

2024-2025 EVALUATION WORK PROGRAMME

Independent Evaluation Unit
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Geneva, Switzerland

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INTRODUCTION

1. In conformity with the [ITC Evaluation Policy](#), the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) prepares an annual Evaluation Work Programme, each year, which includes a budget and a prospective plan for the subsequent year. The draft Evaluation Work Programme is submitted to ITC's Senior Management Committee (SMC) to discuss feedback on priorities, options, and endorsement.

IEU PRODUCTS

Evaluations and reviews initiated or delivered in 2023

2. In 2023, the IEU has initiated or finalized the following independent evaluations directly managed by the Unit:
 - *2023 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report*. The [2023 AESR](#) covered evaluations and reviews from January to December 2022, ranging from evaluations carried out by the IEU, self-evaluation, funder-led evaluations and reviews, and Project Completion Reports. Continuing the approach initiated in 2022, it assessed the findings from evaluations reports and reviews against the main dimensions of the Strategic Plan 2022-25. The document was presented to ITC Member States and discussed at the annual ITC Joint Advisory Group meeting in July 2023.
 - [*The final evaluation of the project Colombia PUEDE: Peace and unity through productive development and commercialization*](#). The evaluation report was presented to SMC on Q2 2023. The Management Response is still pending.
 - Final evaluation of the [*United Kingdom Trade Partnership \(UKTP\) Programme*](#) was completed on Q4 2023.
 - *Evaluation of the Ethical Fashion Initiative* – The independent evaluation of the Ethical Fashion Initiative was launched in 2023. It is expected that the final report will be completed in Q3 2024.
 - *Midterm evaluation of the NTF V programme*. The evaluation process started in 2023 and the final report is expected in Q3 2024.
 - *Midterm Evaluation of Linking Ukrainian SMEs in the Fruits and Vegetables Sector to Global and Domestic Markets and Value Chains – PHASE II*. The evaluation process was initiated in 2023 and the final evaluation report was completed on Q2 2024.
 - *Final Evaluation of the project Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade (SYMST)*. The evaluation process was initiated in 2023 and the final evaluation report was completed on Q2 2024.

- *Evaluation of ITC's Work on Agricultural Value Chain – “Sustainable and resilient value chains”*. The evaluation process was initiated in 2022 and the final evaluation report was completed on Q1 2024.
- [*Sustainability Review of the ITC programme “Trade Development Strategies”*](#). This SR covered the following trade strategies: Saint Lucia – National Trade Strategy 2020-2024; Burkina Faso – Shea sector development strategy 2015-2019, and Sri Lanka – National Export Strategy 2018-2022. The document was finalized in Q1 2023.
- [*Synthesis Note: Sustainability Reviews of ITC Projects \(2021-2023\)*](#). This document synthesizes the main lessons on projects' sustainability distilled by SR since 2021. It was finalized in Q4 2023 and will be diffused within ITC in Q2 2024.

New evaluations and reviews in 2024

3. *2024 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report* – The 2021 AESR focused on the review of the ITC Strategic Plan 2018-2021. In its management response, Senior Management agreed to the recommendation of implementing an independent mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Consequently, the 2024 AESR will focus on assessing the utility of the current plan through a midterm evaluation to identify learnings from its operationalization and provide recommendations with respect to ITC's overall strategy and strategic planning process for the upcoming cycle 2026-2029. The report will be presented and discussed at the annual ITC Joint Advisory Group meeting in June 2024.
4. *Evaluation of the ITC Support to the Process of Accession to the WTO* – ITC support to the WTO is one of the key organizational functions that has never been evaluated by the IEU. The evaluation will assess ITC support in all aspects of accession including navigating the accession process, undertaking domestic reforms and compliance with WTO requirements and overall capacity building for public and private sector stakeholders.
5. *Evaluation of The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)* – This project has played a precursor role in The Gambia in supporting economic development by improving employability and self-employment for young Gambians, including migrants. A year post-YEP's closure, national stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Higher Education, have called for an evaluation to assess project outcomes and to learn from the project experience in areas related to vocational training, business development, access to finance and competitiveness of MSMEs through value addition and market linkages. Accordingly, the IEU will conduct this evaluation in strait cooperation with national partners (including the ITC office in The Gambia) to comply with the [UN resolution on building capacity for the evaluation activities at the country level](#).
6. *Sustainability Review: Supporting African export promotion agencies to improve services for MSMEs, (Renforcement du Management opérationnel des OPC dans 20 Pays moins avancés-B587 (MOPSE))* – Sustainability Review assesses the sustainability of projects (typically 3-4 years after closure) along four key dimensions: value-addition, outcomes, impact, and context. The key overall question that is addressed is: What has been the sustainability of the project's results, i.e., outcomes and impact, and of contribution to organizational and systems capacity for trade?

7. The MOPSE project focused on supporting the design and implementation of managerial and operational improvement plans in Trade Promotion Organizations (TPOs) in 20 LDCs, with success stories having been reported *inter alia* in Burkina Faso, Zambia, and Malawi, at project closure in 2019.
8. Concerning 2025, the following projects have requested an independent evaluation:
 - *Promoting growth through competitive alliances I* – Eswatini, DSIT/GIVC.
 - *Climate competitiveness: Building opportunities in the green economy for emerging and developing countries*, Global, DSIT/GIVC.
 - *Promoting new non-traditional exports*, Ecuador, DCP/OLAC.

Update of the ITC Evaluation Policy and Guidelines

9. The role of an Evaluation Policy is to set out the conceptual framework for evaluation in an organization. The document outlines the purposes and principles of the evaluation function, including the set out of roles and responsibilities for the governance of the function and the framing of human and financial resource requirements.
10. In alignment to UNEG recommendations for a regular updating of the Evaluation Policy of UN Agencies, IEU conducted in 2023 a comparative analysis of selected evaluation policies in the UN system with a view to complement and improve the current ITC Evaluation Policy (2015). The main areas deserving improvement were identified in terms of (1) articulating the fit-for purpose theory of change and standard procedures of the evaluation function, including the complementarity of evaluation with other functions (monitoring, audit, investigation, etc.), (2) clarifying planning criteria and coverage norms as for the different evaluation types, (3) reinforcement of the quality assurance mechanisms and the use of evaluative evidence, (4) contributions to UN system-wide and joint evaluations and national evaluation capacity development, (5) definition of roles and responsibilities, institutional arrangements and resources, and (6) a note on the policy's implementation, reporting and future review.
11. The goal of updating the policy is to continuously adapt the evaluation function added value to the organization's strategic and operational accountability and decision-making needs to better contribute to ITC strategic planning and the 2030 agenda. Accordingly, in 2024, the IEU will develop the updated Evaluation Policy and submit it to senior management for its approval and its presentation and discussion to member states at the JAG. Similarly, the ITC evaluation guidelines will continue being updated in 2024.

ADVISORY SERVICES INCLUDING OTHER EVALUATIONS, REVIEWS, AND SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Self-evaluations

12. Self-evaluations are managed or conducted by respective delivery managers. In all cases, the IEU supports them in the selection of an independent evaluation consultant and provides advice on the drafting of the ToR, to ensure their conformity to the ITC Evaluation Guidelines and Policy. For quality checking purposes, the IEU also reviews and provides feedback to the inception and evaluation reports. It can also provide guidance on the management response process to ensure that the action plans to implement recommendations is well structured. As per the current ITC evaluation policy, all projects with a budget over \$2m should be self-evaluated, provided that no IEU or external evaluation has been conducted.
13. In 2023, the following self-evaluations were carried out:
 - Thematic Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming at ITC (completed).
 - Final evaluation of the ARISE Plus Malaysia project (initiated).
14. In 2024, the following tentative self-evaluations of a project with a budget over USD 2 mio (which are not subject to an internal or external evaluation) might be conducted, for which IEU has not yet received confirmation:
 - Final evaluation of the regional project Business-friendly: Supporting value chains through inclusive policies, investment promotion and alliances in ACP countries.
 - Final evaluation of the « Programme d'appui à la Compétitivité de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (PACAO) au Sénégal ».
 - Final evaluation of the Youth Startup Academy in Africa project in Uganda.
 - Final evaluation of the project Addressing the drivers and causes of vulnerability in migration among border communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor in The Gambia.
15. It is worth mentioning that according to the information available, no project has a planned a self-evaluation in 2025.

Funder-led evaluations and reviews

16. Funder-led evaluations are managed or conducted by the donor of the project being evaluated. In 2023, the following funder-led evaluation were initiated or carried out:
 - Final Evaluation of EU-Bhutan Local Governance and Trade programmes, commissioned by the EU, completed November 2023.
 - Midterm evaluation of ITC Standards Maps (T4SD database), commissioned by SECO /BMZ, completed January 2024.

- Final evaluation of the ASEAN Regional Integration Support (Laos-ARISE Plus) component in Lao PDR, commissioned by the EU – expected to be finalized in 2024.
- Midterm evaluation of the Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) programme, commissioned by the EU Delegation in Pakistan, finalized in 2024.
- Final evaluation of the Trade-Related Assistance (Arise plus Thailand) project, commissioned by the EU – expected to be finalized in 2024.
- The Gambia Independent Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) Portfolio Evaluation 2017-2022, commissioned by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and finalized in January 2024.
- Final evaluation of the ECOWAS: West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP). Commissioned by the EU, completed in March 2024.

17. In 2024, the following external or funder-led evaluations have been confirmed:

- Evaluation of the Viet Nam Trade Policy and Export Promotion Project, commissioned by SECO.
- Final evaluation of the Trade-Related Assistance project in Nepal, commissioned by the EU.
- Final evaluation of the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP), commissioned by the EU.
- Final evaluation of the Market Access Upgrade Programme (MARKUP) in Burundi, commissioned by the EU.
- Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy (SAAVI), Iraq. (OIOS assessment mission planned for Q4 2024).

18. According to information made available to the IEU, the following evaluation will be conducted in 2025:

- Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy (SAAVI), Iraq (final funder-led evaluation to be carried out by the EU).
- Final evaluation of the Growth for rural advancement and sustainable progress (GRASP) programme, commissioned by the EU Delegation in Pakistan.

19. Results Oriented Monitoring Reviews (ROMs) are short-term monitoring missions on ongoing interventions, conducted by the European Commission. Upon request of the project team, the IEU provides information sessions tailored to the ROM process, indicating what was expected from the project team, and what to expect at each stage of the ROM Review process. This helps to prepare the project manager and teams and provides an opportunity for IEU to share lessons learned from other projects that had experienced a ROM review. Very importantly, the IEU also provides feedback on the draft ROM review document including their recommendations, to support the project team to feedback in a constructive and useful manner.

20. In 2023, the following ROMs were initiated or completed:

- COMESA Cross Border Trade Initiative: Facilitating Small-Scale Trade Across the Borders.
- South Sudan: Jobs Creation and Trade Development.

- Culture project: Identity Building and Sharing Business Initiative.
- Programme d'appui à l'intégration socio-économique des jeunes (INTEGRA) en Guinée.
- Myanmar: Trade-Related Technical Assistance (ARISE+ Myanmar).
- Euromed: Providing trade and market intelligence for better informed decisions (TIFM 2).
- Philippines: Trade-Related Assistance (Arise + Philippines).
- ACP Business-friendly: Supporting value chains through inclusive policies, investment promotion and alliances.

21. According to information made available to the IEU, the following ROM will be conducted in 2024:

- Implementation of the African Trade Observatory within the AUC (initiated).
- Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-Food Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy (SAAVI), Iraq.
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22. In terms of a broader perspective on evaluations in 2025, concerning projects finishing in 2025 with a budget over 2 mio (qualifying for evaluation), the following evaluations are to be confirmed:

- Value chain diagnostics zooming in on pharmaceuticals, cars and formulated complementary foods, Africa; DMD/TMI.
- Strengthening agri-food trade in the region through institutional coordination and business support, ECOWAS, DCP/OA.
- Promoting growth through competitive alliances I – Eswatini, DSIT/GIVC.
- Climate competitiveness: Building opportunities in the green economy for emerging and developing countries, Global, DSIT/GIVC.
- Promoting new non-traditional exports, Ecuador, DCP/OLAC.

Project Completion Reports

23. First introduced in 2015, Project Completion Reports (PCRs) are a form of self-assessment conducted by project teams at the end of all ITC trade-related technical assistance projects. Upon request of project management, this exercise is quality supported by the IEU. The aim of the PCR is for the project team to systematically self-assess the project, according to the standard evaluation criteria. The PCRs also include a section to capture main lessons learnt, and what should be done as follow-up. The purpose is to support reflective learning and knowledge sharing, draw and share lessons learned, and provide recommendations within ITC.

24. In 2022, the development of an online PCRs submission, approval, and tracking system has had a significant impact on PCR performance and compliance. PCRs completion status is currently reported to senior management on a quarterly basis.

25. In 2023, with the development of an internal database for management monitoring and follow-up, all PCRs report details are now available in SharePoint and visible. In this context, the IEU

continued assisting project teams in their PCR preparation for quality purposes, upon request and as part of its advisory services. As a result, 87% of projects complied with the submission within the mandated 6-months period after project completion. A total of 34 PCRs were completed and submitted.

26. In 2024, the IEU will continue supporting project teams with this endeavor and it is expected that 90 PCRs will be completed. In collaboration with ITS section the IEU will work to develop a direct link to single PCR completed reports accessible in Chief / Director dashboard for management visibility and monitoring purposes. It is worth mentioning that AI tools being currently developed by the ITS should enable the PCR database to become more useful as it can be purposefully searched.

Evaluation planning

27. In 2024, the IEU will continue advising the Sustainable economic reintegration of returnees in Nigeria project to develop an evaluation plan, which will be adequate for an impact assessment potentially comprising a baseline and mid-term and final evaluations, in partnership with the German and Nigerian implementing NGOs.

ENHANCING THE EVALUATION CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION ON RESULTS

Evaluation Policy and Guidelines

28. Over the period 2024-25, the IEU will provide ITC staff with an introductory session explaining the main features of the updated ITC Evaluation Policy and corresponding Guidelines. The objective will be to raise staff awareness on the purpose and the utility of evaluation function and on the existence of these reference documents for matters related to management of ITC-conducted evaluations and ITC responsiveness to funder-led evaluations.

Project management

29. In 2024, the IEU is updating how evaluation applies to ITC projects as part of the review of the Project Management guidance available [here](#). Project managers will find useful information on [mid-term](#) and [final evaluations](#) in the project cycle itself, as well as user's questions-driven resources in the form of [FAQs](#) with 2-pagers briefs guiding project managers' role in self- and funder-led evaluations, and corresponding templates.

Interactive Evaluation at ITC training course

30. The IEU will relaunch its self-paced training course on evaluation which support of the trade academy. The course includes four modules, both online and PDF offline versions, for project managers to familiarize themselves on the relevance and utility of the evaluation function at ITC and on planning and managing the evaluation process. The course is tailored to IEU-conducted independent evaluation, ITC-implementing units' self-evaluations, and funder-led evaluations. It is proposed that completing the course of about 4 hours to be mandatory for ITC staff acting as evaluation manager in a self-evaluation or focal point engaged with donors in funder-led

evaluations. A certificate of achievement will be provided as incentive for those completing the course.

Management responses

31. In 2024 and 2025, special attention will continue being put on improving the relevance and utility of evaluations and reviews recommendations, which included a close dialogue with stakeholders and on supporting good quality management responses and appropriate follow-up actions. The IEU will continue to ensure the follow up of evaluation recommendations on an annual basis.

Communication briefs on evaluation results

32. In 2024, the IEU will continue to prepare and disseminate a communication brief for each independent evaluation report to distil the main results. In parallel to the circulation of the main report, those briefs will promote a wider, easily accessible uptake of key findings and lessons across the organization and among key partners and donors.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

UNEG

33. In 2023, the IEU actively participated in the work of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and contributed to the work of UNEG working group related to “Gender, Disability and Human Rights (GD&HR)”. The IEU attended GD&HR working group meetings and provided feedback on the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator 2022 Reporting Cycle Results. It is worth noting that the Guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations which was revised in 2023, will be taken in account in the updating of the ITC Evaluation Policy.
34. In 2024, an independent and external Peer Review of the ITC evaluation function will be carried out in accordance with the [UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations](#). This will be the second peer review of ITC’s evaluation function after the [Peer Review of 2016](#). Accordingly, it will focus on the maturity of the ITC evaluation function in term of independence, credibility, and utility and on how effectively evaluation is used throughout ITC to promote accountability, learning and improvement.

UN SWAP

35. The Unit contributes to corporate reporting on ITC’s participation in the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW). As the Business Owner for key performance indicator 4 – Evaluation, in 2023, the IEU conducted a meta-evaluation and completed the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) UN-SWAP Evaluation Scorecard to analyze the independent evaluations completed during the year. The results of the evaluation showed that KPI 4 exceeded requirements in 2023.

UN DIS

36. The IEU also contributes to ITC's corporate reporting on ITC's implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (DIS) through KPI 10 – Evaluation. As per the 2023 reporting, the ITC evaluation guidelines need to include guidance on addressing disability inclusion in the evaluation process to be considered as approaching the requirements outlined in the [UNDIS Technical Note](#). The ITC evaluation guidelines will be updated in 2024 and will incorporate this requirement. The IEU will continue to support the implementation of the UNDIS in conjunction with the ITC Disability and Accessibility Focal Point.

OIOS

37. In 2023, the IEU contributed to the completion of three publications of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS):

- The *Evaluation Study of the UN Evaluation Dashboard 2020-2021* (IED-23-006); and
- The assessment of *Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives* ([A/78/70](#)).
- The [Thematic evaluation of United Nations Secretariat support to the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

JIU

38. As the focal point for Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), in 2023, the IEU contributed to the completion of seven JIU reports, including:

- *Review of the internal pre-tribunal stage appeal mechanisms available to staff members in the UN system* ([JIU/REP/2023/2](#));
- *Review of accountability frameworks in the UN system* ([JIU/REP/2023/3](#));
- *Review of mental health and well-being policies and practices in UN system organizations* ([JIU/REP/2023/4](#));
- *Flexible working arrangements in UN system organizations* ([JIU/REP/2023/6](#));
- *Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the UN system* ([JIU/REP/2023/7](#)); and
- *Review of the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of health insurance schemes in the UN system* ([JIU/REP/2023/9](#)).
- [Joint Inspection Unit 2022 Self-assessment](#)

39. In addition, ITC participated in two ongoing JIU reviews facilitated by the IEU:

- *Review of the acceptance and implementation of JIU recommendations by the UN system organizations* (A.466 – Review focal point OED/SPPG/IEU); and
- *Review of the health services in the United Nations system* (A.471 – Review focal point HR/DPS).

40. In 2024, ITC will participate in four additional system-wide JIU reviews facilitated by the IEU as part of the JIU programme of work for 2024:

- *Review of budgeting in organizations of the United Nations system: some comparisons (A.473 – Review focal point FM/DPS);*
- *Review of the single-audit principle and the impact of additional oversight requirements by donors (A.474 – Review focal point FM/DPS);*
- *Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system (A475 – Review focal point CSS/DPS);*
- *Review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations system organizations (A.476 – Review focal point HR/DPS).*

41. In 2023, the IEU reported on the status of implementing JIU recommendations addressed to ITC. This reporting was possible with the reporting contributions provided by many staff members. In 2024, the IEU will continue to play its role and follow up on the JIU recommendations issued to ITC.

BUDGET

42. ITC management supports the JIU recommendation of developing a comprehensive budget framework and resource allocation plan for the ITC evaluation function. In addition, to staff resources, the IEU is receiving in 2024 an annual RB allocation of USD 243,000.¹ The indicative budget below covers costs necessary to produce evaluation deliverables:

indicative evaluation budget for 2024	IEU	Project
Midterm evaluation / NTF V programme		199,000
Midterm evaluation / <i>Ukrainian Fruits & vegetables</i>	33,000	
Final evaluation / <i>Systematic Mechanism for Safer Trade</i>	14,500	8,000
Programme evaluation / <i>Ethical Fashion Initiative</i>	51,500	
AESR-Midterm evaluation / <i>ITC Strategic Plan</i>	61,000	
Final Evaluation / <i>Uzbekistan WTO accession</i>	22,000	
Final Evaluation / <i>The Gambia YEP</i>	24,000	
Sustainability Review / <i>MOPSE project</i>	33,000	
UNEG/OECD peer review of the ITC evaluation function	4,000	
Total	243,000	207,000
Grand total	450,000	

¹ The budget does not include resources related to IEU staff members (RB: one P4 and one P3; PSC: one P2 and one part-time G5).