



International  
Trade  
Centre

## EVALUATION REPORT

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# Evaluation of the ITC Participation and Performance in the UN Delivering as One System

Vol. 1 Report

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Independent Evaluation Unit

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## EVALUATION OF THE ITC PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN THE UN DELIVERING AS ONE SYSTEM

This evaluation report makes reference to the following SDGs:

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

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

This is an independent publication by the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit. The evaluation was commissioned and managed by ITC's Independent Evaluation Office (IEU). The IEU established an evaluation team formed by the Head of the IEU (Miguel Jiménez Pont) and two external consultants: the Senior Evaluation Consultant (Nurul Alam) and the Senior Trade and Development Policy Consultant (Manuela Tortora).

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## Contents

Acronyms.....	ii
Executive Summary.....	iv
1. Context of the Evaluation.....	1
2. Significance of DaO in UNDS.....	11
Genesis of DaO: An Intergovernmental Process .....	11
Challenges Addressed by DaO.....	12
DaO Concept and Governance.....	13
Performance Assessment of the First Generation of DaO .....	17
3. Overview of TRTA in the DaO Context.....	19
Trade and SDG.....	19
Economic and Trade Pillars in UNDAF.....	20
ITC Positioning within TRTA.....	20
Enhancing Factors for Cooperation and Coherence .....	23
4. ITC Participation in DaO.....	26
Lessons from ITC Participation in DaO .....	26
Strategic Fit of DaO initiative with ITC mandate.....	32
Assessment of Participation in Key Pillars of DaO .....	35
Constraints to Effective Participation.....	38
Partnerships with other UN Agencies within UNDAF .....	41
Good Practices in “Cutting across Silos” .....	43
5. Changing Horizon.....	46
Acceleration of the UNDS Reform Process .....	46
Country-level Focus of the UNDS Reform .....	48
The New Role of UNSDG .....	50
Role of NRAs and Small Projects with Small Budgets .....	51
6. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	53
Findings .....	53
Conclusions.....	56
Recommendations .....	58

## Acronyms

3ADI+	Accelerator for Agriculture and Agroindustry Development and Innovation
AFE	Authorization for Field Expenditure
BOS	Business Operations Strategy
CBF	Common Budgetary Framework
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEB	Chief Executives Board
DaO	Delivering as One
DC	Developing Country
DCP	Division for Country Programmes
DOCO	Development Operations Coordination Office
DTIS	Diagnostic Trade Integration Study
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ED	Executive Director
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GHD	Global Help Desk
HLP	High-level Panel
HQ	Headquarter
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
IF	Integrated Framework
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Money Fund
ITC	International Trade Centre
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JP	Joint Programme
LDC	Least Developed Country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
NES	National Export Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRA	Non-Resident Agency
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OMT	Operations Management Team
PPOC	Programme Planning and Oversight Committee
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBM	Results-based Management

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDGF	Sustainable Development Goals Fund
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SIDO	Small Industries Development Organization
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SMECS	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Competitiveness Survey
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SUGECO	Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative
TCPR	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
TISI	Trade Investment and Support Institution
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRTA	Trade Related Technical Assistance
UN	United Nations
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDAP	United Nations Development Assistance Plan
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP RR	United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
UNSC	United Nations Steering Committee
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

- I. This report presents the results of the evaluation of the “International Trade Centre (ITC) Participation and Performance in the United Nations (UN) Delivering as One (DaO) System.” The analysis elaborates on the ITC’s participation in DaO initiatives, and lessons learned to date.
- II. The objective of the evaluation is twofold: first, to produce an independent evaluative assessment of the ITC’s past and current engagement in the UN’s DaO system; and second, to provide an analytical perspective and a set of recommendations for consideration by ITC management to better position the organization to engage in the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform process of in order to support the goals of 2030 agenda effectively. The evaluation adopted a forward-looking approach, with an emphasis on distilling lessons learned from ITC participation in DaO, highlighting issues related to processes and constraints in implementation systems, including challenges related to lack of flexibility in DaO’s institutional structure.
- III. The evaluation examined the efforts and activities of the ITC to engage in DaO between 2008 and 2016 and also examined ITC’s current participation in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in selected countries. It adopted a mixed methods approach consisting of a range of quantitative and qualitative tools and methods (i.e. document and literature review, interviews, country visits, and an online survey) to collect data and perceptions to generate evidence in response to the identified evaluation issues and questions.

## DaO

- IV. The genesis of the DaO dates back to the 1990s when the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) were introduced to remedy to the lack of coherence in UN implementation strategies at country level. In 2006, the report of the United Nations Secretary General’s (UNSG’s) High-level Panel (HLP) on System-wide Coherence, *Delivering as One (DaO)*, presented a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening the work of the UN in partnership with host governments, with focus on results.
- V. DaO was adopted to improve the overall coordination of the implementation work of UN institutions and agencies at country level. It aims to alleviate the systemic deficiencies linked to uncoordinated and segregated planning, design, and implementation of UN system organization assistance programmes.
- VI. “DaO” encapsulated the main goals of the reforms introduced at that time. These promoted UN systems operational representation based on “five ones” adopted in eight pilot countries – referred to as “One UN.” The “five ones” are: One Leader, One Programme, One Fund, Operating as One, and Communicating as One.
- VII. DaO, as applied in the eight “One UN” countries, was evaluated in 2012. The most relevant conclusions of the 2012 evaluation noted that the DaO reforms improved interagency synergies and reduced overlaps, as well as alignment of UN development aid with national development strategies and ownership. Still, the evaluation found “little” progress towards identified DAO goals of “reduced duplication” and “reduced fragmentation.” Progress was found to be “moderate” on “reduced competition for funds” and “enhanced capacity for strategic approaches.”

## **ITC, DaO and Trade-Related Technical Assistance: the Context**

- VIII. Trade, as such, was not included in the list of 10 MDGs, nor in the list of 17 SDGs. However, many targets of both sets of goals are directly or indirectly related to trade. Trade is one of the most crucial components of the international economic environment that interacts with and influences national development plans. Of the 119 UNDAFs reviewed for the present evaluation, 118 had economic pillars. The analysis also found that among the 119 documents reviewed, 57 specifically mentioned trade as an important element of the country's development strategy. This evidence, complemented with direct observations gathered during the evaluation process, confirm that demand for trade-related assistance from developing countries is likely to be sustained at a high level in current and future UNDAFs.
- IX. In line with its joint mandate from the WTO and the UN, the ITC supports the regulatory, research, and policy strategies of its two parent organizations by focusing on implementing and delivering practical trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) projects. The ITC works with the private sector and is the only actor in the multilateral system fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Nonetheless, the broader TRTA landscape is complex and crowded. According to the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO's) 2017 *Guide on Trade Capacity Building*, more than 30 multilateral entities work in this area.
- X. At the UN level, the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity (thereafter 'the Cluster'), is an interagency cooperation and coordination mechanism at the Secretariat level, which encompasses 15 UN entities (including the WTO and the 5 UN Regional Commissions) working on different aspects of trade and related issues. The Cluster was originally inspired by the need to ensure and enhance the role of trade and related issues in the UNDAFs. Since most of the Cluster members are Non-Resident Agencies (NRAs), joining forces was an efficient and useful move. It was also relevant to the overall goal of increasing the efficiency and impact of UN assistance in the trade area by avoiding duplications and overlaps and enhancing coordination. The ITC has participated in the Cluster since the beginning of this informal mechanism in 2008.

## **Methodology**

- XI. The evaluation focused on: the relevance and performance of ITC projects within DaO/UNDAF, to contribute to larger UNDAF expected outcomes in terms of sustainable development; strengths and weaknesses in ITC's engagement; and the extent to which factors internal to ITC or the DaO Initiative, including governance issues, policies, and partnerships, influenced the effectiveness of the organization's engagement with the DaO initiative.
- XII. The evaluation adopted a forward-looking approach and can be considered as formative and goal free. Methods and tools include Document and literature review; Group and individual semi-structured interviews; Country visit and key-projects assessment in selected DaO countries; and Questionnaire survey to ITC staff working in DaO countries and staff with DaO experience at headquarters.

## **Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

- XIII. These are summarized in the table below. The summary of findings segment of the below section presents the findings and how they are interconnected logically. The supporting evidence is presented at the end of the executive summary by finding. (If reading on screen, the reader can refer to the evidence by clicking on the links and then returning to

the summary of findings by clicking on the “back to logic” link. Alternatively, if reading on a printed version, the evidence is presented on separate pages, allowing the easy back and forth between findings and evidence.)

- XIV. After the Summary of findings, the text offers a brief review of the analysis corresponding to the findings, thematically organised and linked to a set of recommendations. The analysis and conclusions are also referenced to the findings through the evidence links.

### **Summary of Findings**

⇒ **ITC engagement in DaO was not systematic.** See evidence [Finding 1](#) (clickable if on computer)

➤ Why has ITC engagement in DaO been relatively low?

- Lack of sustained funding from DaO. See evidence [Finding 2](#) (clickable if on computer)
- Lack of internal policy guidance from ITC management. See evidence [Finding 3](#) (clickable if on computer)
- Absence of internal corporate oversight from management. See evidence [Finding 4](#) (clickable if on computer)
- Some factors inherent in the status of the ITC (e.g. related to NRA status). See evidence [Finding 5](#) (clickable if on computer)
- Engagement in DaO has been process-heavy. See evidence [Finding 6](#) (clickable if on computer)
- Minimum funding requirement for NRA participation in UNDAF. See evidence [Finding 7](#) (clickable if on computer)

➤ In this context why should ITC participate in DaO?

- ITC participation in DaO that did take place, though limited, generated positive experiences and useful lessons. See evidence [Finding 8](#) (clickable if on computer)
- ITC’s participation in UN systemic initiatives like DaO enhances its development effectiveness. See evidence [Finding 9](#) (clickable if on computer)

⇒ **ITC’s limited participation in DaO undermined its visibility in DaO countries.** See evidence [Finding 10](#) (clickable if on computer)

➤ Why is ITC not so visible?

- Advocacy by the UN Resident Coordinators and the UN Country Team plays an important role in positioning ITC role in UNDAF. This advocacy challenge is also partly due to low communication and outreach by ITC itself. See evidence [Findings 11 and 12](#) (clickable if on computer)



## **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

### **⇒ Internal Elements in the ITC Approach to DaO**

- Beyond the potential added value ([Finding 8](#); [Finding 9](#)) of participating in DaO, which may take time to become evident, **the present UN-wide reform process is accelerating** and the **obligation to participate, coordinate, and cooperate with other UN agencies** at country level will become more and more pressing. In addition to the fact that the ITC can contribute to the DaO through its specific and unique technical mandate related to export and entrepreneurship development ([Finding 8](#)), it operates under the UN's normative principles and **its programmes at the country level are required to demonstrate and communicate about stronger consistency with, and contribution to, UNDAF outcomes in the future.** ([Findings 11 and 12](#)) The UNDAF outcomes are now all specifically linked to the SDGs so all ITC programming must be aligned to the SDGs.
- While within the ITC, there **continues to be some ambivalence and debate** at various levels about the added value of operating through the DaO ([Finding 2](#); [Finding 5](#); [Finding 6](#); [Finding 7](#)), it would be essential that there be **reaffirmation by the management to staff** at all levels about its intent and commitment to participate in the initiative. Any mismatch between HQ management level thinking and that of country-level engagement in systemic efforts ([Finding 3](#); [Finding 4](#)) **would mean that opportunities will be missed** to maximize the benefits to ITC of its participation in the initiative ([Finding 9](#)). Without progressive change within the agency, as the reform is deployed (emphasis on DaO and decentralizing programming and implementing at country level), more and more opportunities will be missed, affecting ITC's recognition within the UN, as a valuable contributor to the achievement of SDGs.

#### **Recommendation for strategy level:**

1. ITC should develop a pragmatic vision and clear strategy on how it proposes to position itself to systematically engage in and derive benefits from ongoing systemic initiatives (like DaO) and from new reform initiatives of UNDS.

#### **Recommendations for administration of UNDAF processes:**

2. At the Headquarters level, clear responsibilities should be assigned to staff and operational units relating to **strategic engagement with UNDS** governance system, and consequently with DaO, UNDS reforms, and the UNDAFs (SDGs).
3. Building on the content, processes and definitions of the 2016 “Rules of engagement for ONE ITC”, DCP regional offices should manage the **UNDAF requirements**, for the countries of ITC interest, to produce the following end outputs:
  - Produce formal “**country intelligence reports**” on a regular basis;
  - Ensure ITC is an **official signatory of the UNDAF**;
  - Make sure these **UNDAFs contain an economic / trade pillar** to whose outcome(s) ITC officially contributes;
  - Operationalize an effective **monitoring system within DCP** to inform and report on all ITC activities in the country linking their contribution to UNDAF outcome(s) to which ITC contributes;

#### **Recommendation on accountabilities and job descriptions:**

4. In order for the ITC to play its designated role in implementing DaO, UNDAFs and aligning itself to SDGs, staff members at all levels of ITC should be explicitly identified and required to play **substantive roles in implementing DaO / UNDAF**. Hence, ITC should ensure that the job descriptions, work plans, deliverables, and performance appraisals of relevant staff members reflect their participation, contribution, and accountability in enhancing participation in this area and aligning programming to SDGs.

## ⇒ External Elements in the ITC Approach to DaO

- The **UN reform will facilitate opportunities** for the ITC's engagement into DaO and broader UNDS coherence initiatives compared to how the process has been working to date ([Finding 6](#)). At the global governance level, **the granting to ITC in March 2018 of full membership in the new UNSDG**, with all members being theoretically equally accountable and equal, **opens options** for ITC to contribute to sustainable development at the UN-wide level through export and entrepreneurship development. This should be achieved in conjunction with other like-minded UN agencies (e.g. through the Cluster [Finding 5](#) and other complementary initiatives). The recently created ITC New York Liaison Office should enable such participation in disseminating ITC work among delegates and within the UNSDG / DOCO machinery.
- ITC has to be present in the UNDAFs. An enhanced participation in **DaO would offer increased visibility for ITC's** work in relation to the SDGs because of the strong linkages between trade and the SDGs at the global and country levels. ITC needs to position itself within the UN-wide system as the reform steers all UN partners to work together to contribute to the achievement of SDGs, through UNDAF country level planning and implementation. The logic is that as UN agencies avoid duplication of work, they individually—hence the ITC as well—and collectively become more efficient. This entails that the planning phase of collective work becomes even more central. ([Finding 10](#))
- As a full member of the UNDS, ITC has to be part of the UNDS collective identity at the country level. This entails targeted **communication with the UNRCO** and systematic **interaction within the UNCT**, as these are becoming the central pieces in the articulation of UN agencies' comparative advantage at the country level, and the identification of gaps and overlaps in the UNDS response to country needs, including the recourse to non-UNDS partners. ([Findings 11 and 12](#))
- The issue of the **role of NRAs in the area of trade** ([Finding 5](#)) should be raised at two levels in parallel: at the UNDG level, and at the country level (with the host Government, the Regional Coordinator [RC] and the UNCT as a whole). ITC, together with other non-resident TRTA-providing UN entities, should emphasize that being resident is not a necessary condition to be efficient in this thematic area, and that NRAs should be treated as full members of UNCTs for the sake of coherence and team work within the economic pillar of UNDAFs – notwithstanding the size of their budgets.

#### **Recommendation for enhancing engagement at the system-wide level:**

5. **ITC should engage with UN development partners to design collaborative solutions strategies.** Where the potential for global partnerships is identified, more detailed discussions should be held between headquarters in order to highlight and enhance complementarities between UN partners in mandate, programming approach, reporting, and business practices.
  - ITC should take advantage of its new full membership within the UNSDG to define and present initiatives that bring together UN agencies in **championing trade and entrepreneurship-related SDGs**. It should also use this membership to defend its interests as an NRA. As much as possible, ITC should discuss and agree common positions with partner UN Agencies, including within the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity platform.
  - A collective and consistent advocacy drive by trade-related NRAs in UNDG platform can ensure **positioning of trade and export sector in strategic discussions of UNDAF** and help TRTA agencies secure their rightful role in UNDAF programmes. The GA Resolution of 31 May 2018 provided clear directives to RCs to ensure that the collective strength and multiple skill sets of UN system agencies be brought to bear in implementing UNDAFs. ITC along with other trade-related NRAs should collectively follow up and push for uniform advocacy by RCs for utilization of the competencies and global experiences of the NRAs. As experience demonstrates, through well-informed coordination and rapport with RCs, the ITC could better, and more systematically, disseminate and showcase its areas of specialization and support at the country level, and access opportunities for more programme participation and partnerships.

#### **Recommendation for enhancing engagement at the country level:**

6. DCP regional sections **should regularly engage with the UNRC**, relevant members of the UNRCO and the UNCT to enhance ITC role, its areas of specialty and competence within DaO / UNDAF. They should identify and utilize opportunities of **securing ITC's role and participation in UNDAF design processes**, including the Common Country Analysis (CCA), and ensure that all ITC operations (funded from all sources) in a given country are weighted up within the appropriate pillar/ component of the UNDAF/UNDAP. Simultaneously, they should maintain close relationships with the government and national counterparts, to explain how ITC role can be enhanced by synergies with other UN agencies within the DaO mechanisms.
  - ITC should develop a set of tailored **advocacy messages** to be used in promoting solutions at the country-level – and within UNDAF context. This can be facilitated by compilation and synthesis of an evidence-based portfolio of good practices used in developing solutions strategies in the context of the CCA and UNDAFs. Management should support the creation of mechanisms for regular sharing of information and experience and their use by relevant ITC staff.
  - As an NRA, it is important for the ITC to explain its role and its areas of specialty and competence to the UN Resident Coordinator, relevant members of the RC Office and the UN Country Team. It should also maintain close relationships with its constituency in the trade ministries and other relevant government agencies. When interacting with national counterparts, ITC should explain how its role can be enhanced by synergies with other UN entities within the DaO mechanisms.

Finding 1 ([back to Summary](#))

**1. Evidence for Finding 1 “ITC engagement in DaO was not systematic and was opportunistic at best.”**

- a. The evaluation team found that of the 58 countries with UNDAFs that had trade pillars, the ITC was officially present in 25, representing 43% of these 58 UNDAFs and 21% of all the 119 UNDAFs reviewed.
- b. However, according to the 2018 data in the UNDG ITC Agency Report, ITC was either a member of the UNCT or considered an NRA in 12.7% of countries. ITC was considered a member of only 6.9% of UN Country Teams.
- c. The ITC traditionally followed a project-based approach to programming at country level, which to a large extent relies on earmarked donor funding. Its corporate reporting and results framework do not require reference to any coordination or interface with UN system coherence and programming processes (like UNDAF/DaO). Its somewhat stand-alone country-based project planning lacks coordination with mainstream UNDAF initiatives and the country programmes and strategies of other related agencies.
- d. The ITC’s approach to participation in DaO has been one of pragmatic engagement. The ITC focused on DaO intervention opportunities when the context was conducive and when there was strong potential for results. Opportunities were missed due to its selective coverage of countries, limited resources, and other internal constraints. Coordinating with, and being part of, DaO has been coming at a cost and ITC participation in DaO has therefore not necessarily showed a steady upward trend. Very importantly, as an NRA, the ITC is not directly in the loop of in-country UNDAF participation dynamics.

Finding 2 ([back to Summary](#))

**2. Evidence for Finding 2 “The lack of sustained funding support from DaO/UNDAF sources for ITC projects generates weak incentives for participation.”**

- a. The initial DaO years showed good promise of resource allocation but as the country-based ‘One Funds’ shrank in size and donors increased their earmarking of funds, the limited contributions that ITC had received in the past continued to – and are likely to continue to – diminish. In countries where a One Fund exists, ITC’s contributions received from bilateral sources to its joint programmes usually far exceeded contributions that were received from the One Fund.
- b. The One UN funds established at the country level are multi-donor trust funds managed by the UNDG Multi Partner Trust Fund Office as Administrative Agent. It is difficult for NRAs like ITC to participate in the negotiations to set the allocation criteria that include: the definition of the funding gaps to be covered by the One UN fund; the share of committed resources required to each agency in order to access the One UN funds; and the performance criteria required to access these funds. One UN Funds matter for the NRAs as these are predictable resources leading to sustained assistance during the four-year implementation period of the UNDAF.
- c. Finally, ITC’s substantial reliance on non-core donor resources (which makes it accede to donor demands and requirements or priorities) poses some constraints in engaging fully in systemic integration at the country level.

Finding 3 ([back to Summary](#))

**3. Evidence for Finding 3 “A lack of policy guidance and uncoordinated management of responsibilities on DaO hampered ITC’s uptake in the organization.”**

- a. Although ITC has participated at different stages of DaO since the initial pilots, knowledge, information, and awareness about DaO have been confined to a very limited number of ITC staff members, with experience of engagement with the DaO initiative. Consequently, institutional knowledge of DaO has tended to rotate in a few units, resulting in a lack of systematic flow and sharing of key information and awareness among the professional staff concerned across the organization.
- b. Decisions on engaging with DaO/UNDAFs are taken based on the information and analysis by the five regional desks at Division for Country Programmes (DCP). ITC/DCP keeps track of UNDAF rollout in countries, selects priority countries, and tries to participate in the early stages of the UNDAF cycle. The ITC also endeavors to submit information about its projects to be included in the results matrix of UNDAF through UNCT members.

Finding 4 ([back to Summary](#))

**4. Evidence for Finding 4 “In the absence of corporate oversight backed by accountability/reporting requirement, the motivation for participation in systemic initiatives suffered a setback within the organization.”**

- a. Focus group discussion (FGDs) with geographic desks, and review of the information system and periodic monitoring documentation on UNDAFs, suggest that ITC data sharing interactions with UNRCs and UNCTs usually provide information of a routine nature and only occasionally reflect substantive or proactive engagements or analysis.
- b. There is a lingering concern among ITC programme professionals that issues like trade, export, and productive capacities do not enjoy a high order of priority in UNDAF discussions compared to other economic and social issues. Even in the countries where UNDAF economic pillars include trade, coverage and analysis of trade issues tend to receive relatively little attention.

Finding 5 ([back to Summary](#))

**5. Evidence for Finding 5: “Some inherent internal factors inhibited the ITC’s pro-active participation in DaO and limited uptake of the initiative within the organizations.”** These factors include:

- a. At the UN-wide level, the ITC has **NRA status. This gives the agency only indirect access** to related information on UN Director General (UNDG)/ Development Operations Coordination Office DOCO (and NRA group) through UNCTAD and the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity. The main obstacle to the participation of NRA agencies in the UNDAFs is not their lack of permanent presence in the country but rather their **lack of predictable core resources** that can be committed at the beginning of the UNDAF cycle.
- b. However, it should be noted that the ITC’s **utilization of the Cluster** *has* been important, particularly at the beginning of the consolidation of the Cluster within the UN System. Yet, it has been **limited overall** compared to other agencies and compared to its potential for ITC purposes.

Finding 6 ([back to Summary](#))

**6. Evidence for Finding 6: “Engagement in DaO has been process-heavy involving lengthy gestation between process, action and results.”**

- a. Evaluation interviews point to staff perception that engagement in DaO has been time-consuming, process-heavy and has had a long gestation between process, action and results.

Finding 7 ([back to Summary](#))

**7. Evidence for Finding 7: “The set precondition of a minimum funding requirement for NRA participation in UNDAF created a deterrent for ITC participation in DaO/UNDAF.”**

- a. In many UNCTs the small entities whose expenditures are under 10% (or a similar thresholds) of the total annual UNCT expenditure have been excluded from country-based funding mechanisms.

Finding 8 ([back to Summary](#))

- 8. Evidence for Finding 8: “When there was ITC participation in DaO, it generated positive experiences and useful lessons.”**
- a. Wherever opportune and relevant, ITC has been part of DaO approaches (e.g. Albania, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Viet Nam) either through direct interaction with the UNCT or through its participation in the UN-CEB Cluster.
  - b. Recent positive country experiences illustrate benefits of ITC engagement in DaO. The main added value for ITC is to **contribute to the overall UNDAF through its specific technical expertise** (TRTA, export and entrepreneurship development, and internationalization of SMEs).
  - c. In some cases, DaO offered **an important structured platform** for ITC to work in partnership with **UNCT members, donors, and governments**.
  - d. There are some examples (in Tanzania, Rwanda and Cape Verde and Vietnam) of **ITC gaining access to partnership contributions** in mainstream efforts of the UN and being able to contribute in its areas of expertise. In these examples, ITC availed itself of opportunities for early and continued engagement in UNDAF formulation processes.

Finding 9 ([back to Summary](#))

- 9. Evidence for Finding 9 “ITC’s participation in UN systemic initiatives like DaO for coherence is consistent with ITC operational programming and enhances its development effectiveness.”**
- a. Working within the UN framework of DaO/UNDAF is fully consistent with ITC’s business model and operational programming modality, which requires the organization to work with private sector partners and entities and flexibly mobilize and seek direct funding from other donors or sources for its projects. In fact, country experiences confirm that working within UNDAFs and UNCT partnerships brings forth many tangible and intangible benefits to ITC including access to the UN platform for advocacy, inclusion of its contribution to UN strategic planning (UNDAF), and reporting, and also access to additional funding windows.
  - b. ITC’s capacity building programmes are fully compliant with UN-wide protocols for technical assistance, as provided in UNDAFs with a common approach and framework for formulating and measuring capacity development results. ITC works closely with UN system efforts, beneficiary countries, development partners, and donor agencies to improve the common definition and framework for measuring the outcomes and impact of trade-related technical assistance.



Finding 10 ([back to Summary](#))

**10. Evidence for Finding 10 “ITC’s limited participation undermined its visibility in DaO countries.”**

- a. ITC is barely visible by national stakeholders, donors, UN Agencies, and the UN DOCO.
- b. In countries where ITC is not part of the UNDAF, its projects are not captured in One UN reporting.
- c. Maintaining agencies’ brand and visibility within joint communications has been one of the more challenging and sensitive aspects of DaO. However, the relevance of ITC in system-wide mechanisms like DaO is clear and supported by the linkages between trade and development. DaO’s operational modalities are based on requests from developing countries and supported by available donor funding.

Findings 11 & 12 ([back to Summary](#))

**11. Evidence for Finding 11 “Advocacy by the Resident Coordinators and the Country Team plays an important role in positioning the ITC role in UNDAF.”**

- a. In most countries, ITC relies on the UN Resident Coordinator to represent its interests. In addition, ITC makes use of the services of the UNDP for in-country logistics as well as representation at important events where ITC is not in a position to participate physically. Where this engagement with the UNRC or UNDP is sporadic, weak, or absent, ITC tends to receive little or no support from the existing systemic presence at the country level (from UNRC or other UNCT members).
- b. There seems to be a lack of consistency in the intent and the way the UNRCs choose to advocate, promote, and engage ITC across countries, which can pose a significant barrier to ITC getting the required advocacy and support to play a role in UNDAF /One Programme.

**12. Evidence for Finding 12 “This advocacy challenge is also partly due to low communication and outreach by ITC itself.”**

- a. Interviewed UNRC underlined a number of action areas for ITC that presently are not always systematically covered: Joining associated inter-agency Results and/or Thematic Groups; actively engaging in their discussions and work and regularly updating the UNRC on activities carried out by ITC is important and is not systematically done presently.
- b. The country managers are expected to be connected to UNRCs and NRA specialists in UNRCOs who maintain routine communications; however, this does not always happen.

## 1. Context of the Evaluation

1. *The UN reform* – It is relevant to mention at the outset that this evaluation has been conducted at a time of intense reform fervor at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The evaluation process coincided with the launch of a renewed reform initiatives of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) by the new United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) (Jan. 2017) in response to Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) 2016 resolutions.
2. Although the immediate focus of questions in this evaluation centered mainly on the participation and performance of ITC in the DaO initiative in the last seven years, it became clearer that, to be meaningful and relevant, the evaluation enquiry and analysis must be nestled within the broader issues of interest, compatibility and assessment of ITC's participation in initiatives on systemic coherence, coordination and partnership both at UN corporate and at the country level. With the fast moving reform process set in motion by the UNGA resolution of 31 May 2018, the prospective and forward-looking dimension of the evaluation assumed even greater significance.
3. This contingency necessitated a slightly staggered timeline in finalizing the evaluation report so that the emerging consensus on issues of systemic coherence as well the resultant transformations in United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) corporate processes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) programming have been realistically assessed and analyzed for their potential implications for ITC.
4. *Evaluation objectives* – The objective of the evaluation was two-fold: first, to produce an independent evaluative assessment of ITC's past and current engagement in the DaO system of the UN; and the second to help generate an analytical perspective and a set of recommendations for consideration of ITC management to better position the organization to engage in the reform process of UNDS in order to support the goals of 2030 agenda effectively.
5. More specifically the evaluation :

- a. Assessed Relevance of DaO to ITC strategic goals, and effectiveness of ITC's engagement in and contribution to the DaO initiative and related programmes.
  - b. Assessed the experiences and lessons learned from participation in DaO initiative and their relevance for the ITC's corporate mandate and programmatic operations. The focus on DaO initiative would provide an empirical.
  - c. Building on the evaluative insight and experiences from DaO, it carried out a prospective assessment of relevance and implications of recent reform initiatives of the UNDS for ITC's mandate, policies and business practices.
  - d. Based on an integrated analysis of the three dimensions above, it recommended to ITC management a set of actions to enhance better readiness of the organization to engage, leverage and play an effective role in in the context of UN coherence and SDG 2030 agenda.
6. There has been substantial momentum in the recent reform initiatives of the UNSG for revamping and transforming the UNDS strategy and action plan for strengthening, coordinating and restructuring the systemic mechanisms in support of SDGs at the global, regional and country levels. This has implications for all UN agencies including ITC. The evaluation took note and reflected on their potential implications for ITC's engagement in the future. In view of the above, the timing of the evaluation was considered opportune to take stock of ITC experience and lessons learned from its engagement with DaO.
  7. The primary intended audience for the evaluation are ITC's policy and decision-makers (member states and senior management) and other users of evaluation – including the Oversight Committee of ITC and other stakeholders in funding countries and partner countries. It is expected to be useful, to the middle management and ITC professional staff serving at different operational divisions at the headquarters and the field.
  8. *Evaluation scope* – The evaluation examined the work and actions taken by ITC to engage in DaO during the period 2008-2016. This included review of policies, decisions and internal processes as well as all related ITC projects involved in the DaO initiative (including UNDAF, United Nations Development Assistance Plan (UNDAP), One UN, Millennium Development Goal (MDG) -F, and SDG-F). As part of the process of distilling lessons, the evaluation assessed the context, process and progress as well as lessons learned from DaO experiences in selected countries including the constraints and challenges faced by ITC to engage fully in DaO approach.
  9. The analysis included an objective contextual assessment of the process of evolution of

the DaO practice in the backdrop of the QCPRs, the MDGs, and more recently SDGs. The analysis underpin the new initiatives for system-wide coherence at UNGA, ECOSOC and the UNSG's drive on 'Reforming the UN development System'<sup>1</sup>.

10. Systemic issues of UN reform related to, or triggered by, the DaO approach at headquarters, regional and country levels were also examined. For the assessment of contribution of ITC projects to the fulfilment of DaO/UNDAF expected outcomes, a closer examination was carried out of the countries where ITC has received direct funding (Cape Verde, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Viet Nam), with more specific interaction in countries, which had a good mass of projects offering substantial experience and evidence to offer (Rwanda and Tanzania).
11. The immediate focus of the evaluation has been on assessing ITC's involvement in the DaO initiative, and on UNDAF processes in those countries from the perspectives of:
  - ITC projects' relevance and performance within DaO/UNDAF, to contribute to larger UNDAF expected outcomes in terms of sustainable development and to assess ITC's project portfolio relevance, performance and sustainability within DaO system;
  - Strengths and weaknesses in ITC's engagement with a view to recommend ways for strengthening it. In doing so, the evaluation took note of the current changes to the UNDAF processes, in particular those pointing at strengthening the planning, coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) role of the UNCTs and UNRCs, and the increasing importance of SDGs in framing UNDAFs;
  - The evaluation also assessed the extent to which factors internal to ITC or the DaO Initiative, including governance related issues, policies, and partnerships, influenced the effectiveness of the organization's engagement with the DaO initiative (including fund-raising). In the process, it made an effort to identify any major gaps and challenges constraining the results.
12. The evaluation conclusions took due note of the ITC experiences and the factors facilitating its successes and impinging on its missed opportunities. A set of action-oriented recommendations were formulated for the consideration of ITC management.
13. *Evaluation criteria* – The evaluation assessed the contribution and value added of the DaO approach for ITC operations and to draw lessons learned. In that respect the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform>

standard evaluation criteria that were applied are follows:

- *Relevance* of the initiatives and of the approach as a whole in terms of responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the individual countries and enhanced relevance and coherence of the UNDS and ITC in particular;
  - *Effectiveness* – in terms of contribution in strengthened national ownership and enhanced national capacities/capacity development in DaO countries; contribution of ITC to development results in its areas of competence; implementation of appropriate processes and production of results;
  - *Efficiency* – the reduction of transaction cost for the countries, the UN system/ITC and other partners; new ways of doing business; simplification and harmonization of rules, regulations and procedures; additional, more predictable and more flexible funding mechanisms; and
  - *Sustainability* of the DaO approach. Prospect of sustaining and enhancing the approach under SDG with supportive systemic coherence efforts and enhanced resources, potential longer term multiplier benefits from the approach both at the level of the member countries and for the UNDS as a whole.
14. *Evaluation approach* – The evaluation adopted a forward looking approach, with an emphasis on distilling lessons learned so far from ITC participation in DaO, underlining the process, systemic constraints and rigidities ITC is facing. As explained earlier, because of the particular timing of the evaluation, special effort was made to maintain a balance between introspective (lessons learned from past) and prospective dimensions, in view of the more recent momentum and scenario in UN Reform initiatives, and their potential implications for ITC for the future.
15. This evaluation exercise can be characterized as a formative evaluation with a goal-free character. It looked into the way ITC participated and implemented its projects or project components in various DaO initiatives to examine whether the Theory of Change (ToC) or the operational logic of UN coherence as stipulated in DaO was actually working. The goal-free approach provided the flexibility to accommodate the evolving nature of DaO, and focus on the observable outcomes of projects and processes in reference to needs of the country rather than strict adherence to the rhetoric of programme goals.
16. The Evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards, and adopt a consultative approach, seeking and sharing opinions with stakeholders at different points in time and assessing ITC's role and work also from the

point of view of beneficiary clients and users of its products and services, as well as of its partners.

17. *Methods and tools* – The Evaluation adopted a mixed methodology consisting of a range of quantitative and qualitative tools and methods, to collect data and perceptions to seek evidence and clarity on evaluation issues and questions. These included:

- Document and literature review (including existing reviews and evaluations);
- Analysis of corporate policies, strategies, circulars, bulletins, reviews and any other relevant document aimed at DaO operationalization within ITC and at country level;
- Group and individual semi-structured interviews, harmonized through check lists and interview protocols;
- Country visit and key-projects assessment in selected DaO countries;
- Questionnaire survey to ITC staff working in DaO countries and staff with DaO experience at headquarters;
- Desk-studies and analysis, review of past evaluations; project reviews of a sample of representative initiatives.

18. *Stakeholder Consultative process* – Consultation with stakeholders was a key feature of professional conduct of evaluations. This Evaluation was also as consultative as possible, within available time and resources. The following groups of stakeholders were consulted:

- ITC Membership, comprising of; Governments of selected group of Member Countries, either at the country level or through their Permanent Representatives in Geneva and/or New York, as required; ITC Governing Bodies, in particular the Joint Advisory Group (JAG);
- UN Corporate governance/ entities: the Chief Executives Board (CEB), the United Nations Development Group (UNDG)/the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and at the country level UNRC, UNCT, Representatives of Non-Resident Agencies (NRAs) like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Labour Organization (ILO);
- ITC Senior Management, Regional Units in Headquarters (HQ), Country Programmes, Administration and Finance sections; ITC staff working in the different DaO locations,

including country focal points and project professionals;

- ITC external stakeholders, including participants directly and indirectly engaged with and benefiting from ITC's support and assistance, partner organizations such as UN agencies and bodies, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Official Development Assistance (ODA) bilateral agencies, other development partners, private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society.

19. Steps for Consultation with ITC key stakeholders:

- Meetings in HQ, with Senior Managers and staff during the preparatory phase, to identify issues and questions to be included in the ToR and expectations from the Evaluation;
- Circulation of the draft ToR for comments and suggestions;
- Meetings with ITC Senior Management and technical, administration and operations staff, in HQ;
- ITC staff at country level, to collect information and evidence about their projects, work experience with UNCT, UNDAF and DaO;
- Advanced draft report is also being circulated for comments and suggestions;
- Presentation of the Evaluation's preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations in a debriefing session with key stakeholders in ITC HQ.

20. *Triangulation* – The Evaluation triangulated or cross-validated the information and data gathered from stakeholders and through different tools. This underpinned the analysis and validation of evidence gathered. In addition, the team members applied their own technical judgment in the assessment of, for example, the quality of normative, project and process outputs.

21. *Selected Country cases* – The Evaluation team undertook a field visit to Rwanda as a DaO country. A special questionnaires were circulated with some UNRC Offices (Vietnam, Tanzania, Bhutan and country UNRC Offices to solicit their experiences in DaO. The team directly assessed the opinion and perceptions of national stakeholders on ITC's engagement and relationship with DaO.

22. *Evaluation Questions* – The Evaluation aimed to respond to four overarching questions:

- a. How relevant were DaO objectives and modalities to ITC's mandate, policies and business practices including their practical long-term implications?

- b. How effective were ITC's engagement/participation so far in the DaO initiative and its related programmes?
  - c. To what extent engagement in DaO added value for ITC to fulfill its own objectives and overcoming constraints?
  - d. What future strategies would be appropriate for ITC to gain better fit within and leverage from DaO, taking note of ongoing reform measures on coherence of UNDS?
23. These questions touch on a number of areas (thematic criteria) of inquiry with multiple questions within each. The Evaluation matrix, which was developed as an Evaluation tool, further detailed issues, criteria, questions, along with sources of information, method and tools for data-gathering and analysis. It is attached as Annex 2. The evaluation questions were consistent with the ToC developed as part of the evaluation exercise.
24. *Theory of Change* – DaO was adopted as the vehicle by the UNDS to promote improved functioning collectively at the country level. UN agencies were committed to engage in DaO to enhance their continued relevance, better strategic positioning, and more effective delivery of results and impact. Overtime the DaO experience matured and is now subsumed under the new reform agenda of the UNDS. In order to effectively to meet the expectations of Member States, UN system agencies are obliged to converge in an integrated and coherent manner at all levels to achieve a transformative, universal, and integrated 2030 Agenda.
25. The evaluation developed a ToC specifically for this evaluation. It is fully presented in Annex 1. It describes the potential contribution that DaO could offer to ITC. The DaO is targeted collectively at the UNCT in a country rather than individual UN entities. DaO aims at alleviating the systemic deficiencies that exists due to uncoordinated and segregated planning, design and implementation of assistance programmes of UN system organizations in a country. Hence, it is crucial that developing an agency specific ToC must conform to and be coherent with the DaO collective strategies, intermediate outcomes and impact in the country agreed by all. The ToC builds on a review of literature, IEU Concept Note, and views expressed by key related professionals at ITC headquarter during the preparatory phase of the evaluation.
26. *ToC Narrative* – The left hand side of the diagram (Figure 1 below titled 'DaO strategies') forms the core and the starting point of the DaO approach. Each of the boxes include a number of inputs and activity streams carried out with ITC support that are expected to deliver specific outcomes. This, in turn, jointly with outputs from other streams contribute



to ITC outcomes for member countries. The outcomes are expected to contribute to a better comprehension and appreciation of the importance and role played by ITC in its area of operation by the government, UNCT and donors at a country-level. This finally is expected to contribute to achievement of intermediate impact state by the country. ITC role in the DaO outcome chain is expected to enhance ITC's recognition, role and development contribution through more effective promotion of trade, export and entrepreneurship.

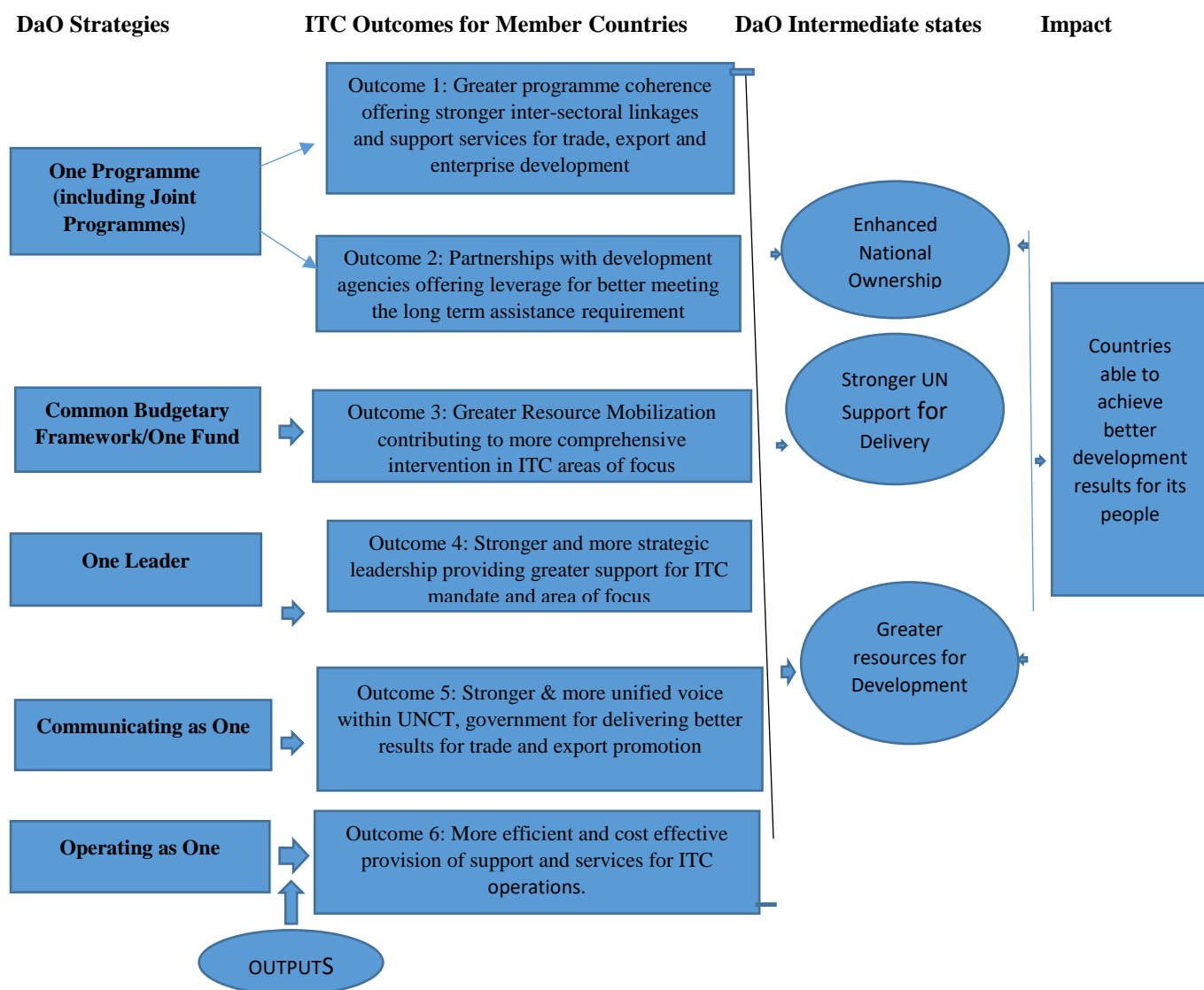
27. The ToC indicates that DaO has the potential to make a positive contribution to the achievement of ITC's mandate and business practices in the following ways:

- Greater programme coherence and inter-connectedness for the trade, export and enterprise development arena with wider economic sector's initiatives, thereby offering durable solutions and more relevant services and support to the country;
- Foster greater partnerships with development partners, UN agencies and other stakeholders which can better meet the long-term assistance requirements of the trade and export sector;
- Help secure a stronger, supportive & more unified voice within the UNCT and the government by delivering better results for country;
- Opportunities for accessing wider sources and opportunities for resource mobilization through 'Common Budgetary Framework' (CBF) contributing to the full range of interventions required by the country;
- Stronger and more strategic leadership through 'One leader' providing greater support for ITC's mandate;
- More efficient and cost-effective provision of support and services for ITC projects; and
- Operations through 'Operating as One'.

28. The evaluation sought to assess whether there has been potential benefits as outlined in the ToC and if not, what the effects (positive and negative) of the DaO has been on ITC's programme, funding and business practices. The evaluation focus was more on the outcome level.

29. While the ToC is helpful in simplifying complex realities, it should be borne in mind that what limits its utility was lack of uniformity on how DaO is implemented in different countries, and also the significant role that personal relationships play between individuals and members of the UNCT. As a consequence, a positive outcome in one country may not transpire in others.

**Figure 1: Elements of ToC for potential DaO contribution to ITC**



**\*\* Key risks and assumptions:** There are some assumptions, risks and exogenous underpinning factors in ITC engagement in DaO which might impinge on the flow of positive benefits to ITC. These are: Funding and governance arrangements, agency mandates and branding, change in UN/internationally agreed development goals, ITC access in UNDS management, unintended consequences of UN reform, personality mix in UNCT, and government perception on priorities.

30. *Evaluation limitations* – A number of constraining factors are elaborated in chapter 4. Perhaps the most significant limitation was the lack of uniformity in the way ITC approached and engaged in DaO. Lack of a uniform understanding of the concept created a diversity in a way DaO was perceived by staffers.
31. The lack of baseline data on the situation prior to DaO implementation was an obstacle to make an assessment on the net benefit (or negative impact) that the Initiative had on ITC. Also, the lack of a counterfactual to DaO countries where few or no elements of DaO had been rolled out made it difficult even to make qualitative comparison in the relationships between ITC and other UNCT members and the host government.
32. Inadequacy of systematic data and monitoring reports on ITC participation in DaO was certainly a limitation including extreme limited participation of ITC staff in the evaluation survey.
33. Lack of budget for visit of more sample countries by the team limited the volume of data on outcomes of intervention and more direct feedback from stakeholders.
34. *Report structure and content* – Chapter 1 of the report provides an overview of the purpose of the evaluation, describes the methods used, offers a ToC and outlines the limitations of the process. Chapter 2 provides an elaboration on DaO concept and its significance in UNDS. Chapter 3 brings forth a Contextual Overview of Trade-Related Technical Assistance (TRTA). Chapter 4 provides an analysis of ITC participation in DaO. The new initiatives of the reform of UN system is covered in chapter 5. Finally chapter 6 wraps up the report with findings, conclusions and Recommendations.

## 2. Significance of DaO in UNDS

### Genesis of DaO: An Intergovernmental Process

35. Diverse mandates, decentralized structure and relatively autonomous programme operations of the UN system development agencies frequently created a facade of uncoordinated and incoherent development interventions at the country level. Hence the issue of systemic coherence at the country level evolved as an important agenda item for discussion at the governing bodies of the UN agencies. They have wrestled with the topic of UN coherence since the 1980s and efforts were made to improve teamwork and programmatic coherence at the field level through such initiatives as the creation of the Resident Coordinator System in the late 1970s and the introduction of UNDAF in the late 1990s. Despite repeated calls at the General Assembly and the ECOSOC for systemic coherence of the UN development system over the last over two decades, there has been little clarity or consensus on the nature of the reform and what it would entail in practice on the ground.
36. Successive Triennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews (TCPRs)<sup>2</sup> resolutions (2000, 2004 and 2008) along with the consensus outcome document of the 'World Summit of 2005' generated growing consensus agreements and suggested approaches to make the UN development system more relevant, coherent and effective on the ground. In 2006, the UNSG's High-level Panel (HLP) on System-wide Coherence in its report, entitled '*Delivering as one*'<sup>3</sup>, presented a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening the work of the UN in partnership with host Governments and its focus on results.
37. The impact of these initiatives culminated in the General Assembly decision in 2007 on a new initiative to deepen coherence at the field level: namely, DaO. Eight countries volunteered to pilot the "Delivering as one" initiative, innovating new approaches to coherence at the country level. The pilot programme countries were Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam. The purpose of the pilots was to allow the UN system, in cooperation with host Governments and in support of national development goals, to develop approaches that

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<sup>2</sup> The General Assembly resolution mandated the conduct of Triennial Comp. Policy reviews every three years, which, since 2000 and since 2012 became QCPR every four years.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that 'DaO' was only the title of the Panel's report that encapsulated the main goals of the reforms introduced at that time. DaO's operational representation based on "five ones" adopted in pilot countries is referred to as 'One UN' and countries are also coined as 'One UN countries'.

would enhance coherence, efficiency and effectiveness at country level; reduce transaction costs for national partners; and test what works best in various country situations.

## Challenges Addressed by DaO

38. The overall challenge at the country level identified by the inter-governmental process was that the UN system was making sub-optimal contributions to helping Member States to meet their national objectives. Two underlying factors contributed to exacerbating the UN's incoherence at the country level: first, fragmented governance systems of the UN organizations, which were assessed as inefficient and ineffective; and second, the predominance of "earmarked" funding (provided to UN agencies) restricted to specific projects and programmes, which often focused more on donor-determined priorities rather than on highest priorities identified by the governments (and often, in discussions with the UN country teams). Both factors were acting at cross-purposes and, in turn, inhibited attainment of coherence of UN country programmes. The following four specific challenges were confronted by the UN organizations at the country level:
39. Duplication and overlap- It was common to find different organizations in a given country performing similar roles, providing the same services, and addressing the same issues, often without consultation with each other, and with varying concepts or approaches. Further, multiple systems of procurement, recruitment and accounting followed by each organization obliged national beneficiaries and institutions to adapt to multiple operational and conceptual modalities. This lack of coherence and coordination raised questions of efficiency, value for money and transaction costs of the relatively modest contribution of the UN system contributions.
40. Fragmentation- This again had several dimensions. In the first place, the UN system in any country had multiple leaders as there were organizations, with minimal attempts to prepare or deliver common positions on issues affecting the country. UNDAF was introduced as an instrument to promote coherence, but had not proved to be fully effective. It still primarily depended on individual agencies' funding, each of which was responsible to its own governing body. Programmes continued to function within organization-specific accountability frameworks, and did not maximize UN system synergies to address national priorities in a coherent fashion. Donor requirements for accountability and visibility further exacerbated funding-driven fragmentation.

41. Competition for funds- The third challenge at country level, which is related to the previous two, was competition for funds. Decentralization of funding responsibilities of some major donors to country level and the trend of stagnating UN core resources placed pressure on organizations to mobilize much of the resources for country programmes locally. Far from consistently collaborating, organizations often competed with each other to gain funding for their programmes, even if the programmes at times appeared somewhat loosely or tangentially connected to their core mandate.
42. Lack of strategic approaches-The fourth challenge was the lack of capacity to develop and implement strategic approaches. Crippled by the combined constraints of the first three challenges, the UN system was seen to lack a focus on and capacity of garnering complementarity, coherence and synergy.
43. The DaO evaluation<sup>4</sup> (2012) concluded that these country level challenges caused three negative effects on overall UN performance: Firstly, the combination of inter-agency duplication, fragmentation and competition rendered governments somewhat peripheral to UN processes, thereby undermining the primacy of national ownership. Secondly, the UN system delivered its intended services and activities considerably below their potential, thereby limiting its achievements in terms of effectiveness. Thirdly, the UN processes encumbered high transaction costs for all concerned, thereby breeding apparent sense of inefficiency and leaving an imprint in the minds of the host governments that costs of engagement with UN might be high in comparison with the benefits. The combination of the three negative effects led to an overall sub-optimal contribution of the UN system in helping countries meet their national goals, and therefore reduced the sustainability of those benefits to which it contributed.

## DaO Concept and Governance

44. 'DaO' is a UN initiative that began in 2007 whereby in a programme country the UN system would have One Leader, One Programme, One Budgetary Framework, Operating as One, and Communicating as One. As a global initiative it was crafted as a response to address the set of generic challenges mentioned above. It was conceived as a multiple country-led approach to reforming the delivery of UN development assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1190>

45. The DaO concept, in operational terms, consists of five pillars that bring the UN system agencies operating at country level together in a more systematic way with a logical structure: One Programme; a Common Budgetary Framework (and an optional One Fund), Communicating as One, One Leader and Operating as One. Each pillar has a set of core elements to ensure a better coordinated UN in-country. The 5 pillars of DaO are described in figure-1, but it is important to note that it is not a 'one size fits all' model. So DaO has been configured and implemented differently in countries, depending on the context.

DaO 5 pillars

One Leader: coordinates all UN development activities in a programme country was given more authority and resources. By assuming comprehensive strategic leadership, the UNRC acts as a link between national authorities, the UN and other partners. The commitment and incentives of the UNCT to work towards common results and accountability was later strengthened through implementation of the monitoring and accountability system and by defining UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements.

One Programme: under the leadership of the RC and based on the country's nationally-owned development strategy, a joint country programme or UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is defined which draws on the full range of UN expertise and enables UN organizations to better focus on activities according to their comparative advantages. Joint Work Plans aligned with the UNDAF were later added to strengthen the results-focus.

Common Budgetary Framework/One Fund: is a common financial framework for all UN development entities at country-level updated annually with transparent data on financial resources required, available, expected, and to be mobilized. Coordinated financial planning provides governments and partners with transparent information on all UN activities as well as on funding sources and gaps. A Joint Resource Mobilization strategy that is appropriate to the country context is frequently adopted. A One Fund may be established at country-level to provide funding for unfunded UNDAF outcomes.

Operating as One: in order to increase efficiency and to lower expenses for administration, business procedures and policies must be harmonized, simplified and unified. When relevant, premises and services should be shared between UN organizations. Since 2014, it has been recommended that these efficiencies are brought together to form a Business Operations Strategy (BOS).

Communicating as One: entails the development of a joint communications strategy for all UN agencies which is appropriate to the country context and is approved by the UNCT.

46. The governance of the DaO reforms is managed at two levels:

- At the global, system-wide level, the UNDG sets the general rules and policies governing the DaO process of reforms.

- At the country level, it is the UNRC (that replaced

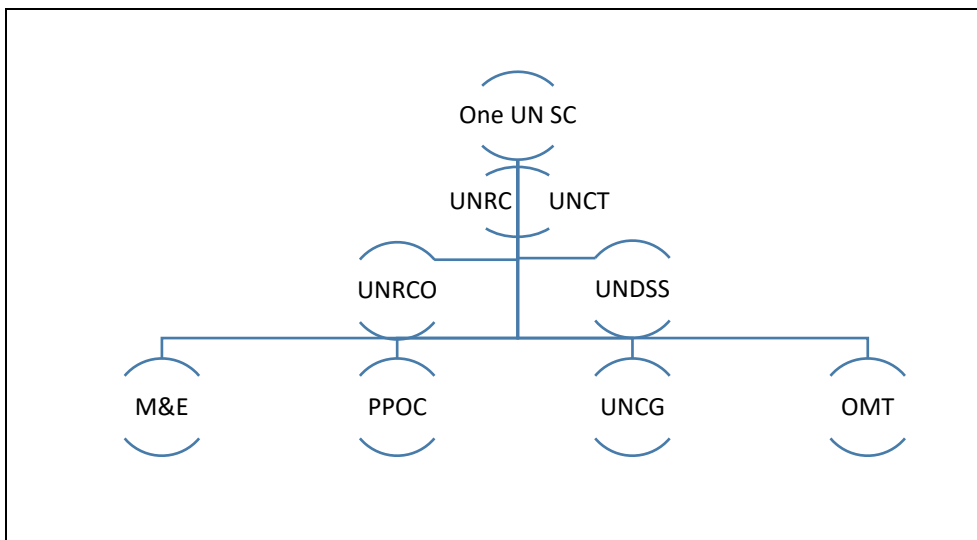
the role previously given to the United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative (UNDP RR)), and the UN Country Teams with Secretariat support of the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO). In the One UN countries, the 5 pillars of the One UN scheme provide the operational structure of the system. This is implemented with different intensity according to each country's circumstances.

47. Global, System-wide level- UNDG is one of the three coordination mechanisms of the CEB which is the highest-level coordination forum of the UN System comprising of 29 Executive Heads of UN Agencies and its Funds and Programmes, the Specialized Agencies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the WTO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The CEB strengthens synergies, identifies and reduces duplication and gaps, promote coherence and coordination among the organizations of the UN system. Within the CEB structure, the UNDG is responsible for operational activities for development with a focus on country-level work spelt out as follows:
- Promotion of coherent and effective oversight
  - Provision of guidance and capacity building with country level partners
  - Coordination of UN development operations at country level
  - Addressing policy guidance issues related to country level operations
  - Implementation of the TCPR resolutions Support to the UNRC system
48. UNDG is chaired by the Deputy Secretary General and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Vice Chair. The UNDG Chair reports to the Secretary-General and the CEB on progress in implementing the group's work plan, and on the management of the Resident Coordinator system. UNDG supports the Resident Coordinator system, UN country teams and the DaO by providing guidance on business operations, coordination, planning and programming, and by promoting coherent and effective oversight of country operations.
49. UNDG works on developing policies and procedures to facilitate cooperation among member organizations in analyzing country issues, planning support strategies, implementing support programmes, monitoring results and advocating for change. It is also responsible for elaborating guidelines for the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the UNDAF. Finally, UNDG is spearheading the effort to shape coordinated operational support to countries in meeting the SDGs. DOCO performs the secretariat function of the UNDG and the regular monitoring of the DaO process.
50. The Country level- The UNRC is the leader of the UNCT which carries out operational activities for development, emergency, recovery and transition in programme countries. The UNRC system encompasses all organizations of the UN system in dealing with operational activities for development, regardless of their formal presence in the country. The UNRC system aims to bring together the different UN agencies, including the NRAs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the country level.



51. The UNRC facilitates and oversees the CCA, and the design and implementation of the UNDAF. Where required, the Resident Coordinator may also propose amendments to the UNDAF and the joint work plans if some activities are no longer aligned with the broader strategy of the UNDS to respond to national needs and priorities.
52. The Joint National/UN Steering Committee, co-chaired by the government coordinating entity and the UNRC, reviews and guides the strategic direction of the UNDAF and the joint work plans, providing high-level oversight and support. The steering committee meets at least once per year during the UNDAF annual review to discuss data and evidence collected during monitoring for assessing progress against the indicators, horizon-scanning, updating risk analysis, and assessing performance in forming.

Figure 2. DaO UNRC System Structure <sup>5</sup>



**UNSC:** UN Steering Committee is the highest level governing body composed of Government Representative, UN Resident Coordinator, UN agencies, (Other representatives of Development Partners, Civil Society may be coopted).

**UNRC:** United Nations Resident Coordinator;

**UNCT:** UN Country Team;

**PPOC:** Programme Planning and Oversight Committee to support the UNCT by providing strategic and technical recommendations on programme planning, implementation, funding, policy dialogue, reporting and quality assurance of the One UN Programme.

**UNCG:** The UN Communications Group is a group that ensures coherent messaging from the One UN;

**OMT:** The Operations Management Team comprises of HR, IT, Finance, Administration and Procurement staff and serves as supportive group to the UNCT.

**M&E:** Monitoring and Evaluation is to ensure Result Based Management in planning and reporting

53. The secretariat responsibilities of the RC is vested with the UNRCO who, on behalf of the

<sup>5</sup> Generic structure developed based on United Nations Development Group (2014) *Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Adopting the "Delivering as One" Approach*.

UNRC, keeps track of the process requirements and maintains functional communications with NRAs such as the ITC for ensuring their participation in the design and implementation of UNDAF and other system-wide programme processes in the country. The role and efficiency of UNRCO is fundamental in ensuring that the NRA's are fully in the loop of timely communication about the UNDAF timelines, important meetings, documentation and other processes.

54. The organizational framework responsible for implementation, decision-making and coordination mechanisms of the DaO/One UN is usually outlined in the UNDAFs. The diagram shown above (Fig.2) is a generic presentation of the organizational framework usually in use in DaO countries to ensure implementation. The UN Agencies are members at each level in different capacities and responsibilities. These levels serve as coordination mechanisms to ensure the development, implementations, quality, coherence and consistency of the UNDAF Results as well as monitoring and reporting on programme implementation.

### Performance Assessment of the First Generation of DaO

55. The expansion of DaO since 2007 has been a noteworthy phenomenon in the realm of UN operational activities for development. DaO was formally authorized by the UNGA in the 2012 QCPR. The number of countries having formally adopted DaO has grown from 8 in 2007 to 50 countries by mid-2015. Since its inception, the scheme was also seen as promising by many other countries and there was a strong demand for DaO to be available to any country that wanted it.
56. The DaO, as applied in the 8 One UN countries, was evaluated in 2012. The most relevant conclusions of 2012 evaluation noted that the DaO reforms improved interagency synergies and reduced overlaps, as well as alignment of UN development aid with national development strategies and ownership. The evaluation noted that '*moderate*' progress was registered against the 'One Programme', 'One Leader' and 'One Budget' strategies and '*weak*' performance was registered in 'One Office'. Progress towards the immediate outcomes was found to be '*little*' on '*reduced duplication*' and '*reduced fragmentation*' and '*moderate*' on '*reduced competition for funds*' and '*enhanced capacity for strategic approaches*'. Intermediate outcomes were found to be '*strong*' only on '*national ownership*', but '*moderate*' regarding '*better delivery of UN system support*' and

'little' regarding 'reduced transaction costs'.<sup>6</sup> The upshot of the evaluation findings was that despite progress in many areas, some of the core challenges still remained and the systemic efforts require renewed intensity, commitment and persistence.

57. In more recent QCPR 2016 survey, many of the findings of the 2012 Evaluation was reconfirmed.. Some salient findings of the survey are presented below.

- Many governments expressed disappointment with what appeared to be slowness on the UN side in implementing DaO. There were repeated references to lack of commitment on the part of some agencies, or lack of will to work together or to change ways of working.
- In countries where DaO has been in effect since 2012 or earlier, alignment with national development strategies and plans was judged to be closer by both programme country Governments and Resident Coordinators.
- Regarding coordination, there were many references to DaO, and a prominent theme was the call by the Governments for the UN system to coordinate itself better. Several governments felt that the UN was slow in implementing DaO, and that some UN agencies were still resisting coordination. Many governments felt that coordination was satisfactory at the planning stage but remained weak at the programme implementation stage. Governments also pointed to a multiplicity of UN programming tools among the UN agencies, a reluctance to make use of national systems and capacities, and a need for better monitoring and evaluation.
- The survey results also pointed to the fact that the majority of non-core funds were restrictively earmarked by individual donors to specific projects. Pooled resources, which offer more flexibility to respond to local needs, accounted for 13.7 % of overall non-core resources flows in 2014.

58. Many calls were made to strengthen DaO, to improve coordination and division of labor among UN agencies, and to engage more intensively in joint programming. There were several calls for the UN to adopt common operational procedures such as report formats, and several requests also for the UN to make more use of national systems and capacities.

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpts of findings form *the Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One, Summary Report*, September 2012, New York: United Nations.

### 3. Overview of TRTA in the DaO Context

#### Trade and SDG

59. The transition from the MDGs' vision of development to the SDGs' integrated approach represent the road map where the DaO is a vehicle to achieve the goals, and where ITC has to take advantage of it.<sup>7</sup> The focus is on ITC in the DaO, but many features of the background thereafter, determine the assessment of ITC performance in it in recent years as well as the identification of future strategies:
60. Trade was not included in the list of 10 MDGs, nor in the list of the 17 SDGs. However, many targets of both sets of Goals are directly or indirectly related to trade. Trade is one of the most crucial components of the international economic environment that interact with and impacts on national development plans. Without a conducive and enabling environment, national economies cannot prosper – particularly in an increasingly globalized world.
61. The interface between trade and development is multifaceted and goes far beyond the traditional trade definition of trans-border flows of goods and services: trade is an integral vehicle for structural transformation of economies and societies, access to technology, generating employment, attracting investment upgrading workforce, and sharing knowledge and ideas. From the point of view of policy makers, trade is a horizontal issue impacting on, and connected with many areas of development policy making: monetary and fiscal policy, financial frameworks, education, production, environment, labor, health, food security, transportation, and communication.
62. Today, in the context of the SDGs, the linkages between trade and development not only concern countries or regions, but also sectors of economic activity, that are equally and increasingly interdependent.<sup>8</sup> This enlarged vision of the role of trade, that transcends borders to encompass real economic phenomena, mirrors the interconnections between the different goals of SDG (as compared to the MDGs that were designed as autonomous

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<sup>7</sup> ITC, <http://www.intracen.org/MSME-Day-2017/SDGs/> and ITC Strategic Plan [http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About\\_ITC/Working\\_with\\_ITC/JAG/Redesign/13\\_Consultative%20document%2013%20July.pdf](http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/Working_with_ITC/JAG/Redesign/13_Consultative%20document%2013%20July.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/presspb2016d3\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/presspb2016d3_en.pdf)

thematic areas). Capturing the impact of trade requires a comprehensive vision.<sup>9</sup> The SDGs mirror the complexity of development, where trade is an inevitable component.

## Economic and Trade Pillars in UNDAF

63. To make a rough assessment of the demand in economic and trade arena, this evaluation carried out an exercise to determine the number of UNDAFs which contain “economic” and “trade” pillars. Out of a total of 119 reviewed UNDAFs, 118 had economic pillars. This equates to 99% of all UNDAFs referring to wide-ranging elements related to economic development in one way or another. An economic pillar relates to, for example, overall poverty reduction, inclusive growth, the sustainable use of natural resources and decent work. However, there is a wide diversity in the UNDAFs (different levels of details, different action matrices, and different priorities). It is therefore risky to draw general conclusions, but in almost all of them, the « traditional » UN assistance areas on humanitarian and social issues are more elaborated than its economic assistance.
64. In determining trade pillars (or focus) in UNDAF, the review considered that there are elements that clearly distinguish it from economic development in general. An UNDAF with a trade pillar more specifically mentioned trade as an important element of the overall development strategy of the country. The focus and mention will be on issues such as trade policy framework, capacity building of trade institutions, competitiveness, private sector development, market analysis, regional integration, international and green trade as well as trade policy ( sometimes in the text directly, sometimes in indicators). Using this definition of UNDAFs with trade pillars, the analysis found that among the 119 documents reviewed, 57 could be classified in this category; i.e. 48% of countries with UNDAFs had a specific programmatic focus on trade. The analysis clearly points to the fact that the demand for assistance in trade related area from developing countries (both middle income and Least Developed Countries (LDCs)) will sustain at a high level in the current and future UNDAFs.

## ITC Positioning within TRTA

65. Since the 60's tech technical assistance to developing countries aiming at improving their integration in the international trading system, and reaping benefits from it, has been one of the pillars of development cooperation. Since 1964, within the UN system two entities

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<sup>9</sup> UNCTAD, Trading into Sustainable Development: Trade, Market Access, and the Sustainable Development Goals. 2016 [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditctab2015d3\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditctab2015d3_en.pdf)

–UNCTAD and ITC, provided trade and trade-related technical assistance to developing countries. The Secretariat of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and then the WTO provided assistance mainly on international trade agreements. Since the inception of these two entities, the assistance provided by UNCTAD and ITC was conceived as different but complementary: the former focused on enhancing the capacity of policy makers on trade and related policy issues, the latter, among other things, mainly aimed at enlarging the export capacity of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and supporting the national (private and public) institutions involved in trade. Thus ITC mandate, still today, is unique within the UN system because of its goal and its targeted beneficiaries.

66. In the last 20 years, many other UN entities have been, and are today, increasingly delivering trade and trade-related assistance according to their mandates. ITC is part of this wide, complex and crowded landscape of TRTA. According to the UNIDO Guide on Trade Capacity Building 2017)<sup>10</sup> there are more than 30 multilateral entities involved in this area.
67. This variety of entities shows the wide scope of trade, that intersects horizontally with many key components of both the international economic system as well as all national and regional development processes. Within the MDGs (2000-2015), trade was relevant to many of these goals, and therefore relevant from the point of view of ITC assistance to development. This is even truer when considering ITC in the context of the SDGs: ITC identifies itself as contributing to ten out of 17 SDGs<sup>11</sup>.
68. Since the implementation of the DaO reforms initiated in 2007, the increasing role of trade in national poverty reduction and development strategies is reflected in the expansion of the economic pillars of the UNDAFs which encompass trade and trade-related issues, or are sometimes only centered on trade issues. On the other side, as mentioned above, the growing number of UN entities intervening in the area of trade contributes to enlarge the scope of the assistance on this area.
69. The development assistance in the trade arena faces the same set of challenges of duplication, fragmentation, dominance of earmarked resources, competition for resources, and lack of strategic approach. The Dahlberg study commissioned by the

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unido.org/news/unido-releases-trade-capacity-building-resource-guide-interactive-web-too>

<sup>11</sup> ITC emphasis is on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16 and 17. Goals 1 (poverty reduction), 5 (Gender equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) are identified as “primary goals” for ITC. See Dalberg, op.cit., p. 6.

UNSG carried out an assessment entitled 'System-wide outline of the Functions and capacities of the UN Development System'<sup>12</sup>. The report made the following observations on overlapping dimensions of UN system work on enterprise development, and trade, industry investment.

70. According to the 2017 Dahlberg report "Work on enterprise development is fragmented and overlapping across UNDS entities. Multiple UNDS entities – including but not limited to ILO, ITC, UNIDO and UNDP – have been involved in knowledge production, capacity development, and convening activities related to small and medium enterprise development. Similar activities and products are produced by these entities, which suggests that limited expertise is being spread thinly across multiple entities."<sup>13</sup>
71. For trade, industry and investment, multiple UNDS entities have similar expertise and produce similar content around the same themes. While examples of reports drawn from UNDS entity websites, do not necessarily have overlapping content, they do illustrate that work being done by different entities on similar themes. They indicate a strong likelihood of duplication in work, and suggest to create a "centre of excellence" in which experts in different entities can work together and share knowledge."<sup>14</sup>
72. However, the careful analysis of the data available in the UNIDO "Guide on Trade Capacity Building"<sup>15</sup> enables a more precise and refined understanding of the situation. ITC is "the only development agency that supports SMEs experience in every category/indicator of the database and is only actor of the multilateral system fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of SMEs"<sup>16</sup>. ITC emphasizes Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in its mission statement and goals; it has published an annual report of SME Competitiveness Outlook since 2015 and launched the SME Trade Academy in 2014. ITC acts with a clear focus on SMEs in all its projects, events and publications.
73. When comparing ITC to UN system specialized organizations, ITC works on each and every aspect related to TRTA, by mainly focusing on market linkages and value-added

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg\\_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> ' System-wide Outline of the Functions and Capacities of the UN Development System' – Dahlberg Consultant's Report , June 2017 [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg\\_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> "Guide on Trade Capacity Building", UNIDO, 2017 <https://www.unido.org/resources/publications/advancing-economic-competitiveness/trade-capacity-building-resource-guide-interactive-web-tool>

<sup>16</sup> <https://tii.unido.org/category/e-commerce-services-and-digital-economy-itc>

intervention in aid for trade. ITC is focused on the development of export capacities, while other UN entities contribute to TRTA from the different perspectives that correspond to their specific mandates and expertise. The 15 UN entities members of the UN Interagency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity all provide complementary contributions to TRTA.<sup>17</sup>

74. Outside the UN system, the expansion of trade and trade-related assistance activities started growing since the late 80's, in the context of the IFI's structural adjustment loans. Today, the World Bank (WB) and the regional development banks are important providers of trade and trade-related assistance, including in the main area of focus of ITC, i.e. the support to the export capacity of the business sector.<sup>18</sup> According to the UNIDO database, Development Banks demonstrate a high level of global advocacy and active participation in trade policy development. Because of the size of their operations, they are key players in TRTA activities. ITC's complementarities can be identified and built on their relative specialization in data and market information and the provision of loans, grants, funds and other forms of financial support to beneficiaries and partners.

### Enhancing Factors for Cooperation and Coherence

75. Further to the Integrated Framework (IF) that was in place from 1997 to 2006, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), launched in 2007, is a multi-donor trust fund to finance trade assistance for the LDCs as part of the Aid for Trade initiative led by the WTO. The assistance financed by the EIF is delivered by the WB, the WTO and UN entities.<sup>19</sup> This mechanism operates outside the UN interagency machinery at the global and country level, and has no links with it – therefore, is out of the scope of the Delivering as One. ITC has been an important “partner” of the EIF since its establishment, and many ITC projects have been financed by EIF resources.
76. At the UN level, the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity (thereafter ‘the Cluster’), is an interagency cooperation and coordination mechanism at the Secretariats’ level, which encompasses 15 UN entities (including the WTO and the 5 UN Regional

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<sup>17</sup> See the mandates and scope of TRTA of these entities in the 2017 edition of the document of the Cluster [https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tc2010d1rev7\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/tc2010d1rev7_en.pdf), pages 14 – 15.

<sup>18</sup> In addition, the providers of bilateral development assistance (i.e. national development agencies) as well as NGOs are also part of the expansion of trade and trade-related assistance world-wide.

<sup>19</sup> “EIF is the only multilateral partnership dedicated exclusively to assisting Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in their use of trade as an engine for growth, sustainable development and poverty reduction. The EIF partnership of 51 countries, 24 donors and eight partner agencies works closely with governments, development organizations, civil society and academia.” <https://www.enhancedif.org/en/who-we-are>



Commissions) working on different aspects of trade and related issues<sup>20</sup>. Within the UNDS, the areas of trade, industry and investment, and enterprise development show overlaps and potential synergies.<sup>21</sup> The Cluster was originally inspired by the need to ensure and to enhance the role of trade and related issues in the UNDAFs, according to the national development strategies, with **a holistic vision** embracing the complementary expertise of several UN organisations. The concerns of **NRAs** were highly relevant in this regard (the majority of the Cluster members are NRAs), as well as the paramount goal of increasing the efficiency and the impact of UN assistance in the trade area by **avoiding duplications and overlaps and enhancing coordination**. ITC has participated in the Cluster since the beginning of this informal mechanism in 2008.

77. The main goal of the Cluster is to promote the topic of trade and productive capacity as a development topic of the UN agenda. This need was particularly felt in the context of the launching of the DaO in 2007: a survey, conducted by ITC, among many UNDAFs showed that trade and related topics were absent in almost all the UNDAFs being implemented at that time. Now, ten years later, this situation was reversed: only a minority of UNDAFs do not have an economic / trade or trade related component. The Cluster contributed to this evolution by its advocacy and by providing inter-agency proposal and joint programmes to be included in the UNDAFs at the early stage of their formulation.
78. In terms of operations, UNDAFs are the main starting point to identify possible Cluster interventions, positions or operations because the Cluster is, in the first place, meant to enhance the role of its members at the country level within the DaO principles. As soon as the information on one or several UNDAFs is communicated by the UNDG, it is shared (through UNCTAD) among all members and comments or suggestions are requested, then discussed within the Cluster with the view of launching the coordinated initiatives deemed necessary in each case to increase the quality and impact of TRTA. Between 2008 and 2014, there were 3 or 4 meetings of the whole Cluster every year (ITC was always present), in addition to many consultations, exchanges, specific meetings as necessary. The main issues discussed revolve around possible coordinated actions of some members of the Cluster at the country level (project proposals, joint missions,

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<sup>20</sup> See : [http://unctad.org/en/Pages/TC/TC\\_United-Nations-Inter-Agency-Cluster.aspx](http://unctad.org/en/Pages/TC/TC_United-Nations-Inter-Agency-Cluster.aspx) The number of entities members of the Cluster show the diversity and the scope of trade and trade-related assistance: UNCTAD (Coordinator), ITC, WTO, UNIDO, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNEP, the 5 UN Regional Commissions, UNCITRAL, UNOPS.

<sup>21</sup> Dalberg, *System-Wide Outline of the Functions and Capacities of the UN Development System*. Consultant's Report, June 2017. [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg\\_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf) , pages 31 and 32.

coordinated contacts and positions) as well as sharing information on TRTA.

79. Moreover, the integrated vision of development provided by the SDGs is increasingly shared by non-UN entities of ITC's relevance, such as the WTO.<sup>22</sup>
80. System-wide coherence is the overarching goal of the DaO reforms started in 2007. The trade and trade-related assistance provided by ITC has to be seen in this systemic context: ITC assistance being one of the components of UN development assistance, its complementarity and coherence with other relevant components are as important as the quality of ITC work seen in isolation.

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<sup>22</sup> Mainstreaming trade to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, WTO, 2018  
[https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/coherence/sdgs\\_e/sdgs\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/coherence/sdgs_e/sdgs_e.htm)

## 4. ITC Participation in DaO

### Lessons from ITC Participation in DaO

81. ITC has been selectively engaging in DaO at the country level since 2008 through active membership in UN Country Teams. Wherever opportune and relevant, ITC has been part of Delivering as One approaches (e.g. Albania, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Viet Nam) either through direct interaction with the UNCT or through its participation in the UN-CEB Cluster. The objective was to promote and support the trade and entrepreneurship dimension in national development strategies through active participation in UNDAFs. Besides offering potential for access to UNDAF resources, this also provided increased opportunities to leverage innovation and achieve results in export promotion, trade and entrepreneurship development by engaging with diverse actors including the private sector.
82. ITC and UNDAFs- The evaluation team carried out a review of 119 UNDAFs to identify the number of countries which had trade focus in any of the programme pillars and the number in which ITC was officially involved. In the 119 UNDAFs reviewed, a cohort of 58 UNDAFs had trade focus (either as part of economic Pillar or independently). Within this 58 UNDAFs, based on a three point criteria, ITC was officially present in 25 countries (a little over 21% of the UNDAFs)<sup>23</sup>. This makes ITC present in 43% of the UNDAFs with a trade component. Given the size of the organization, its financing envelope and scale of operation, this is still a sizeable presence and operation.
83. However according to the data in UNDG document<sup>24</sup> developed on the basis of the 2017 ITC Agency Report, ITC is either a member of the UNCT or considered an NRA in 12.7% of countries. This is still 30.3% less than what the present analysis finds. This discrepancy clearly reveals that there are gaps in information and capture of data. ITC is perhaps reported as a participant in certain UNDAFs even if the agency is not part of the UNCT nor registered as an NRA in that country. However, a few cases of reverse situation were also present where the UNDG reports that ITC is part of the UNCT but the UNDAF does

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<sup>23</sup> Satisfying one of the three criteria: ITC was i) a signatory of the UNDAFs; ii) identified as being responsible of a portion of the resource mobilization; or iii) simply mentioned as participating in one way or another.

<sup>24</sup> UNDG, February 2018. *ITC Agency Report 2017*. P.1

not refer to ITC's presence. Such was the case in Ethiopia and Morocco.

84. Cases of positive benefits from engagements in DaO and UNDAFs- The key informant interviews at ITC headquarters, at the UN headquarters and the field confirmed that there have been positive benefits accrued from these early engagements in UNDAF processes in a number of DaO countries. By and large, there are examples in many countries where ITC pursued the opportunities of early and sustained engagements systematically, and it gained access to partnership contributions in mainstream efforts of the UN in the countries concerned and was able to contribute in its areas of expertise. This required that ITC availed opportunities of early and continued engagement in UNDAF formulation processes, contributing substantively in the consultations on relevant areas of programme from the headquarters, leveraging country level project staff to be part of the consultations process and forge closer links with the UNRCO and the government stakeholders. The continuity of engagement and communication (physical presence or virtual) was considered crucial to be part of the country dynamics of UNDAF.
85. Examples of such active engagement by ITC were visible, among others, in Tanzania, Rwanda and Cape Verde and Vietnam. Starting in 2008, ITC partnered with various agencies to deliver projects in Viet Nam, and Mozambique funded by the MDG-F. These engagements turned out to be substantial and well-funded from One Programme and continued over two UNDAF periods. The interaction and communication between ITC HQ. and Tanzania UNRC was considered to be effective despite distance and geographical separation.
86. From 2009 to 2011 ITC was part of the One UN programme in Cape Verde, working together with UNCTAD in order to deliver on economic graduation from an LDC to a Developing Country (DC), and post-accession to the WTO. From 2012 to 2013, ITC implemented a project in Albania under the One UN Coherence Fund. In 2015, together with UN Woman and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) ITC launched a project in Palestine funded by the Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDGF).
87. It is likely that ITC had missed out from such engagement or had to limit its participation in UNDAFs in a host of countries due to financial and human resource constraints. Consequently, despite opportunities of engagement, ITC had marginal or no presence in strategic and relevant DaO decision-making and coordination system in these countries.

88. *Rwanda: Case of Leveraging UNDAF partnership* – ITC experience in working within DaO in Rwanda is an illustration of a comprehensive and systematic engagement. It also delivered concrete results on the ground. The evaluation mission undertook a country visit to review the participation and get first hand feedback from the stakeholders. ITC was not a participating agency in UNDAF 2008 – 2012. Hence, despite being listed as a potential beneficiary agency from ‘One Fund’, it did not have a chance to benefit from it.
89. However, ITC followed a systematic effort to engage in the following UNDAP (2013-18) process. With the role of trade mainstreamed in national development plans, the UNDAP mirrored the national priority in its ‘Joint Programme (JP) on Inclusive Economic Growth (2013-2018)’. ITC is a significant partner in the UNDAP stream of trade and productivity enhancement. The government had high expectations on ITC role in supporting this objective. ITC also actively participated in the Programme Planning Operations Committee of the UNCT.
90. Overall both the government and the UNRC reiterated that ITC played a positive and highly productive role during the current UNDAP. ITC’s contribution was also well covered in the annual reports. Its interventions mostly focused on institutional and technical capacity building, direct support in development of systems and methodologies for streamlining export promotion operations, quality enhancement and market access. ITC was a beneficiary of the One UN Fund, that provided substantial financing to the UNDAP. Although the One Fund covered one third of the UNDAP 2013-18, the financing volume went down significantly in the later years which also affected the results that ITC was contributing to.
91. In 2013, ITC partnered with UNDP, UNIDO, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UN Women to develop flagship programmes under the One UN initiative ‘State capacities for planning’ in Rwanda, where ITC was responsible for supporting SMEs and TISIs in several sectors. In addition ITC was also active participant with other agencies in the following diverse initiatives:
- Industrial diagnosis and trade competitiveness – ITC with UNDP and UNCTAD
  - Private –Public dialogue - ITC with UNIDO, UNCTAD, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), ILO
  - National quality Infrastructure – ITC with UNIDO, FAO and World Health Organization (WHO)
  - Standard for SMEs- ITC with FAO and UNIDO

- Participation in international standardization processes –ITC with FAO, UNIDO, WHO
92. *Tanzania: Successful example of linking policy level work with downstream livelihood impact under DaO/UNDAP* – In Tanzania ITC was a key member of UNDAP II Economic Growth team despite being an NRA. It was also a member of the ‘UN Inter Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity’ project on backward linkages between tourism and horticulture, financed by SECO (2011-2018) and involving UNIDO, ILO, UNCTAD and ITC as executing agencies (UNOPS as Administrative Agent). ITC was responsible for delivery of key project outputs: Collaboration Suite with Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO) (technical); Horticulture and tourism linkage events (high level); Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative (SUGECO) and Horti-Tengeru Greenhouse and linkage initiative (Technical). This project, as well as two similar operations in Lao PDR (2010-2017) and Myanmar (started in 2018) financed by SECO, constitutes an example of a genuine delivering as one operation, with one common budget and logical framework for the four executing agencies, and an International Coordinator based in the country, representing the Cluster within the UNCT.
93. In close coordination with the other executing agencies, ITC’s key success was in linking policy level work and key decision makers with more downstream livelihoods impact driven interventions. Their best example intervention that was highlighted by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), as being a sign of best practice was support to enhance agricultural production of start-up youth entrepreneurs through a partnership with the Tanzanian NGO (cooperative) “SUGECO”. ITC supported the capacity building of SUGECO and their national professionals (both directly and under ITC contract).
94. The Tanzanian experience generated the following useful lessons:
- Working closely with other UN agencies along the same value chains can lead to a greater impact of ITC’s interventions and attract more donor’s interest. It is important to highlight what value ITC could add to other UN agencies when engaging in a joint project, as well as the value added by other agencies to ITC work.
  - The strength and leverage capacity of ‘One UN’ and joint elements of projects enhance greater visibility and awareness to their partners.
  - Having in-country ITC project coordinators/staff and empowering them (under HQ virtual guidance) to engage in soft representative role at UNDAP meetings enhances visibility and advocacy for ITC along with substantial technical value in UNCT / national platform.

95. *Vietnam – Timely intervention can provide Window of opportunity for ITC contribution in UNDAF - The One Plan (OP) 2012-2016*, the second generation DaO UNDAF in Viet Nam, was designed in the immediate aftermath of Viet Nam's attainment of LMIC status in 2010. While ITC was not part of the first UNDAF/One Plan (2006-2010), it was a signatory of the second UNDAF/OP 2012-2016. It was signed in March 2012 between the Government of Viet Nam and 15 UN resident and 2 non-resident agencies (ITC and UNEP). The programmatic prioritization of the OP 2012-2016 was clustered under the following three Focus Areas: 1 - Inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth; 2- Access to quality essential services and Social Protection ; and 3- Enhanced governance and participation.
96. ITC was involved in the Joint Programmatic Group (JPG) on Economic Growth and decent employment, (under Focus Area 1) led by ILO and FAO. It actively participated in the Spanish MDG-Fund "Green Production and Trade to Increase Income and Employment Opportunities for the Rural Poor" in June 2013. This was also ITC's immediate last project in Viet Nam. With a total project budget of USD 4,345,610, ITC received the bulk of the funding, adding up to USD 1,722,398.
97. The project was implemented over for four years, and its overall objectives were to (i) improve the overall competitiveness for raw material growers/collectors and grassroots producers of handicrafts and small furniture focusing on five value chains in four northern provinces in Viet Nam, namely Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Hoa Binh and Phu Tho; (ii) facilitate the development of new and high value products and increased productivity and deployment of new technologies; (iii) establish new market linkages at national and international level; (iv) strengthen the capacity of traders and processors at the SME level; and (v) promote investment of national exporters at the provincial level. The project was implemented together with FAO, ILO, UNCTAD, UNESCO and UNIDO, and included the hosting of ITC's International Trade Fair 'Lifestyle Viet Nam', which was actively promoted among international buyers, resulting in more than 1,500 buyers joining.
98. In addition, ITC supported the design and development of market support for ethnic minority producer groups and companies in Viet Nam, resulting in new and innovative market linkages. The final project report notes that ITC, not being resident in country, faced particular challenges to coordinate effectively and timely the coordination and implementation of activities as the Lead Coordinating UN agency. However, the Programme Management Unit (PMU) of the joint project provided significant support to ITC and played a crucial role in coordinating overall agency inputs.
99. ITC also supported the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) to undertake formal advocacy with the business community, employers and business associations of all economic sectors in Viet Nam and the Asia-Pacific region on trade in services, with attention being given to the liberalization of financial services.
100. *One Strategic Plan (OSP) 2017-2021* – The development of the UNDAF and One

Strategic Plan (OSP) 2017-2021 was done through an extensive and lengthy consultation process, taking concerns and focus areas of the NRAs well into account. This OSP, with an overall umbrella budget of USD 423 million, was signed by a total of 18 agencies, 4 of which are non-resident agencies. ITC is a signatory as a non-resident agency.

101. The One Strategic Plan 2017-2021 represents the programmatic framework for 14 resident and 4 non-resident agencies (IAEA, ITC, UNCTAD, and UNEP) working in Viet Nam, focusing on addressing institutional bottlenecks that have resulted in increasing disparities and vulnerabilities particularly among people/children with disabilities, those from ethnic minority groups, and migrant families. OSP 2017-2021 was developed through a consultative process involving Government, donors, CSO and other relevant key stakeholders. It also included due consultation with all NRAs, and included their input and addressed their concerns.
102. It is structured into four focus areas, shaped by the central themes of the SDGs (People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace) with nine related outcomes. The delivering and coordination architecture of the OSP 2017-21 includes five Results Groups namely : i) Governance and Justice; ii) Climate Change and Environment; iii) Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience ; iv) Inclusive Growth and Social Protection ; and v) Inclusive Social Services Although currently not part of any of the above mentioned inter-agency bodies, ITC has noted its contribution to the OSP 2017-2021 under the following outcomes: Poverty and Vulnerability reduction, Low-carbon climate and disaster resilient development, Sustainable management of natural resources and environment, New economic growth model.
103. *Vietnam's Recent Focus on Trade and export* – With the country's transformation from a centrally planned to a market economy and the conclusion of various Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), such as the EU-Viet Nam FTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) FTA, Viet Nam's trade and export is assuming critical importance for the country's economic growth with its projected creation of 6.5 million additional jobs by 2030 which will mostly be linked to export manufacturing industries. However, concerns remain about the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and SMEs which is in acute need of technical assistance.
104. Driven by the above imperative, the newest UNDAF in Viet Nam, the OSP 2017-2021, includes outcome 3.1: *"By 2021, Viet Nam's growth policies and institutions support a new economic model, which is inclusive, sustainable and more productivity-led, reaping gains from trade liberalization, international integration and migration."* The UN strategic interventions in this regard will (i) provide capacity building and research inputs to support a new economic growth model that emphasizes inclusion and sustainability; (ii) facilitate the transition to formalize and strengthen the supply capacity of value chains and trade competitiveness; and (iii) support the implementation of international economic commitments and agreements, especially from the ASEAN community, World Trade Organization compliance and new-generation FTAs, and support national and local authorities and businesses in international economic integration.



105. The above outcome area in UNDAF, offers an opportunity for ITC to renew its strong involvement in UNDAF process and exercise its share of contribution in areas of its expertise through appropriate participation and interaction with the UNRC and UNCT. The office of the Resident Coordinator in Vietnam underlined a number of action areas for ITC:

### Strategic Fit of DaO initiative with ITC mandate

106. The relevance of ITC in the system-wide mechanisms like DaO is, *a priori*, obvious and sustained by the linkages between trade and development. In addition to the relevance of ITC mandate to the UNDS and DaO, its' operational modalities (explained above) are also highly relevant. They are delivered at the national or regional levels, based on the demands of developing countries and supported by available donor funding.

107. The UNSG report of December 2017 sets the stage for the system-wide reforms and highlights 3 principles concerning development assistance which are harmonious with the role that ITC plays in general but more specifically in the DaO countries:

- Reinforcing national ownership and leadership;
- Ensuring country-contextual responses rather than a “one size fits all approach”;
- Making country level delivery for all the litmus test for success.<sup>25</sup>

108. ITC programmatic endeavors fully support and practice these guiding principles of 2030 Agenda for over the last three decades. The senior management of ITC is committed to support the drive for systemic coherence at the country level through supporting the delivery of the SDGs. The independent Evaluation of ITC (2014) confirmed that ‘ITC’s activities in substantial sample of countries over the past decade demonstrated special relevance, quality and thoughtful delivery of its expertise. It can legitimately claim to be the only “100% Aid for Trade” organization, with important and unique assets’<sup>26</sup>.

109. Decisions on engaging with DaO/UNDAFs is taken based on the information and analysis by the five regional desks at Division for Country Programmes (DCP). The country managers are expected to be connected to UNRCs and NRA specialists in UNRCOs who maintain routine communications. ITC/DCP keeps track of the UNDAFs rollout in countries, selects priority countries and tries to participate in the early stages of the UNDAF cycle, including UNCT membership to submit information about ITC’s projects to be included in the results matrix of UNDAF. The feedback from focus groups of

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-on-unds-qcpr-june-2017.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> *Independent Evaluation of the International Trade Centre (ITC)-2014*

geographical desks and the information system and periodic monitoring documentations on UNDAFs seem to suggest that interactions more often provide information of routine nature and only occasionally reflect substantive or proactive engagements or analysis. The information base and documentation available do not seem to be adequate for systematic analysis and engagement in UNDAF substantive areas.

110. During the country mission to Rwanda the feedback from senior government policy makers and officials, the UN country team and the private sector, reaffirmed the positive role that ITC played as part of the DaO. Consultation with UNRCs of Vietnam, Bhutan and Tanzania also cited positive feedback on ITC's value system reinforcing results orientation, national ownership and leadership as well as context appropriate formulation of TRTA projects. The Resident Coordinator office of Vietnam positively commended ITC's commitment and alignment of its programme with the UNDAF and contribution in the One Programme in two successive UNDAFs.
111. *Areas of Strategic alignment* – There are a number of areas and certain dimensions where ITC's intervention and programming practices demonstrate natural alignment with the UN system coherence efforts as manifested in UNDAFs and DaO initiatives. Main areas of alignment and coherence efforts are elaborated below:
112. *Development Effectiveness and Capacity building* - ITC's capacity building programmes bear full compliance with UN-wide protocols for technical assistance, as provided in UNDAF and UNDAPs with a common approach and framework for formulating and measuring capacity development. Wherever national Results-based Management (RBM) frameworks exist, ITC is reporting the result of its assistance through the respective mechanisms. In addition, ITC has developed a RBM system that allows results including capacity building to be easily communicated by aggregating them at the corporate level and sorted/filtered by country. As a result it is possible to continuously monitor and report against capacity building targets at country level. ITC is also closely working together with UN system efforts, beneficiary countries, development partners and donor agencies to improve the common definition and framework for measuring the outcomes and impact of trade-related technical assistance. Both the capacity building and development effectiveness objectives of ITC programmes render a natural alignment with the purpose of DaO.
113. *Streamlined needs assessment and quality assurance* – In the spirit of harmonization and coordination of its programming instruments and processes with the UN system, ITC

introduced some streamlined needs assessment efforts and internal project quality assurance mechanisms to (a) align with UN system coherent approach (b) ensure that needs of beneficiary countries, in particular, business communities, are well captured, and (c) improve quality of project proposals and support<sup>27</sup>.

114. Notably, ITC is in the process of revamping its internal project lifecycle management systems and tools, to harmonize with emerging changes in the UN programming methodologies and country level demands. As part of this endeavor, ITC intends to make provision to better incorporate and accommodate needs related to UNDAF and UNDAP specific planning, management and reporting requirements. ITC has embarked in the process of reviewing its planning cycle to make it more aligned to country needs and requirements and will make efforts to see how its planning cycle can feed into the planning cycles of the UN development System at large to ensure greater levels of coherence in planning and reporting.
115. ITC accorded priority attention to participation in UNDAF programme processes and other implementation requirements in DaO countries. Over the years, ITC has been increasingly proactive and attentive to becoming a co-signatory of country UNDAP's in DaO countries in particular and UNDAFs at large. Responsible units within ITC got involved in the UNDAF planning cycle in selected countries at an early stage and ensured that trade issues in general and ITC-related activities in particular are advocated, discussed and integrated, as appropriate, into the new UNDAF. As a member of the UN-CEB Cluster, ITC has also been active in discussions and providing inputs for the Cluster's contribution to new UNDAFs being developed.
116. *Stronger coordination with Resident Coordinators* – ITC does not have a physical presence or country offices at the country level like other resident agencies of the UN system. It has project offices in a selected number of countries where it has large country programmes. In most countries, ITC relies on the UN Resident Coordinator to represent its interests. In addition, ITC makes use of the services of the UNDP for in-country logistics, processing of Authorization for Field Expenditures (AFEs) etc. as well as representing it at important events where ITC is not in a position to participate physically.
117. ITC has been following a more proactive approach in recent years to keep the UNRCs informed of its work and its project initiatives at the country level. ITC project managers

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<sup>27</sup> QCPR Survey of Headquarters of UN organizations, Aug 2014.

follow a standard protocol of visiting the office of the UNRC when on mission to a programme country and brief the representatives of the UNRC or the UNRC himself/herself of all of ITCs project initiatives in the country and the expertise ITC can provide to respond to the needs and challenges of the country. In addition to reporting its activities, ITC is an implementing partner of UNDAPs in selected countries.

118. In most cases, ITC does not have country programmes in the commonly defined sense of the word. ITC's project and programmes are often more specific in nature and, hence sometimes may have a stand-alone ambience. Nonetheless, the overall objectives for its assistance are developed in conformity with and to support the objectives of UNDAFs and UNDAPs of the country concerned.

### Assessment of Participation in Key Pillars of DaO

119. Based on the key informant surveys and interviews, literature survey, review of secondary sources of information and institutional documents, the following brief assessment is prepared of the main components of DaO.

120. *The One Programme/Joint Programmes* – ITC participation experience in one programmes so far, suggests that DaO offered considerable advantage and support to ITC in its specialized role in export and entrepreneurship development. This has been evident in ITC participation in one programs in Rwanda, Vietnam and Tanzania. Despite its NRA status and lack of continuous physical presence in-country to participate in all UNDAF (One Programme) processes, engagement in One Programme offered ITC the benefit of working with the UNCT to pursue its technical role within broader objectives of UNDAF. The One Programme offered an opportunity for ITC to leverage the UNDAF platform to advocate the pursuit of durable solutions and to influence the national development agenda.

121. The One Programme offered a structured framework to discuss with the government the priority issues in Economic and trade area and to mobilize and coordinate the support of the government, the UN development agencies and the donors. With increasing coverage of 'Economic development' issues as a focus in UNDAFs (now a focus in 90% of UNDAFs), the One Programme in Dao countries offered a platform for effective advocacy and articulation of trade and export dimensions more systematically. The positive experiences have been a work in progress in the last two UNDAF cycles in a number of countries and results are slowly emerging. However, success is dependent on the

existence of enabling policy, political and institutional environment in the country concerned.

122. ITC's traditionally followed a project based approach to programming at country level, which to a large extent is reliant on earmarked donor funding. Its current corporate reporting and results -framework do not require reference of any coordination/interface with the UN system coherence and programming processes (like UNDAF/DaO). Its somewhat stand-alone country based project planning lacks coordination with mainstream UNDAF initiatives and country programmes and strategies of other related agencies. However, some initiatives for change in ITC programming processes have been initiated (as recorded in ITC's QCPR responses) to align better with in-country UNDAF programme cycles which is a move in the right direction.
123. *The Common Budgetary Framework/One Fund* – From a contributions perspective, the added value of DaO is not substantial to ITC. The initial years showed good promise of resource allocation but as the country-based 'One Funds' have shrunk in size and donors have increased their earmarking of funds, the limited contributions that ITC has received in the past are likely to continue to diminish. In countries where a One Fund exists, ITC's contributions received from bilateral sources to its joint programmes usually far exceed contributions that it has received from the One Fund. Evidence from the case studies suggest that ITCs financial system complied with he needs of the CBF without much issues.
124. *One Leader* – The feedback from the DaO countries confirm that when One Leader understands and is supportive of ITC's mandate and specialized competence , then s/he can play a supportive role in engaging in advocacy on behalf of the Agency. This was the case in most DaO countries like Rwanda, Tanzania, and Vietnam. However this required consistent communication line between ITC and the UNRC/ UNRCO. Unfortunately, while there seems to be a lack of consistency in the intent and the way the UNRCs choose to advocate, promote and engage ITC across countries, there is also a lack of consistency of ITC advocating for its projects. These combined factors seem to act as a significant barrier to ITC getting the required advocacy and support to play a role in UNDAF /One Programme.
125. The UNGA Resolution adopted in May 2018 on 'System-wide Coherence' reiterated the clear directive in this regard that UNRCs are now obligated to ensure that the collective strength and multiple skill sets of the UN system agencies would be brought to bear in

implementing UNDAFs. This would require some more time to be effective. But consultations with NRA representatives in Rwanda and the representatives of NRAs at the UN Secretariat in New York reiterated that the personality of the UNRC, (and also of UNCT members) accounted in part for the success or otherwise of the One Leader.

126. *Communicating as One* – Maintaining agencies' brand and visibility within joint communications has been one of the more challenging and sensitive aspects of DaO. But where this was supported by a policy and practice which brought the agencies together, then ITC found considerable added value, particularly in countries where it has limited presence and resources (e.g. Rwanda, Tanzania, Vietnam). In most of these countries space was provided within the DaO framework for ITC to interact with the government and private sector actors independently on issues related to its mandate. As with the One Programme and One Leader, communications is another area where with well-informed coordination with UNRCs, ITC would benefit greatly from projecting and disseminating its areas of specialization and support offered to developing countries.
127. *Operating as One* – The potential benefits of Operating as One make a compelling case for achieving efficiencies which has proven to work. However, in practice, ITC being an NRA, the operating implications are not as substantial as other resident agencies. In DaO countries and also in participating UNDAF countries ITC's usual administrative and financial transactions use this 'Operating as One' platform. The evaluation mission did not receive any views that ITC faced constraints or difficulties in working through the joint systems or required a duplication of effort to translate them to agency- specific procedures.
128. The development and adoption of Business Operating Strategies (BOS) in 2014 have often taken a pragmatic approach towards selecting the systems that can offer the greatest benefit at the least cost and additional workload to agencies. ITC is not yet a signatory of the BOS. However, during the DOCO and ECOSOC consultations by the evaluation mission it was evident that the benefits of Operating as One would be limited without significant harmonization in procedures by agencies. The required change for harmonization, if thought through judiciously in ITC headquarters, would open up significant potential to harvest the benefits (in terms of effectiveness and efficiency) that will cut across many of the DaO pillars including the One Programme, CBF and Operating as One.

## Constrains to Effective Participation

129. ITC participation in DaO initiative is constrained by a number of factors and issues. A poised understanding of these issues are required to draw objective conclusions on ITC participation in DaO. The constraints recur in varying degrees in different countries but they impinge on the extent of participation by ITC in the DaO process. These issues were also highlighted by programme managers of the country desks at ITC headquarters as well as by project personnel in the countries, in the surveys and country level discussions by the evaluation team. The Independent Evaluation of ITC (2014) also underlined many of these chronic issues that the organization is challenged with.
130. *Trade in DaO/ UNDAF: a Lingering concern* - There is a lingering concern among the programme professionals that issues like trade, export and productive capacities do not enjoy a higher order of priority in UNDAF discussions compared to other economic and social issues. Also the Bretton Woods institutions tend to dominate the arena of major macro-economic issues including trade where markets, monetary, fiscal, trade and commercial policies, get prominent discussion space. In countries where UNDAFs include an economic development pillar, trade-related issues in most instances tend to have a nuanced or less pronounced analysis and coverage as a part of the discussion. The advocacy for trade (and export within that) as a horizontal issue that touches upon many sectors and themes is not articulated adequately and remains under-stated/emphasized in CCAs and UNDAFs. This could be due to weak trade related advocacy by related UN technical agencies in the country or less energetic articulation of trade related priorities by trade ministries and agencies. The trade focus is made specific and pronounced only in a limited number of UNDAFs.
131. Trade is not one of the SDGs, but it is embedded or included as an enabling factor of a number of SDGs. Trade as a driver for development gets a short shift as compared to the role of social agenda that the UN deals with traditionally. The countries usually lack in-depth technical research and analysis capacity to articulate the case for trade in national policy discussions. With reasoned advocacy backed by country level research, there would be better articulation of the role and contribution of trade in national strategies and, in turn, in UNDAFs. This would facilitate better positioning of ITC's (and other trade related UN agencies) technical competence in trade/export/productive capacity arena. Despite important technical assistance in specific economic/trade related areas provided by the UN specialized agencies like ITC/UNCTAD, their respective services /expertise do not

often get appropriate attention and recognition in UNDAF deliberations. This is an important corollary to the absence of trade and exports expert advocates (like UNTAD, ITC, UNIDO) in national strategy discussions.

132. However, UN system competencies in trade and productivity enhancement is becoming more prominent in UNDAF discussions. TRTA agencies through individual efforts and collectively through the 'CEB Cluster' seem to be making good inroads in UNDAF as the statistics suggest. Out of the 119 UNDAFs reviewed by the evaluation, 58 (or 69%) had specific focus or mention of trade and/or exports. ITC as a technical NRA need to leverage TRTA partnerships (the Cluster) to push for appropriate space for trade issues in the UNDAF.
133. *Non-Resident Agency: an inherent constraint* – Being an NRA poses an obvious practical handicap for ITC in engaging on a sustained basis in the UNDAF and other programming processes at the country level. UN agencies with established presence at the country level, have regular access to the government, other national stakeholders and development partners which gives them an edge in advocating and tabling their respective agency priorities during UNDAF and other policy level interactions. This situation poses an intrinsic constraint for ITC (and other NRAs) in role playing and effective participation in the UNDAF formulation and implementation process. ITC needs more support from the ground, from the UN system (UNRC and UNCT) and the Government.
134. Generally the experience has been, that where ITC has had a sustained engagement via regular participation (physically or virtually) in UNDAF related meetings, periodic missions by staffers or presence of designated national project personnel, an enabling environment is generated for receiving positive support from the UNRC and other members of UNCT. Where this engagement is irregular, weak or absent, ITC tends to receive marginal or no support from the existing systemic presence at the country level (from UNRC or other UNCT members). ITC projects are inserted in UNDAF in some countries due more to Government knowledge and demand for its services, or due to ITC's own direct advocacy with the government stakeholders. The resident UN system agencies tend to claim a bigger footprint and share in UNDAF formulation process and accessing pooled funding facilities. In country case reviews (e.g. Rwanda, Tanzania), the evaluation found that in countries where ITC had project and personnel presence, the situation provided a better opportunity for engagement.



135. *Earmarked donor funds and associated obligations* - ITC's substantial reliance on non-core donor resources (which makes it accede to donors' demands and requirements/priorities) poses some constraints in engaging fully in systemic integration at the country level. ITC approach for participation in DaO has been one of pragmatic engagement. ITC focused only on DaO intervention opportunities when the context allowed and when there was strong potential for results. Many opportunities were missed due to its selective coverage of countries, limited resource and other internal constraints. Coordinating and being a part of DaO comes at a cost. Hence ITC participation in DaO has not necessarily showed a steady upward trend. Also being a NRA, positioned ITC one step away from being in the direct loop of the participation dynamics of UNDAF. The evaluation observed that the chapters of the UNDAFs providing information on their funding are always designed according to the « big », resident agencies of the system, that have significant predictable « core » resources.
136. This is a crucial issue that will determine to what extent ITC will be able to be fully on board in the implementation of the current reform initiatives of the UNSG and leverage benefit from them. Presumably, the “cost” being referred to are not a financial cost, since the DaO was not, and will not be, a funding mechanism. Here the “cost” refers to cost of coordination and coherence of ITC operations within UNDAFs, i.e. designing and implementing programmes/projects with other UN entities involved in economic and trade related assistance at the country and regional levels. The recent UNGA resolution on coherence and strong signals on its implementation by UNSG, working in isolation will increasingly render any agency as an outlier and disconcerted player.
137. The One UN funds established at the country level are multi-donor trust funds managed by the UNDG Multi Partner Trust Fund Office as Administrative Agent. These funds aim at financing (or contribute to finance) the gaps between the agencies' available “core and non-core” resources and the cost of the implementation of the UNDAFs. The criteria for the management of these funds, including the share of resources needed to access the fund are set in each country by the UNRC and the UNCT in consultation with the local donors and national authorities: the One UN funds “do not follow a rigid template or provide a one-size-fits-all solution; programming priorities drive the selection of funding sources and governance, implementing and fiduciary arrangements.”<sup>28</sup> It is difficult for NRAs to participate in the negotiations to set these criteria that include: the definition of

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<sup>28</sup> Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office <http://mptf.undp.org/overview/office>

the “funding gaps” to be covered by the One UN fund; the share of committed resources required to each agency in order to access the One UN funds; the performance criteria required to access these funds. One UN Funds matter for the NRAs as these are predictable resources leading to sustained assistance during the 4-year implementation period of the UNDAF. Since the One UN funds are accessible only through interagency operations in the context of the UNDAF, they play a catalyst role in fostering the system-wide coherence and in providing new opportunities for funding at the country level by using local UN agencies’ or donors’ resources.

138. *ITC reporting on results* – In One UN countries, ITC reports to the UNRC on its utilization of the One UN fund and on other ITC projects in the country that are not in the One UN programme. But in countries where ITC is not part of the UNDAF (ex Zambia), ITC projects are not captured in the One UN reporting. Improving the synergy and coherence of different streams of country support provided by ITC funded from different sources remains an issue. The same issue remains in results reporting.

### Partnerships with other UN Agencies within UNDAF

139. ITC’s utilization of the Cluster has been important, particularly at the beginning of the consolidation of the Cluster within the UN System, but overall limited as compared to other agencies and as compared to its potentialities for ITC purposes. As of September 2018, ITC is involved, with various degrees of intensity, in six Cluster’s interventions at the country level that are part of ongoing UNDAFs (out of a total of 29 Cluster country interventions)<sup>29</sup>.
140. The current intensive presence of UNIDO, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UNCTAD in the Cluster operations shows their interest in this instrument, but other Cluster members such as UNDP, FAO, ILO, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), UNEP, also have been active in the last 10 years, depending on the opportunities.

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<sup>29</sup> Asia-Pacific: China, Myanmar (SECO-Cluster joint project started in September 2018), Viet Nam; Africa: Lesotho, Rwanda, Tanzania. (Until 2017, ITC was involved in 11 out of a total of 34 Cluster’s country level interventions; ITC was also part of the SECO-Cluster joint projects in Lao PDR and Tanzania.) Operations of the Cluster at the Country Level [https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/unceb2018d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/unceb2018d1_en.pdf). In order to compare, UNIDO, that is almost totally NRA, is currently involved in 19 Cluster’s interventions, and UNCTAD, that is totally NRA, in 29 Cluster’s interventions. UNECE, also NRA, is very active within the Cluster and in all the UNDAFs of its member countries. For this purpose, the terms of reference of some UNECE staff members include specific tasks dedicated to the Cluster.

141. When analyzing the 28 countries in corresponding to currently ongoing UNDAFs that have an economic pillar, the evaluation observed that the Cluster is a tool that each member agency can use according to its own priorities at the country level. In some countries (China), ITC participates in UNDAF 2016-2020 while trade is not mentioned in the UNDAF. In other countries (Comoros), the support provided by ITC to the export capacity of Comoros during the implementation of the 2015-2019 UNDAF is not included in the document: ITC is never mentioned in UNDAF.<sup>30</sup> In Bangladesh ITC is not included, the UNDAF 2017-2020 has no references to international trade, export promotion nor similar areas. The focus which is being addressed with UN support by UNCTAD, UNIDO, FAO, ILO, UNDP, is on domestic economic policies at the macro level, aiming at enhancing the quality and the impact of policies on job creation, income generation, decent work and productive employment, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, skills development and investment, connecting people to mainstream economy.

#### Cambodia: ITC's participation in UNDAF Results Framework

"ITC was invited in October 2018 to participate in the "National Launching Workshop on the Role of MSMEs in Achieving SDGs in Cambodia" organized by UNDESA and the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft (MIH). ITC's participation to the workshop raised the government's interest in the SMECS, and allowed ITC to engage in a UN coordinated effort to support the MIH. The major UN agencies involved in the country attended the workshop, as requested by the government, to ensure a coordinated approach. UNDESA facilitated the meeting as well as the coordination among UN agencies. As a result of the mission - as well as of internal ITC coordination between CEES and OAP - the SMEC has been included in the UNDAF Result Framework for Cambodia."

*Valentina Rollo, Economist, ITC*

142. Ultimately, the crucial moment for being included in UNDAFs is at the period at the beginning of the drafting of the UNDAF, and at the country level. The Cluster's positions and proposals are discussed within the Cluster. In these 28 countries, ITC has a limited participation. This situation can change at any time in any country. No general conclusions should be drawn regarding past or future ITC roles in the UNDAFs. Since according to the UNDG rules and the new UN system-wide reforms the inclusion of all the UN entities' operations in the UNDAFs is mandatory, inter-agency cooperation and coordination, within or without the Cluster, is certainly enriching, highly desirable, and in some cases, specifically required by donors.

<sup>30</sup> UNDAF outcome 2.1.1 on accelerated, diversified and sustainable economic growth refers to agricultural and fisheries exports as a mean to achieve this goal, specifically exports such as ylang and vanilla (that were addressed by recent ITC projects concluded in November 2017: <http://stage.intracen.org/project/Improving-competitiveness-of-vanilla-ylang-ylang-and-cloves-exports-of-Comoros/> )

## Good Practices in “Cutting across Silos”

143. To obtain more insights on the role of ITC in cross-agency cooperation on strategic cooperation and project operations, the evaluation has examined the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) that ITC has signed between 2017 and 2018 with other UN Agencies and multilateral Agencies. As a result, the evaluation observed that ITC has been playing multiple roles in different types of cooperation with different partners, and that ITC is clearly specialized in technical contribution, reflecting a solid and ample experience in TRTA:
144. *TRTA manager subcontracting parts of the projects* – In cooperation with FAO, UNCTAD, and UNDP, ITC subcontracts partner Agencies for leading and implementing agreed activities while ITC keeps the overall project management role. For example, as a part of ITC project “Enabling Market Access for Tajik Agricultural Products through Improved Food Safety System”, FAO is responsible for a regulatory system for the control of the use of agro-chemicals and veterinary medicines established and operational. ITC financially supports FAO’s input, and provides suggestions for consultants, advocacy and networking to support project objectives.
145. *TRTA manager on behalf of partner Agencies* – In the case of projects requiring combined efforts of two or more Agencies: ITC has signed an MoU with UNCTAD and WTO to jointly implementing the Global Help Desk (GHD) initiative, which is supported by various funders. According to this MoU, ITC is responsible for project management on behalf of partner agencies, while each of the three partners focuses on specific TRTA deliverables.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> According to MoU, UNCTAD focuses on non-tariff measures and trade processes and WTO focuses on aspects related to notifications, ITC is responsible for a series of technical inputs, such as leading on software development, tariffs, taxes, standards, and business opportunities, the technical side of the GTH application, financial contributions administration and process reporting.

146. *Independent TRTA service provider* – In some instances ITC acts as an independent implementer responsible for specific TRTA deliverables requested by the partner. In the case of Granada, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) required ITC to provide consultancy services and be responsible for implementation of the intervention. CDB funded the project, and ITC developed outputs such as courses, policies, business and operational plan. The same applies to MoUs related to ILO-ITC cooperation, where ILO provided funding and ITC was responsible for agreed activities and specific deliverables, such as work plans, datasets, customized aggregations of results, and calculation of employment effects, sector briefs and presentation.

Afghanistan: Enhancing country ownership over TRTA coordination and implementation

147. *Joint TRTA project implementer* – ITC also participates in projects as a joint implementer without overall managing or leading roles. In these cases, ITC cooperates with partner agencies on specific areas. In some instances, the project is fully funded by the project manager Agency, in some other by a third party.

“A year-long ITC’s assistance in Afghanistan culminated in the launch of a National Export Strategy (NES) chaired by Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. An extensive consultative process involved inputs from over 500 Afghan industry leaders, small businesses, and government officials. Aimed at boosting export capacities and integrating the country in international markets, the NES identifies six priority sectors with highest growth potential and six trade support functions, which significantly affect SME competitiveness. At present 128 activities are being implemented by donor communities as well as national agencies. Recognizing the relevance of the Strategy, the Minister of Industry and Commerce affirmed that “the implementation of the National Export Strategy and increased focus on improving the value chains have resulted in substantial increase of export commodities”.”

*Anton Said, Chief Export Strategy, ITC*

148. **TRTA provider within sustainable value chain development** – ITC is increasingly cooperating within joint TRTA Agency initiatives offering multidisciplinary and coordinated solutions for sustainable value chain development. For example, the Accelerator for Agriculture and Agroindustry Development and Innovation (3ADI+)<sup>32</sup> led by FAO and UNIDO, brings the combined capacities of local, national, regional and global actors on analysis, technical assistance, facilitating linkages, policy dialogue, and investment promotion, to develop sustainable value chains in developing countries. ITC has recently joined the 3ADI+ and supported to date, the development of inclusive and sustainable

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<sup>32</sup> Accelerated Agriculture and Agro-industry Development Initiative PLUS (3ADI+), ECOSOC Briefing Note: [https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2017doc/2017\\_ecosoc\\_special\\_meeting\\_proposal-3ADI%2B.pdf](https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2017doc/2017_ecosoc_special_meeting_proposal-3ADI%2B.pdf)

agricultural value chains and market systems in Bangladesh and Tanzania mainly by linking producers and processors to end-markets through value addition.

149. In 2018, ITC's Executive Director (ED), Ms. Arancha González, visited the following countries: Afghanistan, Barbados, Bhutan, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Mongolia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Zambia. During all of these meetings the ED held high level meetings with Head of Government or the Ministers of Trade. She also met with the UNRCs and on occasions met with the UNCTs.

#### Barbados: High-level strategic policy advice on trade and sustainable development

"A specific invitation was received from the Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Amor Mottley in July 2018 for the Executive Director to brief the Parliament of Barbados on Trade Policy issues and the UN SDGs. During that Mission ITC Executive Director met with the UN country team (ITU, UNWomen, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)) and with the UNRC. She also met with the Chamber of Commerce and the TISI. Issues discussed included the global trade and investment landscape, economic opportunities for Barbados in various sectors and the tools and methodologies that the UN could offer to assist, the important linkages between trade and economic growth and the SDGs."

*Matthew Wilson, Chief Adviser, ITC*

150. Evidence suggests that ITC is increasingly playing a role as a strategic policy advisor to governments, and engaging with local partners into coalitions to build buy in and implement coordinated solutions, including with donors. In the case of National Export Strategies (NES), Governments tend to confirm their commitment to the strategy implementation by including it into their national budgets. As a recent example, Sri Lanka has earmarked USD 130 million to implement NES recommendations.

151. On the same vein, ITC is setting up of coalitions of institutions to support the gathering of SME competitiveness data through the implementation of SME Competitiveness Surveys (SMECS). In the recent case of Kenya, this type of coalition has allowed to pull together different organizations and collect data on approximately 1000 firms across all regions and sectors of the economy. There are indications that the analysis of the data will be used as an input into the forthcoming government's SME Policy in 2019. This shows how data can be used to formulate concrete policy actions together with stakeholders to improve SME competitiveness and fair and sustainable development.

## 5. Changing Horizon

### Acceleration of the UNDS Reform Process

152. Findings from a 2016 Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) meta-evaluation and synthesis of UNDAF evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication pointed to a lack of commitment by stakeholders in the UNDAF evaluation process, highlighted by the low level of compliance with the requirement for an evaluation and with recognized quality standards. A low level of participation was identified, along with significant issues regarding coordination and cooperation in the evaluation activities conducted by United Nations entities at the country level. The JIU found that issues such as overlap and duplication among UN agencies with respect to competing evaluation priorities and reports have had a negative impact on the development of UNDAF evaluations. The JIU made five recommendations for strengthening both the UNDAF process itself and the evaluation mechanism. One of the recommendations was designed to underscore the centrality of the UNDAF process as part of the fundamental review of how the UN system organizations will support national governments at the country level, in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>33</sup>
153. With the fast moving reform process set in motion by the UNSG's proposals of June and December 2017, and endorsed by the UNGA resolution of 31 May 2018, the prospective and forward-looking dimension of the evaluation assumed more significance. These initiatives have important implications for ITC (and all UN agencies) as they might necessitate, in many cases, adjusting or fine-tuning organizational strategies and processes to engage better with wider systemic initiatives and its mechanisms.
154. As the most comprehensive reform of the United Nations development system in decades, it has also set the foundations to reposition sustainable development at the heart of the United Nations.
155. The core message of the UNGA resolution underlined that the UN development system must reinvent itself to bring about transformational change to better serve the

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<sup>33</sup> Joint Inspection Unit (2016). *Independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development – Meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework Evaluations, with a particular focus on poverty eradication*. Geneva: UN. Available from [https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu\\_document\\_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2016\\_6\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2016_6_English.pdf)

countries and the people. The adopted proposal envisioned significant adjustments in the organizational arrangements, developing new mindsets, leadership and skillsets as well as enhancing coordination and accountability mechanisms. Emphasis was also placed on strengthening capacity to mobilize partnership and financing at scale, and generation of synergies across the UN development system to support country priorities and deliver greater results for the people.

156. **The Reform package has seven key areas for transformation** and for the sake of brevity and relevance, only the elements of change which have direct bearing and implications for ITC are clustered and elaborated below under certain headings. The seven key areas of the reform are:

- The alignment of the UN system with the 2030 agenda;
- A new generation of country teams ; a strategic UNDAF and led by an impartial, independent and empowered Resident Coordinator;
- A coordinated, re-profiled and restructured regional approach;
- A Funding Compact and expanding the offer of “whole-of-system” expertise to countries;
- A stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda;
- An empowered space for Member States to guide system-wide actions and ensure greater coherence, transparency and accountability for results, underpinned by independent system-wide evaluations;
- Concrete steps to accelerate the system’s alignment to the 2030 Agenda, through a system-wide strategic document developed by the UNSDG in response to a specific QCPR mandate.

157. Among these features the pivotal one is the focus on the SDGs as the common language for objectives and measurements for all UN Agencies including the ITC. In other terms, planning, individual and collective agency responses and activities need to be framed through the SDGs as a pre-condition for their participating in UNDAFs. Building on the SDG-results architecture and ITC Strategic Framework, ITC developed projects actually enforce the alignment of their targets and indicators according to their contribution to SDG indicators.



## Country-level Focus of the UNDS Reform

158. *Country-level focus of the reform*— To effectively deliver on the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, the country level UN organizational leadership, structure and interagency planning mechanisms will be revamped as follows:

- As stated in the December 2017 Report of the Secretary General on the repositioning of the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, a reinvigorated UNRC system with a new generation of UNRC and UNCT with sustainable development in their DNA will lead the UN system country activities. The UNRCs will have a stronger capacity for leadership, accountability and impartiality. A new generation of UNCTs, will be deployed with enhanced skill-sets and tailored to meet the specific development priorities and needs of countries.
- UNDAFS and Inter-agency mechanisms - The current UNDAF will be positioned as the single most important UN country planning instrument in support of the 2030 Agenda. The reform specifically proposed: ‘a demand-driven model that ensures an optimized mix of UN operational capacities and expertise to support country priorities across the SDGs. It will be supported by strengthened interagency planning mechanisms, more creative models of physical presence and common services. It will rely on stronger linkages to specialized and NRAs at the global and regional level to expand the offer for national partners.’<sup>34</sup>
- “By 2019, the UN engagement in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a country — whether agencies, funds and programmes are resident or non-resident — should be based on the SDG integration and prioritization in the country UNDAF. The Resident Coordinator should be fully informed of any engagement undertaken outside the framework of the UN Assistance Framework”

159. Currently, **ITC is considered a member of only 6.9% of UN country teams**. UNCTs will be responsible for managing the UNDAF cycle, ensuring coordination within UN system agencies and drawing on the best technical competencies available within the UN system to support the UNDAF implementation.

160. As it is currently the case in some countries, the UNDAF does not encompass all the UNDS operations. These exceptions will be discussed on a case by case basis with the

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<sup>34</sup> United Nations (2017). *Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet (A/72/684-E/2018/7)*. New York: UN. Available from <http://undocs.org/A/72/684> pgs 11-12

RC and UNCTs.<sup>35</sup> These exceptions should not, in principle, concern ITC operations that by their own nature are integrated in the economic pillars of UNDAFs. This scenario could however arise when the UNDAF does not provide for any economic/trade related components. The activities undertaken within the EIF are usually outside the UNDAF: together with other UN entities, ITC should clarify with the host Government, the UNDG and each concerned UNRC if and why EIF activities should be disconnected from the UNDAFs.

161. The reform process, with more emphasis than in recent years of the DaO, will devote attention to avoid overlaps and foster synergies. It is worth noting that trade is mentioned here together with other areas where ITC has a strong mandate (as well as other UN entities). Recent experiences of ITC projects coordinated with other UN entities could be highlighted (on the basis of the evaluation) as examples of good practices of “cutting across silos” in the area of trade. It is at the country level, within each UNDAF, where overlaps and synergies between ITC and other UN entities should be identified and solved in light of the SDGs and capacity development goals that are relevant in each case. For this purpose, the exchange of information and discussions within the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity are a practical way to address these issues.

162. The main tool that is being introduced in the country process in order to facilitate the capacity development approach and the identification of relevant SDGs is the UNinfo pilot integration platform hosted by UNDP that should be extended to all countries by early 2019. It will provide evidence-based and integrated policy advice and coordinate UNDS support in mainstreaming the SDGs into national plans, policies and budgets.<sup>36</sup>

163. *Common Country Analysis* – The CCAs rarely include an analysis of the international economic / trade environment of the country. However, because of the increasing importance given to economic component of national development plans, the CCAs tend to identify and be more precise on the role of the UN development assistance to support that pillar.

164. *Measuring results* – The reform stipulates that “By 2019, the UN Development Assistance Framework will highlight and articulate an integrated set of UN offerings based on the

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<sup>35</sup> “In defining the scope of accountability for collective results, Resident Coordinators and the concerned UNCT members will discuss which activities, for the purposes of oversight and coordination, need to remain outside the UNDAF and tied directly to entity headquarters, due to the nature of certain mandates, normative functions or other exceptional circumstances.” (para. 61, UNSG report Dec.2017)

<sup>36</sup> The pilot version is available at <https://uninfo.org/en/knowledge-base/dashboard>

system-wide instruments for measuring results, and be focused around identified joint outcomes linked to national results, that take into account the collaboration with a wider set of actors at the country level. Individual agency heads would be accountable for ensuring effective quality, delivery and execution of efforts within the scope of their respective agency responsibilities while at the same time being accountable for collective results”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the UN took the commitment to undergo independent system-wide evaluations to provide Member States with credible assessments of results achieved, at the global, regional and country levels.

165. ITC methodologies and criteria to measure the results of its projects and programmes should take into account, and integrate, the identification of joint outcomes. Concerning monitoring and reporting. In global monitoring tables at DOCO, ITC is currently is barely visible from UN-wide perspective: ITC participates only in 8.7% of the UNDAF countries and in only 2.9% of countries, ITC participates in joint programmes. This thin presence does not create a congenial perception of ITC capacity. However, all these projects were programmatically aligned to the ITC Results Framework which, as explained above, contributes to the SDGs and eventually to those UNDAF outcomes related to economic development.

166. In terms of enhancing its visibility at the UN-wide reporting level, ITC should ensure its formal participation in the UNCT and UNDAF design and implementation process. In doing so, it should more systematically seek formalizing its contribution to UNDAF economic development outcomes. The evaluation observed in the case of Tanzania, that ITC has successfully used the UNinfo platform to record its new XB-funded projects as a contribution to the UNDAF outcomes to which it participates. Building on this good practice, ITC will be well advised to extend the use of UNinfo to report results for all its projects, including those projects that were not initially included into the UNDAF, when this integration platform will be extended to all UNDAF countries.

## The New Role of UNSDG

167. UN development entities at the global and regional level are being transformed to respond to the heightened demands of the 2030 Agenda.

- To enhance strategic direction and oversight of field operations, the UNSDG is being revamped. It is the body that gathers the leaders of the 40 UN entities that support

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<sup>37</sup> para. 23 Annex 3

sustainable development on the ground. The UNSDG is chaired by the Assistant Secretary General and replaces the UNDG that was chaired by the UNDP Administrator.

- The firewall between the UNDP Resident Representatives and the RC is abolished and a clear distinction between these two functions is introduced. The RCs are nominated by, and report to the UN Secretary General.
- A system-wide strategic document will be produced for the first time to accelerate the system's alignment to the 2030 Agenda and to provide a coherent vision of the system's response at the global level in response to a specific QCPR mandate.
- The UN regional economic and social commissions are being strengthened to meet specific regional needs as countries move towards the SDGs.

168. In abolishing the observer status in the UNSDG, all members will be equally accountable. ITC's recent full membership in UNSDG would necessitate careful monitoring and participation in systemic coherence and development issues. This would require more energetic and careful homework on systemic issues including preparing ITCs position on them and advocating its technical and substantive role in its areas of competence. It must ensure appropriate participation in QCPR process and provide inputs to the proposed system-wide strategic document. One of the displayed UNSDG priorities is to address those areas with gaps, overlaps and opportunities in SDG coverage. This is the case of trade and enterprise development items where in addition to the abovementioned gaps, available UN resources have been identified rather fragmented (June 2017 Dalberg report). There could be a risk for ITC in not taking the initiative of joined-up responses which are expected through the UNSDG. The participation of ITC within the UN Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity provides an avenue for ITC to understand and to have a role in the functioning of the new UNSDG regarding economic and trade aid issues as well as NRA status (see section 5.7 below).

169. In view of many overlaps between ITC mandates and operations (as in the case of other UN entities) on the one hand, and those of the economic and trade units or departments or the UN Regional Commissions, the proposed reinforced role on coordination and coherence given to the Regional Commissions (mentioned above) has a direct impact on ITC and should be assessed on a case by case basis.

### Role of NRAs and Small Projects with Small Budgets

170. The UNSG report of December 2017 and the GA resolutions on the reforms being

launched to revamp the UNDS contain references to the role of NRAs, that in addition to their lack of regular presence in the countries, rely on small projects with limited budgets (usually financed by ear-marked non-core resources) to deliver their specific expertise. Until recently, in the guiding documents of the DaO, the effective inclusion of NRAs was rarely mentioned, and a wide room of maneuver was given to the RC and UNCTs on how to integrate their operations and how to access funds available at the country level. The reforms point to significant changes on NRAs role in the DaO, but until now many NRA issues still have to be identified and addressed. While the RC and UNCTs may need a room of maneuver to accommodate countries' needs and situations, clear protocols and good practices should be set to avoid the risk of arbitrary decisions or marginalization of NRA with limited resources. For instance, the financial and performance criteria required to access the One UN funds (aiming at financing the funding gaps of the UNDAFs and foster interagency operations) are set by each RC and UNCT through negotiations involving donors and partners at the country level: it is difficult for the NRAs to participate in these processes. In many UNCTs the small entities whose expenditures are under 10% (or a similar thresholds) of the total annual UNCT expenditure have been excluded from country based funding mechanisms. A room of maneuver regarding the need for the physical presence of NRA in the country is also necessary, depending on a case-by-case assessment done by the NRA in consultation with the RC.

171. The operational and financial rules concerning NRAs are still being discussed within the UNSDG and at the country level. They constitute a crucial but moving target affecting ITC as well as other UN entities providing TRTA. In addition to monitoring some country processes that may be particularly relevant to ITC, alliances with other NRAs at the system level may lead to clarity, fairness and efficiency of NRA operations. Donors and beneficiaries should also be engaged in this regard. Quantitative across-the-board criteria to determine the role of NRAs are not appropriate for trade and trade related assistance, where even small operations with small budgets, for instance on training or policy advice, are efficient and can have a significant impact.
172. The main obstacle to the participation of NRA agencies in the UNDAFs is not related to their lack of permanent presence in the country but rather to their lack of predictable core resources that can be committed at the beginning of the UNDAF cycle. This is a key issue that has to be raised at the UNDG / DOCO / CEB levels. The whole DaO, and its follow-up in the context of the new system-wide reforms and the SDGs, marginalize the UN entities that do not have a significant financial capacity.

## 6. Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

### Findings

173. **ITC Engagement in DaO was not systematic and opportunistic at best.** The review of internal processes, documentation and key informant interviews conducted by the evaluation suggest that the interface and engagement of ITC with DaO has been ad-hoc in its approach. The lack of a comprehensive ITC strategy on its participation in DaO contributed to its limited engagement in the initiative. The DaO process was neither systematically administered, nor internalized which resulted in limited information-sharing, comprehension and engagement of ITC staff in DaO / UNDAF.
174. **Lack of sustained funding support from DaO/UNDAF sources for ITC projects generates weak incentive for participation.** ITC participation in DaO was practiced as a voluntary additionality in programming, often driven by opportunistic considerations, which in this context usually refers to fund seeking avenues. With heavy reliance on extra-budgetary resources, fund raising potential weighed-in heavily in ITC's decisions to participate in new initiatives like DaO. From a contributions perspective, the added value of DaO has not been substantial to ITC. While the initial years showed good promise of resource allocation but overtime as the country-based 'One Funds' shrunk in size, the limited contributions that ITC received from DaO showed a sharp downward trend and are likely to continue as such. This track record of modest funding trend from DaO/One UN financing sources for ITC projects and also limited availability of core funds for funding of broader UNDS operations affected ITC's sustained engagement or partnership in DaO. More specifically, as an NRA, ITC faced endemic difficulties in accessing the available One UN Funds or other country-level financial windows. These apparent funding realities also generated visible disincentive for the organization's pro-active participation in DaO.
175. **Lack of policy guidance and uncoordinated management of responsibilities on DaO hampered its uptake in the organization.** Although ITC has participated at different stages of DaO, since the initial pilots, knowledge, information and awareness of DaO have been confined to a very limited number of ITC staff members, with experience of engagement with the DaO initiative. Consequently, institutional knowledge of DaO tended to rotate in a few units, which resulted in a lack of systematic flow and sharing of key information among the professional staff concerned across the organization.
176. **In the absence of corporate oversight backed by accountability/reporting requirement, the motivation for participation in systemic initiatives suffered a**

**setback within the organization.** The issue of alignment and compliance with UN system coherence initiatives like DaO do not seem to enjoy any attention or priority within. On the contrary, it appears to be a neutral phenomenon within ITC and seem to be treated with a tacit ambivalence in practice. DaO added value in facilitating policy coherence, enhancing synergies and wider development impact at the country level is not fully recognized and appreciated at a broader professional level.

177. **Some inherent factors inhibited the organization's pro-active participation in DaO and hence led to a limited uptake of the initiative within ITC.** ITC's non-resident status coupled with its fairly independent project based programming enabled minimal day-to-day interface with operations of DoA or UNDAF initiatives in the country. Without a living experience like other resident UN agencies in the country, it was difficult for ITC to internalize and appreciate the intangible value-added of DaO as manifested in the strength of a unified UNDAF advocacy platform, in enhanced UN policy coherence, synergies and wider development impact at the country level. This factor perhaps generated a low level of corporate inducement and initiation to participate in DaO (and UNDAF) and caused it to be treated as an in-active variable or mute issue in its programming.

178. **Engagement in DaO has been process-heavy involving lengthy gestation between process, action and results.** The evaluation also notes and agrees with the staff perception that engagement in DaO has been time-consuming, process-heavy and has had a long gestation between process, action and results. Beyond ITC endogenous factors, part of it is probably due to the mixed performance of the DaO initiative itself in addressing concerns related to fragmentation and system-wide coherence at the country level.

179. **The set precondition of a minimum funding requirement for NRA participation in UNDAF also created a deterrent for ITC participation in DaO/UNDAF.** In the 'old' DaO context, participating UN organizations had to pre-commit visibly to country delivery (expenditure), which ITC was unable to do because of its funding structure. The timing and approval process of donor financed projects in ITC precluded their use as a required pre-commitment for inclusion of ITC in UNDAFs. ITC own regular budget allocations in terms of human resource costs and other expenses have been limited to fund activities of coordination, communication and consultation, which are required before and during the process of preparation of the UNDAFs – within ITC, with other UN Agencies, with the UNRCO and the UNCT, and with local stakeholders. There was a strong move by NRAs to change this requirement of prior commitment of funds UNDAF and in the new UNDAF

guidelines (2017) this precondition has been eliminated.

180. **When there was ITC participation in DaO, it generated positive experiences and useful lessons.** ITC participation in DaO has been selective and limited vis-à-vis the expanding scale of this UN-wide initiative. Though limited in scale, yet some useful lessons emerged from this experience and some positive perceptions have been generated among ITC headquarters and field staff about the added value of working within the UN country and partnership framework. ITC experience in different DaO countries increasingly confirmed that engaging in system-wide initiatives, despite its imperfections, essentially enables cohesive strategic planning, better access and harmonization of efforts within national development administration system, enhances national ownership, and facilitates more efficient delivery and better reporting of results at the country level.
181. **ITC's participation in UN systemic initiatives like DaO for coherence is consistent with ITC operational programming and enhances its development effectiveness.** The experience also attests, contrary to the existing perceptions, that working within UN framework of DaO/UNDAF does not pose any constraints or inconsistency with ITC's business model or operational programming modality, which requires the organization to work with private sector partners/entities and also flexibility of mobilizing/seeking direct funding from other donors/sources for its projects. In fact, country experiences confirm that working within UNDAFs and UNCT partnerships bring forth many tangible and intangible benefits to ITC including access to UN platform for advocacy, inclusion of its contribution to UN strategic planning (UNDAF) and reporting, and also access to additional funding windows.
182. **ITC's limited participation undermined its visibility in DaO countries.** ITC's role and utilization of its services in DaO has been quite limited in scale and this has undermined its visibility at the country level as well as at the UN system-wide level. The analysis of interview-generated perceptions, internal processes and documentations concur that in overall DaO context, **ITC is barely visible by national stakeholders, donors, UN Agencies and the UN DOCO.** An overwhelming majority of ITC projects / achievements have been neither included in the UNDAF, nor reported in the One UN Reports. In DaO analysis and reporting, these projects provide an image of useful but isolated operations, standing apart from UNDAF goals and initiatives which support the national strategies. This permeates an inconsistent image of ITC on the totality of its initiatives and contributions to the national stakeholders, donors, UN Agencies and the UN DOCO.



183. **Advocacy by the Resident Coordinators and the Country Team plays an important role in positioning ITC role in UNDAF.** The feedback from the DaO countries and the Country Managers in ITC Headquarters confirm that when the Resident Coordinator/One Leader was knowledgeable and supportive of ITC's mandate and specialized competence, then s/he played a supportive role in promoting ITC technical specialty in relevant areas and engaging in advocacy on behalf of the Agency. This was the case in many DaO countries like Rwanda, Tanzania, and Vietnam where positive results ensued. However this required consistent communication line between ITC and the UNRC/ RCO. Examples like these seem are not too many. Unfortunately, the intent and quality of advocacy and promotion of ITC technical mandate and expertise varies widely between countries and across the Resident Coordinators (RC). This intrinsic factor can weigh in significantly and affect how ITC is positioned to play a role in UNDAF /One Programme.

## Conclusions

### Internal Considerations

184. Beyond the potential added value of participating in DaO, which may take time to become evident, the present UN-wide reform process is accelerating and the obligation to participate, coordinate, and cooperate with other UN agencies at country level will become more and more pressing. In addition to the fact that the ITC can contribute to the DaO through its specific and unique technical mandate related to export and entrepreneurship development, it operates under the UN's normative principles and its programmes at the country level are required to demonstrate stronger consistency with, and contribution to, UNDAF outcomes in the future. The UNDAF outcomes are now all specifically linked to the SDGs so all ITC programming must be aligned to the SDGs.

185. While within the ITC, there continues to be some ambivalence and debate at various levels about the added value of operating through the DaO, it would be essential that there be reaffirmation by the management to staff at all levels about its intent and commitment to participate in the initiative. Any mismatch between HQ management level thinking and that of country-level engagement in systemic efforts would mean that opportunities will be missed to maximize the benefits to ITC of its participation in the initiative (Finding 9). In the long term, without progressive change within the agency, as the reform is deployed (emphasis on DaO and decentralizing programming and implementing at country level), more and more opportunities will be missed, affecting

ITC's recognition within the UN, as a valuable contributor to the achievement of SDGs.

### External Considerations

186. The UN reform will facilitate opportunities for the ITC's engagement into DaO and broader UNDS coherence initiatives compared to how the process has been working to date (Finding 6). At the global governance level, the granting to ITC in March 2018 of full membership in the new UNSDG, with all members being theoretically equally accountable and equal, opens options for ITC to contribute to sustainable development at the UN-wide level through export and entrepreneurship development. This should be achieved in conjunction with other like-minded UN agencies (e.g. through the Cluster Finding 5 and other complementary initiatives). The recently created ITC New York Liaison Office should enable such participation in disseminating ITC work among delegates and within the UNSDG / DOCO machinery.
187. ITC has to be present in the UNDAFs. An enhanced participation in DaO would offer increased visibility for ITC's work in relation to the SDGs because of the strong linkages between trade and the SDGs at the global and country levels. ITC needs to position itself within the UN-wide system as the reform steers all UN partners to work together to contribute to the achievement of SDGs, through UNDAF country level planning and implementation. The logic is that as UN agencies avoid duplication of work, they individually—hence the ITC as well—and collectively become more efficient. This entails that the planning phase of collective work becomes even more central. (Finding 10)
188. As a full member of the UNDS, ITC has to be part of the UNDS collective identity at the country level. This entails targeted communication with the UNRCO and systematic interaction within the UNCT, as these are becoming the central pieces in the articulation of UN agencies' comparative advantage at the country level, and the identification of gaps and overlaps in the UNDS response to country needs, including the recourse to non-UNDS partners. (Findings 11 and 12)
189. The issue of the role of NRAs in the area of trade (Finding 5) should be raised at two levels in parallel: at the UNDG level, and at the country level (with the host Government, the Regional Coordinator [RC] and the UNCT as a whole). ITC, together with other non-resident TRTA-providing UN entities, should emphasize that being resident is not a necessary condition to be efficient in this thematic area, and that NRAs should be treated as full members of UNCTs for the sake of coherence and team work within the economic

pillar of UNDAFs – notwithstanding the size of their budgets.

## Recommendations

190. The following recommendations have been developed drawing on the findings of the evaluation and, more importantly, keeping in view the implications of the most recent reform initiatives of the UN Development System. While the assessment of the past experience from DaO provided important lessons and points for introspection for ITC, the fast unfolding reform initiatives brings new vision and modalities for UN Development System. The set of recommendations below reflect a forward-looking pathway for ITC with pragmatic merger of the lessons from DaO and implications of the recent reform initiatives of the UNDS.

### Recommendations for Strategy level

191. **ITC should develop a pragmatic vision and clear strategy on how it proposes to position itself to systematically engage in and derive benefits from ongoing systemic initiatives (like DaO) and from new reform initiatives of UNDS.** This strategy should reflect the desirable extent of integration/compliance with the various relevant dimensions of the new reform initiatives keeping in view the organization's specific mandate, unique governance and operational flexibility.

192. The strategy should be disseminated within the organization in a circularized form on policy, programming/ project cycle processes, and operational guidance. In addition, periodic orientation/ briefings should be conducted to inform staff on (i) ITC policy of cooperation with DaO or other UN system initiatives, (ii) engagement modality with enhanced UNDAF system and (iii) implications of the new reform provisions for ITC (iv) roles and accountabilities of different levels of staff.

### Recommendations for Administration of UNDAF processes

193. At the Headquarters level, clear responsibilities should be assigned to staff and operational units relating to **strategic engagement with UNDS** governance system, and consequently with DaO, UNDS reforms, and the UNDAFs (SDGs). This unit/monitor would keep track of developments on system-wide reform initiatives (including on DaO/UNDAF) and inform the senior management on their implications for ITC. It would also disseminate information regarding changes or updates in UNDS Reform initiatives and DaO/UNDAF system-wide rules and experiences.

194. Building on the 2016 “Rules of engagement for ONE ITC”, DCP regional offices should manage the **UNDAF requirements** for the countries of ITC interest to produce the following end outputs:

- Produce formal “country intelligence reports” on a regular basis;<sup>38</sup>
- Ensure ITC is an official signatory of the UNDAF;
- Make sure these UNDAFs contain an economic / trade pillar to which outcome(s) ITC officially contributes; and
- Operationalize an effective monitoring system within DCP to inform and report on all ITC activities in the country linking their contribution to UNDAF outcome(s) to which ITC contributes.

### **Recommendations on Accountabilities and job descriptions**

195. In order for the ITC to play its designated role in implementing DaO, UNDAFs and aligning itself to SDGs, staff members at all levels of ITC should be required to play substantive roles in implementing DaO / UNDAF. Hence, ITC should ensure that the job descriptions, work plans, deliverables, and performance appraisals of relevant staff members reflect their participation, contribution, and accountability in enhancing participation in this area and aligning programming to SDGs.

### **Recommendations for Advocacy and Partnerships**

196. **ITC should engage with UN development partners to design collaborative solutions strategies.** Where the potential for global partnerships is identified, more detailed discussions should be held between headquarters in order to highlight and enhance complementarities between UN partners in mandate, programming approach, reporting, and business practices.

- a. ITC should take advantage of its new full membership within the UNSDG to define and present initiatives that bring together UN agencies in support of trade and entrepreneurship-related SDGs. It should also use this membership to defend its interests as an NRA. As much as possible, ITC should discuss and agree common positions with partner UN Agencies, including within the UN Cluster on Trade and

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<sup>38</sup> According to the 2016 “Rules of engagement for ONE ITC” Country Intelligence “consists of understanding the trade and development landscape in the country and region from a strategic and substantive perspective and understanding the actors in-country, including other development agencies; having networks of contacts on the ground; having the ability to bring people together; understanding opportunities for positioning ITC: \*where are the needs and gaps; \*how can ITC fill a gap; \*which resources are available in/for the country; \*which risks does ITC face.”

Productive Capacity platform.

- b. A collective and consistent advocacy drive by trade-related NRAs in UNDG platform can ensure positioning of trade and export sector in strategic discussions of UNDAF and help TRTA agencies secure their rightful role in UNDAF programmes. The GA Resolution of 31 May 2018 provided clear directives to RCs to ensure that the collective strength and multiple skill sets of UN system agencies be brought to bear in implementing UNDAFs. ITC along with other trade-related NRAs should collectively follow up and push for uniform advocacy by RCs for utilization of the competencies and global experiences of the NRAs. As experience demonstrates, through well-informed coordination and rapport with RCs, the ITC could better disseminate and showcase its areas of specialization and support at the country level, and access opportunities for more programme participation and partnerships

### **Recommendations for Engagement at the country level**

197. DCP regional sections **should regularly engage with the UNRC**, relevant members of the UNRCO and the UNCT to enhance ITC role, its areas of specialty and competence within DaO / UNDAF. They should Identify and utilize opportunities of **securing ITC a role in UNDAF/UNDAP design processes** and ensure that all ITC operations (funded from all sources) in a given country are inserted in the appropriate pillar/ component of the UNDAF/UNDAP. Simultaneously, they should maintain close relationships with the government and national counterparts, to explain how ITC role can be enhanced by synergies with other UN agencies within the DaO mechanisms.
  - a. ITC should develop a set of advocacy messages that can be used in promoting solutions at the country-level. This can be facilitated by compilation and synthesis of an evidence-based portfolio of good practices used in developing solutions strategies in the context of the CCA and UNDAFs. Management should support the creation of mechanisms for regular sharing of information and experience and their use by relevant ITC staff.
  - b. As an NRA, it is important for the ITC to explain its role and its areas of specialty and competence to the UN Resident Coordinator, relevant members of the RC Office and the UN Country Team. It should also maintain close relationships with its constituency in the trade ministries and other relevant government agencies. When interacting with national counterparts, ITC should explain how its role can be enhanced by synergies with other UN entities within the DaO mechanisms.