



ITC Evaluation Policy

SECOND EDITION



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The ITC Evaluation Policy 2015 was developed in line with the practices promoted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the recommendations of the external Independent Evaluation of ITC (2014) and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) Programme Evaluation of the ITC (2015).

During the preparation of the policy consultations were conducted with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), ITC member states, UNEG, and the evaluation offices of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UN Women proved insightful and constructive for the development of this Evaluation Policy.

In developing the Policy, the ITC Evaluation Unit also referred to existing evaluation policies, manuals, guidelines, and other guidance documents of the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of development banks, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNCTAD, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), OIOS, World Food Programme (WFP), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and others.

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BOA	Board of Auditors
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OIOS	UN Office of Internal Oversight Services
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SPPG	Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section
TISI	Trade Investment and Support Institution
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Purpose of the Evaluation Policy

1. The 2015 Evaluation Policy builds on and supersedes the ITC Evaluation Policy of 2008. It is referred to as the second edition Evaluation Policy. In conformity with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Standard 1.5, the Evaluation Policy shall be periodically reviewed and updated.¹
2. The purpose of the Evaluation Policy is to contribute to improving the performance and results of ITC in delivering trade-related technical assistance. It aims to create an enabling institutional environment for enhancing the strategic alignment of the evaluation function to ITC's development goals, upgrading the quality and utility of evaluation services, and expanding the evaluation coverage of ITC's operations.
3. The Evaluation Policy sets general principles, standards and process for the evaluation function of the ITC, which includes independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Unit and self-evaluations managed by the respective operation units. The Evaluation Policy provides policy guidance on the practice and use of evaluations, self-evaluations, impact surveys, impact stories, and other performance measurements to serve management decision and policymaking. For donor-sponsored evaluations related to ITC operations, ITC coordinates with donors in planning and provides customized technical support and collaboration.
4. In accordance the UNEG Norms and Standards and good practices promoted within the UN system, the Evaluation Policy constitutes one key pillar of the institutional framework for results-based management, corporate accountability, learning and partnership, with a view to keeping ITC in alignment with the development of evaluation within the UN system and in the broad development community.
5. The Evaluation Policy is complemented by two operational Guidelines:
 - i. The Guidelines on Independent Evaluations and Impact Assessment set rigorous and practical methods, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for independent evaluations including impact assessments, managed by the Evaluation Unit, which serves as the central evaluation office of the organization; and
 - ii. The Guidelines on Self-evaluation define and clarify a set of rigorous and practical methods, tools, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for self-evaluation, which are under the responsibility of delivery managers.

Evaluation Context in ITC

6. The decision to update the Evaluation Policy is related to the recommendations of two recent external independent evaluations of the ITC² and two UN assessments of evaluation functions of UN organizations that touched upon the evaluation function of ITC³. This Evaluation Policy addresses these recommendations on enhancing the evaluation function, revising the evaluation policy, supporting evaluation capacity building, and conducting risk-assessment for evaluation planning. It also emphasizes evaluation advisory services to support monitoring and reporting.
7. The decision to revise the Evaluation policy also reflects the important changes that have taken place at ITC, in the UN system, and among the broad evaluation community since 2008:

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group. Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, 2005, page 6

² (i) Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014 which was managed by the ITC Evaluation Unit, funded by ITC donors and conducted by an external evaluation service provider; (ii) Office of Internal Oversight Services. Programme Evaluation of the ITC 2015

³ (i) Joint Inspection Unit. Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, 2014, and in particular the JIU Framework for the Analysis of the Level of Maturity of the central/corporate level Evaluation function in each Organization and Variations across Organizations; (ii) Office of Internal Oversight Services. Biennial Report on Strengthening the Role of Evaluation and the Application of Evaluation Findings on Programme Design, Delivery and Policy Directives 2015

- i. In the UN and the broad evaluation communities, important developments have taken place to strengthen the evaluation function, in terms of evaluation services, utility, resource allocation, product development, methodology, standards and process, etc. For example, the growing demand for evaluation capacity development, the increased focus on impact, the spreading use of theory of change, and a trend towards expanding evaluation coverage through self-evaluations and project completion reports, are all enriching and reshaping the existing knowledge of evaluation function and methodology.
 - ii. Other important developments include, *inter alia*, the methodology and function development backed by UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and UNEG, such as the issuance of the UNEG Impact Evaluation Guidance, the application of gender equality and human rights standards in evaluations, and the emergence of developmental evaluation methods.
 - iii. Within ITC, the key consideration is the revised strategic direction, particularly since 2013, which bears critical implications on ITC's operations as well as the evaluation function. As indicated in the ITC Strategic Plan 2015-2017, the six strategic focus areas of ITC's services and the programmatic approach to ITC's strategic interventions are reshaping the operating model in house. Meanwhile, in line with the UN post-2015 development agenda, ITC is intensifying efforts on women's empowerment and gender equality, youth development, environmental sustainability, as well as other interventions areas.
8. The developments mentioned above are factored into the Evaluation Policy 2015 to ensure that the evaluation function is in a position to serve the organization towards right objectives and in right ways.

Evaluation Concept

9. **Evaluation.** In line with UNEG standards and norms, an evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining, when applicable, the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organization. At ITC, the focus of evaluation is to assess the strategic issues identified by ITC management and key stakeholders with the objective of improving performance and learning.
10. **Utility of evaluation.** Evaluation shall serve the information needs of intended users. The need to ensure utility implies the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process and the systematic follow-up on the evaluation recommendations. Learning partnership among stakeholders shall be participatory and inclusive throughout the evaluation process for achieving consensus on evaluation scope, objectives, methods, and the use of evaluation findings.
11. **Independent evaluation.** Independent evaluations at ITC are those designed, conducted and managed by the Evaluation Unit in accordance with international independence criteria and following UNEG standards and norms and ITC Evaluation Policy and related guidelines, where possible in collaboration with partners and when necessary with the support of external evaluators. The purpose of conducting independent evaluation is to enhance corporate accountability, promote organizational learning, and extend strategic partnership in achieving ITC's development objectives. Evaluation shall act as an agent of change and feed into management decision-making, through providing evaluation-based evidence, lessons and recommendations into the planning, budgeting, programming, implementation, monitoring and reporting, and closure phases of the project and programme management cycle.
12. **Self-evaluation.** In alignment with the Policy, self-evaluations shall often be managed or conducted by respective delivery managers, for the purposes similar to that of independent evaluations. Self-evaluations should be undertaken in line with ITC Evaluation Policy and related Guidelines. The planning of self-evaluations should be coordinated with the annual planning of the Evaluation Unit.

13. **Monitoring and reporting** is an indispensable function of programme and project management. Monitoring and reporting, along with other guidance and oversight duties, are the main elements of operations performance management function, located in the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (SPPG).
14. **The evaluation function at ITC** is distinct from, but strategically complementary to, the performance management function which oversees the monitoring and reporting at ITC. The performance management function generates corporate-level information on performance and results, which is based on the data received from individual interventions.
15. **Other assessments.** Other forms of review, study, and assessment may overlap to some extent with evaluation's duties, but are differentiated and should be to be classified in the ITC context according to the competent body, as described below:
- i. Needs assessments and appraisals are tools that enable decision makers to choose and decide between optional intervention approaches, and to refine the client-oriented design of an intervention.
 - ii. Review is a periodic or ad hoc, often rapid, assessment of performance of an undertaking that does not apply the due process of an evaluation. Reviews tend to emphasize operational issues.
 - iii. Project completion report is an appraisal conducted at the end of the project, assessing and reporting on the fulfilment of its expected accomplishments. Completion reports often are considered as a form of self-evaluation.
 - iv. Audit of ITC and ITC activities is conducted by the OIOS and the UN Board of Auditors (BOA). Audit verifies whether the existing policies, norms and instruments are being applied and used adequately. It focuses on the accountability and control of the efficient use of resources, with less emphasis on learning related to relevance, sustainability and impact of the activities than in evaluation.
 - v. Inspection and investigation are also conducted by the OIOS and the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Inspection is a general examination seeking to resolve a particular problem, or to identify vulnerable areas and malfunctions, to propose corrective actions. Investigation specifically inquires or examines a claim of wrongdoing and provides evidence for eventual prosecution or disciplinary measures.
 - vi. External oversight body evaluations. Within the UN Secretariat biannual programme and budget, ITC is responsible for Subprogramme 6 of Programme 10 on Trade and Development, which addresses the operational aspects of trade promotion and export development. ITC's activities are subject to periodic ITC-specific programme evaluation by the OIOS, which evaluates programme performance within the UN Secretariat. In addition, the JIU conducts evaluations with a UN system-wide perspective and provides recommendations which may apply to ITC when applicable.
 - vii. Evaluations of funding countries / institutions. Within their own evaluation system, funding members or entities may commission or conduct evaluations of a programme/project financed by those members and implemented by the ITC. In this case, the evaluation findings and recommendations might imply actions for ITC management. The operational sections responsible of the object being evaluated by funding members shall inform the Evaluation Unit at the planning stage to coordinate the process and to ensure ITC's interests are taken into account.

Evaluation Function

16. The Evaluation Unit is the custodian of the evaluation function at ITC. It is operationally located in the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section of the Office of the Executive Director, as a distinct entity. The independence, impartiality and objectivity of the evaluation function are strictly

respected so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured.⁴ ITC Management oversees the strategic development and delivery of the evaluation function and ensures its independence, impartiality, quality, and utility at ITC.

17. The objectives of the evaluation function at ITC are to serve decision making of ITC management on selected policy and strategic areas, improve the performance and results, and therefore, enhance ITC's position in the Aid for Trade arena. These objectives shall be achieved through consultation and priority-setting with ITC management, conducting strategic evaluations in a timely manner, and promoting learning and consensus building.
18. Evaluation approaches should be harmonized at ITC to ensure internal consistence. The evaluation function provides standards and advisory services, and evaluation methods and processes. It also advises on the setting up of monitoring and reporting systems to ensure quality data for evaluation, since evaluation relies on effective monitoring and reporting system to generate quality evaluation findings.
19. To provide a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of ITC's evaluation function, periodic peer review of the evaluation function will be conducted by an independent external review teams within the UNEG - DAC Task Team on Peer Reviews mechanism. The decision for a specific review of the evaluation function of ITC will be made by the ITC management.
20. The Evaluation Unit shall actively participate in UNEG activities to keep abreast of the development in evaluation within the UN system and implement the required policies, strategies and guidelines. It will also maintain a close working relationship with other UN evaluation offices and affiliated organizations, and multilateral and bilateral organizations. The Unit acts as the ITC focal point for the development and follow up of the evaluation reports of ITC interest undertaken by the JIU and the OIOS.
21. The evaluation function at ITC operates in line with UNEG norms and standards and other internationally accepted principles. The Head of the Evaluation Unit should have proven competencies in managing evaluation function, and the evaluation professional staff members should have commensurate capacities and experiences in managing, designing, and conducting evaluations. ITC aligns the Evaluation Unit staff members' job description with UNEG's competency framework for evaluators.⁵
22. In close collaboration with UNEG, the Evaluation Unit will assess the possibility of conducting joint-evaluations with other UN agencies and partners on issues of common interest. In alignment with the 2014 UN Resolution on Capacity Building for the Evaluation of Development Activities at the Country Level, the Evaluation Unit will also explore ways to leverage evaluation processes at the country level to support evaluation capacity building for development results in developing countries.

Evaluation Products and Services

23. **Products.** The Evaluation Unit shall deliver a mix of evaluation products including independent evaluations, annual evaluation synthesis report, thematic analytical reports and communication products based on evaluation, and guidelines for evaluations and self-evaluations, and validation of self-evaluations.
24. Strategic independent evaluations take the form of corporate-level evaluation on selected themes and evaluation of programmes or large projects. These evaluations will follow ITC's evaluation policy, guidelines, and be in line with the UNEG standards, norms, and good practices. The selection of evaluation objects (as defined in Section VII on Evaluation Work Programme and Budget) will be aligned to ITC's strategic objectives, and take into consideration ITC's programmatic approach applied to the focus intervention areas.

⁴ UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, 2005, page 8

⁵ Core Competencies for Evaluators of the UN System <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/81>
UNEG Core Competencies for Heads of Evaluation Offices in the United Nations <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/82>

25. To meet the increasing demand for evaluation and expand the evaluation coverage of operations, self-evaluations and project completion reports will be instituted. Self-evaluations are undertaken by delivery managers in accordance with the practices detailed in the Guidelines for Self-evaluation. Validation of self-evaluation is a service provided by the Evaluation Unit to ensure the quality of the reports. Project completion reports should be planned and conducted by delivery managers.⁶
26. **Advisory services.** The Unit also provides advisory services including regular comments on monitoring, reporting and evaluation to the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) on project ideas, project plans and programme plans, support to delivery managers on monitoring and reporting issues including baseline surveys, periodical reviews, impact studies, midterm reviews, self-evaluations, project completion reports, independent evaluations, etc.
27. The purpose of providing evaluation advisory services is to develop an evaluation-based learning culture in the ITC, and, in particular, to support the use of evaluation practices and methods in project cycle management and to monitor, report and demonstrate credible evidence of results.
28. **Theory of change.** Among the advisory services, particular importance will be given to the understanding and the use of the theory of change in the process of establishing the scope of an evaluation, identifying the logic chains and critical assumptions, conducting evaluability analysis, designing evaluation methods, and implementing evaluation recommendations.
29. **Impact assessment,** as a type of evaluation focusing on examining the attribution or contribution issues in the causality links, could take the form of either independent evaluation or self-evaluation, pending on the specific requirements, objectives, funding sources, and timing. The decision for undertaking an impact assessment should be based on a balanced consideration of the potential value added, compared with a regular evaluation exercise, and the cost involved in conducting an impact assessment.
30. **Use of impact assessment methods.** It may not be applicable to conduct impact assessment in certain operations, however, some specific impact assessment methods, such as comparison between before and after intervention and comparison between the results observed in target groups and that in comparison groups, could be applied in monitoring, reporting, and self-evaluation activities.
31. Among others, the ITC's client survey on impact will be supported by the Evaluation Unit. The Unit will also explore methods to enhance the "impact" elements in ITC's Impact Stories to uphold the partnership and visibility efforts of ITC.

Operationalization of Evaluation Principles

32. **Independence.** The principle of independence could be achieved only when the evaluation function is separate from the policy-making process and from managers responsible for planning, design, management and implementation. These aspects of independence are reflected in the following operational policies:
- i. The Head of the Evaluation Unit is responsible, in due consultation with the ITC Management, for formulating the annual work programme within the established budgetary appropriations; and,
 - ii. The Head of the Evaluation Unit has the authority, in due consultation with the ITC Management, to issue and disclose final evaluation reports without prior clearance from any other ITC managers and functions.
33. **Accountability.** One main purpose of evaluation is to promote accountability. Accountability in this context refers to the assessment of developmental results, the impact of technical assistance and the performance of ITC and partners, in particular concerned Governments and Trade Investment and Support institutions (TISI). Systematic evaluation of past and ongoing programmes, projects, policies and strategies, is indispensable for ITC learning from its experience both positive and negative, and to

⁶ Guidelines for project completion reports will be developed.

improve future performance. Accountability through evaluation analysis requires the use of a rigorous assessment methodology. It requires that successes, unexpected results, shortcomings and failures highlighted during the evaluation be disclosed without interference. The operationalization of accountability aspects of evaluation shall take the following forms:

- i. The Evaluation Unit shall work in line with the Evaluation Policy and evaluation guidelines; in accordance with its work programme, the Evaluation Unit shall conduct evaluations, taking into consideration of the strategic importance of the evaluation subjects, in the forms of corporate-level evaluation, programme evaluation, and evaluation of large project;
- ii. The ITC Management shall ensure that ITC staff members promptly provide sufficient documents and other information required by the Evaluation Unit, and participate actively in the evaluation process. The Unit also promotes the learnings and good practices from self-evaluation;
- iii. The Evaluation Unit shall present an Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report to convey the key findings of evaluation to ITC management and the JAG. This report shall present consolidated results and impact achievements, and a summary of cross-cutting issues and insights stemmed from the evaluations completed in the previous year; and
- iv. The Evaluation Unit shall ensure that all evaluation reports and other evaluation products are disclosed to the public and disseminated in a timely manner.

34. **Learning.** Establishing effective feedback loops from evaluation to management, operational staff and stakeholders is necessary to ensure evaluation lessons are learned. The Evaluation Unit shall contribute to learning objectives through the following policies:

- i. After completion of the independent evaluation report, the Evaluation Unit shall facilitate a process, involving ITC and other partners, through which the main users of the evaluation can deepen their understanding of the evaluation findings and recommendations and make them operational;
- ii. In addition to the evaluation report, the Evaluation Unit shall prepare easy-to-read communication products on evaluation findings and recommendations and disseminate them widely among ITC staff and ITC stakeholders, and the Evaluation Unit shall promote the lessons learned and good practices from self-evaluations;
- iii. The Unit shall engage with in-house quality assurance platforms in the development and appraisal of policies, strategies, programmes and projects;
- iv. Upon request, it shall prepare written comments on selected new corporate policies, strategies, programmes and projects that have been preceded by an independent evaluation on the same topic; and
- v. For the purpose of ensuring appropriate follow up, the ITC management shall ensure that evaluation recommendations are adopted at the operational, strategic and policy levels (as appropriate). Accordingly, progress on agreed recommendations will be tracked by the Evaluation Unit and reported regularly to the management.

35. **Partnership.** Evaluation in the ITC has a wide range of internal and external partners that have different interests and perspectives. Establishing a constructive partnership with internal and external partners is essential for generating relevant recommendations and ensuring their uptake and ownership.

- i. Major internal stakeholders include delivery officers, who are mainly concerned with the feedback of evaluation lessons and findings explaining what works and what does not, and ITC management, which has both a strategic and operational interest in the outcome of evaluations that can be used as an accountability tool and to feed into the decision-making processes in ITC.

- ii. Major external stakeholders include UN/UNCTAD and WTO, ITC's parent organizations, member states, and direct clients including policy-makers, TISIs, SMEs, and others.

36. These partnership aspects are reflected in the following operational policies:

- i. The Evaluation Unit will ensure that the evaluation process is participatory, understood and is transparent to partners and includes mutually-agreed approaches and timetable;
- ii. In line with international good practices, the Evaluation Unit will share the terms of reference, inception report, and draft evaluation report with management and other concerned partners to solicit comments and develop ownership;
- iii. Through consultation and consensus building, the Evaluation Unit will follow up on the implementation status of the evaluation recommendations and update partners in transparent and timely manners; and
- iv. In close collaboration with the counterparts at WTO and UNCTAD, the Evaluation Unit will propose and co-organize annual learning and knowledge exchange event, with a purpose to reflect and debate on the key evaluation findings and learning themes related to aid-for-trade development. The event will involve participation of the management, delivery managers, and other staff of the three organizations.

37. **Capacity building.** The Evaluation Unit shall promote an evaluation-based learning culture at ITC, which will be achieved, partly, through enhancing the common understanding of evaluation, monitoring, and reporting activities, and improving the utility of evaluations. The operational policies in this respect include:

- i. The Evaluation Unit shall provide guidelines for evaluation and self-evaluation and related advisory services and related training for undertaking self-evaluations and evaluation-related activities;
- ii. The division directors shall have the responsibility to ensure that the delivery managers consult in a timely manner with the Evaluation Unit on planning and practice of evaluation and self-evaluation;
- iii. The related delivery officers will actively participate in the full evaluation process when an evaluation is being undertaken for their operations;
- iv. The Evaluation Unit shall, in coordination with the management of the subject being evaluated, present the evaluation report, to the Senior Management Committee (SMC) and other interested partners, together with a management response and an action plan; and
- v. Beyond individual evaluations, the Evaluation Unit shall organize dedicated meetings for operations divisions to capture their feedback and experiences, and promote evaluation-based learning. The feedback received will be taken in consideration in developing the evaluation work programme for the subsequent year.

Evaluation Work Programme and Budget

38. **Work programme.** The Evaluation Unit will update each year the work programme, including a budget, for the current year and a prospective plan for the second year.

39. The annual work programme shall be prepared based on consultation and a priority-setting process. The work programme shall link resource requirements to expected achievements and deliverables. It shall also provide the criteria for programming the evaluation subjects and setting of priorities. The selection criteria and priority setting shall take into consideration of the results of a risk assessment, alignment to ITC's strategic plan, proportion of ITC's investments, maturity of the operations, value of

innovation and learning, potential for future strategic development, rigor of theory of change, timeliness, etc.

40. The work programme shall comprise a mix of different types of evaluations and accompanying advisory services.
41. The draft annual work programme will be prepared by the Evaluation Unit in consultation with the ITC Management, and then submitted to the SMC for approval. The evaluation work programme will be detailed in the annual Operational Plan of ITC.
42. **Budget.** In line with OIOS recommendation⁷, the work programme should include a budget item for the evaluation function to be developed within the ITC Biennium Programme Budget. The work programme shall include a budget to be funded through the ITC budgetary resources.
43. Each project plan should indicate a clear plan for evaluation and the related responsibilities, and provide commensurate budget for evaluation.

Implementation Arrangements

44. The Evaluation Unit is responsible for managing independent evaluations at ITC. To ensure participation and ownership among key stakeholders, regular consultations will be conducted during the evaluation process. The main clients shall be involved in commenting on the draft deliverables including terms of reference, inception report and draft evaluation report.
45. ITC management ensures that the Evaluation Unit has timely and sufficient access to information needed for conducting independent evaluations and that the operational managers of the divisions, programmes, and projects actively cooperate with the Evaluation Unit and participate in the evaluation processes.
46. Self-evaluations are undertaken by delivery managers, according to Evaluation Policy and Guidelines on self-evaluations and following the ITC evaluation criteria, methods, rating system, and applicable procedures.
47. The Evaluation Unit will conduct validation of self-evaluations, applying the following quality criteria, for example: scope of the report, quality of methods, data and analysis, participatory process, lessons and learning, and candour and impartiality. The validated findings and results shall be included in the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report.
48. Large projects, defined as those with a budget above USD 1 million, if not included in the evaluation work programme for independent evaluations, are subject to a self-evaluation. The budget for self-evaluation shall be earmarked at the project design and planning stage. It should take into account that evaluation may extend or take place after the project is operationally closed.
49. For projects with a budget smaller than USD 1 million, a project completion report⁸ should be planned and proportionately budgeted. Pending on the feasibility, the validation exercise may be extended to project completion reports.
50. **Conflict of interests** should be strictly avoided during the evaluation process to safeguard the impartiality and reliability of the evaluation:
 - i. For independent evaluations, the evaluation manager and evaluation consultants should not have been involved substantively in the management, design, implementation, or performance review of the evaluation objects. In case of a conflict of interests, the related evaluation manager or consultant shall recuse from this particular evaluation;

⁷ OIOS biennial assessment of evaluation functions with UN secretariat entities, 2015, paragraphs 66-67

⁸ For accountability, a project completion report should describe, as objectively as possible, the design, intervention logic, changes during the implementation period, planned and actual costs, planned and actual outputs and results, lessons learned, and other issues. It is often considered as a form of self-evaluation.

- ii. The ITC management should ensure that the evaluation staff members and evaluation consultants will not be subject to, at ITC, any form of undue influence, such as partial information, bias against or in favour of certain stakeholders, retaliation, and actual or perceived threats in relation to the professional judgements made by the evaluation team;
- iii. Evaluation consultants who provide evaluation services shall commit to confidentiality rules. Within one year after the completion of the evaluation, an evaluation consultant should not seek employment or consultancy with the operation units in which the operations were evaluated by the very consultant; and
- iv. The existing UN and ITC procedures to protect staff and consultants from involving in conflicts of interest apply equally to the evaluation staff and consultants.

Evaluation Criteria, Process and Use

- 51. **Criteria.** ITC applies the commonly accepted evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact to independent evaluations and self-evaluations. The exact evaluation criteria for a specific evaluation will be tailored to the context and specific evaluation requirements.
- 52. In 2014, the Evaluation Unit adopted the criterion of gender equality and women's empowerment, which is to be applied in each evaluation when applicable to measure the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in ITC's operations. In addition, the consideration of the impact on environment and climate change will be applied as an evaluation criterion when it is applicable.
- 53. A rating system, adopted by the Evaluation Unit in 2014, will be refined by the Guidelines for Independent Evaluations and Self-evaluations.
- 54. **Preparation phase.** The Evaluation Unit shall prepare evaluation terms of reference and compose an evaluation team which usually includes Evaluation Unit staff members and consultants.
- 55. The Evaluation Unit shall prepare an inception report based on available data and desk review. This document shall propose the customized methodology, evaluation process, initial analysis of the evaluation subject, key issues for in-depth study, etc.
- 56. **Data collection and field study phase.** The evaluation team will conduct data collection which may involve missions to ITC headquarters and/or project sites in countries.
- 57. **Report drafting phase.** During the report drafting phase, the Evaluation Unit will invite comments from different stakeholders on the draft report, and decide whether and how to address the received comments. The evaluation products should be high-quality and be user-friendly. An internal quality assurance mechanism including peer review will be introduced.
- 58. **Communication and dissemination.** The Evaluation Unit is committed to promoting consensus building and learning through communication and dissemination. Evaluation products should be disseminated at ITC and among stakeholders, and available to general public in the ITC website.
- 59. **Follow up and learning events.** The Unit will organize learning events among stakeholders. The responsible divisions and teams shall prepare a Management Response detailing whether the evaluation recommendations are accepted and why, and develop an Action Plan for each accepted recommendation.
- 60. The managers responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan shall provide periodic status reports to the Evaluation Unit. The Evaluation Unit assesses the progress in implementing recommendations, on a six-month basis, and reports to the SMC.
- 61. The general process mentioned above could be adapted for self-evaluations where and when it is applicable.

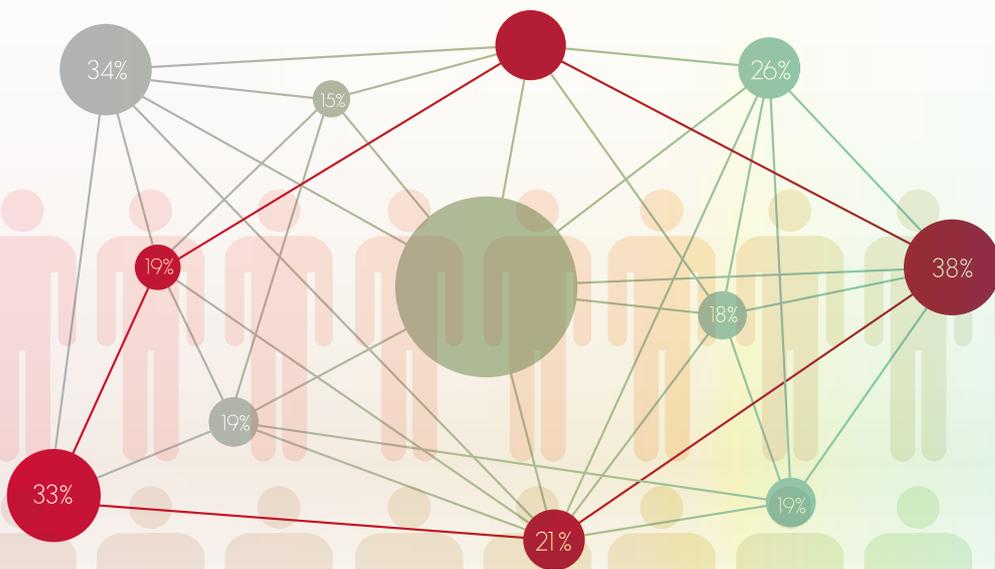
Follow up of Evaluation Recommendations

62. The Evaluation Unit follows up and provides technical advice on the implementation of evaluation recommendations. The process of developing management response to the evaluation recommendations and related action plans is considered by the Evaluation Unit as a consensus-building and learning process. Participation, collaboration, and result-orientation will be respected during the process.
63. The SMC guides and supervises the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. The Evaluation Unit reviews on a six-month basis the implementation status reports provided by delivery managers, and presents the consolidated implementation status report to the SMC, twice per year, for review.
64. Pending on the adequacy of the implementation as assessed by the Evaluation Unit, the SMC will decide whether further actions are needed by delivery managers to sufficiently address the recommendations in line with ITC's strategic objectives.
65. The Evaluation Unit reports yearly on the Implementation Status of the Evaluation Recommendations through the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report to ITC management. To promote broader learning, the Unit will also present the implementation status to the Oversight Committee of the ITC, composed of representatives of UNCTAD and WTO.



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