner. Concerning SMEs, the debate is a bit more balanced; some think that because of they are from the private sector, they can benefit from the programme and others think they cannot. In way, both opinions are supported by the same argument. ITC also has a methodology to assess the institutional strength of SMEs which is distinct from the institutional strengthening section's approach. A generalizable answer to the discussion on which type of institutions can be clients of the programme is: any institution that has as their clientele or membership "internationalisable" MSMEs can be potential programme clients.

Other than these two, whether the institutions are small, big, more or less mature, the programme can adapt its approach to the different needs. It is important to underline that this adaptation is presently taking place. The most notable **differentiated approaches** used are the *Assisted Benchmarking Assessment* on the one side, and the *Assisted Self-Assessment* on the other side. The former is mainly used with more mature TPOs and sometimes other institutions as it is an in-depth diagnostic based on 225 indicators. The latter is more broadly used with all other types of institutional beneficiaries as well as with the less mature TPOs, using 87 indicators.

The Cubed methodology has been described as some sort of in-depth due diligence which responds to the needs of institutions in certain circumstances (mainly when they ask for it[31]) but are mainly relevant for ITC teams designing projects in a given country or region. As mentioned above, **CUBED** is mainly used for stakeholder mapping and to better understand the trade and export ecosystem of a country or region.

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[31] It is to be noted that as the CUBED reports are normally not meant to be shared with the institutions, if there is a desire on their part to see the report and potentially learn from them, the TISI team will normally review the reports to render them more user-friendly and better adapted to the learning objective which is different than that of its primary stakeholder mapping objective.

The Ecosystem approach is also being more and more used by the programme; it assesses the entrepreneurial system of a country. At this time, the Ecosystem approach is only in its pilot stage but has generated interest among stakeholders as shown by the answers of the few respondents that knew about the new methodology. The programme is presently either already applying the methodologies (since 2018) or looking into how to apply them with the following types of institutions:

- Accelerators/ incubators (start-uppers);
- Cooperatives;
- TPOs;
- Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs)Chamber of commerce;
- Sector institutions;
- Women organizations;
- Service-related organizations.

One of the basic concepts behind the programme's methodologies is that the more **information on best practices** ITC, the programme and its teams collect, the better the Benchmarking, Cubed and Ecosystem approaches work — this is in fact one of the programme's features the institutions appreciate most and which has them consider the service valuable. In the context where the programme wants to **expand** the service offer beyond TPOs, there is still a gap in terms of available best practices on the other types of institutions to enhance the quality of the work it conducts. The programme can transfer elements of the methodologies, which are mainly based on TPO experience and knowledge, to other institutions because of similarities in modus operandi yet the one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

Work themes included in the Performance Improvement Roadmap **(PIRMs) have been considered relevant** by the institutions involved because they are always extracted from the Benchmarking, Cubed and ecosystem's processes which identify challenges and gaps to address in the short, medium and long term. Some of the themes most mentioned as relevant include customer relationship management (CRM) development support, HR management and personnel training as well as assessing their progress and the way their service portfolio is being enhanced and improved; is it responding better to their client SMEs needs and priorities?

Still, regardless of the type of institutions, some respondents feel there is **a need to adapt even more the approaches**, beyond the choice of methodologies to apply, mainly to the different levels of maturity of the institutions. Broadly, the main finding is that the methodologies, and hence contents of the PIRMs, strategies and action plans are somewhat too complex and ambitious for many of the beneficiary institutions from developing countries and LDCs. These smaller, less mature institutions are not necessarily ready to receive a full benchmark support as they have less absorption capacity. These institutions are focussing efforts on developing basic capacities (e.g. increasing their membership base and maintaining their revenues). Lack of resources and funds are at the centre of these institutions' challenges, not necessarily the performance of their teams.

The programme is aligned with ITC's mission and all three goals. In addition, ITC has a unique approach to institutional strengthening through its programme.

Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy

ITC's mission is to foster inclusive and sustainable economic development in developing countries and transition economies and contribute to achieving the SDGs. It does this by making businesses in developing countries more competitive in regional and global markets and connecting them to the global trading system. ITC's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 defines the organization's mission and goals as follows (ITC 2018b):

Mission: *To enhance inclusive and sustainable growth and development in developing countries, especially least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition through improving the international competitiveness of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).*

To achieve ITC's mission **the goals are***:*

- *Improved national business and trade environments for MSMEs*
- *Improved performance of trade and investment support institutions*
  to offer high-quality, sustainable business services to MSMEs
- *Improved international competitiveness of MSMEs*

The evaluation finds that the programme is aligned with ITC's mission and all three goals. The programme supports institutions that through trade promotion have the potential of enhancing sustainable economic growth, mainly in developing countries and LDCs. As mentioned above, work done with more advanced countries help better support the institutions in developing countries and LDCs.

As discussed with all respondents and mentioned in many documents—the most important being the programme's programme document[32]—ITC's institutional strengthening of trade organizations of all types has as objectives i) the improvement of national business and trade environments of MSMEs; ii) the enhancement of the performance of trade and investment support institutions and iii) the increase of international competitiveness of MSMEs.

It is also important to note that information collected through ITC staff interviews points to the fact that there is a **strong internal need for the programme's support**. Project managers put aside funds to ensure the programme can conduct for example institutional mapping (CUBED) and they can then concentrate on other aspects of their projects.

Alignment with ITC's comparative advantages

Data collected points to the fact that ITC, through the TISI Programme, has a **unique approach** to institutional strengthening[33]. ITC is the only organization conducting these specific types of systematic and structured assessments through the Benchmarking, Cubed and Ecosystem methodologies. The WB, ADB, FAO, ILO, UNIDO and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), among others, do have programmes that conduct institutional strengthening, strategy and action plan design, but these do not enclose systematic methodologies similar to those of ITC. Indeed, the researched approaches were not as detailed and rigorously designed and applied as those used by ITC.

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[32] ITC (2015). Programme Document. FOCUS Area 4 Programme: Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions. p. 1, 5 and 8.

[33] Ibid. A full section of the document is dedicated to showing how the programme differentiates itself from others (starts on p. 6).

ITC hence provides a unique service and keeps its methodologies updated by continuously collecting best practices that allow the programme to benchmark institutions using the most recent data available. Institutions appreciate the programme's support because of this uniqueness which helps them become better. They want the **best practices coming from abroad**, for example from France, Ireland or Switzerland.

The fact that **ITC is coordinating the WTPO** also provides it with a strategic position to remain an important player in institutional strengthening. Its secretariat role for the organization of the WTPO events every two years is the result of TPOs asking ITC to do so (see subsection 2.1 for more details). As mentioned by some beneficiary respondents and ITC staff, the ITC's comparative advantages explaining this request is its neutrality and hence objectivity. Based on these two particularities, ITC is well perceived to manage the best practice award during the events.
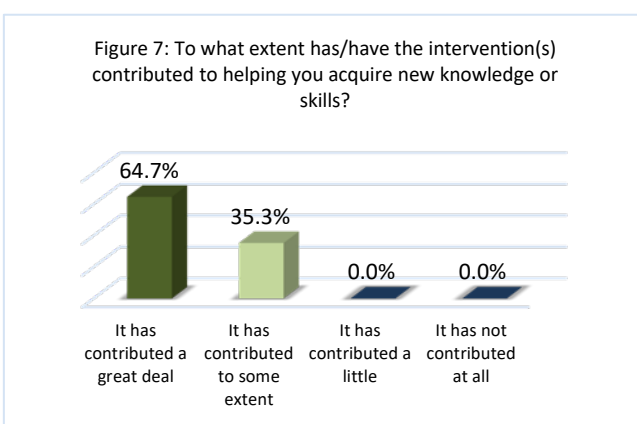
3.2. Effectiveness

To what extent does the programme achieve its objectives? What is the potential and actual contribution of each of the projects to the achievement of the programme's objectives?

What factors in the project design and implementation arrangements account for the estimated results in terms of effectiveness?

The programme is achieving strong overall results, mainly in terms of enhancing the client institution's management and operational capacities and performance. Yet these results are somewhat fragile because they rely on beneficiary institutions' leadership and commitment. In addition, between intensive support periods and visits by the programme team, institutions tend to slow activity implementation pace.

Results and commitment

Figure 7: To what extent has/have the intervention(s) contributed to helping you acquire new knowledge or skills?

Whether through AIM, MOPSE, indirect delivery or paid services to more developed countries' institutions, the **programme has generated strong results in terms of institutional strengthening**. Capitalising on success stories with core Benchmarking support to TPOs, the programme has started looking into providing services to other-than-TPO institutions. It is somewhat **early to assess the level of results** achieved in this broader category of clients. All beneficiary respondents mentioned they had increased their knowledge and built their capacities in one way or another and that the programme has generated useful information material which institutions can share with their teams. This includes all survey respondents of whom 64.7% consider that the programme interventions have contributed a great deal to helping them acquire new knowledge or skills and 35.3% stated that the interventions have contributed to some extent (see Figure 7 above).

One element that is central to the effectiveness of the programme is that it depends on the **commitment and leadership** within the client institutions' teams. Interview data shows that in a few cases, continuous efforts to provide TA to institutions have not produced the desired outcome because there was no buy-in from senior staff and decision makers. Normally, the TISI Programme team is able to determine from the beginning if the required level of commitment is present before deciding to involve the institution or not. Still, even in the cases where the right institution is chosen, if there is a **change in personnel,** and
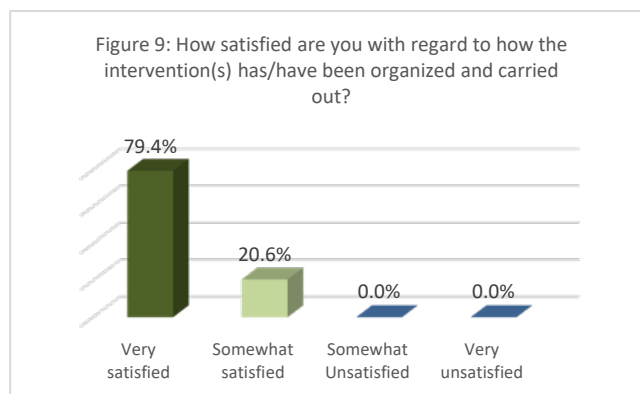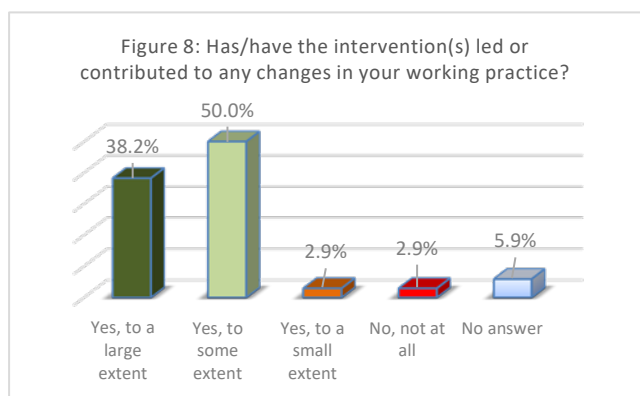
as a result, interest in moving forward with the programme's process diminishes, progress and benefits can easily be lost. This has happened and one of the main reasons why it did was because the participating institutions' new decisions makers did not like being confronted by information that point to their weaknesses. Decision makers and staff need to be ready to accept that Benchmarking will review the institutions' performance and then work to improve the situation; this is not always a given, all the more when teams change. Commitment needs to be confirmed across leadership teams, from the board to senior staff, as well as with all employees. Data collected points to the fact that the commitment was also the main success factor for MOPSE, for example.

This shows the **importance of the first three steps in the programme's ToC** which are i) raising awareness on specific institutional issues, ii) fostering an openness to learning within the client institution's teams and above all iii) generate consensus around the Benchmark results. The ToC is hence well thought through as practical examples show it works. Many respondents also mention that its "repetitive" or iterative nature is needed (again thinking about the loss of leadership and commitment that can result from staff turnover). In addition, these respondents' points to the fact that if the ToC is circular (i.e. the continuous improvement loop), it can also help "fragment" the steps needed for particular institutions to reach certain level of managerial and networking capacities. In other words, considering different levels of institutions' technical assistance absorption capacities, the programme could focus on a reasonable number and levels of targets for each cycle which would then create a good basis on which to build for the following cycle. The commitment element needed to succeed is also part of the high-level assumptions made in the programme ToC.

Changes in how beneficiary institutions operate

As shown in Figure 8 to the right, 91.1% of the survey respondents assume that the programme interventions have led to some change in their working practice. For 2.9%, the interventions have contributed to no change at all in their working practice. 5.9% of the survey respondents didn't answer the question. This is a theoretical indication that the programme is achieving the "action" level output 4[34]. Satisfaction survey results generated directly by the programme with its client institutions show positive results and points to potential changes thanks to the Benchmark assessment as well as the PIRMs. 21% of this survey's respondents mentioned it was somewhat too early for their Benchmark assessment to really initiate change; these will come with time[35].

As shown in the Figure 9, concerning the interventions that have been organized and carried out, 100% of the survey respondents are satisfied (79.4 % very satisfied and 20.6% somewhat satisfied).

Figure 8: Has/have the intervention(s) led or contributed to any changes in your working practice?

38.2% — Yes, to a large extent
50.0% — Yes, to some extent
2.9% — Yes, to a small extent
2.9% — No, not at all
5.9% — No answer

Figure 9: How satisfied are you with regard to how the intervention(s) has/have been organized and carried out?

79.4% — Very satisfied
20.6% — Somewhat satisfied
0.0% — Somewhat Unsatisfied
0.0% — Very unsatisfied

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[34] As a reminder, this output is: Output 4: "Action - institutions operational and/or managerial capacity improved"
[35] ITC (2019). 2018 AIM Annual Report. p. 16.

Notwithstanding these high levels of satisfaction concerning the interventions, data collected shows that **between in-field follow-up missions, there is normally a slowdown in institutional progress and action implementation**. For example, one issue that these institutions face is a lack of engagement with their client base. This is usually one of the initial elements the programme will work on; looking at how the institutions can start offering tailored services. However, this process of undertaking links with clients takes time and changes to the way the institutions operate. While ITC staff are present, beneficiary teams will usually visit client or member enterprises with the TISI team/staff. When the programme mission ends, the visits become less frequent or even stop. Over time and with ongoing programme support, dedicated institutions will adopt a more proactive approach with their clients. Indeed, many MOPSE respondents mentioned that their **overall communication skills** were enhanced during the project, including through improved performance measuring capacities.

In the case of **MOPSE,** all respondents mentioned they were satisfied with the programme. One issue though that was mentioned is that **it was difficult** for the programme to **really adapt to the different levels** of maturity of the TPOs involved as it was working with many at the same time. The participating TPOs did not benefit from the project equally. Different institutions have different priorities and so some considered that important subjects were not sufficiently addressed — many mentioned the CRM as an example — while others struggled to keep up with the pace in certain areas of work. In addition, some **institutions sent different people to the different workshops** which hindered them from really moving forward. Others were not prepared to absorb the support provided because of the less advanced level of maturity. Nevertheless, the interactions between the different institutions of diverse sub-Saharan countries and distinct levels of maturity were also considered useful and informative for the participants. Among interesting results, it contributed to the intermediate outcome 2 linked to **networking[36]**. The peer-to-peer learning through sharing of experiences, including through a MOPSE WhatsApp group, has been appreciated by the majority of respondents and implementers alike.

Many called for more follow-up after the project's end. Even if the programme is always available through many means of communications—the beneficiaries can consult the TS section team with ad hoc demand, see subsection 2.1 for more details on the substantive and technical, MOPSE is more event-oriented and so some respondents mentioned it would be interesting to **include more specific in-country missions** during which the programme could meet all the institutions' teams. The workshops are considered useful and effective, all the more with the input from Business France, considered an added value, but many respondents mentioned the issue of how the information will be disseminated within the beneficiary institutions after the events. In certain circumstances, the participants will have enhanced their knowledge and know-how, but the institutions will only have benefited minimally.

Enhanced management capacities of institutions to support internationalisation of SMEs

According to more than half of the survey respondents, the management capacity of their institution has been greatly enhanced by the programme interventions. For 42,4% of the respondents, the interventions contributed to some extent to enhancing their institution management capacity. For 6,1%, it has contributed a little (see Figure 10).

As demonstrated above in section 3.2, **the programme is performing generally well in terms of enhancing management capacities of the beneficiary institutions.**

Figure 10: To what extent has/have the intervention(s) contributed to enhancing the management capacity of your institution?

51.5%
42.4%
6.1%
0.0%

It has contributed a great deal | It has contributed to some extent | It has contributed a little | It has not contributed at all

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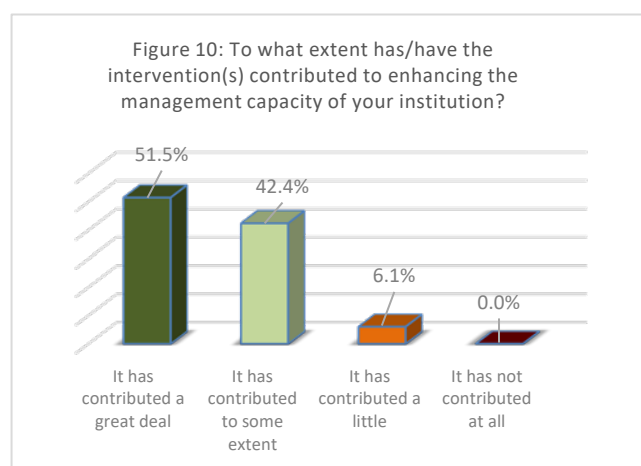
[36] As a reminder: Outcome 2: "Enhanced and strengthened institutions networks allowing for exchange of knowledge and best practices in delivery of services to SMEs"
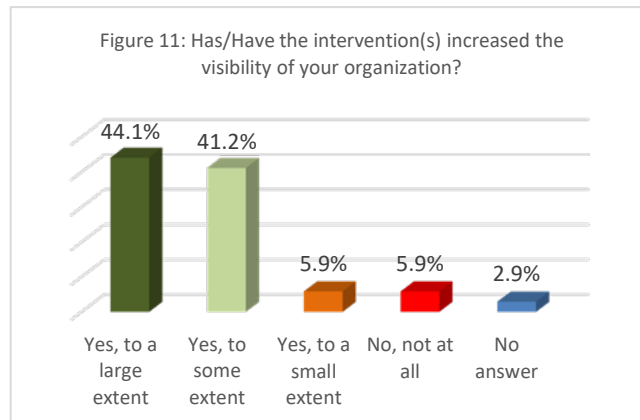
With time and through alignment with known combinations of success factors (e.g. beneficiary team's commitment, sufficient client institutions' budget to implement the programme's recommendations), the programme has acquired the expertise to make a change in how institutions operate. The positive record for now is mainly with TPOs. As demonstrated by the Zimbabwe example, the full cycle from Benchmark to Re-Benchmarking (or the **continuous improvement loop) has shown results in enhancing management** capacities of institutions teams mainly thanks to continuous support. The action plans and the close follow-up are central success elements. Other examples of success stories of the sort have been mentioned by many respondents: among others are Moroccan, Costa Rican and to a certain extent Sri Lankan TPOs. The AIM's 2018 Annual report also points to the enhanced Mongolia National Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (MNCCI) consolidate benchmark score by 25%[37]. It is important to mention that these changes took time to materialise.

Enhanced TISI networks for the benefit of enterprises

The second intermediate outcome is important because much of the relevance of the programme is based on the fact that the majority of institutions want to learn from other similar institutions abroad. This is the basis of the Benchmarking approach. In this sense, the networking capacity is well aligned with this desire to learn from peers. **The programme has succeeded in stimulating networking among institutions although to a lesser extent compared to outcome 1 since the networking work has started later than the performance enhancement component of the programme**. Still, MOPSE and WTPO did particularly well in this case as at every event, numerous institutions were brought together and shared experiences, good practices and challenges.

The **Ecosystem approach is also at the centre of outcome 2**. It can indeed help the institutions find themes (e.g. youth, climate smart production, gender, the service sector) in which peers are known to be active and so allow them to network with one another.

As shown in figure 11 to the left, 91 % of the survey respondents stated that the interventions have increased the visibility of their organization (44% to a large extent, 41% to some extent, 6% to a small extent). For 6% of respondents, the visibility of their organization has not increased at all. Having respondents consider that the programme increased the visibility of their institution is a sign that it is helping them create links with other institutions. A few respondents mentioned that for example the MOPSE

Figure 11: Has/Have the intervention(s) increased the visibility of your organization?

44.1% 41.2% 5.9% 5.9% 2.9%

Yes, to a large extent | Yes, to some extent | Yes, to a small extent | No, not at all | No answer

project coordinated its third workshop with a WTPO event in Paris in 2018 and the first edition of Ambition Africa, which generated strong TPO networking opportunities. Interview and survey data shows that the **public sector respondents considered at a higher level than the networking outcome was effective while the private sector respondents** were somewhat less positive. The few respondents who mentioned this also alleged that the results were more visible for the public sector institutions where for the private sector, no real change had been noticed yet.

WTPO

The WTPO is important for and appreciated by both the ITC and the client TPOs. Even though ITC's role in the WTPO is administrative and logistical, it **positions the programme** in a positive manner with TPOs, some of which can eventually become clients. Organizing the event and supporting the determination of the agenda's content keeps the ITC in close contact with the participating TPOs.

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[37] ITC (2019). 2018 Annual Report. p. 17-19.

Communication is regular and frequent before, during and after the events. However, it is not always clear what ITC can do between conferences to maintain this positioning, other than supporting meetings of regional TPO networks, which it does at the moment. The **WTPO obligates the parties to stay in contact** through regular emails and communication tools but when no events are taking place, reasons to maintain the intensity of links with the TPOs are less present. Nonetheless, the WTPO does play an important role for intermediate outcome 2 as it is central to developing networking capacities among the participants. It also allows for experience sharing and more so between different lines of maturity levels, which is what the TPOs from developing countries and LDCs want, i.e. to learn best practices from the most renowned peers.

Overall, **WTPO participants are satisfied** with the support provided by ITC. The 2018 WTPO satisfaction survey results were shared with the ET and the results are particularly positive. There answers point to a need for more time for dialogue with participants from other countries and more time for sharing good practices. Some panel discussions were appreciated more than others but, generally speaking, responses were positive. The conference application will need some adaptations as some features, such as discussions or meetings booking were rated not so high or not very used.

Normally, there can be around 200, core, individual participants, representing around 50 TPOs present at a WTPO event. As for the awards, there is normally around 30 applicants. These numbers vary depending on the event.

Different Client Approaches

As shown with the different figures in Annex D, demonstrating a general upward trend in the most positive responses classified by a number of interventions the respondents have participated in, overall, **the programme reaches better results with higher level client approach** — i.e. the more intensively the programme intervenes with client institutions, the better the results. However, there is always a need to use the right client approach for different types of institutions. As mentioned by some ITC representatives, the client approach can make a difference in terms of the level of commitment of the institutions' decision makers. Using somewhat less time-consuming approaches — technical or even light touch — with less committed institutions can eventually generate sufficient interest to help move the institutions towards buy-in into more intensive support.

In addition, as mentioned in the relevance subsection, the programme is demand driven. In this context, client institutions sometimes ask to participate in a substantive level approach (e.g. a regional workshop) to respond to a specific and ad hoc need. It is to be noted that an institution that has been involved in the intensive approach in the past may have more inclination to ask for substantive support to follow up on their previous efforts. In-house ITC demand for support also directs the choice of the client approach. Some projects will want the institutional mapping while others will ask for the intensive approach and follow the full Benchmark methodology.

Case Study: Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe TPO, called ZimTrade, visited for the purpose of the evaluation **is considered a success story,** although it did suffer from a commitment gap for a few years recently. Still, the results are concrete and notable, and the re-engagement has started. The institution underwent the full process from Benchmark to Re-Benchmark, and in between the two processes, implementing the strategy and PIRM developed in cooperation with the programme and benefiting from training on all features (i.e. strategy, results measurement, service portfolio design or client management[38]). Thanks to the programme, the institutional culture changed. Between 2013 and 2016 the Benchmarking score doubled. Each team and employee now know better their **roles and responsibilities** and although there are now regular performance reviews for staff, they operate more independently and need less

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[38] ITC (2019). 2018 Annual Report. p. 11

supervision. This increases effectiveness and efficiency of operations. Many respondents also mentioned that they feel freer to share their views and opinions on how to run the institution, which was not the case before they participated in the process. Internal staff issues are better handled through more fluent and opened communication. As one person mentioned, "people have become a brand," meaning that the fact ZimTrade takes care of its employees and respects their opinions is made known to clients which enhances its own image.

Another very important improvement, largely generated by the programme, is the **culture of planning and measuring**. With time, ZimTrade integrated the process of regularly planning, measuring and planning again, each time at longer and longer terms. All elements of the programme are also quite well integrated and reinforce each other. For example, planning is based on measuring which itself uses RBM, three elements brought by the programme. These three components the programme reinforces bode well with improved communication; an aspect also addressed by the programme's support. The RBM support received was appreciated as it is simpler to use than that which used by the ministry they report to. They were able to negotiate an exemption of using the regular reporting style and instead use the programme's approach for reporting.

One factor that allows for ZimTrade to perform and that differentiates it from other examples discussed during the data collection phase of the evaluation is the fact that it has **good financial resources**— other client institutions lack the needed funds to finance the programme recommended activities and improvements. ZimTrade's funds come mainly from the private sector (close to 100%) as they collect a percentage of all imports and exports. With proper resources and dedication, the TPO really transformed and improved its approach. It has gone through the full cycle ending with its re-benchmarking which showed they had doubled their consolidated programme score. At this point, however, they still feel like they need support from ITC. Conducting their own institutional analysis and continuous planning is not something they consider they could do on their own. The **neutrality and objectivity of ITC** as well as its external, international point of view in the process provide an added value they cannot do without (see sustainability section for more details on this issue).

ZimTrade client **SMEs** consulted during the mission confirmed they noticed these **improvements. Communications were more frequent and regular, and service offered more adapted and useful.** Both ZimTrade and the SME representatives mentioned that the institution's services had improved: marketing and internationalization training, support on how to participate in fairs and how to develop precise market reports, are examples mentioned among others. Yet for some of the SMEs, there have been **no specific results**. More could be done to ensure regular and frequent consultation on the part of ZimTrade with the SMEs and to speed up responses to requests. For the institution to really make a difference, it has to prepare the trade delegations that represents all clients with the specific information coming from the manufacturing companies themselves. For the moment, the delegations' marketing is too generic and general in the representation of the Zimbabwe economy. Some respondents also mentioned that other institutions could potentially be better positioned to support specific sectors (i.e. sector specific associations).

To summarise this important finding: **For some MSMEs, there have been no specific results or effects because the present client institutions do not have the ability or knowledge to effectively serve their needs (other institutions, not yet clients of the programme, might have these abilities and knowledge). In addition, factors outside the institutions' control have more effects on the SMEs capacities to internationalize than the institutions work itself.**

Indirect delivery at the ITC

The programme also actively supports and strengthens other ITC projects.

Box 2: The Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa (SITA) example

The ITC SITA project benefited from CUBED support. In Tanzania, two institutions wanted to be the focal point for the project. The CUBED process helped the project decide based on objective data and analysis. A similar situation occurred in Ethiopia.

The Tanzania spices sector was not well represented as one existing sector institution was no longer active. With support from the programme, the project was able to revive this institution, providing all stakeholders – including national actors – with a "bridge" to reach spices producers in the country who normally are difficult to communicate with.

Many projects and programmes use the services provided by the institutional strengthening section when a manager considers project stakeholders need institutional strengthening. Whether as a proper segment of a project or for project design purposes (mainly through CUBED to help find the right institutions to work with during the lifetime of a project, although the other methodologies are also used within ITC projects), the programme delivers its services and the majority of **the respondents from the ITC mentioned they were satisfied** with how the coordination is going. Some non-programme ITC staff know the methodologies and can even apply them (or adapted versions of the methodologies) without having the programme staff intervene. Others just use the finished

products the section delivers (reports produced using the programme's different methodologies). The large majority of ITC staff interviewed do not **consider that they should be able to use the programme's methodologies**. They do not consider they need to master the methodologies as the programme can offer the service.

Many respondents mentioned they appreciate the **simple and short reports** that the programme can deliver and consider that these should be the standards for such product delivered within the ITC. Whether for ITC staff or for client institutions within the beneficiary countries, simplicity, easy access and usefulness are important factors.

In the same line of thought, the **CUBED** approach is also appreciated by other projects within which it has been used because it is a **quick exercise that generates useful information**. Its customizable nature is appreciated mainly because of the different timelines and budgets the projects implemented by the ITC have. In addition to helping decide which institutions a programme should work with (see box 2 above), CUBED can help projects decide on which topics their support can focus on as it determines which are the areas of institutional weaknesses the beneficiaries might have (see more on this issue in the efficiency section below).

SDGs

The results of this evaluation suggest that the programme is making relevant contributions to the SDGs, some of which are more indirect in nature. By improving the performance and service offering of institutions, the programme contributes to developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (SDG 16.6). It also enhances institution's ability to enable higher levels of economic productivity (SDG 8.2), and thus indirectly also contributes to SDGs related to small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3), and youth (SDG 4.4).

The scope of this evaluation did not allow for direct impact assessments of SDG contributions. However, the results allow conclusions to be drawn. The findings show that the programme is achieving overall strong results in improving operations and services of business support organizations. Thereby, these

institutions have an increased capacity to improve the development of businesses and the economy overall. The programme thus contributes to achieving higher levels of economic productivity (SDG 8.2).

Moreover, since the programme works across sectors and has continued to expand its range of clients, it is expected that these results of institutional strengthening have an impact on specific areas: The work with associations and cooperatives in the agricultural sector strengthens their support to businesses and small-scale farmers in the agricultural sector. In this way, the programme indirectly contributes to increasing agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (SDG 2.3). The programme also works with TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) institutions. Strengthening these institutions indirectly supports their ability to convey technical and vocational skills to youth and adults (SDG 4.4).

It was found that the programme also makes a significant contribution to SDG 16.6. By improving their managerial and operational performance, it contributes to the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (particularly since many trade support institutions are governmental).

3.3. Efficiency and synergies

To what extent has the programme been efficiently managed and delivered?

How successful is the programme in supporting other ITC initiatives? How successful is the programme in drawing in the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve the performance of TISIs?

Adequacy of human, material and financial resources: Planning and management

There are difficulties in terms of making sure the team's size and availability are aligned with demand as well as programme's staff that need supervision and support, because of agendas and travel schedules of staff, among other things.

Agendas and schedules

As the programme is very demand-driven, its implementation must be adapted to the **institutions' planning and execution pace and agenda**. This renders the management of the programme team's schedule, travels and efforts quite complicated as there are multiple stakeholders' particularities, availability, timing and events to take into consideration. Using data collected through the ZimTrade case study, the survey and ITC interviews, to analyse trends, the evaluation found that activities at the beginning of the year pick up relatively slow as potential beneficiary institutions develop their annual work plans. Once these are approved, the pace of activity accelerates to a point where the programme is struggling to respond to demand. This can lead to challenges in terms of meeting clients' demands timely with service and product delivery (e.g. reports) for specific events or contexts.

There is also the fact that **demands are different depending on the type of country** (e.g. developed, developing countries or LDCs). As mentioned above, the intensity of support provided by the programme should differ between each type of countries (i.e. the different client approaches). Indeed, even with a committed team, the programme needs to provide a more hands-on technical assistance and follow-up to ensure the support provided leads to changes and generates results than with more developed economies' institutions. Yet staff availability affects the programme's ability to adequately respond to the specificity of the demands in terms of intensity. Thus, although the needed intensive and substantive client approaches exist and have been shown to be effective, it is not clear they are actually fully being applied because of lack of time and availability of key actors from the institutions.

Team members and ability to apply the methodologies

Not all programme staff are able to implement the full spectrum of services available to different types of institutions. In this context, the risks linked to institutional memory loss is present if a senior staff leaves or is no longer available.

As the programme has more than one methodology, it is also working to ensure that as many programme staff as possible **are able to implement the spectrum of services available**. At the moment, not all staff members are able to apply all methodologies in different settings, sectors and with different types of institutions. Although there are also advantages to having staff members being experts (e.g. implementing specific methodologies or with specific types of organizations or sectors), for the moment, it seems the programme has not reached a balance between these two realities. It is still in search of more seniority within the team to ensure that staff members can use more methodologies in more diverse settings. In addition, some of the team members are on a steep learning curve. Even the intermediate staff still have a lot to learn as the programme has many ramifications and specificities and is constantly evolving. Although the majority of missions are conducted with a pair of employees present, and usually one of them senior, there is still a voiced lack of supervision and mentorship because of overburdened staff (whether senior, intermediate or junior). This is an issue in the context of team management difficulties described above.
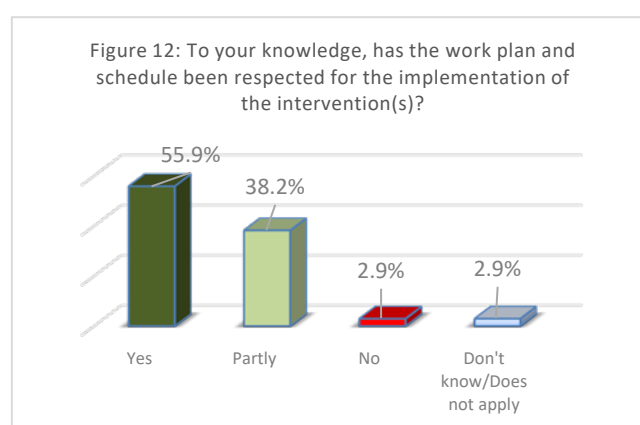
This situation also led to discussions on **risks linked to institutional memory loss**. As few people know all the methodologies and are senior enough to implement them in different circumstances, there is a risk of losing the knowledge and know-how if they leave, are not sufficiently available or are impaired by health or other problems. However, the programme has well documented the details of its work and the methodologies and programme activities can be taught with a learning-by-doing approach and with time. There is also an online knowledge management platform that is available and that is growing in use[39]. The fact remains that overall, an approach to address this risk needs to be sought.

The programme has a small pool of external consultants to work with. However, their availability is limited and therefore at times not ideal. In addition, the legal process to hire them is sometimes so time-consuming or cumbersome that it hinders the programme's ability to adequately respond to client needs.

Timeliness of activities and costs

Because the programme needs to adapt its implementation to the beneficiary institutions' planning and execution pace and agenda, the programme is not always able to adapt to the phases and 'waves' of demand.

According to 55.9 % of the respondents, the work plan and schedule have been respected for the implementations of the interventions. 38.2% of respondents think that they were partly respected. For 2.9% of the respondents, the implementation of the intervention did not follow the work plan and schedule (see Figure 12 to the left). Although the survey open-ended questions' answers do not explain why some 41% did not have fully positive answers to this question, interview data shows that some respondents were sometimes waiting to

Figure 12: To your knowledge, has the work plan and schedule been respected for the implementation of the intervention(s)?

55.9% Yes
38.2% Partly
2.9% No
2.9% Don't know/Does not apply

receive programme services and products to move forward with other activities which sometimes caused

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[39] The online platform is for client institutions but also for ITC staff who want to know more about tools or information on good practices and case studies. See http://www.tisibenchmarking.org/benchmarkredesign/

inconveniences. Many times, staff that had started the work with the client institutions became less available over time and then they were left waiting although normally not for long.

Nonetheless, the majority of all survey and interview client institutions' respondents that addressed this question mentioned they considered the activities to have been **implemented in a timely manner**. For example, in the case of the MOPSE project, the information and documentation have been sent sufficiently in advance for the participants to be fully prepared for the workshops.

In some cases, programme related **ad hoc support for specific events (e.g. fairs) would have been desired by institutions and was not delivered**, although the respondents raising this issue understand that in-person and in-depth assistance cannot be delivered in a short term and on demand manner. Many respondents mentioned that online support (whether emails, WhatsApp or the online platform) is a partial solution to the issue of timeliness and ad hoc demands. This reduces costs (e.g. by cutting travel costs) and would augment the quick response to specific, short-term demands. Many respondents of all types mentioned that networking and peer to peer support can also help (e.g. Q&A WhatsApp sessions). Indeed, MOPSE respondents mentioned having used the WhatsApp group extensively.

Still, with a somewhat short staff team and sometimes lack of availability of team members, some client institutions' respondents mentioned they were occasionally in **waiting mode** when it came to receiving the Benchmarking reports or feedback on strategies or action plans.

The programme's 2019 budget shows that more than **50% of the estimated programme's delivery is financed through indirect delivery**. Indeed, almost 3M USD comes from indirect delivery where 2.3M USD come from direct programme implementation (i.e. AIM and MOPSE mainly). One financial issue that was discussed with ITC staff and more specifically with the programme's team is **yearly underspending** which has been a challenge in the past years **but seems to be resolving in 2019**. As of August 2019, the programme was confident it would be able to spend all committed, confirmed and planned budgets.

The annual budgeting cycle is sometimes not easy to adapt to the WTPO cycle (every two years). This is why the conference was officially integrated in AIM in January 2019; it helps in terms of planning.

Synergies within ITC

ITC projects managers using the programme's services through indirect delivery reduce for example, the time they have to dedicate to the stakeholder mapping, increasing their efficiency and allowing them to concentrate their efforts to their expertise work.

The programme has leveraged in-house expertise and its expertise has been leveraged by other projects and programmes (mainly through indirect delivery). Overall, the programme has helped increase ITC's efforts to counter the silo approach within its teams, an issue addressed by many ITC staff interviewed and reported in evaluations, including the Independent Evaluation of the ITC[40]. The programme helped the different sections understand that they need one another. The institutional strengthening section is specifically dedicated to its objective and so uses other sections' expertise when demands are not within its core expertise (e.g. online marketing). On the other hand, the **Cubed methodology, for example, is considered useful** by other managers because it allows choosing the right institutions to work with while designing projects. While in Zimbabwe, the evaluation team witnessed the use of the Cubed methodology for another ITC project in the country; from observations and discussions with the project manager and programme staff present, using the Cubed methodology **reduces the time the project team itself has to dedicate to the stakeholder mapping** and increases

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[40] Sanaa Consulting (2014). Independent Evaluation of the ITC. p. 7-8.

the quality of the exercise as the programme's team has strong and recognized skills to conduct such stakeholder mapping.

The programme is extensively conducting **indirect implementation**; i.e. they use their methodologies within other projects. From a financial document provided by the programme called "Expected delivery projects — 2019," close to twenty projects are benefiting from the programme's support, whether for project design purposes (e.g. CUBED) or specific institutional strengthening needs within the projects (e.g. with a Benchmark approach). The majority of ITC staff consulted considers that the support is useful. Some think that the full Benchmark approach can sometimes be overwhelming for the client institutions. Many appreciate more the Cubed approach (or the assisted self-assessment version of the Benchmarking) than the full Benchmarking. It fits better within a specific timeline or a project because the more intensive Benchmarking process requires longer periods of data collection and analysis. The Cubed approach also helps during the design phase of ITC projects for stakeholder mapping. Some ITC staff respondents have mentioned, without specific "hard" data, that 80% of the institutional mapping choices made using the Cubed approach was successful. In other words, according to these respondents, in 80% of the cases where the Cubed methodology is applied, the project team is satisfied with the selection of the institutions to work with and consider that this selection has contributed to results for the projects.

The programme also uses other sections' services. For example, to support the implementation of a strategy or PIRM, they might use the in-house e-commerce or marketing services. The programme will provide these services using the specialized ITC sections to client institutions when for example the PIRM developed within a Benchmark exercise suggest it should enhance its capacities in these areas.

Coordination and cooperation with other development partners

International partners welcome the coordination with ITC and the programme. However, normally, it is not the ITC that generates these synergies but the main stakeholder actually coordinating international efforts are the beneficiary institutions themselves.

In Zimbabwe, through ZimTrade, the programme has shown that it **can leverage and complement other donors and implementing agencies' work**. A Netherland's project called PUM, a GIZ project called SES and another project called Trade Com were all considered in the programme's landscape and were discussed with the TPO's staff. Without contacting the other projects' implementation teams, the programme looked into the different complementarities of their support with the projects' input from other examples discussed with the ITC staff, the programme links well with other initiatives that also operate with the targeted institutions. However, from observations in Zimbabwe, the efforts are not fully visible on the part of the programme: it is ZimTrade's efforts that canalize the support of the different projects (the programme, PUM and SES) rather than ITC actively engaging with other executing agencies.

Generally speaking, when ITC does work in direct coordination with other donors' and implementing agencies' projects, these **partners welcome the coordination with ITC** and the programme. The neutrality of ITC's status combined with its business-oriented work is appreciated by interview respondents who voiced their opinion on this matter. ITC is also able to share "the spotlight" in the sense that it recognises partners' work, which is appreciated by partners.

Communication

All interview respondents (and a few survey respondents) considered the **communications** (e.g. emails, newsletters, suggestions, PIRMs and other reports) **coming from the programme were adequate**, responsive and exhaustive. However, during discussions, it became clear that the programme had some difficulty in demonstrating its results. As mentioned in section 2, the programme's ToC is complex and the upward logic towards higher-level results follows a series of steps. To follow

this logic and try to assess the contribution of the programme to these higher-level results is not easy as mentioned by many programme staff interviewed.

With the MOPSE project, Business France conducted a midterm assessment and were satisfied with the progress of the project, including the communication with partners and all the 21 TPOs. The high level of satisfaction of Business France came with the programme's ability to coordinate and plan.

3.4. Sustainability

In the context of this programme, the sustainability criterion has a different angle of analysis compared to other evaluations. ITC is providing a service that any institution, at any level of maturity could benefit from or require at some point. To a certain extent, the institutional challenge the programme is trying to tackle is not inherently an LDC or developing countries' one. There are examples of institutions that were supported by the programme through donor funding that are now paying for the services (e.g. re-benchmarking and support for implementation) with their own resources. They pay because they appreciate and value the services provided by the programme. In addition, some of the most advanced TPOs in the world have benefited from the services of the programme. The evaluation team considers important to mention this here to contextualize the content of the section below.

> *To what extent are the programme's positive effects likely to continue after the end of its intervention?*

The programme generates overall sustainable results although this sustainability depends on many external factors, beyond the programme's accountability ceiling, which need to co-exist to ensure advances are not lost. External economic and inter-institutional factors are some examples. Examples of such factors are provided below.

The programme's built-in sustainability elements

Institutional strengthening can be seen as an element of sustainability within itself. **A stronger institution will be in a better position to maintain itself and survive changes.** Indeed, if a TPO can manage itself in an enhanced manner, over time, normally, the national promotion of exports can make a difference and increase economic growth. In addition, with institutionally stronger clients, the programme, the ITC and even other donors, other executing agencies, the government and any interested actor will have better partners to work with (see the discussion over how the programme results create bridges among actors). As a respondent mentioned, exemplifying what many respondents said: *"Institutional strengthening is beyond providing equipment; the knowledge and know-how acquired through the programme will last."*

But the beneficiary institutions do not operate alone. **External factors** affect companies wanting to export, including other national agencies that do not have the same objectives and which have not received training from ITC. In other words, for example, a beneficiary TPO can do a great job thanks to the programme, but if the macroeconomic environment and efforts by other national agencies do not foster trade or export, there will be no change or results for the SMEs. So there are many external economic and inter-institutional factors that affect the sustainability of trade promotion results beyond the TPOs' work. As these factors are above the programme's accountability ceiling, it cannot compensate the effects of the lack of these factors.

As the programme relies on an **Advisory Board** teamed by, among others, beneficiary institutions' representatives[41], the individuals involved in the board are hence involved in the design of the programme, which creates buy-in and ensures sustainability to a certain extent. Indeed, as these

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[41] Past clients and champion institutions' representatives are also involved.

representatives are working on what the programme is composed of, they can ensure they input support they consider useful and aligned with their needs.

Hence, in addition to being demand-driven — the institutions must generally send an official expression of interest to take part in the programme, although this process does not always go through formal, official channels, with copy to Geneva mission for example — the programme allows, through the Advisory Board, partners and beneficiaries to voice their ideas on the design and implementation of the activities. The evaluation team attended an Advisory Board meeting and it was noted that the board members openly expressed their thoughts and ideas which the programme actively integrated in its planning. Additionally, all respondents that are or have been board members expressed satisfaction with their involvement. Taking part in the WTPO events is also a sustainability element for many respondents, even more so for those that host the events and those have competed in the best practice contest. Again, being involved in the design, planning and implementation of programme activities help generate buy-in.

Most respondents pointed again to the fact that with a **dedicated team**, the beneficiary institutions producing most results — e.g. the TPOs in Costa Rica, Morocco or Zimbabwe —will be able to pursue implementing the improvements in the short and medium terms. Also, many MOPSE beneficiaries mentioned that they were able to mainstream the new approaches in their staff's day-to-day work (e.g. using the KPIs to measure the performance of the institutions) and they are confident that the changes will be sustained overtime. These MOPSE respondents point to the fact that this is a knowledge-and-skills project which does not require intense financial investment on the part of the institutions.

Continuity

For some respondents, in the longer term, being involved in a **new cycle of benchmarking** would be necessary to continue generating results and fostering buy-in — whether a re-benchmarking for those that have gone through a benchmark or start a full new cycle for those that have done a re-benchmark. It is to be noted also that the law of diminishing returns applies here: many times, the initial process produces strong visible changes in the institutions; however, as they continue to progress, further steps may be more demanding and do not always lead to major noticeable changes. In this context, regular follow-up can serve to boost morale and buy-in, which remains an important piece of the puzzle.
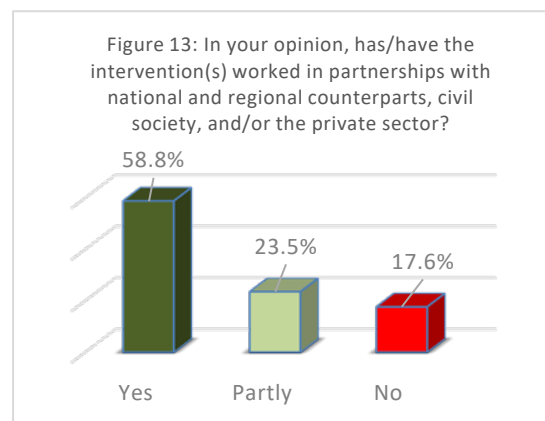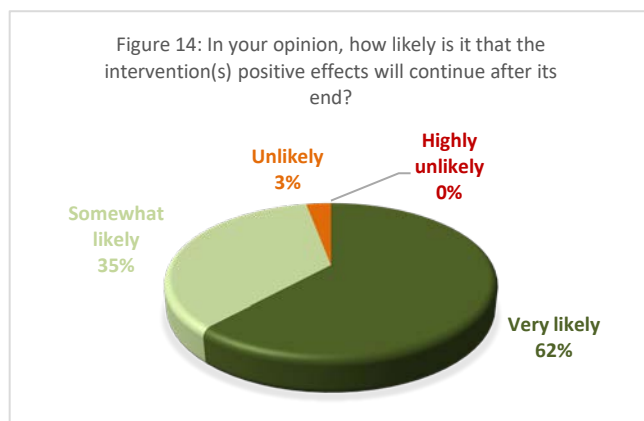
Still, as mentioned already, staff turnover can affect negatively the likelihood that the institutions continue on the path outlined with support from the programme. The survey respondents also mentioned they have strategies and plans in place which provide them with guidance in the short- and medium-term future even if senior staff change. They also consider that the knowledge and benefits of the process, as well as its contribution to the success of the institutions, now warrants its adoption across other departments and organizations. As the whole process is built on **strategies and action plans**, paper trails help minimally retain institutional memory and facilitates knowledge management, but the risk remains that progress previously made can be lost. In other words, the respondents consider that the need for the programme support (e.g. Benchmarking and Re-benchmarking) is continuously needed hence the improvement loop (i.e. by definition, a loop is repetitive).

Although the risk of loss of advances is real with staff turnover — among other causes which can include a change in best practices for a certain type of institutions; a change in the international trade context or the inclusion of a new sector in the service portfolio of a given institution — and the consequence of this risk is proportionally higher as the programme and the client institutions invest time and money, the risk mitigation strategy is to yet again invest more and follow-up with a more hands-on support on the part of the programme, including with the start of another improvement loop.

The focus group discussion with SMEs also showed that their representatives are satisfied with the support provided by ZimTrade. In addition to supporting them in preparing for trade fairs, the institution also provides **language classes** (e.g. Portuguese, French and Chinese) and an export readiness self-

assessment tool, some new services the programme helped enhance. The probability that ZimTrade continues to offer these services is high. As for new, more specific services (e.g. manufacturing market research), respondents doubted they would be increased and sustained. ZimTrade is doing well with more traditional sectors but it needs to adapt to added-value, transformation industries to really make a difference for these players.

Scaling up and replicability

Figure 14: In your opinion, how likely is it that the intervention(s) positive effects will continue after its end?

Highly unlikely 0%
Unlikely 3%
Somewhat likely 35%
Very likely 62%

Figure 13: In your opinion, has/have the intervention(s) worked in partnerships with national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector?

58.8%   23.5%   17.6%
Yes   Partly   No

From figure 13, 58.8% of survey respondents think that the interventions have worked in partnership with national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/ or the private sector, a key sustainability element. 17.6 % think the opposite while 23.5% assume that the interventions have worked partly in partnership. In this context, the majority of the survey (97%) and interview respondents consider the **results achieved will have long-lasting effects** within and outside the institutions (see figure 14 below to the left). Many point to the fact that the programme did generate links with outside organizations, which creates some sort of network that can potentially serve as a structure ensuring sustainability of results. The respondents did remain careful in answering the question, and no specific example has been brought forward. In Zimbabwe, the evaluation team interviewed representatives from the ministry to which ZimTrade is attached. Representatives from this ministry showed knowledge about the programme and mentioned the ITC team kept them informed of the activities being implemented. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, ZimTrade is quite independent from the ministry, including in terms of funding and for now, the economic situation does not allow for it to really continue supporting ZimTrade in the path it has embarked with the programme. At the international level, partnerships with other implementing partners and donors have been strengthened which have the potential of generating renewed interest in financing projects such as MOPSE. As the results achieved by the programme and specifically by MOPSE is shared with such partners, they have shown more and more interest in being involved in future similar endeavour.

Networking, as a component of the programme, becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements upon which institutions can rely to find new and upcoming best practices among their peers.

Outcome 2[42] is central to sustainability as **networking** can foster something like auto-benchmarking among institutions. As institutions strengthen links among each other, they can begin gathering information on how others function and compare (benchmark) their own approaches. It becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements — networking events, contacts among institutions, online community platforms— upon which institutions can rely to search for new and upcoming best practices. Among project beneficiaries, within the context of programme activities: some respondents mentioned that thanks to the programme, including the MOPSE project as well as being

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[42] Outcome 2: "Enhanced and strengthened institutions networks allowing for exchange of knowledge and best practices in delivery of services to SMEs"

involved in the WTPO events, they have developed links with other TPOs. One representative mentioned a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU) has been signed with another TPO to continue strengthening the coordinated work with them. Again, the WhatsApp group has been mentioned more than once as a tool to keep in touch with other institutions' representatives and even share best practices.

3.5. Gender equality

To what extent has the design and implementation of the programme incorporated gender concerns, and can out-comes be identified in this regard?

The programme integrates gender equality in its interventions to varying degrees, depending on projects. It does not systematically do so, however. The programme has guidelines on how client institutions can integrate gender in their strategies, activities and projects but there lacks a systematic integration of gender equality in everything the programme does.

85.4% of survey respondents stated that **gender concerns have been integrated to the interventions** design and implementation (32.4% to a high degree, 47.1% to a medium degree and 5.9 % to a minimum). 5.9 % think that gender concerns have not been integrated at all (see Figure 15 to the right).
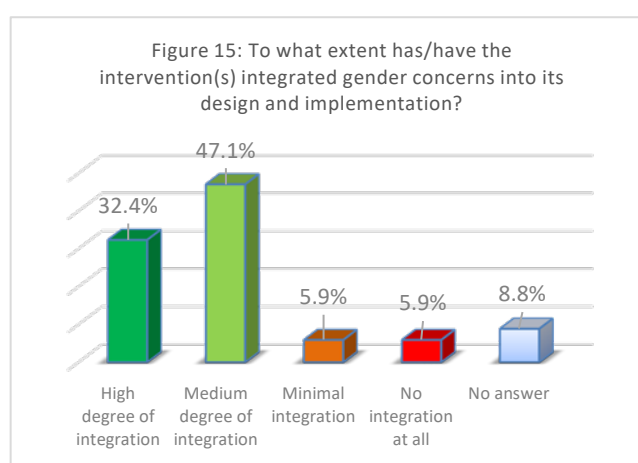
Respondents that answered positively mentioned for example that many of the ITC staff are women which provides an example of empowered women to beneficiaries and event participants. Others discussed the fact that the

Figure 15: To what extent has/have the intervention(s) integrated gender concerns into its design and implementation?

performance measurement component of the programme always endeavoured to ensure **data collection is gender sensitive** (gender sensitive KPIs). It is to be noted that, although the KPIs are gender sensitive, the evaluation team was not able to corroborate the fact that the annual progress reports or other reporting documents present data in a gender disaggregated manner. Some respondents did consider, however, that the gender theme was not necessarily relevant for them as their services are provided to companies and not individuals; the former are not gendered, and all companies are treated alike. It is notable that although the answers to this question are positive (79% positive answers), compared to other survey responses, they are somewhat more negative (almost 12% are negative). Many interview respondents were not fully aware of any specific gender-oriented programme activities. This partly explains why the answers to the question were comparatively less positive than answers to other survey questions.

The **#SheTrades project** is by itself gender oriented and as the programme offers adapted services and through this initiative, there is evidence that the institutional strengthening support can be tailored and made aligned with gender-specific interventions The project has been brought up by many respondents aware it existed, including MOPSE and ZimTrade interviewees, who knew about #SheTrades .

Some respondents mentioned that before being introduced to **ITC's suggested KPIs**, they did not report on gender issues. Now, as there are gender-sensitive KPIs, their awareness has been raised on the issue and they try to reach an equilibrium for example when they hire new staff. Some respondents have also expressed their new awareness of the fact that women are often marginalized and need to be supported in reaching decision-making positions in institutions with which the programme is working.

In addition to collecting gender disaggregated data for its monitoring, the programme has guidelines on gender equity. The guidelines are destined to help client institutions implement good practices the programme has collected over the years and recommends implementing. The document starts by explaining that there is a consensus on the importance of gender equity and women empowerment in trade and economic development. It then moves on to depicting the 10 good practices. From raising awareness to building a women-supportive ecosystem, the good practices and with a suggestion to be called a #SheTrades Champion. Both annual reports mention the existence of the Gender Equity Guidelines[43]. Some programme representatives have mentioned the guidelines but the majority of people the ET talked to did not mention the document when gender equality was discussed.

The 2018 – 2019 Light Project Plan mentions that the programme's development marker on gender has a rating of "0." Yet it also mentions that "The ultimate objective [of the programme] is to contribute to poverty reduction, employment creation, gender parity and trade growth.[44]" The programme's 2015 document also mentions that "there are a number of common obstacles facing exporters that are dependent on country, sector, gender, and maturity of the organisation.[45]" The same document, when comparing other organizations conducting similar work, mentions that one of these organizations has an advantage over ITC's institutional strengthening programme as it has an emphasis on gender issues. The programme's 2018 – 2019 annual work plan does not address gender or women empowerment. Nor do the MOPSE operational proposal or the WTPO 2018 Survey Outcomes. There is one Benchmark and one CUBED indicator/question that mention gender as an important element (Benchmark "Consideration of CSR issues in client selection [environmental concerns, child labour, gender, minorities, legal and tax compliance, etc.]" and CUBED "Do you have specific measures related to gender / youth?")

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[43] ITC (2017). Gender Equity Guidelines. 12 pages.

[44] ITC (2018). AIM light Project Plan 2018-2019. I 4 IMPACT (AIM): Improving institutional performance for SME internationalization (B633). p.7

[45] ITC (2015). Programme Document. FOCUS Area 4 Programme: Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions. p.3

4. Conclusions

Adapted solutions

The programme **is relevant** and aligned to clients' needs as it is demand driven. However, the adaptation of products and services to the specific and differentiated needs of the participating institutions needs to be further optimised, in particular with regard to institutions' maturity and their capacity to absorb the programme's support..

Results

The programme has reached **strong results** with TPOs — many of which it has been working with for a long time — as well as with other institutions, although to a lesser extent.

For the best performing TPOs, external macro level factors (e.g. national and regional macroeconomic contexts, see section 3 for more details) and other actors, above the programme accountability ceiling as demonstrated in the ToC, are sometimes hindering the institutions' ability to **actually have an impact on the internationalization of SMEs**. In other words, although the programme is changing the way TPOs operate and renders them more effective and efficient, their performance does not necessarily translate into a better context for SMEs as other factors interfere. These external factors, elements or actors can nullify the results TPOs generate or lessen the potential positive outcomes the programme would have if it would also work with other institutions. In this context, the expansion to other-than-TPO work conducted by the programme is logical as this may eventually help it to go beyond the accountability ceiling. Working with these institutions can render the programme's approach more holistic and help stabilize some of these external factors. The Ecosystem approach is also now seen as part of the answer as it integrates organizations in the programme that are not necessarily beneficiaries, again going beyond the accountability ceiling.

The programme is at an important crossroad as it needs to manoeuvre and adapt itself to new ranges of institutions (see section 3.2 above, "Results and commitment"), each with their own particularities, in addition to their different level of maturity. Somewhat ironically, although the programme's uniqueness and comparative advantage is defined through the systematized nature of its methodologies, if it wants to **expand towards other-than-TPOs**, it needs to now start tailoring these methodologies on a case-by-case basis.

Considering all this, the programme should potentially reduce the number of institutions it works with and increase the depth of the support provided. To ensure government institutions are reached and can contribute to the internationalization of MSMEs, the programme would need to further coordinate activities that endeavour to enhance trade policies.

More intensive support generates better results, all the more with less mature institutions. However, there is still a need to use the right client approach for different types of institutions. Using somewhat less time-consuming approaches — technical or even light touch — with less committed institutions can be more feasible and appropriate. Eventually it can also generate sufficient interest to help move the institutions towards buy-in into more intensive support.

For less mature institutions, the programme should use simpler, more flexible and case-by-case adapted products (strategies, action plans, PIRMS, etc.). It then also needs to invest in more hands-on support and frequent follow up to ensure the implementation of proposed action plans. In the case of institutions from developing countries and more importantly LDCs – ITC's priority countries –, it has been found that the programme sometimes targets adjustments that are unattainable for the beneficiaries in their current state. In such cases, the programme should instead focus on simple advances, which over time may also lead to major changes.

For more mature institutions, the programme needs to continue collecting best practices and lessons learned and work with them more as partners than clients: As the programme collects these best practices, it enhances and updates its benchmarks — in the strict sense of the term — for its methodologies. There is also a need to collect best practices on other-than-TPO institutions to adapt the methodologies to these organizations.

Long-lasting results

The programme can compare institutional performance nationally, regionally and globally. The Benchmarking process is a comparative exercise and the calculated score has exactly this objective: comparing the performance of a given institution against all other similar institutions. However, strictly speaking it is not the programme's objective to compare performance. The exercise is rather to ensure a given institution can improve its own score with support provided by the programme. The programme also sometimes tries to achieve this by fostering connections between a client institution and other similar institutions that might be able to provide inputs as to how they have improved or uniquely perform on a particular aspect of institutional management. However, this targeted networking approach to achieving programme results is not yet in full motion.

Networking, as a component of the programme, becomes a feature which brings external-to-the-programme elements upon which institutions can rely to find new and upcoming best practices among their peers. It is clear that the programme has **achieved a lot in terms of enhancing institutions' management capacity**. It has been doing so for a longer period than the work on networking. In this context and with more available core ITC programme staff — with implemented adjustments discussed immediately below — there would be a momentum which could be taken advantage of to build up more experience in and generate more networking results. Enhanced networking provides an opportunity for the beneficiary institutions to themselves seek best practices among peers. This can also be combined with the expansion of the service delivery to other-than-TPO institutions.

Preserving and strengthening the offering

Beyond the Benchmarking, the programme has developed other methodologies over the years to adapt to new needs and contexts – e.g. the CUBED and Ecosystem approaches. The evaluation considers both i) the collection of good practices for the different methodologies and types of institutions and ii) the development and refinement of new methodologies as research and development (R&D) activities of the programme. This R&D work has different and longer-term objectives beyond the concrete short-term implementation of activities. On the one hand, the objective is to further develop and refine methodologies and, on the other hand, to better reach developmental results.

The programme does not explicitly divide their activities between R&D and implementation. This is also due to the nature of how the programme works, as it combines and mixes R&D with overall service provision (e.g. doing a Benchmarking is on the one hand the delivery of a service, and on the other the collection of data points and best practices which feed into the methodology). When working with institutions, the programme directly implement its methodologies with these clients. There is usually no project context or particular outside relevance; it solely serves the institutions' demands and needs and also benefits the programme's R&D process.

Most of the programme's own activities based on the methodologies above are delivered using unearmarked programme funds (i.e. so-called 'Window 1' funds). It is these unearmarked resources that enable the programme to sustainably carry out R&D activities and to collect best practices - both of which are elements that significantly characterise the unique selling proposition of the programme.

At the same time, although at the core of the programme lies an unrivalled service offering in institutional strengthening, it has become highly complex with many names (e.g. AIM, I 4 Impact, TISI or Institutional Strengthening Programme, etc.) and many contexts (working globally, with different types of institutions, different levels of maturity, etc.). This plurality reduces the recognition value of the program.

Programme Management

With a rather small team and with limited resources, the programme has reached satisfactory targets. Yet as the programme is seeking to expand and even within the present context, its **human resources are at the moment quite stretched**. Senior staff, which could mentor new(er) staff are travelling extensively and so are less present. Junior staff are experts in niches but are not always in a position to apply the programme's methodologies in certain specific situations outside of their "comfort zones." In addition, expanding the programme requires strategic planning which should involve senior staff, many of which do not have time to dedicate to this task as they are implementing programme activities. One solution to this issue can be to lean towards training a bigger pool of consultants to increase the number of persons outside ITC that can continue to deliver the programme, while its ITC core team could take more time to ensure that pending strategic, structural decisions are made and the necessary support is provided to all staff. However, providing updated and frequent training to consultants is also time-consuming and to a certain extent voids the advantage of using more extensively consultants for implementation of methodologies. Having the **consultants themselves provide the training** to others could be an interesting alternative. This can be done through the fostering of mentor situations, during which a pair of consultants (or more) are brought together to implement programme activities.

There is also a need to make sure that there are **no gaps in service provided**. Apart from the fact that between visits, progress within the beneficiary institutions slows down, changes can also render the process less effective with staff turnover, for example.

Linked to this issue is the fact that staff management has become challenging to ensure that each type of methodology can be applied in different settings in a learning-by-doing approach, as it has been trying to do. Developing **training plans** for staff would be part of the solution. Yet there is a **cost** to ensuring these plans are executed (e.g. bringing more and more the less senior staff on mission for them to learn "in the real world"). Overall, the programme services' costs need to be re-estimated and increased as for now, the programme is working with many institutions for which it must deliver the promised services. To make sure the programme is answering the demand, the pace of implementation is quickened and there is less time for mentoring and best practices sharing. Contrary to the well-known saying, the programme would need to slow down its implementation pace a bit and work with fewer institutions with more funds, which would then lead to accomplishing more with the reduced number of client institutions. The programme is somewhat underspending, so the availability of funds is not necessarily a problem. This challenge will be to convince the funders and more importantly, decision makers at the ITC, to fund staff training, and to accept a reduction in the expected contribution to Corporate Indicator B1. While staff is on training and senior employees are coordinating the training, they are not implementing the programme, which hence creates an opportunity cost.

Some have brought up the idea that conducting more **online support** to the institutions (e.g. the use of the programme's online platform for self-assessments, distance support through well-known communication platforms) could free up time and resources (i.e. human and financial). Yet this somewhat contradicts the finding that the main targeted beneficiaries from developing and LDCs need more direct, face to face support to ensure results are reached. The "e-solution" could work for more advanced institutions but the hands-on approach is still much needed for the rest of the clients.

Within ITC, the programme is often "used" by other sections and projects. One element that needs to be leveraged is the fact that the methodologies have different versions (i.e. client approaches, intensive, substantive, etc. see section 2 for more details) and sections and project teams appreciate the idea that they can **pick and choose**. The issue is that sometimes, the team is not available to deliver the required services.

Gender equality

Considering the importance of gender equality — and many other SDG themes and issues — within the UN and within the ITC, the programme needs to do more specific work in this area across its projects and activities**.** As demonstrated above, there is a gap in gender sensitive results. Programme staff have recognized that there is pressure to integrate the theme within its approach as the ITC is a UN institution. Although programme related documents recognize the importance of gender equity and women empowerment in trade and economic development, not much is planned to address the issue. At a strategic level, as the ITC is a UN agency, it needs to commit to SDGs.

The programme itself targets SDG 8 "Decent work and economic growth" with the target "Encourage formalization and growth of MSMEs." The present evaluation concludes that it should also work on the SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" as it has the potential of doing so. One of the main reasons why gender has not been integrated in the programme is the fact that there is a belief that gender is not an issue that is linked to trade. In addition, there is a lack of information on how to deal with gender and women empowerment themes. In this context, the gender equity guidelines are important and very useful. Still, this awareness and information gap could be filled by new research on the subject. This would stimulate innovation and would allow for future programming to become more gender sensitive. Nonetheless, the project missed on the opportunity to specifically address this important theme in more depth.

5. Recommendations

In the light of all findings and conclusions discussed above, the evaluation makes a total of eight recommendations. **The first four recommendations are of a strategic nature** and aimed to strengthen programme results through adjustments in its service offering. Specifically, they advise

1) to increase the focus and flexibility for certain interventions, in particular with less mature institutions;
2) to work with different types of institutions, thereby expanding the programme's reach within business ecosystems;
3) to further strengthen institutional networks; and
4) to review the programme's name and terminologies used.

The **second set of recommendations is of a managerial nature**, aimed at preserving the programme's ability to carry out its work, which is a core function of ITC. These are related to

5) having adequate funding for the programme, in particular to cover research and development (R&D) activities;
6) ensuring the availability of senior team members for strategic and staff guidance; and
7) making sure that knowledge is being transferred within the team.

Finally, the evaluation also makes a recommendation

8) to strengthen the consideration of gender and other focus areas of sustainable and inclusive development.

All recommendations are to be implemented by the programme and the whole section, but may lead to strategic decision-making that will involve other sections and actors.

Recommendation 1: *Increase the focus and flexibility of interventions, in particular for less mature institutions. Mainly for the full 'AIM for Results' methodology, it is recommended that the programme ensures more continuous support to selected institutions over the next three years. Depending on available resources, this may require to reduce the number of institutions with which the programme is working most intensively.*

This focused approach should particularly take into account the absorption capacity of client institutions. To that end, it is also recommended to break down the capacity building approach into smaller components which can then be offered periodically to ensure that the programme achieves progressive results. This would mean to start with more fundamental challenges and move upwards as needed and suitable. This will be more aligned with the absorption capacities of main programme clients from developing countries and LDCs.

Recommendation 2: *Intensify the work with different types of institutions in the business ecosystem, since engaging with only a narrow range of institutions can hinder the programme's ability to achieve results. Ensure that insights gained by the programme are effectively shared within ITC.*

a) It is recommended to increase the intensity of the programme's work with the full range of organizations in the business support ecosystem to be able to influence and connect its different actors. As the programme continues to expand its reach, it should also collect best practices with new types of client institutions. To support this expansion, an improved use of digital tools could complement the more in-depth and face to face relationship with selected institutions.

b) By expanding its reach and being able to gather information on entire business ecosystems, the programme can significantly feed into the essential function of corporate country intelligence. It is therefore recommended to ensure that, as the programme's insights continue to grow, this information is effectively shared within the organization, in particular with country managers. In turn, country and project managers need to be aware of and incorporate the knowledge and service offering of the programme.

Recommendation 3: *Strengthen institutional networks so that results can be achieved by institutions helping each other. Facilitate networking among institutions as it allows them to share best practices, for example through events or communications channels that the programme can help develop. This will help to address the strongly expressed needs and requests for international best practices from beneficiary institutions, in particular those from developing countries and LDCs, which are the core of the programme's clientele.*

Recommendation 4: *To strengthen the programme's identity and recognition value, it should consider updating, standardizing and possibly simplifying the institutional and programme terminology used.*

Recommendation 5: *Ensure that the programme has a sufficient base of unearmarked resources (through Window 1 funding) to sustainably carry out R&D activities and thus maintain its creative nature and competitive advantage. This is all the more important in view of the pending or ongoing adjustments, and since focusing the programme's offer to specific needs (recommendation 1), extending it to different types of institutions (recommendation 2) as well as enabling networks (recommendation 3) will all require dedicated time and resources.*

Thereby, it would be beneficial to have a targeted and well-planned approach to the more research-oriented activities of the programme, including a regular review of R&D spending and achievements.

Recommendation 6: *Over the next two years, it is recommended to ensure that the programme's core staff can dedicate more time and energy to design, supervision, peer support and steering the programme at the strategic level. This is all the more necessary if the programme further extends its range while customizing its offer (see recommendations 1-3), which requires high expertise and time-consuming needs assessments.*

The section could alleviate the pressure on core staff by preparing a staffing plan for consideration by senior management, increasing the size of the team (e.g. by adding positions at the mid-level), and by increasing the pool of senior, capable and knowledgeable consultants with which the programme works.

Recommendation 7: *It is recommended to develop, over the next year, clear knowledge transfer plans for each team member to help them assimilate methodologies in different contexts. The programme staff also needs to develop experience and expertise aligned to new types of clients. Some of the key elements which form the programme's methodologies can be extended to new clients (i.e. best practices from member-based institutions can be used for different types of clients, as long as they are membership based), but more experience within the team will be needed.*

As training by doing can be resource consuming – as it normally involves travelling – simulations, using past and present situations, could be used to reduce costs. For staff to learn, providing online services to more advanced institutions, who do not necessarily need face to face support, could also be a less costly solution for hands-on training. While providing such online services, staff to be trained could be present and involved, which would provide them with opportunities for learning.

Recommendation 8: *It is recommended to strengthen the gender equality component of the programme as well as the consideration of other relevant mainstreaming areas for sustainable and inclusive development. This could for example take the form of a refresher of the Benchmarking, CUBED and Ecosystem methodologies as well as of all types of support tools and content.*

Annexes

Annex A: Evaluation Matrix

Annex B: Bibliography

Annex C: List of people met

Annex D: Additional results of the online survey

Annex E: Data collection instruments

Annex F: Terms of reference

Annexes

Annex A: Evaluation Matrix

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Information and Data Sources
RELEVANCE			
• Are the programme objectives and design relevant to the development needs of participating countries and consistent with government priorities?	• Alignment of the programme's design with country policies and programmes • Perception of TISIs, SME representatives, government representatives and ITC programme team of alignment of the programme's objectives and design with the development needs/priorities identified in their countries.	• Document review • Interviews • Survey	• Governmental strategic documents (policies) • TISIs strategic documents • Programme documents • External literature • ITC strategic documents • TISI representatives • ITC programme team • Government representatives
• How and to what extent is the programme contributing to ITC's mandate and work? o What is ITC's comparative advantage in terms of TISI strengthening and to what extent does the programme maximize it?	• Correlation between the programme design and ITC's mandates and strategies • Alignment of selected activities with ITC's strategies and activities • Evidence of correlation between the programme's objectives and design and with ITC's strengths • Level of ITC project manager's awareness of, satisfaction with, programme tools and activities	• Document review • Interviews	• Programme documents • External literature • ITC strategic documents • TISI representatives • ITC programme team
• Did the project design, choice of activities and deliverables properly reflect and address the primary needs of TISI stakeholders? And SMEs? o Is there a correlation link between the programme's design, activities and deliverables and the needs of the beneficiaries?	• Level of satisfaction of TISI and SME representatives with the programme's design (activities and deliverables) • Perception of TISI and SME representatives and ITC programme team of alignment of the programme design with their needs and priorities	• Interviews • Survey	• TISI representatives • SME representatives
• Were the actual activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goals and the intended outcomes?	• Correlation between the activities and outputs and intended outcomes	• Document review • Interviews	• Programme documents • Progress reports • ITC programme team

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Information and Data Sources
EFFECTIVENESS			
- To what extent does the programme achieve its objectives? - What is the potential and actual contribution of each of the projects to the achievement of the programme's objectives? - What factors in the project design and implementation arrangements account for the estimated results in terms of effectiveness? - What are the main results achieved in each of the categories of the TISI client approach (Partners; Intensive; Substantive; Technical; Light Touch)? - In which of these categories has the programme been most relevant, effective or efficient (and in which of them, less)? - To what extent does the programme contribute to ITC's results framework? - To what extent can ITC staff use the TISI strengthening methodologies (e.g. the benchmarking) in their projects and programmes? - To what extent does the programme contribute to fostering a network of strong TISIs on which the ITC can rely as stakeholders and partners for project implementation?	- Extent of achievement of programme outcome indicators as a proportion of targets to date: - Percentage of client SMEs reporting improved internationalization further to TISI support (once they have gone through the full AIM approach) (Ultimate outcome)—only informative. - Number of TISIs reporting improved operational and/or managerial performance as a result of ITC's support through this project (Outcome 1) - Number of TISI's reporting having improved networking skills and capacities as a result of ITC's support through the project (Outcome 2) - Number of institutions reporting improved operational and managerial performance as a result of ITC support (Corporate indicator B1) - SDG targets 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women. 4.4: By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. 8.2: Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.	- Document review - Interviews - Survey	- Programme documents (progress and annual reports, evaluations—AESRs) - Consultants - TISI representatives - ITC programme team - Government representatives

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Information and Data Sources
	• Type and number of factors in programme design that account for the estimated results • Type and number of factors in programme implementation that account for the estimated results • Examples of results achieved in each of the categories of the TISI client approach • Perceptions of programme stakeholders of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of programme in each category of the TISI client approach		
• To what extent are the TISIs satisfied with the activities organized by the programme and the quality of the outputs? o How have the different activities complemented each other in the capacity building of the TISIs?	• Level of satisfaction of TISI representatives and SME's with the activities organized by the programme and the quality of the outputs • Level of satisfaction of TISI representatives and SMEs with the management and management style • Perception of the programme managers and stakeholders	• Document review • Interviews • Survey	• TISI representatives • ITC programme team • SME representatives
• What are the lessons learned or best practices for similar future interventions or other ITC projects?	• Lessons learned for replication of the programme to other locations or for other ITC projects	• Document review • Interviews	• Programme documents • ITC programme team • TISI representatives
EFFICIENCY			
• To what extent has the programme been efficiently managed and delivered? o Were human, financial, and material resources and time expended sufficient to achieve the expected outputs	• Correlation between costs and results • % of budget spent • Adequacy of management expenses vs. operational expenses • Adequacy of the achievements of outputs with the work plan	• Document review	• Programme documentation (financial reports, progress reports, evaluation—AESRs)
		• Interviews • Survey	• TISI representatives • ITC programme team
• How successful is the programme in supporting other ITC initiatives?	• Examples of other ITC initiatives supported by the programme • ITC programme team's perception of the programme's support to other ITC initiatives	• Document review • Interviews	• Evaluations from other ITC initiatives • ITC programme team
• How successful is the programme in drawing on the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve the performance of TISIs?	• Use of internal expertise to achieve better results or at a lower cost	• Interviews	• Programme documents (reports, budgets) • ITC programme team

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Information and Data Sources
	• Perception of programme managers of use of internal expertise to achieve better results or at a lower cost		
• Has the programme timeline been affected by possible constraints/problems? If so, how have these affected programme objectives and have they been addressed in an appropriate manner?	• Actual vs. planned schedule and budget • Examples of and reasons for any delays or obstacles to meeting planned schedule • Actions taken to mitigate time or budget constraints	• Document review • Interviews	• Programme documents (annual work plans, annual reports, activity reports, financial reports) • TISI representatives • ITC programme team
SUSTAINABILITY			
• To what extent are the programme's positive effects likely to continue after the end of its intervention? • Is there evidence that programme partners are committed to continue working towards the project objectives beyond the end of the project (e.g. continuing organizing the WTPO eventually without the ITC's support)? To what extent have TISI's institutional capacities been enhanced?	• Perception of ITC programme team, TISI representatives, SME representatives, and government representatives • Level of individual development facilitated through the programme • Level of cooperation with other int'l organization or local implementation partners • Existence and quality of stakeholder assessment	• Survey • Interviews • Document review	• Programme documents • TISI representatives • SME representatives • ITC programme team • Government representatives
• To what extent have the targeted beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders been involved in the planning and implementation process? • Was a specific exit strategy or approach prepared and agreed upon by key partners to ensure sustainability?	• Level of satisfaction of the stakeholders with their involvement in the programme's implementation • Level of engagement of beneficiaries in the design and implementation stage • Perception of stakeholders and managers	• Interviews • Survey	• TISI representatives • SME representatives • ITC programme team
	• Existence and quality of an exit strategy	• Document review	• Programme documents
• To what extent is the project embedded in the national/local structure of each country?	• Perception of ITC programme team, TISI representatives, SME representatives, and government representatives • Evidence of planned follow-up activities with similar objectives not financed by outside donors. • # and quality of identified sources (human and financial) of future training support provided by non-donor actors	• Interviews • Document review	• Governmental strategic documents (policies, local action plans/strategies) • Programme documents • External documents • TISI representatives • SME representatives • ITC programme team • Government representatives

Questions and sub-questions	Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Information and Data Sources
GENDER			
• To what extent has the design and implementation of the programme incorporated gender concerns, and can outcomes be identified in this regard? • How have the beneficiaries been sensitized on the gender dimension of trade promotion policy and activities and their impact on gender equality (GE)?	• Number of men and women involved in all activities • Existence and quality of GE strategy or plan • Evidence that measures were undertaken to increase participation of women in the programme's activities • Evidence that gender issues are integrated in published documents by the programme • Evidence of efforts to sensitize beneficiaries on the links between the gender dimension and trade policy • Perception of TISI representatives, SME representatives, and programme team of the integration of gender concerns into the programme design and implementation	• Document review • Interview • Surveys	• Programme documents • TISI representatives • SME representatives • ITC programme team
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS, COORDINATION AND SYNERGIES			
• To what extent does the project advance ITC's efforts to promote equitable trade and sustainable development? • How has the programme advanced partnerships with national and regional counterparts, the civil society and/or the private sector?	Stand-alone questions	• Document review • Interviews • Survey	• Programme documents (progress reports, evaluations—AESRs) • TISI representatives • SME representatives • ITC programme team • Government representatives

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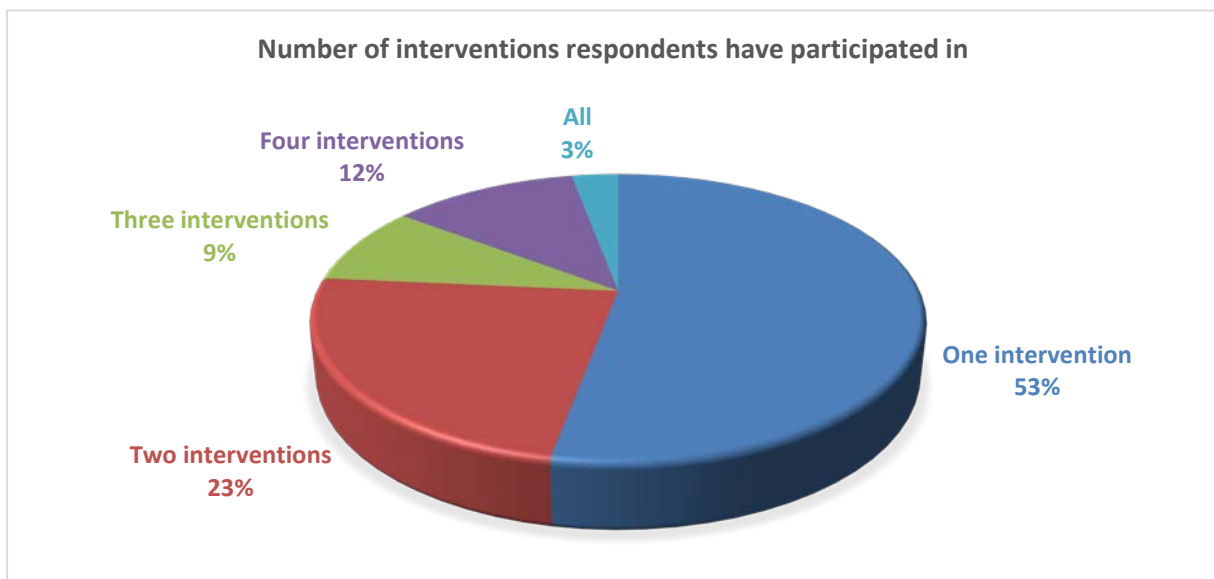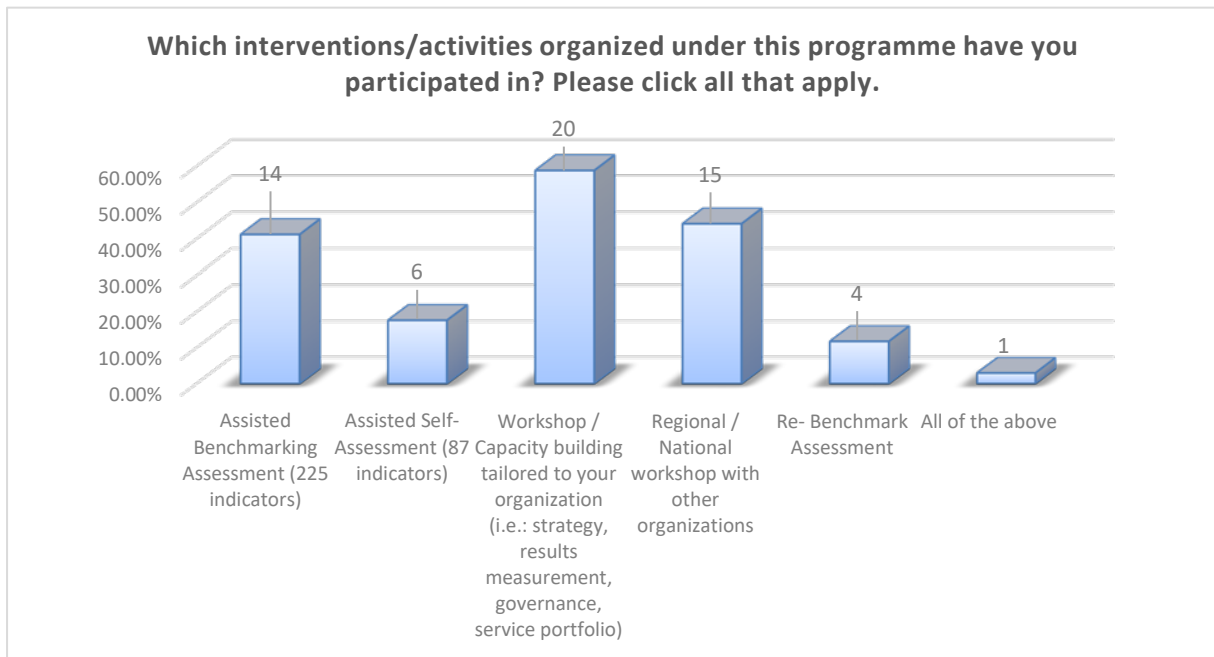
Annex C: List of people interviewed

No.	Country	Name	Title	Organisation	Female	Male
1	Gambia	Mr. Momodou Lamin Gaye	Director, Business & Export Development	Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA)		x
2	Ghana	Mr. Albert Kassim Diwura	Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA)		x
3	Ghana	Mr. Zakari Khalifa Abdallah	Deputy Director Services	Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA)		x
4	Kenya	Ms. Rebecca Rayon Mpaayei	Interim Director, Product & Market Directorate	Kenya Export Promotion & Branding Agency (KEPROBA)	x	
5	Kenya	Mr. Kelvin Nkai	Regional Coordinator & Stakeholder Engagement, Mombasa Region	Kenya Export Promotion & Branding Agency (KEPROBA)		x
6	Malawi	Ms. Cindy Kacherenga	Director, Trade Promotion and Facilitation	Malawi Investment and Trade Centre (MITC)	x	
7	Nigeria	Mr. Sidi-Aliyu Abdullahi	Director Policy and Strategy	Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC)		x
8	Nigeria	Ms. Ifeyinwa Evelyn Obidike	Deputy Director, Policy and Strategy	Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC)	x	
9	South Africa	Mr. Mmathlakane Joseph Senona	Chief, Director: Export Promotion	Trade and Investment South Africa (The DTI)		x
10	Tanzania	Mr. Boniface Akili Michael Ngowi	Ag. Director of Trade Promotion (Ag. DTP)	Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TANTRADE)		x
11	Uganda	Ms Brenda Opus	Senior Export Marketing Executive (Products & Services)	Uganda Export Promotion Board (UEPB)	x	
12	France	Mr. Philippe Yvergniaux	Director, International Cooperation	Business France		x
13	France	Mr. Christophe Legillon	Deputy Director, International Cooperation	Business France		x
14	Switzerland	Mr. Anders Aeroe	Director, Division of Enterprises and Institutions (DEI/OD)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
15	Switzerland	Ms. Anna Brezhneva	International Consultant (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
16	Switzerland	Ms. Anne Chappaz	Chief, Trade and Investment Support Institutions (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
17	Switzerland	Mr. Aman Goel	Associate Programme Adviser (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
18	Switzerland	Ms. Penelope Hurndell	Senior Programme Officer, Benchmarking and TSI Capacity Building (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	

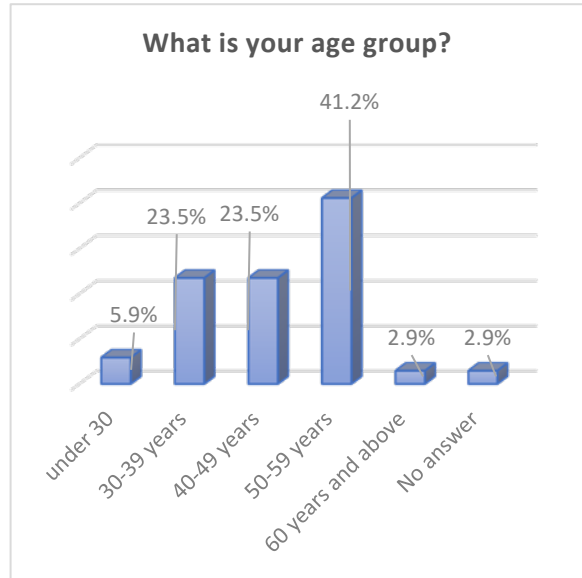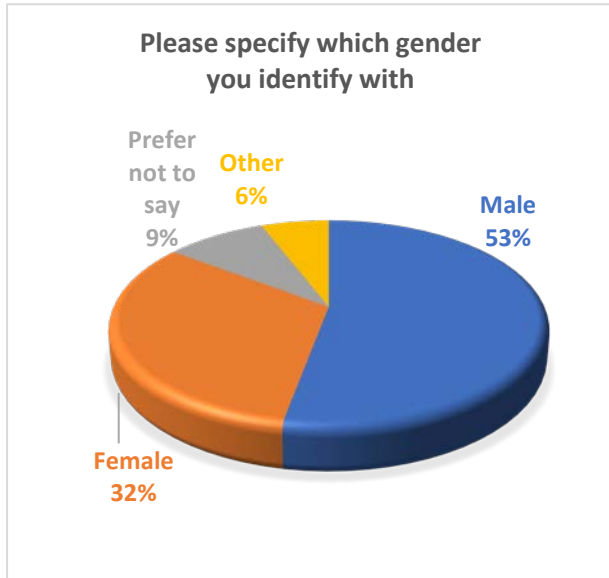| No.	Country	Name	Title	Organisation	Female	Male
19	Switzerland	Ms. Miyoba Lubemba	Senior Adviser, Trade Support Services (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
20	Switzerland	Ms. Saskia Marx	Business Development Adviser (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
21	Switzerland	Mr. Ben Mohamed Imamo	Senior Programme Officer, Institutional Networks & Business Generation (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
22	Switzerland	Ms. Ann Penistan	Associate Programme Officer (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
23	Switzerland	Ms. Nuria Rull Bes	Associate Programme Officer (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
24	Switzerland	Mr. Andrea Santoni	Adviser, Benchmarking & TSI Capacity Building (DEI/TISI)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
25	Switzerland	Mr. Simon Balfe	Programme Officer (DEI/SIVC)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
26	Switzerland	Ms. Michelle Kristy	Associate Programme Officer (DEI/SIVC)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
27	Switzerland	Mr. Martin Labbé	Senior Officer, Trade Institutional Development (DEI/SEC)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
28	Switzerland	Mr. Rob Skidmore	Chief, Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness (DEI/SEC)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
29	Switzerland	Mr. Kevin Musa	Programme Manager (DCP/OA)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
30	Switzerland	Ms. Ingrid Colonna	Associate Project Adviser (DCP/OAP)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
31	Switzerland	Ms. Madhubashini Fernando	Project Officer (DCP/OAP)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
32	Switzerland	Ms. Elena Boutrimova	Chief, Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (DCP/OEECA)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
33	Switzerland	Mr. Armen Zargaryan	Regional Trade Promotion Adviser (DCP/OEECA)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
34	Switzerland	Mr. Matias Urrutigoity	Senior Trade Promotion Officer (DCP/OLAC)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
35	Switzerland	Ms. Iris Hauswirth	Chief, Strategic Planning, Performance & Governance (OED/SPPG)	International Trade Centre (ITC)	x	
36	Switzerland	Mr. Ben Morrison	International Consultant, Alliances for Action Inclusive Agribusiness Systems	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x
37	Switzerland	Mr. José Prunello	International Consultant and former Team Leader (retired)	International Trade Centre (ITC)		x

No.	Country	Name	Title	Organisation	Female	Male
38	Switzerland	Dr. Martina Bozzola	Lecturer, Economics of Agriculture, Food and Health	Queen's University Belfast and ZHAW Research Fellow	x	
39	Zimbabwe	Ms. Herzel Takaedza	ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	ZimTrade	x	
40	Zimbabwe	Mr. Allan T. Majuru	CEO	ZimTrade		x
41	Zimbabwe	Mr. Mirirai Moyo	Finance Director	ZimTrade		x
42	Zimbabwe	Mr. Phillip Phiri	Operations Director	ZimTrade		x
43	Zimbabwe	Mr. Norman Savado	HR&A Director	ZimTrade		x
44	Zimbabwe	Ms. Vuyiswa Mafu	Manager: Export Promotion	ZimTrade	x	
45	Zimbabwe	Ms. Sihle Dhliwayo	HR Officer	ZimTrade	x	
46	Zimbabwe	Mr. Tonderai Marufu	Manager Finance	ZimTrade		x
47	Zimbabwe	Mr. Tatenda Marume	Manager: Export Development	ZimTrade		x
48	Zimbabwe	Ms. Anne Bake	Manager: Market Information	ZimTrade	x	
49	Zimbabwe	Mr. K. Midzi	Monitoring	ZimTrade		x
50	Zimbabwe	Mr. Kupakwashe W. Midzi	Client Manager	ZimTrade		x
51	Zimbabwe	Mr. Danai Majaha	Manager: Communications	ZimTrade		x
52	Zimbabwe	Ms. B. Mutetwa	Director, International Trade	Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Trade	x	
53	Zimbabwe	Mr. Shaw Chimombre	Principal Economist	Ministry of Industry and Commerce		x
54	Zimbabwe	Mr. Eric D. Zinyengere	Managing Consultant	Team Consulting		x
55-61	Zimbabwe	Seven private sector representatives	MSMEs	-	xxx	xxxx

Note: The column 'Country' indicates where the interview was conducted, not the nationality of the person.

| | | | | | 25 | 36 |

Annex D: Additional results from the online survey

Profile of respondents

Which interventions/activities organized under this programme have you participated in? Please click all that apply.

Number of interventions respondents have participated in


Most of the survey respondents (24 out of 34) hold high level management position in their respective institutions as executive director or manager, chief executive officer, head of department. 8 respondents hold mid-level position such as officer and coordinator. 53% of the respondents are male while 32% are female. 9 % of the respondents prefer not to specify their gender. For the remaining 6%, 3 % labelled themselves as other and 3% did not answer the question. When it comes to the age of the respondents, 5.9% are under 30 years. Both the 30–39 years and 40–49 years group include respectively 23.5 % and 23.5 % of the respondents. 41.2 % of the respondents fall into the 50–59 years age group. 2.9% of the respondents is comprised of people aged 60 years and above. 2.9% did not answer the question.

Please specify which gender you identify with

Prefer not to say 9%

Other 6%

Male 53%

Female 32%

What is your age group?

41.2%

23.5% 23.5%

5.9%

2.9% 2.9%

under 30

30-39 years

40-49 years

50-59 years

60 years and above

No answer

15 of the respondent's institutions are membership-based. 26.6% of these institutions have a membership number ranging from 20 to 50. For another 26.6%, membership figures vary from 220 to 700 while for 20% membership is between 1000 and 3600. The remaining 19 institutions are not membership-based.

Is your institution membership-based?

Yes, 44.1%

No, 55.9%

Is the institution a cooperative?

Yes 12%

No 88%
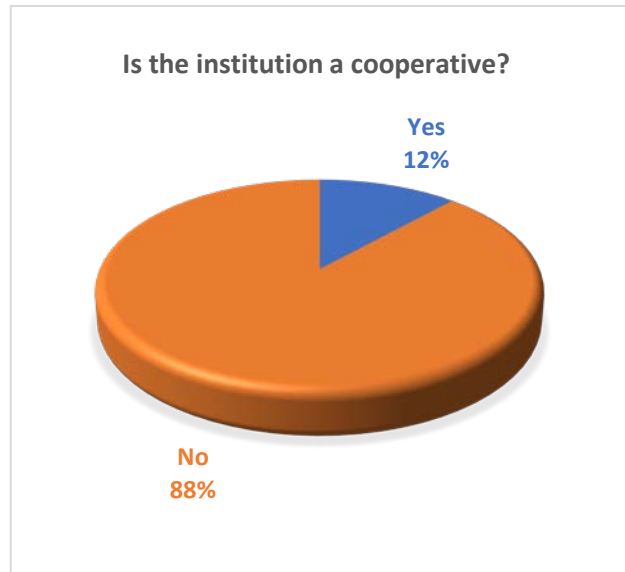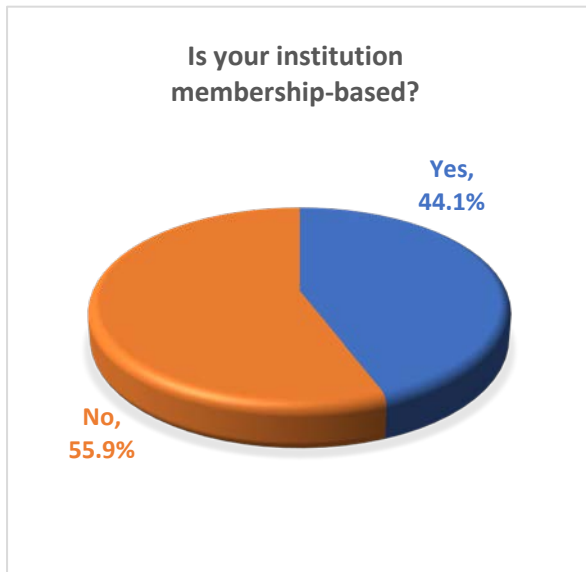
88% of the survey respondents represent institutions that are not a cooperative. 12% of the respondents are from a cooperative.

50% of the survey respondent's institution employ several full-time employees between 21 to 100. 23.5% have a few full-time empl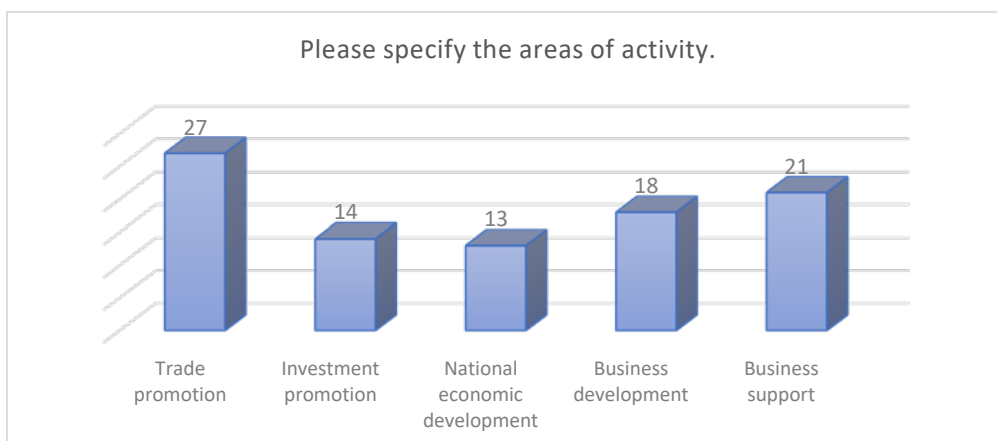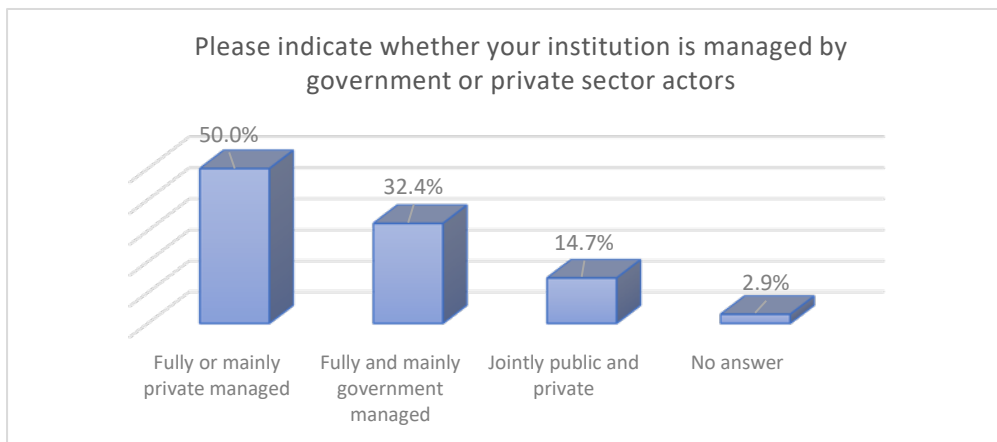oyees between 6 to 20. While for 14.7% of institution, the number of full-time employees is from 1 to 5. 8.8% of institution employ a lot of full-time employees from 101 to 500. 2.9 % of the institution represented in the survey do not employ any full-time employee.
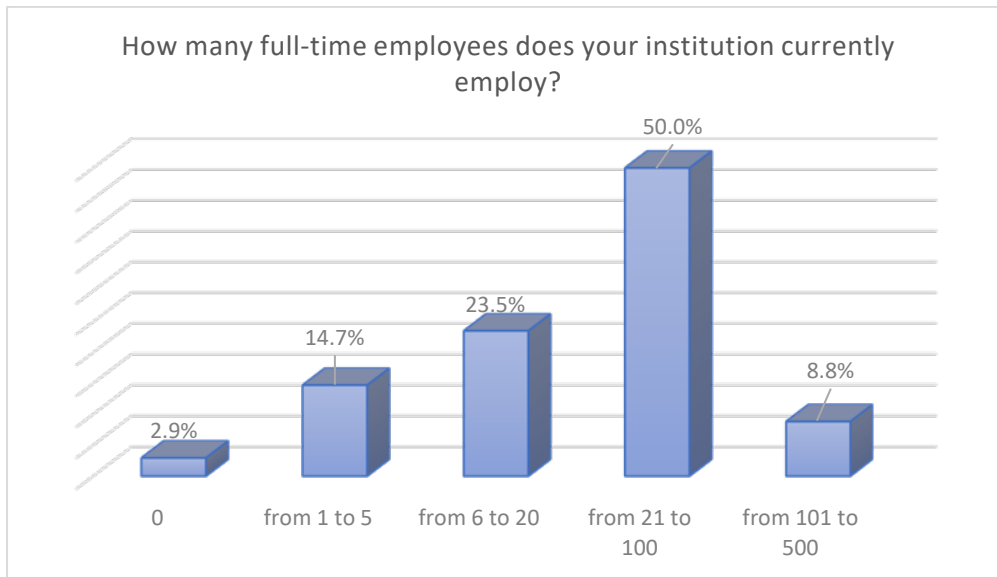
50% of the respondent's institution are fully or mainly private managed. 32.4 % are fully and mainly government managed while 14.7 % are jointly public and private managed. 2.9% of the respondents did not answer to that question. The areas of activity of the survey's respondents' institution are displayed as followed: 27 in trade promotion, 14 in investment promotion, 13 in national economic development, 18 in business development and 21 in business support.

Cross-tabs: most positive responses and client approach

Intervention (s)sustainability and usefulness
Highest positive answers

→— Opinion of the respondents about the sustainability of the intervention (s) positive effects

→— Extent to which the intervention(s) in retrospect have been useful

About the interventions design,planning and implementation
Highest positive answer

→— Extent to which respondents were adequately involved into the planning and design of the intervention(s)

→— Extent to which the intervention(s) integrated gender concerns into its design and implementation

→— Extent to which the work plan and schedule been respected for the implementation of the intervention(s)

→— Extent to which the intervention(s) worked in partnerships with national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector

Interventions contribution to respondents organization
Highest positive answers

Extent to which the intervention(s) contributed to enhancing the management capacity of the respondents institution

Extent to which the intervention(s) led to any changes in the respondents working practice

Extentent to which the intervention(s) increased the visibility of the respondents organization

Level of respondents satisfaction regarding interventions
Highest positive answers

Level of satisfaction of the respondents about the way the staff carried out the intervention(s)

Level of the respondents satisfaction about the material provided for the intervention(s)

Annex E: Data collection instruments

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Evaluation of the ITC TISI Strengthening Programme	
Interview notes:	---
Group:	---
Name and function:	---
Location and time:	---

Introduction: The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality and achievements of the ITC TISI Strengthening programme and to provide recommendations for its implementation. Depending on your availability, the interview will last approx. one hour and will focus on your personal experience with the programme, for example activities you are familiar with, any positive aspects, challenges or suggestions for improvement. I will take notes, but rest assured that this conversation will be confidential, as the report will not attribute any names to individual statements or findings

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	*ITC programme team / other staff*	*Government representatives*	*SME representatives*
Background of interviewee + OH and MSC				
Could you please briefly describe your area of work and your relationship to the programme?	✓	✓	✓	✓
• *To start, in your own words, how would you describe the results that should be taking place in the context of the TISI strengthening programme? And those that are actually taking place?* • *Can you tell me a "story" of how the programme changed the way you do things in your work or on how your organization functions?*	✓	✓	✓	✓

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	ITC programme team / other staff	Government representatives	SME representatives
Relevance				
Alignment with development needs of countries and priorities of governments of participating countries				
To what extent are the programme's objectives and design relevant to the issues/ needs/ priorities/ policies/programmes identified in your/the country? • Was a stakeholder assessment conducted with relevant stakeholders at the beginning of the project • Can you give examples of such needs? To what extent do you feel that the objective and the expected results remained relevant throughout the implementation of the programme?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy; alignment with ITC's comparative advantages				
What distinguishes ITC's work in this area from that of other organizations? To what extent does the programme reflect ITC's organizational profile and strengths?		✓		
To what extent does it contribute to raising ITC's profile in the area of TISI strengthening?		✓		
Alignment with the primary needs of TISI stakeholders				
Do you feel that the programme design, activities and deliverables properly reflect the primary needs of TISI stakeholders? • Could you provide examples of how these differ for the different types of stakeholders involved in the programme?	✓	✓		✓
Were the actual activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goals and the intended outcomes? • Has the implementation of programme activities and outputs contributed to the achievement of the overall goals and intended outcomes thus far?	✓	✓		

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	ITC programme team / other staff	Government representatives	SME representatives
Effectiveness				
Contextual factors, scaling up and adjustments				
How successful is the programme in your view? What does it do well? What are its main achievements so far? To the extent of your knowledge, do you consider it is contributing to the SDGs (the interviewer will read out the four relevant targets mentioned above)?	✓	✓	✓	
Are you using the programme's methodologies and tools? How? Are you able to implement them yourself or is it the programme team that is doing so? (for other ITC staff specifically)		✓		
Do you feel you have access to a network of increasingly better performing TISIs to implement your projects thanks to the programme? (for other ITC staff specifically)		✓		
Are there any major changes in the overall context that have affected or are likely to affect the programme's implementation and overall results?	✓	✓		
What do you see as the main challenges for the programme? Could you describe some of the lessons learned from the programme so far?	✓	✓		
How could the programme be improved? What would your main suggestions be?	✓	✓		
Can you identify any best practices for similar future interventions?	✓	✓		
Programme's ability to achieve its intended (intermediate) outcomes				
Outcome 1: Improved overall performance of TISI support to and on behalf of MSMEs for increased internationalization				
Do you think the programme has performed well in its endeavour to improve TISI support to MSMEs for increased internationalization? • *Do you (do TISIs) have improved operational and/or managerial performance as a result of ITC's support through this programme?* • *Do you (do TISIs) have improved capacities in the various areas of programme intervention (governance, strategy, HRM, Performance Measurement, Service Portfolio, Communications & PR, Client Management…)?* • *Have you been trained on these various areas of intervention?*	✓	✓	✓	

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	ITC programme team / other staff	Government representatives	SME representatives
Outcome 2: Enhanced TISI networks for the benefit of enterprises				
Do you think that the programme has performed well in its endeavour to enhance TISI networks for the benefit of enterprises? • *Do you (do TISIs) have improved networking skills and capacities as a result of ITC's support through this project? If so, how have your capacities been improved?*	✓	✓	✓	
TISI Client Approach				
Could you describe some of the main results achieved by the programme within the 5 categories of TISIs benefiting from interventions under the programme? *The five categories according to the TISI client approach are:* • *Partners: TISIs that contribute to development and delivery* • *Intensive: TISIs benefiting from intense, proactive multi-year engagement (account managed);* • *Substantive: TISIs benefiting from substantive, on-demand support;* • *Technical: TISIs benefiting from technical, general presentations; and* • *Light Touch: TISIs benefiting light touch advice, accessing TISI Strengthening information & research.*		✓		
In which of these categories has the programme been the most relevant, effective or efficient? In which of them less so?		✓		
Efficiency				
Adequacy of human, material and financial resources				
From your experience, how well is the programme carried out? Is it well managed? Does it have the necessary staffing, financial and material resources?	✓	✓		
How would you score the programme on a scale from 1 to 10 in terms of speed, adequacy of staffing and financial resources, and quality of management?	✓	✓		

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	ITC programme team / other staff	Government representatives	SME representatives
Coordination, complementarity and coherence				
In your view, has the programme leveraged the ITC's in-house expertise and resources to achieve results at a lower cost?		✓		
How successful is the programme in terms of supporting other ITC initiatives?		✓		
How would you assess the partnerships with other organizations? Is the programme's delivery well-coordinated between implementing partners?		✓		
Do you consider that the services and support provided by the ITC were delivered in a timely and reliable manner?	✓			
To the extent of your knowledge, has the work plan and schedule been respected for the implementation of the programme? • *Were the project managers able to make decisions at the right moment to ensure the project ran smoothly?*	✓	✓		
Overall, are you satisfied with the monitoring and reporting strategy of the programme? • *Were the indicators and means of verification for the programme outcomes, and outputs appropriate? Were they (sufficiently) used?*	✓	✓		
Sustainability				
Likelihood of continued long-term benefits				
How likely is it that the long-term benefits will continue following the programme's completion?	✓	✓	✓	✓
To what extent were you involved in the planning and implementation process of the programme? • *Is there evidence that programme partners are committed to continue working towards the project objectives beyond the end of the project?* • *To what extent have your (have TISIs') institutional capacities been enhanced?*	✓	✓		✓

Discussion questions and prompts	Target groups			
	Representatives of institutions	ITC programme team / other staff	Government representatives	SME representatives
What steps were taken to ensure the programme's positive effects continue after the end of its intervention? • Was a specific exit strategy or approach prepared and agreed upon by key partners? If so, were you consulted in the context of its preparation? Are you satisfied with the strategy or approach? • To the extent of your knowledge, will the results reached have effects outside the beneficiary organizations?	✓	✓		✓
To what extent is the programme embedded in the national/local structure in your (in implementing) country(ies)? How much support will TISIs receive within local structures/systems upon the programme's completion?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gender, partnerships and synergies				
To what extent have the design and implementation of the programme incorporated gender concerns? • Can you identify any gender-related outcomes? • Have the beneficiaries been sensitized on the gender dimension of trade promotion policy?	✓	✓		✓
To what extent has the programme contributed to ITC's efforts to promote equitable trade and sustainable development?	✓	✓		
How has the programme advanced partnerships with national and regional counterparts, the civil society and/or the private sector?	✓	✓	✓	✓

ONLINE SURVEY

FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF INSTITUTIONS

EMAIL INVITATION

Subject: Survey for the Evaluation of the ITC "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme"

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is currently evaluating its "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme." The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality and achievements of the programme and to provide recommendations for its implementation.

Our records indicate that you participated in this programme, which is why we are requesting your participation to the attached survey. This survey has been prepared and is managed directly by ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit, conducting this evaluation. It will take approximately 10–15 minutes of your time to fill out the questionnaire. We invite you to provide additional qualitative information to explain or detail your responses when you believe it to be relevant in the available answer boxes.

All your contributions will be **strictly confidential** and will be highly valuable to help understand the effectiveness and the impacts of the ITC's services as well as to improve them in the future. Your responses will be transferred to a database accessible solely by the independent evaluator.

We thank you in advance for your help and your responses.

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir or Madam:

Welcome to the online survey for the evaluation of the ITC "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme"

The e-survey is designed to provide useful information that will help improve future project design and provide constructive recommendations in order to strengthen the ITC's work in this area. Your participation in this e-survey is important.

We kindly request you to respond to this survey by August 19, 2019. Your insights and responses are greatly appreciated and are valuable to the success of the Project. Your individual feedback will be kept confidential to the evaluator.

This survey has been designed and is managed by Mr. Alexandre Daoust. You may contact Mr. Daoust via alexandre.daoust@baastel.com if you have any questions on the survey.

We thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this important evaluation exercise.

Section A: Identification
1. What country do you work in? What is the name of the institution you work for? (open-ended questions)
2. What is your current position? (please select from list)
3. Please specify which gender you identify with Male ☐ Female ☐ Other (specify) ☐
4. Which events/activities organized under this programme have you participated in approximately? Click here for a full list of events and activities implemented.

Section B: Relevance

5. What is your general level of satisfaction with the programme's design, programme activities, and deliverables?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

6. To what extent do you feel that the programme is aligned with your institution's needs and priorities.
- High degree of alignment
- Medium degree of alignment
- Minimal alignment
- Not aligned at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

7. To what extent do you feel that the programme is aligned with the development needs, policies, and programmes identified in your country?
- High degree of alignment
- Medium degree of alignment
- Minimal alignment
- Not aligned at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section C: Effectiveness

8. What is your general level of satisfaction with the programme's contribution to the achievement of its objectives and with the quality of its outputs?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

9. What is your general level of satisfaction with the management of the programme?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

10. To what extent has the programme contributed to the building of your capacity?
- It has contributed a great deal
- It has contributed to some extent
- It has contributed a little
- It has not contributed at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

11. To what extent has the programme contributed to the capacity building of your institution?
- It has contributed a great deal
- It has contributed to some extent
- It has contributed a little
- It has not contributed at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section D: Efficiency

12. What is your general level of satisfaction with the human, financial, and material resources available to achieve the expected outputs?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

13. To the extent of your knowledge, has the work plan and schedule been respected for the implementation of the programme?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section E: Sustainability

14. In your opinion, how likely is it that the programme's positive effects will continue after the end of its intervention?
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Unlikely
- Highly unlikely

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

15. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the programme's planning and implementation process?
- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Somewhat unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section F: Gender, partnerships and synergies

16. To what extent has the programme integrated gender concerns into its design and implementation?
- High degree of integration
- Medium degree of integration
- Minimal integration
- Not integration at all

Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

17. In your opinion, has the programme advanced partnerships with national and regional counterparts, civil society, and/or the private sector?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please describe these partnerships:

FOR ITC PROGRAMME TEAM

EMAIL INVITATION

Subject: Survey for the Evaluation of the ITC "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme"

The International Trade Centre is currently evaluating its "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme." The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality and achievements of the programme and to provide recommendations for its implementation.

As you have involved in one way or another with the programme, we are requesting your participation to the attached survey. This survey has been prepared and is managed directly by ITC's independent Evaluation Unit, conducting this evaluation. It will take approximately 10–15 minutes of your time to fill out the questionnaire. We invite you to provide additional qualitative information to explain or detail your responses when you believe it to be relevant in the available answer boxes.

All your contributions will be **strictly confidential** and will be highly valuable to help understand the effectiveness and the impacts of the ITC's services as well as to improve them in the future. Your responses will be transferred to a database accessible solely by the independent evaluator.

We thank you in advance for your help and your responses.

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir or Madam:

Welcome to the online survey for the evaluation of the ITC "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme"

The e-survey is designed to provide useful information that will help improve future project design and provide constructive recommendations in order to strengthen the ITC's work in this area. Your participation in this e-survey is important. The e-survey should take no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete. We also invite you to provide additional qualitative information to explain or detail your responses when you believe it to be relevant.

We kindly request you to respond to this survey by August 19, 2019. Your insights and responses are greatly appreciated and are valuable to the success of the Project. Your individual feedback will be kept confidential to the evaluator.

This survey has been designed and is managed by the independent external evaluator Mr. Alexandre Daoust. You may contact Mr. Daoust via alexandre.daoust@baastel.com if you have any questions on the survey.

We thank you in advance for your valuable contribution to this important evaluation exercise.

Section A: Identification
1. What is your current position at the ITC? (please select from list)
2. Please specify which gender you identify with
Male ☐ Female ☐ Other (specify) ☐
3. How would you describe your involvement in the TISI programme?

Section B: Relevance
4. What is your general level of satisfaction with the programme's design, programme activities, and deliverables? • Very satisfied • Somewhat satisfied • Somewhat unsatisfied • Very unsatisfied
5. To what extent do you feel that the programme is aligned with the needs and priorities of TISIs? • High degree of alignment • Medium degree of alignment • Minimal alignment • Not aligned at all Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
6. To what extent do you feel that the programme is aligned with the development needs, policies, and programmes in the implementation countries? • High degree of alignment • Medium degree of alignment • Minimal alignment • Not aligned at all Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
8. To what extent do you feel that the programme is aligned with the strategic objectives of the ITC? • High degree of alignment • Medium degree of alignment • Minimal alignment • Not aligned at all Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
Section C: Effectiveness
9. What is your general level of satisfaction with the programme's contribution to the achievement of its objectives and with the quality of its outputs? And with the programme's tools and methodologies? • Very satisfied • Somewhat satisfied • Somewhat unsatisfied • Very unsatisfied Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
10. What is your general level of satisfaction with the management of the programme? • Very satisfied • Somewhat satisfied • Somewhat unsatisfied • Very unsatisfied Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
11. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent has the programme contributed to the capacity building of TISIs? • It has contributed a great deal • It has contributed to some extent • It has contributed a little • It has not contributed at all Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section D: Efficiency
12. What is your general level of satisfaction with the human, financial, and material resources available to achieve the expected outputs? • Very satisfied • Somewhat satisfied • Somewhat unsatisfied • Very unsatisfied Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
13. To the extent of your knowledge, is the work plan and schedule respected for the implementation of the programme? Yes ☐   No ☐ Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section E: Sustainability
14. In your opinion, how likely is it that the programme's positive effects will continue after the end of its intervention? • Very likely • Somewhat likely • Unlikely • Highly unlikely Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
15. How satisfied are you with your involvement in the programme's planning and implementation process? • Very satisfied • Somewhat satisfied • Somewhat unsatisfied • Very unsatisfied Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:

Section F: Gender, partnerships and synergies
16. To what extent has the programme integrated gender concerns into its design and implementation? • High degree of integration • Medium degree of integration • Minimal integration • Not integration at all Please provide comments, details or explanations related to your answer:
17. In your opinion, has the programme advanced partnerships with national and regional counterparts, civil society, the private sector and internally at the ITC? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please describe these partnerships:

Annex F: Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the ITC programme: "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions"

Independent Evaluation Unit

6 June 2019

Programme description

The "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions (TISIs) Programme" aims to improve the managerial and operational performance of TISIs so they can better assist micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) internationalize. The TISI Programme is carried out by the TISI section (DEI/TISI) and represents ITC's focus area 3 "Strengthening Trade and Investment Support Institutions".
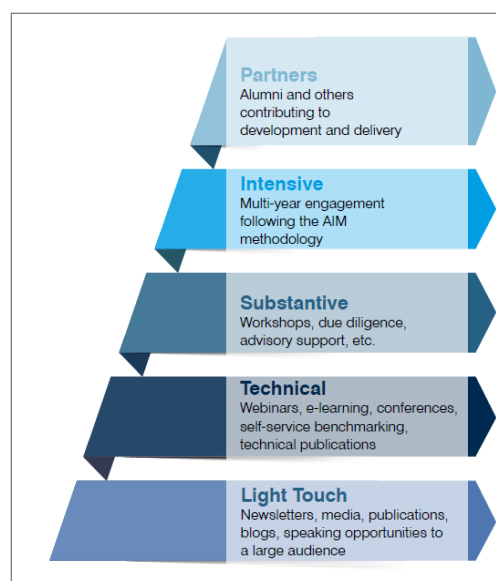
At the heart of the programme is the **Assess-Improve-Measure (AIM) for Results** methodology, which is delivered through advice, training and information sharing either through modular interventions or under a fully-fledged customized approach to meet the needs of institutions. The **I 4 Impact — (AIM) project** is formed around this core methodology. It was created in 2013 and since then, ITC has supported over 100 TISIs through this project to develop clearer strategies, improve their service portfolio, establish results measurement systems, strengthen networks and optimize the use of resources at their disposal.

Originally, target beneficiaries of this project were Trade and Investment Promotion Organizations (TIPOs). However, since 2018 the scope of work expanded to a broader range of institutions including Chambers of Commerce, national, regional and sub-regional TISIs, membership-based business associations, incubators and other sector specific and functional associations.

TISIs benefiting from interventions under the project are split into five categories according to the TISI client approach (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: TISI client approach

- **Partners:** TISIs that contribute to development and delivery
- **Intensive:** TISIs benefiting from intense, proactive multi-year engagement (account managed);
- **Substantive:** TISIs benefiting from substantive, on-demand support;
- **Technical:** TISIs benefiting from technical, general presentations; and
- **Light Touch:** TISIs benefiting light touch advice, accessing TISI Strengthening information & research.

Source: ITC Annual report 2017

Under the TISI Strengthening Programme, the TISI section also organizes the biennial **World Trade Promotion Organizations Conference and Awards (WTPO Conference)**. The conference was first established in 1996 with the purpose of providing a forum for TPOs from around the world to gather and discuss issues that are important for their work agenda. Nowadays it is recognized by senior representatives of TPOs as the global networking event on their agendas to foster new ideas, future collaborations and positive outcomes of their efforts. TISIs in the wider sense are not included in the conference.

The programme currently also includes a **project that focuses on building the managerial and operational capacities of TPOs** in 21 Sub-Saharan African countries (MOPSE). This project is co-implemented with Business France (a French TIPO) and funded by the French Development Agency (AFD).

Furthermore, in 2018 the institutional strengthening section ran a **pilot project to develop a new international standard on impact reporting for TISI**. This pilot was conducted with five TIPOs (SGE Switzerland, EPB Sri Lanka, ASEPEX Senegal, Procomer Costa Rica and Dubai Exports. In 2019, this stand-alone project was integrated in the I 4 Impact — (AIM) project.

Finally, **the programme is contributing to a wide number of other ITC initiatives**. Under these projects, the institutional strengthening section usually provides support ranging from the so-called CUBED or Benchmarking assessment, which is specifically designed to help project managers assess the capacity, capability and commitment of partners/beneficiaries, to general capacity building and advisory services to strengthen institutions and networks to deliver against project objectives. In some of these cases, the financing for the TISI component is clearly defined, in some others less so. Ideally, the programme supports the delivery of these ITC programmes or projects by conducting assessments in advance to inform their subsequent implementation.

An **Advisory Board** is in place to provide strategic guidance and advice for the programme. It consists of CEOs of TISIs appointed by the Executive Director of ITC on the basis of their individual experience and contribution to the institutional strengthening work of ITC and with due consideration to diversity. The Board meets maximum twice a year at the ITC headquarters in Geneva, or in an alternate location decided upon by the members.

Funding

Activities under the AIM project have been covered with Window I (W1) funds[1] of about $1 million annually for the past two years. Services under the project[2] are provided free of charge to beneficiaries in ITC programme countries, while clients from prosperous countries pay for them. The TPO Network World Conference and Awards used to be funded from ITC's regular budget, but are now also covered by W1 funds. In addition, the pilot on impact reporting standards was financed through W1 funds.

The MOPSE project and the programme's indirect delivery to other projects are financed through earmarked Window II (W2) funds. The MOPSE project is the first W2 project focused solely on TISI strengthening directly managed by the section. It has a budget of $1.6 million for the two-year period 2018-19.

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[1] ITC relies on two sources of funding: regular budget (RB) and extrabudgetary funding (XB). The regular budget is approved on a biennial basis by the United Nations General Assembly and the World Trade Organization (WTO) General Council. Extrabudgetary funds are voluntary contributions, which include two categories of funds known as windows. Window I (W1) consists of unearmarked and soft-earmarked contributions from funders, while Window II (W2) is composed of earmarked bilateral contributions for specific projects and programmes.

[2] Which includes the development of tools and methodologies as well as piloting.

The table below provides an overview of the project portfolio directly managed by the TISI section in recent years, and the project budgets.

Table 1. Programme budget including past and ongoing projects

ID	Project	Start Date	End Date	Budget (in $)
B633	I 4 IMPACT (AIM)	Jan 2018	Dec 2019	2 100 000
B587	MOPSE	Jan 2018	Dec 2019	1 600 000
B507	Standard on impact reporting	Sep 2017	Dec 2018	76 637
B665	WTPO Conference and Awards (2018)	Jan 2018	Dec 2018	294 935
A419	WTPO Conference and Awards (2016)	Jan 2016	Dec 2017	150 000
A776	AIM for Results (Phase I)	Jan 2014	Dec 2017	2 460 247
			Total	**6 681 819**

Source: data extracted from ITC's corporate project portal (at May 2019)

Coherence with ITC Strategic Plan

ITC defines its objectives in strategic plans. The programmatic approach for delivery is still relatively new in the organization. The Strategic Plan 2015–2017 included, for the first time, a programmatic approach framing the organization's activities. This approach also encompasses a theory of change for each programme, aligned to corporate focus areas, goals and a common results framework.

The institutional strengthening programme directly delivers against ITC's corporate outcome indicator B1 (number of institutions reporting improved operational and managerial performance as a result of ITC support). It is fully aligned with the objectives of the ITC Strategic Plan 2018–2021[3] and contributes to the following key initiatives set out in the plan:

> **Box 1: Key initiatives related to the TISI Programme (ITC Strategic Plan 2018-21)**
>
> **Strengthening a broader base of institutions.** ITC aims to expand and improve the use of the Assess, Improve Measure (AIM) methodology, by using a modular approach and more digital channels for greater reach. In 2018, the project primarily supported TPOs, but already expanded its scope of work to a broader base of business support organizations. This will continue in 2019.
>
> **Understanding and strengthening business support ecosystems**. ITC intents to define, measure and strengthen the services that MSMEs can receive from an interdependent ecosystem of business support providers, including the connections and leverage points between key actors. A pilot assessment of institutions supporting entrepreneurship was initiated in 2018, replication and fine-tuning of this work will take place in 2019 in other regions.
>
> **Foreign trade representatives in the digital age**. ITC aims to revamp and scale the programme, assisting countries to strengthen economic and trade diplomacy by building and upgrading relevant skills of foreign trade representatives to develop domestic trade and investment flows. A manual for Foreign Representatives was developed in 2018 and will be launched in 2019.
>
> **Impact assessment for TISI services.** ITC plans to further develop impact assessment methodologies and tools to measure the impact of TISI services on MSME competitiveness, trade and employment. In 2018, the TISI section developed a methodology to support institutions to report on impact. In 2019, the section will consolidate the impact standard and support more institutions to reach the standard.

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[3] Strategic plan 2018-21, the ITC results framework is outlined on pages 50-51. For the TISI Programme and the key initiatives listed in the box, see page 32-33.

Theory of change

Trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) face a number of common internal barriers to performance, including poor governance, unclear mandates, and declining budgets, as well as the challenges of a highly competitive, increasingly complex global market. At the same time, they are critical multipliers of ITC's work because they are important service providers to MSMEs. ITC intends to assist them to implement and sustain improvements across all dimensions of their performance, to ensure that MSMEs receive the help they need to grow and benefit from advocacy efforts on their behalf.

The programme seeks to improve performance through an iterative process of raising awareness, learning, commitment and action, leading to a new level of maturity with each cycle of change. At every stage, value is added to the TISI as they act on opportunities for improvement. The programme supports a deep multi-year engagement for high-impact institutions, while also delivering a broader service offering to improve awareness and knowledge for all TISIs.

The ultimate objective is an economic and social impact, by contributing to job creation, increase in average income and improved inclusiveness. By putting particular accent on helping institutions measure and demonstrate results, the project aims to influence governments, donors, private sector representatives and beneficiaries to support these business support activities. With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, the successful delivery of this programme is foreseen to contribute to a variety of SDGs, including targets of SDG 1, 8, 16 and 17.[4]

Purpose and objectives

An OIOS audit[5] in 2017 recommended an evaluation of the AIM project to inform its next phase. In the meantime, the AIM project has been fully integrated as general methodology for institutional strengthening and is used as such by the TISI section. This resulted in the consideration that the evaluation could be conducted with a wider scope. As there was another audit in 2018[6] covering activities of the section, the exercise was aimed for 2019 to avoid evaluation fatigue and to ensure that it considers the results achieved under the I 4 Impact—AIM for Results project upgraded in 2018.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to determine the quality and inform the future implementation of the programme. In particular, the evaluation is supposed to meet the following objectives:

a) assess to what extent the programme's theory of change is valid and to what extent the interventions achieve the intended outcomes (and possibly impact);

b) provide indications as to in which areas of work the programme is most effective or provides most added value to ITC's work and mandate;

c) serve as a basis for future improvements by providing recommendations for a refined theory of change and/or operational aspects of the implementation of the programme;

d) provide lessons learned, examples of good practice or transferable findings that may benefit the design, implementation and results of other ITC projects and programmes; and to

e) ensure accountability towards partners and funders by reviewing the programme's performance.

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[4] See ITC annual report 2017, page 89
[5] OIOS Report 2017/152: Audit of ITC projects and activities funded by unearmarked funds (pages 6-7)
[6] OIOS Report 2018/098: Audit of ITC projects funded by the Netherlands Trust Fund

Intended users

The main intended users of this evaluation are:

- the **TISI Programme team**, given that the evaluation will provide insights about the programme's process, performance as well as recommendations for improvement;
- **Senior Management**, as the evaluation will provide evidence that can serve as an information base for organizational decisions and management, in relation to ITC's programmatic approach in general and the TISI Programme in particular;
- **ITC staff,** as the evaluation will demonstrate ITC achievements and may likely provide insights that are transferable to other areas;
- **Partners and funders**, who want to learn more about the programme's performance; and
- the **general public** interested in learning more about ITC interventions or the TISI programme.

Scope

The scope of the evaluation will encompass all activities in the programme's portfolio. As there were some strategic shifts in precedent years, the year 2018 is to serve as the main temporal scope for the evaluation. However, the scope of evaluation may extend further into the past, for example to assess long-term effects on individual TISIs.

Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation is expected to answer a set of questions in order to meet its purpose and objectives. These questions are directly linked to a number of fundamental evaluation criteria that reflect the core principles for evaluating development assistance and have been adopted by most development agencies as standards of good practice in evaluation. The evaluation questions may be further refined during the inception phase.

The following set of high-level evaluation questions is suggested for this evaluation:

Table 2. Evaluation questions and related criteria

High-level evaluation questions	Criteria focus
- How and to what extent is the programme contributing to ITC's work and mandate?	RELEVANCE
- To what extent does the programme achieve its objectives? What is the potential and actual contribution of each of the projects to the achievement of the programme's objectives? - What are the main results achieved in each of the categories of the TISI client approach? In which of these categories has the programme been most relevant, effective or efficient (and in which of them, less)?	EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT
- To what extent has the programme been efficiently managed and delivered? - How successful is the programme in supporting other ITC initiatives? - How successful is the programme in drawing in the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve the performance of TISIs?	EFFICIENCY, SYNERGIES
- To what extent are the programme's positive effects likely to continue after the end of its intervention?	SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation may also address cross-cutting dimensions, such as the following:

- *Human Rights and Gender Equality:* The extent to which aspects of human rights and gender equality are embedded in the programme and its contribution to their enhancement.
- *Environment and climate change:* The extent to which the programme contributes to protection and rehabilitation of the environment as well as to climate adaptation and resilience.
- *Innovation:* The extent to which the programme has introduced innovative approaches to achieve ITC's goals or better adapt to emerging contexts or if innovations have been replicated or scaled up by development partners.

Methodology

The evaluation process and methodological approach is expected to follow the principles set forth in the ITC Evaluation Guidelines. Furthermore, it shall be performed in line with the Norms and Standards for Evaluation and respecting the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation published by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

The methodology is supposed to be designed during the inception phase and entail the following:

- Verify the **theory of change** developed by the programme and adjust it if necessary.
- Develop an **evaluation matrix**[7] defining which data sources will be used to answer the evaluation questions while taking into account data availability as well as budget and time constraints.

The evaluation should be based on a rigorous and transparent methodology ensuring impartiality and lack of bias. To this end, a mixed method design is preferable, which allows triangulation of multiple data sources and stakeholder groups. The evaluation will mainly rely on the following data collection methods:

a) **Document review**, which will comprise mainly relevant documents related to the implementation and progress of the programme (e.g. strategic and operational planning documents, work plans & budgets, progress or final reports, monitoring data). In addition, the document review may include relevant publications or other secondary data.

b) **Key informant interviews** will be conducted with a sample of the programme's internal and external stakeholders. The interviews will be semi-structured and conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Internal stakeholders are first and foremost the programme team as well as staff members collaborating with the programme or with a particular knowledge of the activities in this area. External stakeholders for this evaluation are TISIs in general and TIPOs in particular; the programme's Advisory Board, implementing partners and funders; UN agencies and the WTO; as well as relevant research institutes, agencies and academia.

c) An **online survey** may be used to assess the impact of particular programme activities. It is most likely that these surveys will be aimed at institutions in order to assess their appreciation and effects of programme activities.

d) **Field visits** can be an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of the various stakeholders around the evaluation questions and collect additional relevant data, in particular from external stakeholders.

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[7] An *evaluation matrix* is an organizing tool to help plan for the conduct of an evaluation. It is prepared during the inception phase of the evaluation, and is then used throughout the data collection, analysis and report writing phases. The evaluation matrix forms the main analytical framework for the evaluation. It reflects the evaluation questions to be answered and helps to consider the most appropriate and feasible method to collect data for answering each question. It guides the analysis and ensures that all data collected is analysed, triangulated and then used to answer the evaluation questions, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

To ensure participation and ownership among key stakeholders, regular consultations will be conducted during the evaluation process. In concrete terms, this implies that key stakeholders (in particular the programme team) will be consulted at the drafting stages of the terms of reference, inception note and evaluation report and will have the opportunity to provide comments. Moreover, it is envisaged to have a meeting with the programme team to present and discuss the findings before the conclusion of the final draft of the evaluation report.

Evaluation team and management

The evaluation will be commissioned and managed by ITC's Independent Evaluation Office (IEU). The IEU will establish an evaluation team formed by an ITC evaluation officer and an external evaluation consultant. Additional IEU staff or external consultants may support the evaluation if needed. The evaluation team will report to the head of IEU in his capacity as evaluation commissioner.

The ITC evaluation officer will act as the evaluation manager and guide the process. The external evaluation consultant must sign a non-disclosure agreement to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

Timeline and deliverables

The evaluation is planned to be conducted in a timeframe of six months, between May 2019 and October 2019. Annex 2 summarizes the approximate timeline and expected deliverables for the evaluation.

The evaluation report will present the evidence found in response to all evaluation criteria and questions. It should be relevant to decision-making needs, written in a concise, clear and easily understandable language, of high scientific quality and based on the evaluation information without bias. The report will include an Executive Summary and evidence-based recommendations directly derived from the evaluation findings and conclusions. It will be prepared in English and will preferably comprise not more than 40 pages, excluding annexes.