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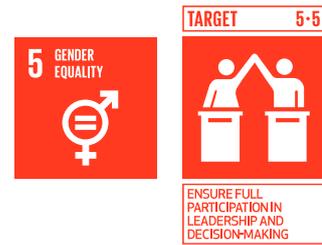
EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative

Independent Evaluation Unit

FINAL REPORT – 15 September 2022

This evaluation report makes reference to the following SDGs:



EVALUATION OF THE ITC SHETRADES INITIATIVE

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

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

The ITC Independent Evaluation Unit has carried out this evaluation under its 2021 Work Programme and is responsible for this publication. The evaluation was carried out by an external evaluator (Charlotte Ørnemark) and managed by an ITC Evaluation Officer (Simon Bettighofer). Oversight and quality assurance was provided by the head of the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (Miguel Jiménez Pont).

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Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AU	African Union
BSO	Business Support Organization
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa
EAC	Eastern Africa Community
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IR	Inception Report
ITC	International Trade Centre
IWA	International Workshop Agreement
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRTA	Trade-Related Technical Assistance
TSI	Trade Support Institution
RBM	Results-based management
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOP	United Nations Office for Partnerships
WBE	Women's Business Enterprise
WE	Women entrepreneur

SheTrades Evaluation Report at a glance

The purpose of this evaluation is to take stock of the SheTrades approach, implementation models and results achieved at different levels after its first five years of operations (2016-2021). More recent developments in 2022 were also considered.

Key conclusions

- SheTrades has become **strong brand** for ITC on gender and trade through engagement in international and national policy advocacy and by adopting a holistic, partnership-driven model.
- High-visibility events and **ambitious quantitative targets** for getting women to market have detracted from monitoring quality in terms of economic empowerment of different groups of women, in particular young women and marginalized groups of women producers, workers and informal traders. While these groups were not initially targeted (focusing more on near-export ready women entrepreneurs) it will be a stronger focus going forward.
- SheTrades relies to a large extent on [SheTrades.com](https://www.she-trades.com) as a main **entry-point** into the 'SheTrades universe' and its various offerings; yet this was not sufficient unless accompanied by other types of support or communications.
- Uneven results achieved to date in working with **national institutional actors**, including those hosting nationally embedded SheTrades hubs, may call for more focus at the national level going forward, including working with national private sector actors.
- During the evaluation period, SheTrades was tasked with advancing a high-profile agenda on women and trade for ITC coupled with **limited staff and capacity** to deliver on it, including limited opportunities for in-house mentoring and cross-project learning within ITC.
- If properly resourced, and if **operational lessons** for gender mainstreaming are more systematically captured – moving beyond gender targeting to sector gender transformative approaches – SheTrades could be further utilized as an internal resource for how to promote gender equality in ITC programming.

Recommendations in brief

- **Recommendation 1:** SheTrades should use the niche, brand and operating space it has successfully created to deepen its engagement in processes that help **transform sectors** (and/or specific value chains) to be more gender inclusive.
- **Recommendation 2:** Ensure tailored and transparent **targeting and tracking, of project beneficiaries**, including young women entrepreneurs/women-owned businesses and those operating in male-dominated sectors, who may need additional support.
- **Recommendation 3:** SheTrades should seek to **re-activate already launched hubs** where there is strong local buy-in and/or where there are dedicated funds to support its operations.
- **Recommendation 4:** Ensure that SheTrades tools and resources **correspond to in-house needs for gender mainstreaming** across programmes and as part of ITC's corporate gender mainstreaming strategy, with a clear mandate, expectations, and sufficient resourcing for SheTrades to take on this role.
- **Recommendation 5:** Review **staff needs and capacity** to be in line with SheTrades' expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.

Evaluation of the ITC SheTrades Initiative

Independent Evaluation Unit, International Trade Centre

Executive Summary

SheTrades is an initiative by the International Trade Centre (ITC) to promote women in trade. The purpose of this evaluation is to take stock of the SheTrades approach, implementation models and results achieved at different levels after its first five years of operations (2016-2021). More recent developments in 2022 were also considered. The evaluation will inform the next phase of SheTrades in its ongoing strategy formulation process, and it will feed into an evaluation of gender mainstreaming efforts in ITC, which will be conducted separately.

ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) commissioned and managed the evaluation. The IEU engaged an external expert for evaluation and gender equality to carry out the evaluation. The evaluation followed a mixed-methods design. Information was collected through a document review and 49 interviews across key stakeholder groups, including women entrepreneurs; business support organizations; government representatives; private sector and funding partners; as well as ITC staff. In addition, a survey was conducted among the registered members of the [SheTrades.com](https://www.shetrades.com) platform, which received 605 responses.

Background

The SheTrades Initiative was launched by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in 2015¹ as a means to address gender disparities in trade and to promote women's participation in international value chains. It aims to promote women in trade, with a focus on increasing the participation of women entrepreneurs from small businesses² in developing countries in international value chains, raising the value of the international business they transact and diversifying the markets they access. This is linked to the higher-level impact goals of contributing to inclusive and sustainable trade, where women's equal opportunities for economic leadership, access to resources and economic productivity is harnessed and valued in international trade.

¹ Operational since 2016

² Including women producers, women in farming households, handicraft producers, etc.

SheTrades is aligned with the Empowering Women to Trade Programme which was developed in 2016 to set out the corporate strategic vision for promoting women's participation in trade. To **unite the previously fragmented ITC portfolio on gender and trade**, SheTrades has adopted a holistic model of working at multiple levels and across multiple stakeholder groups in a range of global action areas. As a result, the initiative operates in various domains of change:

- through support to **women entrepreneurs (WEs) and/or women-owned businesses (WOBs)**,
- through support to national institutions such as **business support organizations (BSOs) and national government counterparts**, and
- in collaboration with international and local **private sector institutions and market partners**.

Starting out as a separate flagship initiative, SheTrades and its brand has since overtaken the Empowering Women to Trade Programme and become synonymous with ITC's approach to support women in trade through its programming. SheTrades is also the main vehicle for **influencing ITC's internal learning around its contribution** to SDG indicator 5.5 ('ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life).

The new ITC Strategic Plan (2022-2025) refers to inclusive trade as one of five impact areas³, and specifically refers to SheTrades as *"a comprehensive initiative that brings together the **full range of [ITC] service offers from a gender perspective**".* This is an evolution from ITC's 2015-17 Strategic Plan which contained a commitment to doubling the value of exports from women entrepreneurs and to supporting improved competency in export-related operations and access to new markets of women-owned businesses (WOBs), but which predated SheTrades and its range of offerings.

SheTrades has identified seven global action areas to enable women in trade:⁴

- 1) Championing (gender disaggregated) Quality Data
- 2) Enacting Fair Policies
- 3) Securing Government Contracts
- 4) Striking Business Deals
- 5) Enabling Market Access
- 6) Unlocking Financial Services, and
- 7) Granting Ownership Rights

SheTrades' projects and services are aimed towards contributing to these action areas. An overview of the SheTrades offering and key achievements is presented in the box on the following page.

SheTrades' niche and positioning is that it provides **complementary offerings** in building trade competitiveness and providing hands-on support through projects on the ground while also engaging in international and national policy advocacy. Notably, SheTrades' advocacy efforts led to the launch of the WTO Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment at the WTO Ministerial conference in Buenos Aires in 2017, with follow-up in the national context through the policy components of its projects.

SheTrades was until recently managed by the section for Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chains (SIVC) in the Division of Enterprises and Institutions (DEI). In a recent re-organization (May 2022), and in line with the prominent role of sustainable and inclusive trade in the new ITC Strategic Plan, a new Division for Sustainable and Inclusive Trade (DSIT) was created, under which one section focuses on Women, Youth and Vulnerable Communities (WYVC) where SheTrades is now housed.⁵

³ The other four are: (i) sustainable and resilient value chains, (ii) green trade, (iii) e-commerce, and (iv) regional integration and South-South trade.

⁴ For more information see here: ITC (2022). [ITC SheTrades Initiative](#).

⁵ The posts of Director for the Division and Chief of Unit were still vacant at the time this report was written.

The overall SheTrades portfolio was around \$54 million between 2015-2022. This, in turn, enabled women entrepreneurs in 30 countries and generated more than \$250 million in trade and investment leads. (Source: SheTrades)

SheTrades Offerings and Scope of Services

SheTrades projects: Projects are funded initiatives that provide specific and tailored support to WEs/WOBs with a country, multi-country, or global focus. Each project has its own Theory of Change and targets and are expected to contribute to the overall change model of SheTrades. The evaluation reviewed 30 closed or ongoing projects since 2015 and noted eight new ones that either started during the evaluation period or were in the pipeline. Most new projects were under \$1 million (6 out of 8), with 1-2 years duration.

SheTrades.com: SheTrades has its own website, [SheTrades.com](https://www.shetrades.com), which is linked to but separate from the [ITC website](#). For registered members, the online platform provides access to much of SheTrades' offerings, such as tools, the Virtual Learning Space (courses, webinars etc.), resources and information produced by SheTrades. It also features news and success stories from members of the SheTrades community (beneficiaries). It has a network of 42 000 profiles (women entrepreneurs, buyers, partner organizations).

SheTrades Outlook: A data tool aimed to strengthen the evidence-base for policy making, it helps track how laws, policies and practices in different countries affect women's participation in business and trade, covering 83 indicators across six policy areas (trade policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, business environment, access to skills development, access to finance and work and society). Country profiles allow for a comparison across countries, illustrating in what areas countries are doing well and where there is room for improvement.

SheTrades App: A free app, available in English, French and Spanish, that seeks to provide easy access for women traders with potential buyers or support organizations. It also helps access training by linking it to the Virtual Learning Space. The app was developed in 2017, with subsequent investments to improve functionality. A project completion report from a project that specifically sought to launch and develop the app noted that it had registered 1,541 interactions by the end of 2017, with 8,371 users.

SheTrades Virtual Learning Space is the core training hub for the SheTrades Initiative. Currently there are 179 learning modules and 66 webinars accessible. A comprehensive self-assessment helps WOBs knowing the extent of their competitiveness knowledge and skills and suggests relevant courses. In addition to webinars, and shorter trainings, longer online courses are offered that lead to certification by the ITC SME Trade Academy. A coaching platform is planned but still under construction (in English, Spanish, and French). As of December 2021, the platform has had 2427 users from 134 countries since its launch in December 2019.

SheTrades Invest comprises a matching scheme where women entrepreneurs are mobilized, screened and matched to a pool of impact investors and the CARE/SheTrades impact investment fund jointly promoted by ITC and CARE USA with a focus on Southeast Asia and Africa. In 2019, the project engaged 31 impact investors and 2,318 SMEs, with approximately 600 companies having participated in capacity building activities.

SheTrades Global: A global and high-visibility trade fair event that seeks to connect export-ready women entrepreneurs to buyers, investors, and partners. Each SheTrades Global is expected to attract over 3000 participants and is organized by the SheTrades team in collaboration with hosts in-country. While two previous global events have taken place, the one foreseen for October 2021 in Dubai got postponed and eventually cancelled. While some SheTrades members can apply for sponsorships to attend, most have to carry their own cost for participation.

SheTrades Hubs: Hubs are embedded in local host institutions and serve as a local chapter of SheTrades in the country context. A total of 12 hubs have been launched, of which seven are considered active to varying degrees (Trinidad and Tobago, MENA, Kenya, Nigeria, Uruguay, Argentina, and Gambia). Local host institutions range from private sector partners, BSOs, to relevant government ministries.

SheTrades partnerships: More than 200 partnerships were developed since the outset of the initiative (funders, BSOs, private sector/market partners, policy-making institutions). The partnership model was assessed by the SheTrades team to bring in an average of \$1 million of in-kind contributions from partners per year and approximately \$1 million of in-kind support from private sectors partners per year. The revised SheTrades.com website lists around 30 active partnerships, most of whom are funders or international market partners.

Findings, Conclusions & Recommendations

Strategic positioning and focus

Finding 1a: SheTrades has successfully carved out a niche in the area of women in trade and created a strong brand during its first years of operation. This can be leveraged to consolidate gains and partnerships going forward.

There is strong evidence to suggest that SheTrades has positioned itself as a global actor to advance the agenda of gender and trade. A notable achievement was the launch and follow-up to the WTO Buenos Aires Declaration on women in trade, and the numerous strategic partnerships created with the private sector, other UN agencies and in at least one instance with an international NGO (the CARE-SheTrades Impact Fund). Within ITC, SheTrades has successfully turned a previously patchy and fragmented portfolio of small projects targeting women into a comprehensive initiative with a common narrative and change theory (yet still allowing for project- and context-specific differences). This has been an evolving task over the evaluation period (2015-2022) yet is evident in how SheTrades is being referred to in the different ITC Strategic Plans and workplans along with other corporate materials (such as the Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines of 2019), and has likely contributed to the fact that inclusive trade, including from a gender equality perspective, takes on a more prominent strategic importance in the new ITC Strategic Plan (2018-22) and recent re-organization.⁶ Stakeholders talked about an increase in demand for gender-inclusive trade expertise among ITC's key stakeholders which can be further leveraged to consolidate gains and partnerships both internally and externally going forward. A strong SheTrades brand was also seen as legitimizing for WEs/WOBs in their national contexts, to gain visibility, and in using certification from SheTrades trainings to gain access to finance and interest new buyers.

Finding 1b: High-visibility events and the launch of multiple offerings during a relatively short time period came with considerable trade-offs in terms of delivery capacity, approach and focus, compounded by ambitious targets.

In its first years of operation, SheTrades launched a number of offerings at national and global levels, and organized a multiple high-visibility events. It also invested considerable effort into building relationships with donors and partners, through numerous advocacy events and engagements with strategic partners. Staff noted that SheTrades Global⁷-- a global meeting place for women entrepreneurs and potential buyers (see box 1) was particularly draining, with unclear outcomes for individual entrepreneurs. Even so, at the early years of SheTrades' operations, it was seen as instrumental to gather a network of women buyers and partners and to position ITC in the women and trade space. This was in addition to and/or in conjunction with running many smaller projects, each with its own deliverables and targets. In doing so, a trade-off in approach was that the focus on economic empowerment became less prominent in SheTrades, which had a sharper focus on getting women to market. This differs from the Empowering Women to Trade programme document which defined success as women increasingly having both the ability to succeed and advance economically, and the power to make and act on economic decisions, including in the domestic domain. The holistic model of working with multiple stakeholder groups and creating strong enabling national systems, supported by international and national partners, was found to be highly relevant. With short-term funding and pre-set deliverables, it was however found that different workstreams (policy support and capacity-building of WEs/WOBs) were often supported in parallel as separate initiatives with little interaction between them, and with lack of sufficient time for follow-up and support to national partners.

Delivery pressure was compounded by the corporate target of getting 3 million women to international markets by 2022 – a relatively short time span since the launch of SheTrades in 2015, and since being referred to as an ITC flagship programme in the 2018 ITC Strategy. By default this target prioritized getting 'near-export ready' WEs/WOBs to expand their business internationally, rather than supporting young

⁶ In which a new division for sustainable and inclusive trade is created, and where women and trade is one of three units.

⁷ From 2015- 2018, the event was called Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum. From 2018 it became SheTrades Global.

WEs/WOBs or more marginalized women traders who may need longer-term support to make it to markets. In fact, in line with ITC's mandate to support SME's to export, the initial phase of SheTrades identified the initiative as complementary to those of other UN agencies active in women's economic empowerment that targeted more marginalized groups of women.⁸

Even so, the evaluation found little evidence that SheTrades had the capacity to deliver on the 3 million women to market target, and it is unclear on what basis that target was set by the top management. The target was meant to represent the cumulative achievement of ITC project delivery, the activities of in-country partners and SheTrades hubs, and through the delivery of independent commitments by other partners (such as private sector partners). Yet, without proper baselines, aggregated monitoring data does not differentiate between 'women reached' (including via one-off trainings) and 'women to market', and it is unclear to what extent it reflects women who used SheTrades to upscale their current business practices, or who expanded trade activities in the local market without exporting.⁹ It was also impossible to verify actual level of achievement against this target using SheTrades output level monitoring data, given the possibility for double-counting if women participated in more than one project, platform or hub-generated activity, or to verify whether commitments by independent partners were actually acted upon. The strong focus on the aggregate number of women reached during the first phase of SheTrades operations appears to have come at the cost of more detailed segmentation and analysis of different outcomes for different groups of women.

Conclusion 1: A strong brand and niche for ITC on gender and trade was successfully established via SheTrades since its launch, notably through engagement in international and national policy advocacy and by adopting a holistic, partnership-driven model. Yet high-visibility events and ambitious targets have detracted from monitoring quality in terms of economic empowerment of different groups of women, in particular young women and marginalized groups of women.

Having carved out operating space at multiple levels (in-country, inside ITC and at the global policy arena), a lot of effort has gone into demonstrating proof of concept, showcasing scalability, creating high-visibility tools and events, and getting 'quick wins' to mobilize both WEs/WOBs and partners. While partly donor driven (and due to the fact that many projects were short-term), this push for demonstrating quantitative results came at the cost of monitoring quality, with the risk of leaving certain segments¹⁰ of women behind. Furthermore, with a sharper focus on getting women to market compared to the Empowering Women to Trade Programme in ITC (2016-21), some of the gender transformative potential in the change model was lost (or not monitored), notably how it has helped shift power to enable women to make and act on economic decisions.

Recommendation 1: SheTrades should use the niche, brand and operating space it has successfully created to deepen its engagement in processes that help transform sectors (and/or specific value chains) to be more gender inclusive, with specific support to groups of women who are currently underrepresented or who benefit less from engaging in trade in the sector.

Presently, the SheTrades change model assumes that if a critical mass of WEs/WOBs are enabled in trade (globally, in a given country context, or sector), this will automatically open pathways also for other women – including younger or less privileged women -- in the same sectors, or as employees of WOBs. While this may be true in some sectors or geographic locations, it would need to be monitored and possibly complemented by other approaches to ensure that women are empowered to trade and benefit from engaging in economic decision-making. This would require a different set of targets that better reflect how sectors become more gender equal and inclusive, and what formal and informal barriers stand in the way. The need to further develop a gender transformative approach has recently been acknowledged by the

⁸ This has been altered in a recent effort to update its approach in line with the 2022 ITC strategy which includes more beneficiary groups.

⁹ SheTrades' own estimates against the 3 million target by mid-2021 was around 1.9 million women, of which around 1 million from commitments by partners (independent delivery), around 850,000 from in-country partners and hubs, and around 50,000 women entrepreneurs through ITC project delivery.

¹⁰ Notably young women, rural women further out in the value chain, employees and informal traders and/or women in male-dominated sectors as they would require longer-term processes of support with a higher degree of investment and coaching to get them into domestic or international markets.

SheTrades team, and is reflected in some of its more recent initiatives. A deepened engagement in carefully selected sectors (or for specific segments of underrepresented WOBs/WEs) may also call for a consolidation of tools and approaches currently offered by SheTrades, possibly dropping some of the resource-intensive events at global level (e.g. SheTrades Global) in favour of approaches that are tailored to the country, regional and/or sector specific contexts.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Be more explicit about the targeting of sectors and groups of women in SheTrades activities in order to enable gender transformative shifts – particularly for those who are underrepresented or benefit less in economic decision-making in the sector at present.*
- b. *Set up a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that systematically track qualitative outcomes over time both at sector level and for different sub-groups of beneficiaries.*
- c. *Critically review the number and scope of high-level visibility events in view of current delivery capacity.*

Note to ITC management: Targets on number of women to market, if used as an aspirational goal at the corporate level, should be set based on evidence, realistic delivery capacity and internal dialogue with clearly formulated expectations on what SheTrades and other gender mainstreaming efforts will contribute. Overly ambitious targets can skew efforts and resources to demonstrating quantity over quality and prevent monitoring of more meaningful gender outcomes.

SheTrades offerings and support

Finding 2: Barriers of entry into the SheTrades universe was still considered high for a majority of users, with SheTrades.com not being sufficient on its own as an entry-point into SheTrades' offerings. Yet, for women who had participated in SheTrades projects as beneficiaries, who had several interactions with the SheTrades team, and/or received several types of support from SheTrades and/or other ITC in-country initiatives, benefits were substantial.

The evaluation found a clear correlation between the level of perceived benefits from engaging with SheTrades and the extent to which participants had been selected as active beneficiaries of project activities and participated in multiple activities. Project beneficiaries typically had a higher degree of engagement, benefited from increased visibility, and participated more actively in both in-person and online trainings offered. However, benefits went down for those less actively involved. Barriers of entry into the 'SheTrades universe' were still perceived to be relatively high by a number of WEs/WOBs, and just registering on the platform was not considered enough for participants to be able to take advantage of all of SheTrades offerings without further support or guidance. This was pointed out in particular by young women who are not yet registered business owners. For those somewhat more peripherally involved, capacity-building efforts, and in particular online trainings that led to certification, were particularly appreciated. Several WEs/WOBs mentioned having used SheTrades certificates to build their CVs and to further leverage their credibility and legitimacy with finance institutions and potential buyers.

Timeliness of support, ongoing mentoring and contact with SheTrades team members and repeated training opportunities, access to multiple SheTrades offerings and opportunities were highlighted as factors that enabled results, including support during the COVID crisis on e-commerce and product diversification. Limiting factors, on the other hand, included diminishing returns on training unless accompanied with access to funding to invest in upscaling their production capacity to meet demand (also pointed out to be a limit to follow-up after trade fairs, even when new connections to potential buyers had been made). Several women also called for a more balanced mix between international TRTA provided by ITC experts, and localized approaches including facilitated peer interactions where less visible (but still important) gender barriers could be discussed (e.g., overcoming sexual harassment in male-dominated trade sectors).

Conclusion 2: SheTrades relies to a large extent on SheTrades.com as a main entry-point into the 'SheTrades universe' and its various offerings, and as a way to keep in contact with former project

beneficiaries. This was not considered to be enough unless accompanied by other types of support or communications channels to lower barriers of entry and use, both in terms of useability of the platform and related tools, and in the level of technical difficulty of the contents provided.

Those who reported benefitting the most from various SheTrades offerings often used many ways to engage in both formal training and informal peer exchange and as project beneficiaries (e.g., via local or sector specific WhatsApp groups), with a mix of global technical support and localized support and engagement. While the SheTrades.com platform is a good support as a knowledge repository, it is not actively checked by registered members unless there are 'push notifications' that correspond to their specific needs or are linked to other project-specific engagements. Different segments of WEs/WOBs may need different types of guidance in how to engage with SheTrades online offerings. A specific SheTrades 'track' for young women who are aspiring but not yet established entrepreneurs, was also suggested.

Recommendation 2: Ensure tailored and transparent targeting and tracking, of project beneficiaries, including young WEs/WOBs and those operating in male or male-dominated sectors, with links to other ITC programmes and partners.

The considerably higher benefits gained by project beneficiaries means that the selection, validation and follow-up with those benefiting from sponsorships or more tailored support via SheTrades needs to be carefully considered, including the role of partners in that process (avoiding gatekeeping or concentrating beneficiaries to those who are better connected in the capitals over rural/less well-established WEs/WOBs). Formal directories of WEs/WOBs often leave out informal traders, women employees or small-scale women suppliers (farmers, those engaged in crafts etc.) who should also be considered for tailored forms of support through complementary means and an initial sector/value chain gender analysis. Additional provisions may have to be made for women operating in traditionally male/male-dominated and/or high-growth sectors where a smaller number of women may be reached.

A reframing of the SheTrades platform as being complementary to other forms of support is called for with more navigational support, particularly for less experienced users.

Directed to SheTrades team:

- a. *Improve the validation and tracking of project beneficiaries, working with partners to reach those outside of the capital, young WEs/WOBs, and other women in the value chain (informal traders, women employees, small-scale women suppliers etc.).*
- b. *Promote and position the SheTrades.com platform as a complement to other in-person, peer-based and/or targeted project activities and with links to other ITC projects and resources.*
- c. *Work with partners to tailor and package content on the platform to the specific needs of different categories of beneficiaries (including young women).*

Finding 3: Supporting enabling country systems, including through SheTrades Hubs and by relying primarily on BSOs as intermediaries, has achieved mixed success to date. National private sector actors were found to play a positive role in relation to creating more diverse and inclusive supply chains in some countries, but more could be done in terms of working on gender inclusive supply chains for international market partners.

While WE/WOB 'success stories' were well-documented at an individual level across projects as a means of communication and inspiration for others. Yet, the evaluation found that it was less clear how big this cluster of 'successful cases' was, and the proportion of women entrepreneurs who contributed to noted positive ripple effects, such as the creation of job opportunities for other women.¹¹ It was also unclear what effects these individual cases of success may have had on sectors or systems in-country. There is also less evidence to suggest how gains will be sustained and further expanded to more WEs/WOBs at

¹¹ The SheTrades Commonwealth project report (Phase 1 and 2) noted that 6649 new jobs had been created by supported WEs/WOBs, and that 73% of these new jobs went to women.

the national level. Launched hubs generated high expectations for ongoing communications and activities among local WEs/WOBs and other stakeholders but had uneven success in maintaining momentum. Expectations were unmet when hubs did not remain active (partly due to lacking funding), and even caused confusion among registered members.

Sustainable effects were less clearly found when it came to supporting intermediary actors in setting up national systems for long-term support to WEs/WOBs, including via SheTrades hubs and/or with BSOs as intermediary actors. Setting up nationally embedded hubs did not, in most cases, provide incentives for BSOs and other institutional stakeholders to collaborate more closely. More often, hubs relied on project-funded national coordinators with a central facilitation role who could support both formal engagements and informal peer-exchanges via the hubs (e.g. via What's App groups). Instead of taking ownership of the hubs, host institutions tended to rely on sustained technical and financial support from SheTrades. Clear governance arrangements and commitment within host institutions and among partners were sometimes also missing. While some host partners engaged in hubs to be more closely associated with ITC support in-country, there was typically poor coordination between SheTrades hubs and other ITC supported activities.

In some countries¹², involving national private sector actors in gender mainstreaming and in creating inclusive value chains created results that potentially were more sustainable, beyond project funding. However, the role of international market partners remained at the level of providing short term support through private sector foundations, presenting (with some exceptions)¹³ with uneven uptake on efforts to also work on gender mainstreaming of their internal policies and operations more broadly, including in their supply chains. While SheTrades was considered to be a strong brand for the global activities, it sometimes caused conflict with other nationally branded initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship. Hub hosts also noted that different donors come with their own programme branding, with less of an appetite to support an initiative that is already strongly associated with ITC under the SheTrades brand.

Conclusion 3: The uneven results achieved to date in working with national institutional actors, including those hosting nationally embedded SheTrades hubs, may call for more focus at the national level going forward. National ownership, coordination across actors and linking hubs more actively to opportunities for support via other in-country programmes or to collaborations with private sector/market partners will be key.

A corporate push for launching a large number of SheTrades hubs, coupled with short term SheTrades project funding and low levels of financial support earmarked for SheTrades hubs, limited the possibility to forge clear links between different stakeholder groups and streams of support (policy and practical support to WEs/WOBs). For SheTrades hubs to become more actively embedded in the local context, they would need to rely less on SheTrades global, but rather be seen as vibrant connection points for WEs/WOBs, local actors and private sector players and serve as an entry-point for new opportunities, partnerships and information about tailored support (by SheTrades, other ITC initiatives in-country, or by other donors and funding partners). High-profile hub launches -- despite a lack of dedicated start-up funds and personnel for follow-up -- led to unmet expectations among national partners and beneficiaries.

Recommendation 3: SheTrades should seek to re-activate already launched hubs where there is strong local buy-in and/or where there are ongoing projects that can support start-up and coordination costs, while refraining from starting new hubs where there is weaker ownership among national partners, and where there is no dedicated funding. National ownership and alignment with local initiatives should be prioritized over maintaining and promoting SheTrades as a global brand in the local context.

Where buy-in is strong and where there is available projects/funding, it is recommended to pursue the hub model by 'reactivating' them. On the other hand, and as part of broader consolidation efforts,

¹² Notably SheTrades West Africa.

¹³ SheTrades typically promotes supplier diversity in all its partnerships with corporations in addition to providing tailored services and/or funding to various projects. Under SheTrades Commonwealth, SBM Bank and Safaricom approved new policies with targets to having at least 10% of suppliers being women entrepreneurs.

SheTrades is recommended to refrain from launching any non-funded SheTrades Hubs, or to set up hubs that are not clearly linked to in-country project(s) that can also be used for national coordination. In countries where ITC has more than one ongoing initiative, the SheTrades hub could be used to ensure closer collaboration between ITC projects in-country so that gender mainstreaming expertise is shared with other ITC programmes. SheTrades should also consider how best to transfer ownership of the hub concept to a set of national actors in a way that forges closer ties for collaboration in-country and that does not conflict with other nationally branded initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship and trade. SheTrades could play a role in working more closely with local private sector partners by linking them to SheTrades hubs, conducting gender training to pursue gender mainstreaming as part of corporate operations, and to diversify their supply chains in ways that open opportunities for local women entrepreneurs.

Directed to SheTrades team:

- a. *SheTrades should critically assess how to reactivate and continuously support launched hubs to ensure that ongoing communications with hub members can be maintained and local activities conducted. Where there is lack of local buy-in, SheTrades should consider closing hubs and clearly communicate to registered hub members how they can participate in other SheTrades activities by other means.*
- b. *National ownership should be prioritized, including alignment with other national initiatives to promote WEs/WOBs and export promotion.*
- c. *Unless dedicated funding and staff capacity is available, SheTrades should refrain from launching any new hubs.*
- d. *SheTrades should seek to enhance and regularly share information with other in-country ITC projects as part of their national coordination budgets, and as part of its role in institutional gender mainstreaming at ITC.*
- e. *SheTrades should explore how to involve local private sectors partners in creating incentives and skills for work on gender transformative approaches in selected value chains and act as intermediaries for involving women (particularly rural woman suppliers, women farmers) in inclusive sector value chains. SheTrades hubs (where they exist) should be used systematically for sharing lessons and insights.*
- f. *SheTrades should incentivize and coach international market partners on how to connect short-term funding support and mentoring with internal supplier diversity programmes, potentially with links to established SheTrades hubs and their operations in the national contexts.*

Directed to ITC management:

- g. *To enhance in-country coordination across ITC programmes and avoid a proliferation of thematic ITC hubs (SheTrades hubs, green hubs, youth hubs) it is recommended to have a corporate strategy on how and under what conditions to set up hubs, their mandate for coordination in the country context, and how to ensure that there is knowledge sharing between hubs set up in the same country (and possibly region) to support gender mainstreaming across other thematic initiatives.*

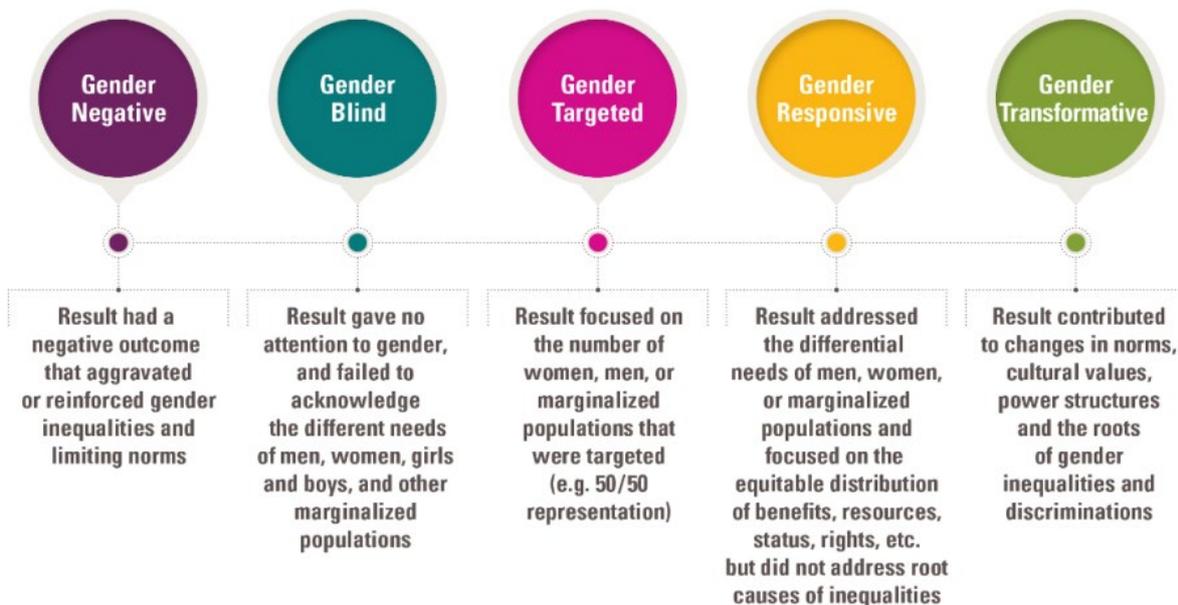
SheTrades within ITC

Finding 4: Targeting women (WEs/WOBs) was considered relevant given the large gender disparities and barriers where SheTrades operates. Lessons applicable to gender mainstreaming more broadly, including how to work with male-led SMEs or in male-dominated sectors, were less well captured, but could be relevant to inform gender mainstreaming across ITC.

Projects reviewed as part of the SheTrades portfolio most often target women (WEs and WOBs) with the aim of promoting their access to markets and increasing their competitiveness. To date, SheTrades has therefore been focusing on sectors where most women operate as either entrepreneurs or suppliers. Projects reviewed also tended to meet their targets, or even overperform, in relation to the number of WEs/WOBs reached. While this has generated important results in relation to trade and investment leads

of successful women beneficiaries, fewer lessons were generated in relation to how to promote gender equality in male-led SMEs or in male-dominated sectors. Notable exceptions were at the policy level where advocacy and research provided insights for example into gender-responsive public procurement, and in the SheTrades West Africa project which partnered with SMEs (mostly male-led) to provide gender training and help upshift women's economic empowerment in key agricultural value chains. The West Africa project also had more room than other projects to target fewer beneficiaries but go deeper into women's economic empowerment including in their economic decision-making (down to household level). This contrasts with projects that have more ambitious targets in terms of number of women reached, which typically left out women who were more peripheral in the value chain (suppliers, employees, rural producers, farmers) and/or their benefits were less well catered for and captured.

An internal strategy for when a gender targeted approach may suffice to achieve lasting sector impact, and when and how to ensure more gender transformative results at different levels was found to be missing in many projects (see figure below). Paradoxically, while the SheTrades change model sets out to create gender transformative results, most projects are primarily designed (and monitored) to be gender targeted. Projects that were more gender transformative in nature (SheTrades West Africa for example) went deeper into the monitoring, learning, and shifting of norms and attitudes of multiple, interlinked key actors in the value chain, thereby seeking more explicitly to transform existing power patterns that generate or maintain gender inequalities in the agricultural sector.



Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015

Even though SheTrades contributes to several of the gender indicators in the corporate strategic plan, and its results are heavily drawn on in the annual UN system-wide action plan (UN-SWAP) reporting on gender equality, there is no formal mandate for SheTrades in relation to ITC's mainstreaming or reporting on gender.¹⁴ The evaluation found that there was a lack of collaboration between SheTrades and other ITC units, particularly when it comes to using each other's materials and in the area of in-country collaboration. This was found to be at least partially driven by a lack of incentives to do so, and a need for each unit to promote its own approaches for fundraising purposes.

¹⁴ The UN system-wide accountability framework designed to measure, monitor and drive progress towards a common set of standards to which to aspire and adhere for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It applies to all entities, departments and offices of the UN system.

Conclusion 4: SheTrades could be further utilized as an internal resource for how to promote gender equality across ITC programming, particularly if operational lessons are gathered around when and how to move beyond gender targeting to create gender transformative results.

SheTrades appeared to be underutilized in ITC as a dedicated space to learn about how to create gender transformative results from promoting women in trade. Generating information materials with more operational lessons, particularly for sectors where women are less well-represented, may increase its relevance for ITC's broader mainstreaming efforts. It would, however, require strengthening staff capacities on gender in non-traditional female-led sectors within the SheTrades team, and shifting its positioning within ITC from being the "one-stop-shop" for women in trade to being more of an internal knowledge hub and a resource for other units. Resourcing such an internal knowledge function for SheTrades would need to be further looked at.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that SheTrades tools and resources correspond to in-house needs for gender mainstreaming across programmes and as part of ITC's corporate gender mainstreaming strategy, with a clear mandate, expectations, and sufficient resourcing for SheTrades to take on this role.

A repositioning of SheTrades to also fill an internal learning function on gender and trade would require strengthened staff capacity and increased effort toward documenting programmatic guidance on gender mainstreaming, including how to work with intersectional dimensions and with men/in male-dominated sectors. Concrete examples on how SheTrades tools or resources can add value to gender mainstreaming efforts in other ITC programmes could also be written up and distributed internally. This would include more critical lessons, highlighting programmatic obstacles and how they were overcome in different settings and for different segments of women. Guidance on how to work with different types of partners in order to introduce a gender perspective, drawing on SheTrades' extensive partnership model would also be helpful, including how to tailor the partnership portfolio to respond to gender issues in different settings (considering the need to widen or bring in different types of partners from e.g. NGOs or the private sector as needed), and in how to coach private sector partners to adopt a gender transformative approach in its support to gender in trade (including through its own internal policies). If sufficiently resourced to take on this task, it could help position SheTrades as an internal knowledge hub on gender – going beyond just targeting women in trade – to addressing more systemic formal and informal barriers and intersectional gender dimensions.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Provide space for systematizing internal learning and reflection around programmatic lessons that can be documented and shared with others (in-house and/or externally), including examples of how, in what settings, and under what conditions different SheTrades tools and resources have been successfully applied to advance gender outcomes and how to shift gender targeting into gender transformative results (particularly in male-dominated or led sectors).*

Directed to ITC management:

- b. *Review and consolidate the internal ITC gender mainstreaming architecture and SheTrades' mandate within it alongside gender expertise and internal mechanisms and resources.*

Finding 5: SheTrades' initial phase of expansion and experimentation with a range of global tools, high-visibility events and partnerships being launched led to staff – in particular junior staff – being overstretched and given a lot of responsibilities without the necessary guidance, often putting in long work hours.

The initial phase of SheTrades saw the launch of numerous initiatives and events, compounded by ambitious targets and the need to demonstrate ‘proof of concept’ to secure a steady stream of short-term funding and projects under a common umbrella and change theory (see Finding 1). This came at the cost of staff being spread thinly with long work hours for all staff. Junior staff and/or younger team members working on short-term contracts were often tasked with managing high-profile partnerships and high visibility events such as the launch of SheTrades hubs or supporting the organization of SheTrades Global event and trade fair.

Tasks were often handed to staff as their responsibility without sufficient onboarding or orientation on gender issues, and with limited time for follow-up. Events organized to generate publicity for the initiative (e.g., SheTrades Global, hackathons, hub launches etc.), also appeared to be added opportunistically, rather than as part of a longer-term strategy or response to in-country stakeholder needs. With many shorter-term projects to manage, staff shortages also occurred due to internal difficulties in acquiring the right level staff positions for the appropriate number of staff given the workload, with instances of reported staff burnout. Leading to high turnovers and a lack of career opportunities for junior staff, the high workload was also noted to have negative consequences in terms of long-term follow-up and relationship-building with national partners, instead favouring ‘quick wins’, short-term results, and the publication of individual WE/WOB success stories (even if these were not necessarily representative of a larger cohort of SheTrades users).

Conclusion 5: During the evaluation period, SheTrades was tasked with advancing a high-profile agenda on women and trade for ITC coupled with limited staff and capacity to deliver on it, including limited opportunities for in-house mentoring and cross-project learning within ITC.

Despite successful external resource mobilization and high-level management support when it came to external visibility, the initiative relied on many consultants and junior personnel (many without any prior experience working on gender issues) to deliver projects, develop global tools, and manage high-visibility events, with limited gender expertise on the team and no time/capacity to mentor staff and facilitate learning across projects or within ITC.

Recommendation 5: Review staff needs to be in line with SheTrades’ expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.

A consolidation effort and clarification of mandate of SheTrades within ITC should go hand in hand with a review of staff capacities to deliver on this mandate. This may involve looking at the number and level of staff, including the proportion of junior staff to more experienced internal or external expertise that is being drawn on. The recent reorganisation has led to an opportunity strengthen gender expertise in the new and/or vacant positions created. Additionally, external expertise particularly in women’s economic empowerment and gender transformative approaches can be more systematically drawn on to inform the design, monitoring and lessons learning across SheTrades activities and projects. A stronger focus on creating enabling (and sustainable) systems at country level may require a shift toward more in-country staff, with sustained support for national coordinators to bridge short term funding cycles.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Ensure that the SheTrades team has (and/or has access to) sufficient gender expertise, advise and training.*
- b. *Provide clear pathways for junior staff to strengthen their learning and to be able to use their gender mainstreaming expertise as a merit for their career paths within ITC (e.g., by supporting*

knowledge sharing activities or engaging in gender mainstreaming support for other ITC programmes). Work portfolios and responsibilities should be commensurate with their level of expertise and with clear job descriptions to allow for an adequate work-life balance.

- c. Ensure that new staff get sufficient coaching and/or training as well as hands-on exposure to in-country activities and sector-specific gender issues.*
- d. Review human resources needs at a global level versus in-country to ensure continuity and follow up in-country that bridges various short-term funding cycles.*

Directed to ITC management:

- e. Ensure that SheTrades management has strong gender expertise and management skills.*

Note to ITC management: Longer-term SheTrades staffing needs should be considered and facilitated depending on the role and expected contribution of the SheTrades team to the various strategic objectives of ITC and in relation to meeting internal gender mainstreaming priorities (see recommendation 4).

1) Introduction and methodology

1. SheTrades is an initiative by the International Trade Centre (ITC) to promote women in trade. SheTrades consists of a portfolio of various projects and support initiatives, initiated and managed under a **common programme umbrella**. The aim is to support **women's full participation in trade as part of promoting inclusive and sustainable value chains and development** and contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Purpose of the evaluation

2. The purpose of this evaluation is to take stock of the SheTrades approach, implementation models and results achieved at different levels after its first five years of operations (2016-2021). More recent developments in 2022 were also considered. ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) commissioned and managed the evaluation and engaged an external expert for evaluation and gender equality to carry it out.
3. The purpose is both **summative and formative** as the first five years of the programme come to a close (2016-2021), and a new phase and updated strategy is being prepared for its continuation. The TOR set out the overall purpose of the evaluation, to cover:
 - the **performance and quality** of the initiative and its alignment with the SDGs,
 - the **effectiveness of its approach** regarding aspects such as its multi-level nature, multi-sectoral dimension, and system transformative aspirations, including whether the initiative has succeeded in adapting to the changed circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and what further consequences such adaptations may have, going forward,
 - where SheTrades has provided **added value to ITC's work and mandate** particularly when it comes to lessons on how to support women in international trade, and incorporate a gender perspective into programming,
 - what **improvements** should be considered going forward in relation to SheTrades overarching Theory of Change and delivery, drawing on lessons and examples of good practice.¹⁵
4. To achieve these objectives, the evaluation examines and responds to the following high-level evaluation questions:

1. To what extent does SheTrades address the right issues?
2. To what extent does SheTrades achieve its objectives?
3. How well are activities coordinated, implemented, and available resources efficiently used?
4. How sustainable will the effects be?

5. **The purpose of this report is to present key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.** The basis for these elements is the set of evaluation questions, guided by the overall methodology. The table below shows the high-level questions and related specific questions, which were examined by this evaluation.¹⁶ The table also shows how the questions are linked to a number of fundamental evaluation criteria. These criteria provide a normative framework for evaluating development assistance and have been adopted by most development agencies as standards of good practice in evaluation.¹⁷

Table 1. Evaluation questions and related criteria

¹⁵ Synthesized from TORs.

¹⁶ As per TORs

¹⁷ OECD (2019), [Evaluation Criteria](#) (revised set of definitions)

Evaluation questions	Criteria focus
<p>1) To what extent does SheTrades address the right issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the initiative's objectives well aligned with women entrepreneur's needs? Are impact goals and the envisaged results in the programme's intervention logic capturing these needs and are they based on valid assumptions? How well has the initiative been designed to address relevant priorities and needs? How well-suited is the initiative's specific approach (multi-level and multi-sectoral dimension and system transformative in character)? Are there any innovative elements to be highlighted? To what extent does the initiative provide value to ITC's work and mandate, particularly from the perspective of working with gender issues? 	<p>RELEVANCE: <i>The extent to which intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs.</i></p>
<p>2) To what extent does SheTrades achieve its objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main intended or unintended results that the initiative has generated so far? Have any individual projects been particularly effective in contributing to the initiative's higher-level objectives? How do synergies or complementarities across individual projects contribute to the achievement of the initiative's higher-level objectives? Were there any key contextual factors that influenced the achievement of results across the initiative's project portfolio? To what extent has the initiative's particular approach been successful? In which areas has the initiative been most effective so far? What are the main results achieved in each of them? Are there examples of results achieved so far that could be considered responsive or transformative? To what extent have higher-level objectives been achieved so far? What contribution does the initiative make to the SDGs? 	<p>EFFECTIVENESS: <i>The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.</i></p> <p>IMPACT: <i>The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</i></p>
<p>3) How well are activities coordinated, implemented, and available resources efficiently used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the SheTrades Initiative been efficiently managed and delivered? How is the quality of implementation perceived by stakeholders? How has cost-effectiveness evolved over time in relation to the estimated reach and scale of the initiative? What systems are in place for monitoring, evaluation, and learning? Do these enable purposeful steering and accountability? To what extent has the initiative contributed to other ITC interventions, particularly in terms of dedicated support for women and/or working with gender issues? How successful is the initiative in drawing in the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve its performance? How well do SheTrades activities fit with those of other actors in the local context? Are efforts being made to ensure coherence? 	<p>EFFICIENCY: <i>The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.</i></p> <p>COST-EFFECTIVENESS: <i>The ratio of conversion from financial inputs into achievement of outcomes or impact</i></p> <p>COHERENCE: <i>The extent to which other interventions support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa. Includes the consistency of different interventions carried out by the same organization (internal coherence) or with those of other actors (external coherence).</i></p>
<p>4) How sustainable will the effects be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, youth, environmental sustainability, social responsibility and human rights) considered in the design and implementation of activities? What relevance do these dimensions have for the initiative? What are related results in these areas? Is there evidence that the initiative or its effects are likely to grow or be maintained beyond the duration of the programme? What impact does the coronavirus pandemic have on the design of the initiative? How did the initiative adapt to the changed circumstances? Are there any other external factors of influence which should be considered? Are achievements likely to lead to a shift in norms or practices related to gender and inclusion in international trade beyond the individual level? 	<p>SUSTAINABILITY: <i>The extent to which benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.</i></p>

6. Gender equality was included as a cross-cutting theme, in addition to being the specific focus of the initiative. **Gender equality, in this context, refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys.** It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.
7. **Gender equality is not a “women’s issue”, but concerns and should fully engage men as well as women.** Also in line with UNEG evaluation standards, equality between women and men, girls and boys is seen **both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable development.**¹⁸

Intended use and users

8. The **intended users** of this evaluation have been identified as: (i) the SheTrades Initiative team in ITC; (ii) ITC Senior Management; (iii) ITC staff, in particular in relation to working with gender mainstreaming in trade-related support programmes, (iv) Partners and funders (existing and potential future partners); and (v) interested peers or the public (e.g. via the website).
9. The evaluation adopted a **utilization-focused approach**, meaning that it was explicitly geared towards the information needs of implementers and key stakeholders. Scoping interviews as well as ongoing consultations with the SheTrades team indicated that of particular interest were overall trends across the portfolio, including how different support and engagement mechanisms complement each other. This is less well documented internally at present, given that monitoring is project specific. Of interest were also how, and to what extent SheTrades acts as a knowledge hub for gender mainstreaming in trade both internally and for external stakeholders.
10. To ensure that recommendations are **actionable** and framed in a way that resonate with the SheTrades management team, a validation workshop was conducted with the SheTrades team in June 2022, where preliminary findings were discussed, and key areas for recommendations were workshopped to get the team’s inputs.
11. Efforts were also undertaken to review and align, to the extent possible, recommendations with the **ITC Empowering Women in Trade Moonshot** – an internal initiative to take stock of lessons and set out a vision for SheTrades under the new ITC Strategic Plan (2022-2025).¹⁹

Evaluation approach

12. SheTrades is an umbrella of various initiatives – most of which are short-term in nature -- including, projects, partnerships, communication outreach efforts, events and a digital platform and tools that seek to enable women to enter or upshift their international trade practice. A **systems approach to evaluation** was therefore adopted which analysed how SheTrades performs in different domains of change or influence (also see Figure 1 below):
 - (i) at the **individual** level for women entrepreneurs (WEs) and women owned businesses (WOBs),
 - (ii) at **institutional** levels that create an enabling environment (within ITC or externally), and
 - (iii) at **societal or sectoral** levels that can help embed norm shifts in new practices and accepted standards for gender-inclusive trade.

¹⁸ The evaluation will follow the principles set forth in the [ITC Evaluation Guidelines](#) and in line with the [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) and respecting the [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#) published by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

¹⁹ This was an ongoing internal strategic exercise taking place within ITC early 2022. The gender moonshot paper was still in draft format.

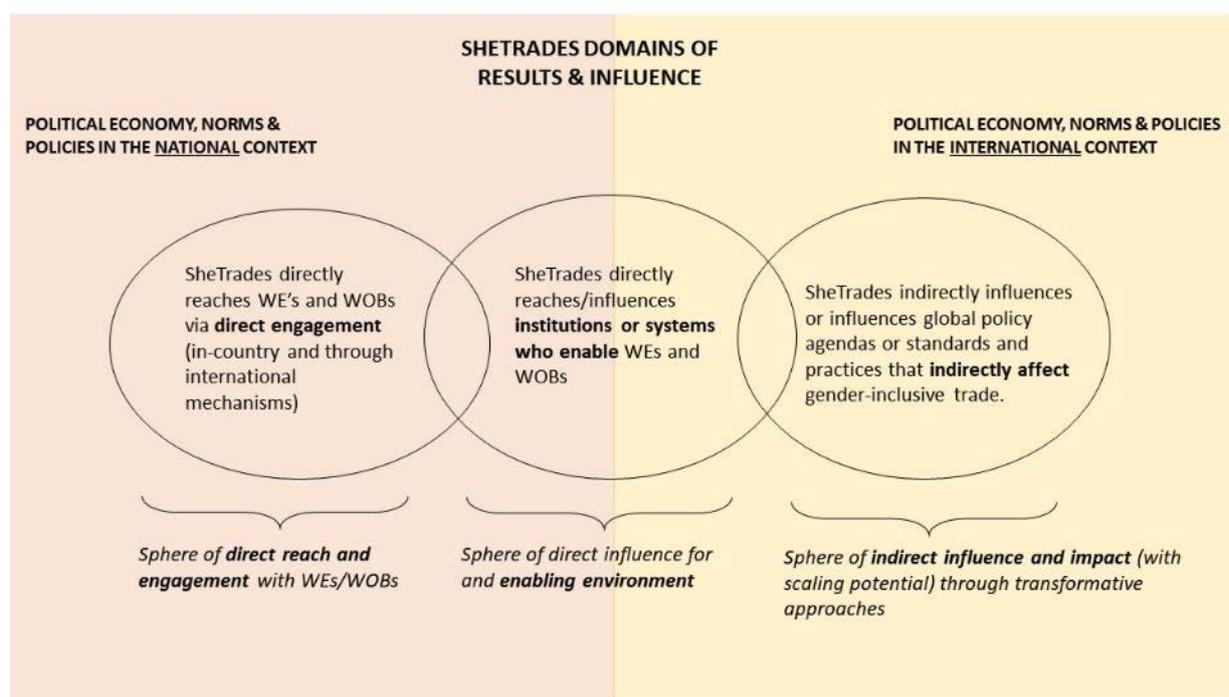


Figure 1: Domains of change of the SheTrades Initiative assessed by the evaluation.

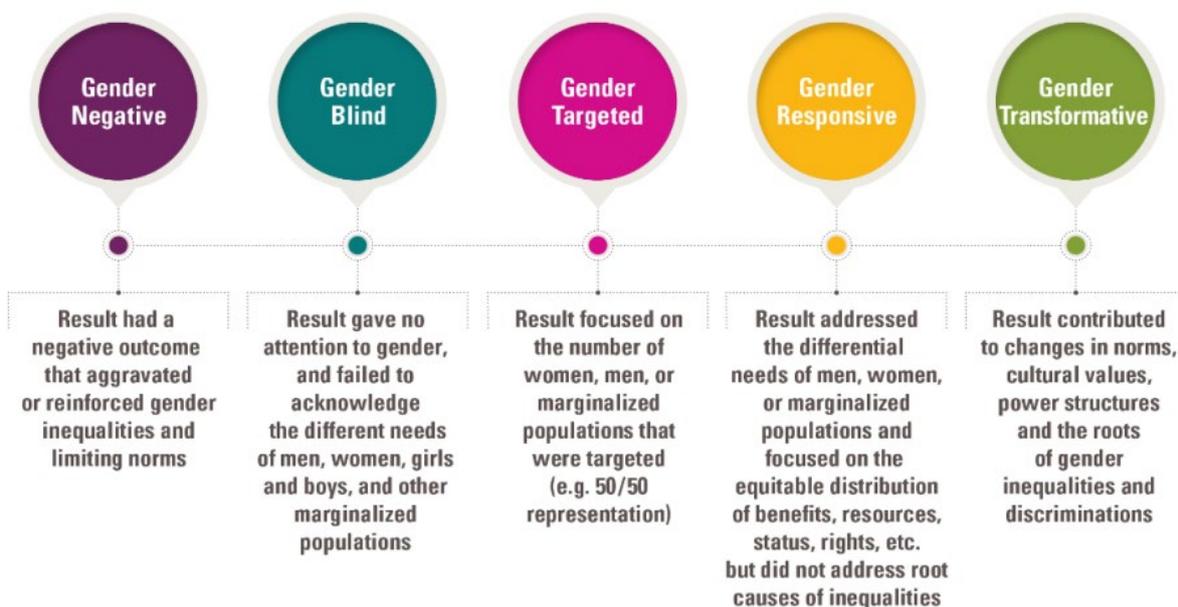
13. These domains also correspond to areas where SheTrades **directly and intentionally** seeks to reach and engage women entrepreneurs at an individual level through projects, outreach and direct communications via the digital platform and large-scale global events (trade fairs, SheTrades Global), where SheTrades **directly influences the enabling environment** (e.g. through business support organizations or in-country policy work), or where SheTrades has an **indirect contribution to more fundamental shifts** in global policy agendas or in norms and attitudes that enable women to benefit from trade at different levels.
14. These **domains of influence** are enabled by a range of complementary projects which combined position ITC as a key agency to take forward the agenda of women and trade at a global level, using its unique niche,²⁰ and in view of the momentum created by the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment at the WTO Ministerial conference in Buenos Aires in 2017.
15. Though currently not mentioned in the SheTrades results framework as a designated responsibility of the initiative (and thus with no specific funds currently allocated for the task), another aspect is the influence that SheTrades indirectly has on **gender mainstreaming within ITC** in order to reach impact-level transformative shifts at scale.
16. The multipronged approach adopted by SheTrades relies on **experimentation and innovation**, i.e. not all initiatives or projects have to succeed to the same degree as long as there is constant learning and overall progress against the overall aim.²¹ The **mixed-methods evaluation approach** therefore drew on the Outcome Harvesting methodology²² which typically seeks to cast a wider net for capturing results than standard monitoring practices by looking to capture things that are beyond the control of an isolated activity or project. It also puts less emphasis on previously identified targets and objectives, instead starting the inquiry by looking at what main outcomes occurred (anticipated and unanticipated) along with the **perceived significance** of observed outcomes by various stakeholder groups. For this evaluation, it was decided to emphasize the **user perspective** in relation to SheTrades offerings, both through qualitative feedback through semi-structured interviews and through survey data.

²⁰ The ITC's SheTrades initiative is a result of ITC's efforts to promote women in trade, dating back to 2009 with the Women and Trade Programme.

²¹ Confirmed via scoping discussions.

²² See: <https://outcomeharvesting.net/>

17. Furthermore, the evaluation sought – as far as possible – to look at results beyond the output level, to what changes occurred as a result of certain activities or outputs, in particular the **changes in behaviours, relationships or practices** by an individual actor or among groups of actors.
18. SheTrades has **clearly identified stakeholder groups** across its various projects and initiative, from which key informants for this evaluation were identified:
- Policy makers involved in coordinating the development of gender-inclusive trade and trade-related policies,
 - Business support organizations (BSOs) that provide services to women entrepreneurs/women-owned or led businesses,
 - Private sector partners, and
 - Women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses.
19. At a portfolio level, there was also an effort to look at the degree to which different aspects of the SheTrades initiative were seen to be **advancing gender equality**, drawing on the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).²³ (Figure 2).



Source: Adapted from the Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, IEO, UNDP, 2015

Evaluation process

20. The evaluation took place between September 2021 – July 2022 containing the following phases:
- Inception phase:** Initial document review, scoping interviews with the SheTrades team, identification of data sources and a review of project documents from 30 TRTA projects (see Annex 4), synthesized in an Inception Report. It relied on four main types of sources: (i) programme documentation related to SheTrades programme management, projects, and outreach materials with an emphasis on reporting, (ii) documents related to ITC's work in the area of women and trade including internal gender mainstreaming materials with links or connections to SheTrades; (iii) publications, evaluations or studies related to women and trade, particularly in relation to the normative framework within the international community and ITC's niche and placement within this domain of influence; (iv) any documentation provided by strategic partners or funders.

²³ The approach was first introduced by UNDP in their 2015 corporate gender evaluation.

- II. **Data collection phase:** Semi-structured interviews conducted online with **49** stakeholders from across the SheTrades main stakeholder groups (WEs/WOBs, BSOs, policymakers, funders, market partners), survey distributed to all SheTrades.com registered members with **605** responses, additional document collection and review.
- III. **Data analysis, validation and reporting:** Synthesis and clustering of interviewee feedback to detect portfolio-wide patterns in line with the evaluation questions and matrix (Annex 3), workshop with the SheTrades team to validate findings and get inputs into the formulation of recommendations, reporting and finalization of the evaluation report.

Data sources & limitations

21. In-person data collection from stakeholders was foreseen to be undertaken in the lead up to, and during the SheTrades Global event, planned for February 2022 (initially October 2021) by attending and interacting with participants expected to attend (from across all stakeholder groups). Since this event was first postponed and then cancelled, due to the COVID crisis and related travel restrictions, **the evaluation had to rely exclusively on identifying and interviewing stakeholders remotely**. This proved to be challenging and often time-consuming since WEs/WOBs are not 'project beneficiaries' in the more classical sense, but primarily busy business managers and CEOs who take advantage of SheTrades' offerings to differing degrees.
22. The evaluation relied on **purposive selection** of interviewees undertaken by the SheTrades team in order to identify WEs/WOBs along with other stakeholders who had benefited or been actively involved in project activities with tangible experiences and insights to share. This **may have introduced a positive bias** from in-depth interviewees compared to the broader community of SheTrades platform users, some which may only attend certain courses or be involved more peripherally/not in project-specific activities. A second tier of users who had been more marginally involved were identified in a couple of countries to further explore any barriers to use or access of SheTrades tools and offerings. However, these stakeholders were generally unresponsive to requests to connect online.
23. At the time of data gathering, **a majority of the short-term SheTrades projects** that makes up the portfolio since 2016 **had come to an end** or were in between funding phases. This also made it more difficult to get hold of relevant stakeholders, particularly from in-country policy work or BSOs, possibly given a lower level of incentives for them to set aside time for the exercise after project termination.
24. Although the SheTrades team gathers excellent output/quantitative project data according to the various indicators and project targets set, there was **less qualitative data and cross-portfolio analysis** in the existing project materials, particularly when it came to outcomes. This made it more difficult for the evaluation to assess that aspect. Instead, the evaluation had to rely on semi-structured interviews as the main source for assessing any outcome level results.
25. To mitigate positive bias and involve a larger number of WEs/WOBs in the possibility to provide feedback, **a short survey was sent to all registered members of the SheTrades platform** (18,625 people at the time of sending the survey). Of these, around 5,329 people opened the email with just above 600 respondents. Given that many of those registered on the platform are thought to be inactive members, this was still considered to be a fairly high response rate. A limitation was that the SheTrades platform had just been updated to a new version and temporarily was only available in English (with Spanish and French to follow). Likewise, the survey was only sent in English, **possibly skewing the responses toward English-speaking countries**. The survey was user-oriented – directed primarily to WEs/WOB – with less questions targeting policy makers or other stakeholder groups in order to keep it brief and encourage a higher response rate. However, the survey included the option to provide suggestions for how SheTrades could be improved, which **more than half**²⁴ of the survey respondents did.

²⁴ 313 respondents provided inputs.

26. Presenting both challenges and opportunities²⁵ to the evaluation, a **series of internal corporate changes** took place in the course of the evaluation period that affected SheTrades' positioning within ITC (as it moved to a new division and sector), its leadership, and its strategic direction – including in relation to the new ITC corporate strategy (2022-25) and the internal vision for how to work with gender equality mainstreaming across ITC.

2) The SheTrades Initiative

Institutional setup and scope

27. The SheTrades initiative was launched by ITC in 2015²⁶ as a means to address gender disparities in trade and to promote women's participation in international value chains. It aims to promote women in trade, with a focus on increasing the participation of women entrepreneurs from small businesses²⁷ in developing countries in international value chains, raising the value of the international business they transact and diversifying the markets they access. This is linked to the higher-level impact goals of contributing to **inclusive and sustainable** trade, where women's equal opportunities for economic leadership, access to resources and economic productivity is harnessed and valued in international trade.
28. In ITC, She Trades was until recently (May 2022) managed by the section for Sustainable and Inclusive Value Chains (SIVC) in the Division of Enterprises and Institutions (DEI). In a recent re-organization, and in line with the 2022-2025 ITC Corporate Strategic Plan, the importance of sustainable and inclusive trade was made even more prominent as a new **Division for Sustainable and Inclusive Trade** was created, under which one section focuses on Women, Youth and Vulnerable Communities (WYVC). Within the section, SheTrades constitutes the unit on Women & Trade, whereas other units will focus on Poor Communities & Trade, and Youth & Trade respectively. Though too early for the evaluation to assess the effects these recent changes,²⁸ it gives more visibility and prominence to the issue with potentials for further cross-collaborations across sections, potentially addressing more of a segmented approach for targeting women entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses and other forms of ensuring the economic empowerment of women and youth (see Findings section).
29. The **new ITC Strategic Plan** (2022-2025) also refers to inclusive trade as one of five impact areas²⁹, and specifically refers to SheTrades as "*a comprehensive initiative that brings together the full range of our service offers from a gender perspective*". In addition to offerings mentioned in previous strategic plans, it mentions women's access to digital technologies and the need to work with local institutions and BSOs as SheTrades Hubs. It also mentions SheTrades Outlook as a means to enhancing country level data to inform national policies. Finally, it mentions that "*in response to requests to upscale our work on gender, SheTrades will pursue a growth strategy*", yet does not specify what such growth would look like.³⁰
30. The focus in the new ITC Strategic Plan is an evolution from the **2015-17 Strategic plan** which predated SheTrades as a comprehensive initiative and ITC brand, even though the 2015 plan still talked about a focus on women and trade, with a focus on doubling the value of exports from women entrepreneurs, and improved competency in export-related operations and access to new markets of WOBs.
31. The **2018-21 ITC Strategic Plan** specifically refers to SheTrades as one of ITC's flagship initiatives and introduces the seven action areas (trade policies, financial inclusion, gender disaggregated data, public procurement, business deals, ownership rights, and capacity building). Furthermore, it mentions

²⁵ Challenges included keeping up with new information and its potential significance for the initiative going forward, while this was also seen as an opportunity to feed in evaluation evidence as SheTrades was in the process of 'redefining' itself in a new institutional set-up and in relation to the new ITC strategy.

²⁶ Operational since 2016.

²⁷ Including women producers, women in farming households, handicraft producers, etc.

²⁸ The new organigramme was presented by ITC Executive Director Pamela Coke-Hamilton at a townhall meeting on 6 May 2022, just as data collection for the evaluation came to a close.

²⁹ The other four are: (i) sustainable and resilient value chains, (ii) green trade, (iii) e-commerce, and (iv) regional integration and South-South trade.

³⁰ ITC Strategic Plan 2022-25, p. 38

SheTrades.com, online and mobile applications, and makes reference to SheTrades Global as a global meeting place for women entrepreneurs, buyers, partners and investors. The 2018-21 Strategic Plan (the main time period for this evaluation) also introduced the **ambitious target for SheTrades to connect 3 million women to market**.

32. It is the understanding of the evaluation that the 3 million women to market target can be seen partly as a **Call to Action**, effective for outreach and mobilization. Being **largely aspirational in nature**, it is also a target that relies heavily on partners' role in upscaling initiatives (see graph below). ITC launched a Call to Action to bring one million women entrepreneurs to market by 2020³¹. This led to a number of market partners making commitments to achieve this goal, i.e., the overall target (3 million by 2021) is combining what ITC directly supports and what partners commit to achieving. The exact number shifts a bit depending on the document reviewed and when it was produced. The Empowering Women to Trade document (2016-21) sets out a more modest number of women directly supported by ITC, with scale being achieved by working in collaboration with partners, and with partners also following through on their own commitments. (See graph below).



33. The SheTrades initiative **frames ITC's projects on women and trade**. The programming framework engages partners to substantially contribute to ITC's corporate objective of connecting 3 million women to market as laid out in ITC's 2018-21 Strategic Plan. The initiative builds on ITC's **Women and Trade Programme**, which ran from 2010 until 2015 and has subsequently been called the Empowering Women to Trade Programme. Several of the Women and Trade programme projects (Phase I and Phase II) that ended in 2016 or later are considered a part of the SheTrades overall project portfolio.
34. As the main flagship initiative of ITC in the area of empowering women to trade and women's economic empowerment, SheTrades is also the main vehicle for **influencing ITC's internal learning and corporate contribution** to SDG indicator 5.5 ('ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life), with a focus on economic empowerment. Even so, this has not been seen as part of the SheTrades official mandate and scope, and there is nothing in SheTrades' internal results frameworks or monitoring that tracks internal contributions to wider institutional mainstreaming efforts.

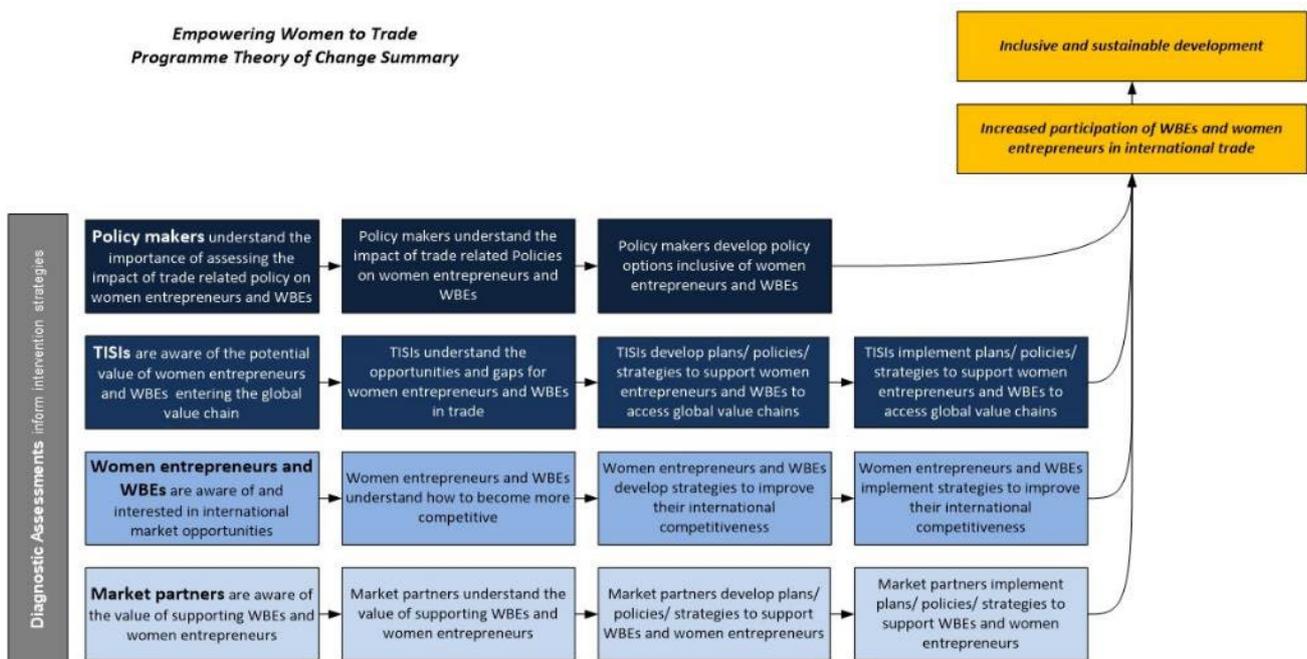
Theory of Change and Global Action Areas

35. **The underlying assumption** of the SheTrades initiative is that women entrepreneurs face barriers disproportionately to men when seeking to engage in trade and sell their products and access international value chains. This limits their potential to increase their income and employment opportunities, particularly

³¹ See Annex 11 of the Empowering Women to Trade Programme document for the full text of the Call to Action

when it comes to women working in export-oriented value chains. The assumption is **validated** by extensive analytical work around gender and trade, including from lessons from ITC’s long-term engagement in the area, as noted in the ITC Evaluation of the Women & Trade Programme, Phase 1 (2016).³²

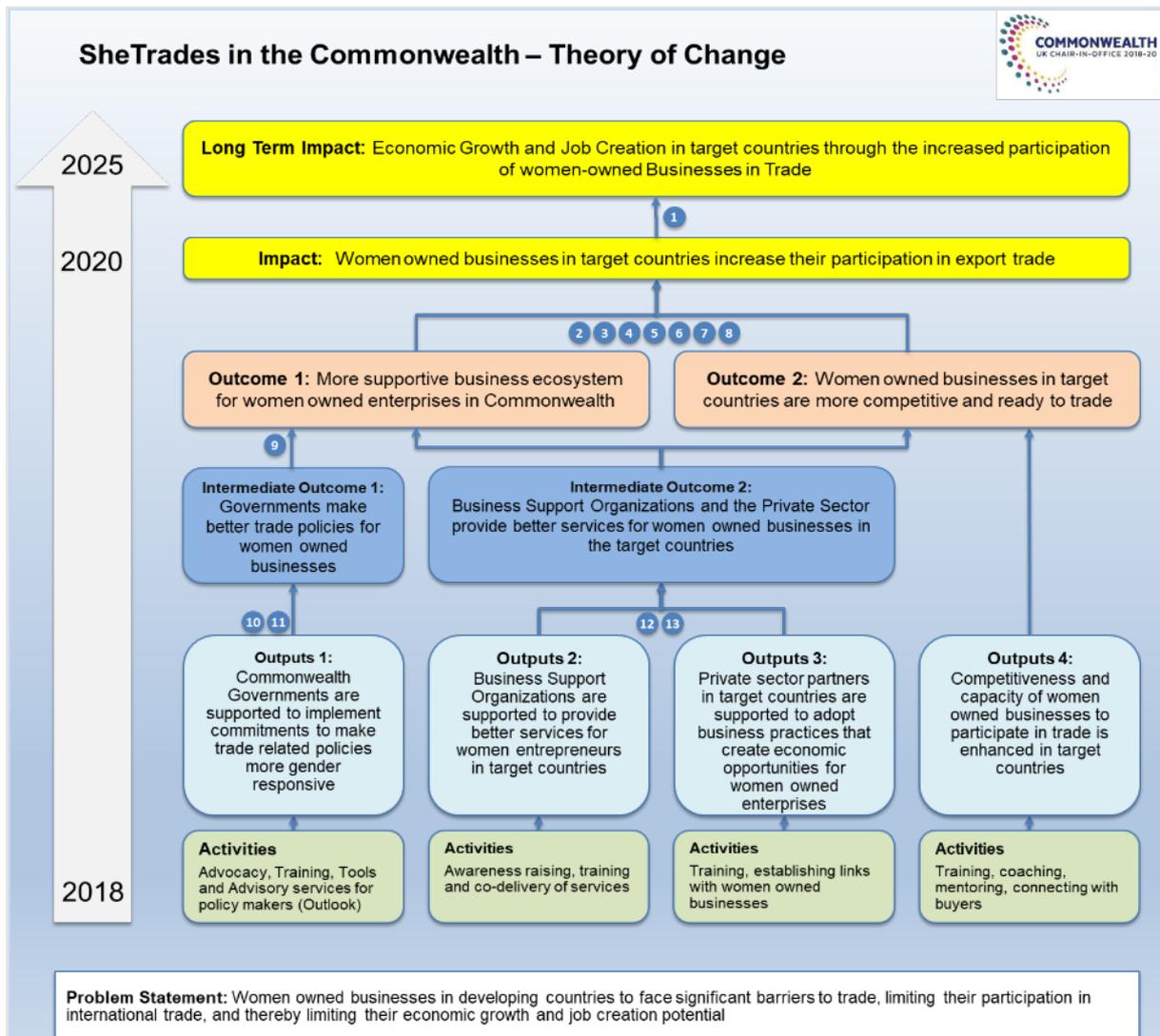
36. These barriers are often **systemic** in nature. In other words, the nature of the problem is **complex** in that it stems from a multitude of inter-dependent variables at multiple levels of operation (individual, institutional, societal). As such, **innovative and experimental** approaches are needed in different settings, and there is no clear way to identify and roll out a one-fits-all ‘best practice’ approach. A **multi-pronged** approach is also needed both to support women at an individual level (in terms of skills, connections, opportunities) and in terms of creating an **enabling environment** at policy-level, and in working with market partners and business support organizations (BSOs).
37. Although there may be additional, deeply rooted gender inequalities that serve as barriers for women’s economic empowerment in a specific geographic or sector context (e.g., the lack of mobility due to cultural norms, unpaid care work etc.), SheTrades does not target these underlying barriers as an entry-point. Rather, expanding women’s access to domestic and international markets as the entry-point is believed to, in turn, have **ripple effects on more underlying causes and barriers**, and on women’s employment more broadly. Targeting WE/WOB’s individual economic empowerment and increasing their market access is also the most commonly supported activity across all of the SheTrades projects. (Annex 4).
38. Such transformative ripple effects include evidence of how women are more likely to use their earnings and increased bargaining power to buy goods and services that improve **family welfare**, which has the potential to break intergenerational cycles of poverty. The Empowering Women to Trade programme document also points to that fact, that a woman is economically empowered “when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions.” This has the potential to strengthen women’s decision-making in the household, and women’s role in shaping institutions, social norms, and the well-being of their communities.
39. During the evaluation period there were a number of **different results frameworks and Theories of Change (ToCs)** in circulation for SheTrades (at overall initiative-level and for individual projects). However, there is a fairly high degree of alignment between them, drawing on the previous Empowering Women to Trade 2016-21 programme strategy document (see below).



Source: Empowering Women to Trade 2016-21. (WBE = Women’s Business Enterprises)

³² Evaluation of the Women & Trade Programme, Phase 1. ITC Evaluation Unit, May 2016.

40. The ToC (above) points to the four parallel tracks, by stakeholder group, with the assumption that they eventually combine to increase participation of women in international trade.³³ The four parallel tracks do not indicate any clear entry-point, but rather indicate that **all four intervention tracks are needed as mutually reinforcing enablers** in any given context. Different projects then have a different emphasis depending on its scope and focus.
41. It should also be noted that at this overall level, there is a strong focus on **international trade**, whereas some project-level ToCs have a stronger focus on creating a supportive business ecosystem at country-level as a means toward (or pre-condition for) connecting women to international trade (see example from the SheTrades Commonwealth project below).

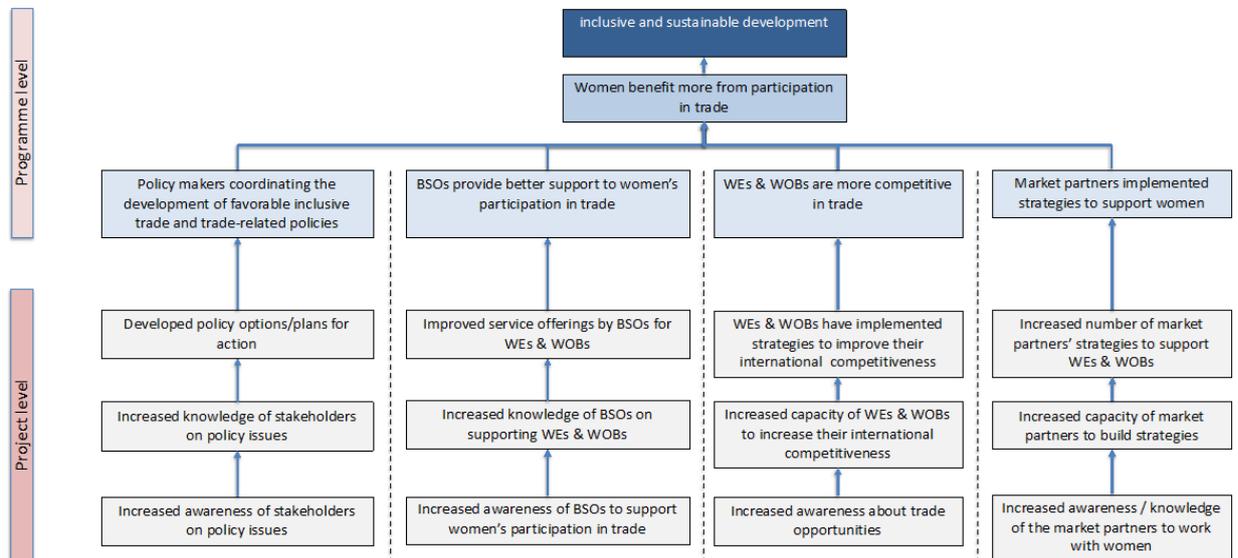


42. The **results-based management (RBM) framework**³⁴ provides an overview of a results chain for the initiative (see chart below) that it is largely **actors-based**, i.e., each of the main intermediate outcomes is based on expected behaviour change by stakeholder group. It also sets out a gradual behavioural progression in key stakeholder groups from increased awareness through to concrete commitments and actions that promote women in trade.

³³ In the Empowering Women to Trade (2016-21) programme document, the term Women’s Business Enterprises (WBE) is being used, while in SheTrades documents Women Entrepreneurs (WE) and Women Owned Businesses (WOBs) is a more common term.

³⁴ ITC (2019). Results-Based Management. Framework applicable for the SheTrades Programme International Trade Centre (internal document)

43. It should be noted that this results framework and accompanying results matrix with indicators was **developed in 2019**, whereas the evaluation covers the full implementation period 2016-21. However, it seems to have been created also with the older projects in mind as they fit into some aspects of the outcome areas to varying degrees. The reason for this 'retro-fitting' of projects into a comprehensive results framework was reportedly that the initiative initially grew quicker than anticipated with some of the internal systems for results management initially lagging behind.



WE: women entrepreneurs; WOB: women-owned businesses; BSO: business support organization

44. Cross-cutting programme strategies are outlined in **seven global action areas** that are directed toward empowering the individual women entrepreneur/woman-owned business, or in lowering the barrier for women's engagement in trade. These seven global action areas are³⁵:
- 1) **Championing Quality Data:** Gender-disaggregated data on women's participation in trade ensures that women are visible in the economy.
 - 2) **Enacting Fair Policies:** Incorporating gender considerations into policies and policymaking processes in order to level the playing field for women in international trade.
 - 3) **Securing Government Contracts:** Through public procurement, governments have the opportunity to diversify their supply chains and empower women-owned businesses through gender-responsive procurement.
 - 4) **Striking Business Deals:** Working with buyers to make their supply chains more open and inclusive of women (private sector procurement).
 - 5) **Enabling Market Access:** Building women's capacity so that they become more competitive and therefore more able to access markets.
 - 6) **Unlocking Financial Services:** Enhancing women and women-owned businesses' contribution to growth, and to contributing to women's autonomy.
 - 7) **Granting Ownership Rights:** Advocacy to ensure women's equal access to ownership and control over resources as a means to engaging in trade.

³⁵ See also typology in Annex 1.

Portfolio overview

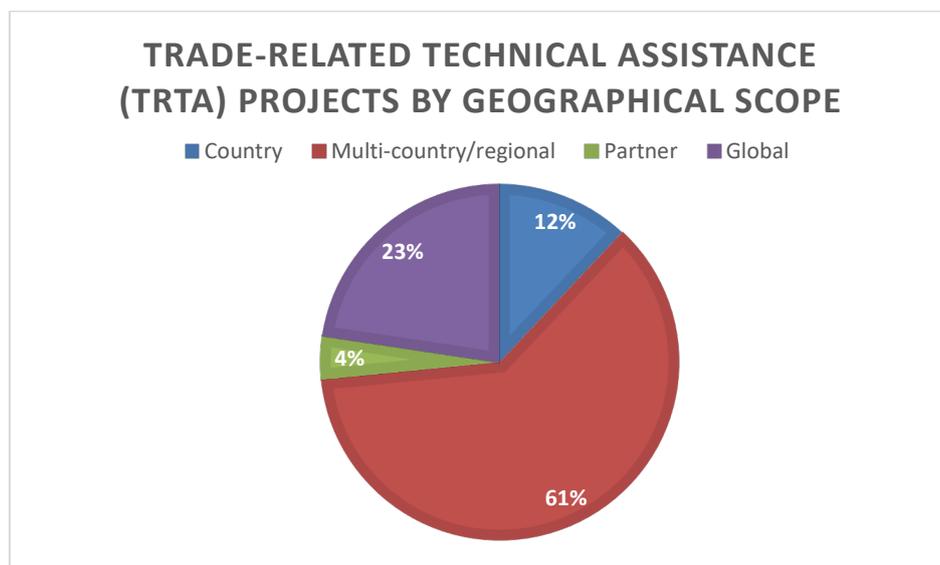
45. The SheTrades **portfolio** contains a number of country-specific, multi-country or regional, partner-driven or global support projects, most of which span 1-2 years. In the time period 2016-June 2021 there was a total of 30 closed or ongoing Trade-Related Technical Assistance (TRTA) projects (see Annex 4), as well as staff and coordination projects and a corporate project, amounting to a total of **around \$50 million to date** with additional resources raised for 2022 onwards.
46. **Additional projects**, covering the time period August 2021-2023, amounting to around \$3.6 million were approved after the initial project mapping was done as part of the inception phase of the evaluation. Several of these projects were continuations of previous work (such as the SheTrades Commonwealth, Phase II), and also relatively short term in nature. Most projects were under \$1 million (6 out of 8), covering 1-2 years. (See Table 2 below).

Table 2. Additional SheTrades projects, covering the time period August 2021-2023

Title of project	Start	End	Budget (USD)	Funding agency
SheTrades: Accelerator Programme for women entrepreneurs in the Apparel, Accessories and Home Décor sector	Aug	Jan 2023	765 240	GIZ Germany
SheTrades: Trade Impact Group - WTO	Oct 2021	Oct 2022	290 698	EU DG Trade
SheTrades Zambia: Increasing the participation of women in trade	Nov 2021	Nov 2023	300 000	EIF & W1
SheTrades: Empowering African women through e-commerce	Dec 2021	Oct 2022	220 101	GIZ Germany
SheTrades: Empowering women and boosting livelihoods through agricultural trade: Leveraging the AfCFTA	Dec 2021	Apr 2023	345 000	FAO
SheTrades: Empowering Women in the AfCFTA (Phase II)	Dec 2021	Jan 2023	464 000	GIZ Germany
Inclusive Trade: SheTrades Initiative	Jan 2022	Dec 2022	1 150 000	W1
SheTrades Commonwealth Phase II	Apr 2022	Mar 2023	1 300 000	FCDO UK
TOTAL			3 665 039	

47. SheTrades projects are to varying degrees covering the **seven global action areas** that SheTrades has defined for adopting a holistic approach to getting women to markets. Both SheTrades **projects and partners commitments** are expected to contribute to these action areas. Partner commitments are made through pledges by institutions at the SheTrades.com website. A pledge specifies the number of WEs or WOBs a partner institution commits to support via training, service delivery, procurement or investment.
48. In addition to administering and supporting a number of separate projects at country, regional or global levels, recent/ongoing initiatives have included supporting beneficiaries with relevant assistance in the **COVID/post-COVID** environment through workshops, webinars and online courses tailored to specific sectors and broad topics (e-commerce, logistics, business skills, etc.). **Digitization of businesses** was made a priority in the COVID era, both in relation to e-commerce, promoting products via different social media platforms, and in relation to conducting business via the Internet. However, some initiatives (e.g., in Rwanda) went even further in terms of digital traceability and using blockchain to connect local women-led coffee growers to more markets.
49. Sustained engagement with women entrepreneurs who participate in SheTrades projects is encouraged through various global outreach initiatives via the **SheTrades.com digital platform** and via a number of national **SheTrades Hubs**, led by national host institutions. Some of these are fairly recently launched (2020, 2021) with South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago being two examples. A hub manual was developed, and recent support has also sought to consolidate and strengthen their institutional set-up (see also Findings section).

1. As of June 2021, there is a total of 30 projects in the 2016-2021 SheTrades portfolio of Trade-related Technical Assistance (TRATA) projects. 11 of these are still active, while 19 projects have contributed to the initiative since 2016 (some starting as early as 2013). There are 2 closed and one active staff and coordination project and one smaller corporate project to produce a publication on follow-up to the WTO Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade.
2. During the inception phase of the evaluation, a review of project documents (operational and financial closures, project completion reports as well as project descriptions for ongoing projects) was synthesized in a **typology of the projects** in relation to their geographical coverage, level of targeting, domains of influence and by global action area (Annex 4).
3. In terms of covering the **global action areas**, all projects were found to focus on enabling market access for women, including through training and other forms of capacity building of women entrepreneurs with a focus on strengthening their competitiveness. Nearly all were seeking to practically match women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses to new market opportunities. Among the older (closed) projects, this was the primary focus whereas current programming in most cases also seek to influence the policy environment and strengthen quality data, indicating that a more **holistic programming** has been developed based on needs over time. With new partnerships and the launch of SheTrades Invest, a stronger focus also seems to have emerged over time on the provision of financial services and access to finance. Some stand-alone projects (such as support towards an international definition of Woman Owned Business) touch on ownership issues but was primarily geared to facilitating standardized international data gathering. The project focused on better data (facilitating the collection and comparison of data), in order to facilitate government contracts, business deals and finance (supplier diversity schemes, public procurement preferential programmes, gender-lens investing, etc.) -- all which critically need a definition for the target groups. The project was not aimed at increasing women's access to property rights. Rather, the global action area on ownership rights is only dealt with by SheTrades as an advocacy issue with no dedicated programming. In the project literature it is only referenced as a pre-condition in relation to creating an enabling environment.
4. As for **geographical coverage or targeting**, the largest part of the portfolio (61%) was allocated for multi-country or regional projects, followed by a global focus (23%). There were fewer country-specific projects (8 in total, 4 closed and 4 active), typically smaller in size (12% of overall portfolio), with the biggest ongoing country-level initiative currently in the agriculture and textile sectors in Gambia. (Graph below).



5. Of the projects that indicated support to one or several **focus sectors**, the agricultural sector was the most common (for 12 out of 21 of sector-focused projects), with coffee the most common sub-sector (for half of all agriculturally focused projects). This was followed by the textile and garments sector, which was mentioned for nearly half of the projects. Several projects also mentioned handicrafts, food and beverage, tourism, and the ICT sectors.

6. The projects typically support women entrepreneurs in **value added agro-processing products**, where they need to comply with standards, invest in marketing and often target niche markets.
7. A focus on **services** was common in the ICT and tourism sectors (e.g., in the Commonwealth project) as it's a growth area with many opportunities for women, particularly in the medium to long term. Yet for projects focusing on services, a lesson was that it can take longer to build trust with buyers (services are less tangible and less easily tested for quality than goods) and to generate sales, particularly at scale. Therefore, projects have had to balance the desire to promote services against the need to generate strong results within the project lifetime (which favours more traditional sectors such as agriculture and textiles and apparel).³⁶
8. Nearly all of the projects went beyond just matching women sellers with potential buyers to also seeking to influence the sector or national **enabling environment**. At domestic level, this implies strengthening institutional capacities in trade and trade-related ministries in the area of trade and gender, support women's business associations, provide analysis and provide technical advice to governments on policy, legal and regulatory reforms. Of the projects that sought to influence the international enabling environment, around half also had specific links to regional organizations (EU, COMESA, AU, EAC etc.). Other projects, particularly the global support projects and the corporate project also targeted the international enabling environment, including follow-up to the WTO Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade.
9. Examples of **country-level policy work** undertaken as part of the SheTrades Commonwealth project focused on supporting countries to come up with an applicable definition of "women-owned business" to fill national data gaps (using the ISO standard developed as part of a SheTrades project); initiatives on gender responsive public procurement, and gender mainstreaming of national policies and implementation plans among other things. (See Table 3 below).

Table 3. Examples of Policy Work under the SheTrades Commonwealth Project

Country	Policy topics covered
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to finance regulations for women • Gender-responsive public procurement • Advocacy for COVID-19 Economic Stimulus package for women
The Gambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-mainstreaming into the AfCFTA National Implementation Strategy • Definition of "women-owned business" • Gender Responsive Public Procurement Policy
Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSME Policy Gender-responsive implementation plan • Gender-mainstreaming in the National Export Development Strategy
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for COVID-19 Economic stimulus package for women in tourism
Lesotho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-mainstreaming into National Export Strategy
Mauritius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-mainstreaming into the AfCFTA National Implementation Strategy
Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of "women-owned business" • Gender-responsive Public Procurement Policy • Gender-mainstreaming in the Trade Facilitation Reform Agenda
Sierra Leone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-mainstreaming into the National Trade Strategy (including AfCFTA Implementation Plan) • Gender-mainstreaming in the Cooperatives Policy
Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-responsive Public Procurement regulations
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of "women-owned business"

³⁶ Observation based on team feedback.

10. SheTrades projects have in several instances worked in **strategic partnerships with other UN agencies** such as FAO, UNCDF, UNDP, and through the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator initiative (with Mary Kay) together with UN Women, ILO, UNOP, UN Global Compact and UNDP, with ITC leading on capacity-building in the multi-agency collaboration. Another example is the EQUALS interagency partnership where over 20 partners from the private sector, government civil society and UN agencies/International Governmental Organizations collaborate around female leadership in ICT.
11. According to SheTrades own monitoring data, **more than 200 partnerships** were developed since the outset of the initiative (funders, BSOs, private sector/market partners, policy-making institutions). This aggregate includes all funders of the over 30 short term projects since 2015, and all of the policymaking and support organizations involved. In other words, not all partnerships are currently active.³⁷ However, the partnership model was assessed by the SheTrades team to bring in an average of USD 1 million of in-kind contributions per year and approximately USD 1 million of in-kind support from private sectors partners yearly. Having built up a strong SheTrades brand was seen as having positively contributed to establishing these partnerships. Yet going forward, "quality over quantity" was seen to be a priority by the SheTrades team.³⁸ The revised SheTrades.com website lists around 30 active partnerships, most of whom are funders or international market partners.
12. Since 2016, there have been 6 projects with a **global focus**. Two of these were more specific, e.g., to support a process and series of consultations around developing a standardized definition of woman-owned business and in relation to a research-oriented EU-funded project, also geared to strengthening data on women in trade. The other global support projects cover the core activities of the SheTrades team in ITC, and the development and communications around the SheTrades offering at a more general level, including the SheTrades App and Website, SheTrades Hubs, SheTrades Global event, SheTrades Invest, and the SheTrades Virtual Learning Space (VLS) courses.

Contribution to ITC gender mainstreaming efforts

50. At the **corporate level**, the programme document of the ITC Empowering Women to Trade Programme (2016-2021) sets out the overall framework. Scoping interviews confirmed that the Empowering Women to Trade Programme was conceptualized as an umbrella initiative for ITC's work on gender in trade at the time when programme approaches were introduced. However, in practice, it has been overtaken by SheTrades in terms of external visibility and management systems. The ITC Annual Report 2019 illustrates how SheTrades is exclusively drawn on in relation to ITC's work on gender.³⁹
51. The Empowering Women to Trade Programme document sets out as a target that **40% of ITC's interventions will focus on the economic empowerment of women by 2020**.⁴⁰ Although it goes beyond the scope of this evaluation to assess whether this was achieved, it is unclear to what extent lessons and tools from SheTrades have been taken up by other units, or as part of general gender mainstreaming practice. In fact, evidence points to the opposite given that incentives for cross-sectoral collaborations are generally missing in ITC.
52. ITC has a gender policy which predates SheTrades from 2011, and more comprehensive Guidelines for Mainstreaming Sustainable & Inclusive Trade: Guidelines for ITC Projects (2019) where gender is dealt with alongside other cross-cutting issues of youth, green growth, and social responsibility. When it comes to tools and methods, the guide refers extensively to SheTrades (see graphic below). Thus, ITC clearly relies heavily on **SheTrades as their main channel for corporate learning around gender mainstreaming**. SheTrades indicators for the trust fund Window 1 (W1) are also closely aligned with that of ITC's overall results framework.⁴¹

³⁷ Data on currently active partnerships was not available.

³⁸ Based on interviews and the draft Moonshot paper (2022).

³⁹ ITC Annual Report, 2019.

⁴⁰ Empowering Women to Trade, 2016-21. Programme document and strategy.

⁴¹ W1 LogFrame and Indicators, internal document.

Level	Tool/method	Description
Policy level	SheTrades Outlook tool	Outlook is a data tool which collates information against a range of indicators and across several dimensions, including legal, economic and business, to inform government policies and create policy frameworks more conducive to international trade for women-owned MSMEs.
MSMEs and institutions	SheTrades chapters	By partnering with host institutions, SheTrades is establishing chapters to provide sustainable, long-term platforms for delivering SheTrades work and results at country and regional level. The host institutions are trained on the chapter toolkit.
MSMEs and institutions	Virtual Learning Space	Virtual Learning Space is about to go online in 2019. It will provide a bespoke and highly adaptable platform for training women-owned businesses in a range of business management and trade topics.
MSMEs and private sector partners	SheTrades.com	SheTrades.com is a global platform on which women-owned businesses can network and connect with buyers and sellers to increase their participation in international trade, and benefit from SheTrades activities.
MSMEs/producer level	Detailed mainstreaming guidance	Detailed guidance for designing and implementing projects with a gender dimension in export-oriented agricultural value chains.
MSMEs/producer level	SME Competitiveness Survey	The SME Competitiveness Survey is a tool to collect enterprise level information on beneficiaries. The surveys provides standard, corporately validated questions which classify whether enterprises are women-led, and also contain a gender module jointly developed with SheTrades. The gender module assesses key aspects faced by women-led firms.

Source: *Mainstreaming Sustainable & Inclusive Trade: Guidelines for ITC Projects (2019)*

53. SheTrades contributes to a number of **indicators in ITC's overall Strategic Plan**, e.g., corporate indicators A1 "Number of male and female beneficiaries reporting greater awareness of international trade as a result of ITC's support"; B1 "Number of cases of institutions having improved operational or managerial performance as a result of ITC support"; C1 "Number of enterprises having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of ITC's support"; and C2 "Percentile share of enterprises that are owned, operated and controlled by women having made changes to their business operations for increased international competitiveness as a result of ITC's support". Additionally, it reports on "Number of male and female beneficiaries demonstrating increased knowledge or skills related to international trade and MSME competitiveness, as a result of ITC support" along with other corporate indicators.⁴²

Global level engagement and positioning

54. According to SheTrades own documentation⁴³, "ITC has become a world leader in the field of women's economic empowerment through trade and is the only UN development agency fully dedicated to supporting the internationalization of SMEs." While other actors, such as the World Bank, have **technical capacity and research experience** (e.g., Women, Business and the Law report) and access to sex disaggregated data on economic activity, SheTrades' niche and positioning is that it provides complementary offerings in building trade competitiveness and providing hands-on support through projects on the ground. Others, such as UN Women and UNDP and many others also engage in both advocacy and programming around women's economic empowerment and can be good partners in addressing some underlying or normative barriers that SheTrades does not explicitly focus on. Conversely, the SheTrades Initiative presents trade as a way towards women's economic empowerment and can contribute with TRTA expertise to other agencies and multilateral actors active in this field.⁴⁴

⁴² It also contributes to ITC corporate indicators A2, A3, A4, C3, C4 and C5.

⁴³ Project document for project B641: SheTrades 2018-2021, including SheTrades Global and SheTrades Invest.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

55. The topic of women and trade has **picked up global momentum**, particularly since the 2017 Buenos Aires Joint WTO Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment took place. The initiative was spearheaded by ITC, Iceland and Sierra Leone as co-chairs of the Trade Impact Group under the auspices of the International Gender Champions. The Joint Declaration was endorsed by 127 WTO members and observers, acknowledging that inclusive trade policies can contribute to advancing gender equality and women’s economic empowerment, which in turn has a positive impact on inclusive economic growth. In September 2020, a group of WTO members also established an Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender.

There are several international trade agreements, and many regional trade agreements that **increasingly include gender provisions**. For instance, in August 2020 the governments of Canada, Chile and New Zealand signed a Global Trade and Gender Arrangement (GTAGA) to help “make international trade policies more inclusive and ensure that the benefits of trade and investment are more broadly shared” with OECD hosting the webinar launch on the topic.⁴⁵ While this trend cannot be linked to the Buenos Aires Declaration and ITC’s role in promoting women in trade, it is fair to say that ITC – as one of the pioneers in this area is strategically placed going forward for ensuring that such international and regional commitments are put to action.

56. ITC, via the SheTrades team, has engaged extensively on the Buenos Aires Declaration and its follow-up, among other things through a **major publication** on the topic of how to deliver on the declaration⁴⁶ and through continued policy engagement. The publication was produced by ITC in collaboration with over 40 WTO members and reflected the good practices and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Declaration.

“ITC data shows that supporting women-led businesses has positive spill over effects. For instance, women-led businesses employ more women than male-led ones; women-led businesses employ more women in senior positions than male-led ones; women-led businesses display a strong commitment to the local community and tend to mentor other women entrepreneurs. Yet, ITC NTM surveys (2017) show that women entrepreneurs own and lead only one in five exporting firms.”

(ITC, Empowering Women in Trade Moonshot paper)

57. WTO and the World Bank also released a major publication on women and trade in promoting gender equality in 2020⁴⁷ with OECD publishing a framework of analysis on trade and gender, including on gender-responsive trade policies in early 2021⁴⁸ indicating an increase in interest and momentum on the topic. Moreover, ITC work, and that of SheTrades was referenced in some of these newly released publications, notably the one by WTO and the World Bank.
58. The SheTrades approach to combine policy and analytical work with project-specific support and support to women entrepreneurs stands out in this respect, as does its initiative **to strengthen the evidence-base on gender and trade** via SheTrades Outlook (launched in July 2020) as an online tool to provide comprehensive data on trade and barriers to women’s economic empowerment. According to the SheTrades Commonwealth Annual Review 2021, getting the tool off the ground was “*challenging... but has exceeded delivery in the outcome area of that targets government policy making. However, the initiative is still working to refine content, shareability and ways to track user-behaviour patterns.*”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Global Trade and Gender Arrangement – Joint Communique, 2020.

⁴⁶ International Trade Centre (2020). *Delivering on the Buenos Aires Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment*. ITC, Geneva.

⁴⁷ Women and Trade – The Role of Trade in Promoting Gender Equality, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank and the World Trade Organization 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433. 2020

⁴⁸ Trade and Gender: A Framework of Analysis,

⁴⁹ SheTrades Commonwealth Annual Review 2021

Global tools and management

59. Country or multi-country initiatives are to benefit both from tailored support/specific activities and from being connected to the **global SheTrades community**. This includes its vast online offering, which was further developed the last couple of years, particularly in response to more activities going virtual since the onset of COVID-19. Global support initiatives and **online tools** includes SheTrades having its own website (linked to, but separate from ITC, [SheTrades.com](https://www.shetrades.com), comprising a virtual learning space; a digital policy tool ([SheTrades Outlook](#)), a mobile application ([SheTrades App](#)), and a virtual learning space ([SheTrades Virtual Learning](#)).
60. The SheTrades Outlook helps track **how laws, policies and practices** in different countries affect women's participation in business and trade, covering 83 indicators across six policy areas (trade policy, legal and regulatory frameworks, business environment, access to skills development, access to finance and work and society). Country profiles allow for a comparison across countries, illustrating in what areas countries are doing well and where there is room for improvement. Initiated under the SheTrades Commonwealth programme, the tool now covers 38 countries is being rolling out in seven additional countries. The goal is to double the number of countries covered by the tool in the next couple of years. This has reportedly facilitated gender mainstreaming across ITC which has played a role in upscaling the tool and its use.
61. The **SheTrades app** is free, available in English, French and Spanish, and seeks to provide easy access for women traders with potential buyers or support organizations. It also helps access training by linking it to the Virtual Learning Space. The app was developed in 2017, with subsequent investments to improve functionality. A project completion report from a project that specifically sought to launch and develop the app noted that it had registered 1,541 interactions by the end of 2017, with 8,371 users. Though significant, it was less than initially targeted, leading to further work on its functionality and promotion.⁵⁰
62. **SheTrades Invest** comprises a matching scheme where women entrepreneurs are mobilized, screened and matched to a pool of impact investors ITC is working with; and the CARE/SheTrades impact investment fund jointly promoted by ITC and CARE USA with a focus on Southeast Asia and Africa. In 2019, the project engaged 31 impact investors and 2,318 SMEs, with approximately 600 companies having participated in capacity building activities.
63. The online tools were **consolidated in 2019**, with less focus on organizing business generation activities, such as B2Bs and trade fairs, which instead were covered by specific SheTrades projects (SheTrades Commonwealth, SheTrades Gambia, SheTrades Zambia, and SheTrades West Africa, etc.)⁵¹
64. Additionally, the **SheTrades Global event** seeks to connect **export-ready women entrepreneurs** with buyers, investors and partners. Each SheTrades Global is expected to attract over 3000 participants and is a major undertaking to arrange for the SheTrades team in collaboration with hosts in-country. While two previous global events have taken place, the one foreseen for October 2021 in Dubai got postponed due to COVID risk and travel restrictions, and finally cancelled altogether after travel still proved to be problematic in early 2022. While some SheTrades members can apply for sponsorships to attend, most have to carry their own costs for participation.

⁵⁰ Project Completion Report, B403.

⁵¹ Project document B641

65. The **SheTrades Virtual Learning Space (VLS)** is the core training hub for the SheTrades Initiative. Currently there are 179 learning modules and 66 webinars accessible on the VLS. Its online courses, live webinars and market tools cover a range of trade-related topics and enable SheTrades to capture learning content for women entrepreneurs under one umbrella for easier access. The capacity-building methodology used by SheTrades is based on transfer of knowledge and skills via online courses and mentoring. The full offer ranges from a comprehensive self-assessment tool that help the WOBs knowing the extent of their competitiveness knowledge and skills, identifying unknown strengths and weaknesses and to improve upon them, to a series of webinars, short online VLS modules, and longer online courses which leads to certification offered by the ITC SME Trade Academy. A coaching platform is planned but still under construction for services in English, Spanish, and French. Since the platform was made available to users in December 2019 it has had **2427 users from 134 countries**.
66. To complement the global support, **SheTrades Hubs** was launched starting in 2017 as an effort undertaken to anchor support structures in the country context, implemented by a local host institution. Interviews illustrated that these have been slow to take off, partly due to lack of funding and/or lack of in-country momentum and support. The SheTrades website refers to seven operational hubs to date (Trinidad and Tobago, MENA, Kenya, Nigeria, Uruguay, Argentina and Gambia),⁵² while a SheTrades pamphlet from February 2021 refers to 10⁵³ and 14 hubs in different places (see extract below). A new hub was also launched in Gambia in January 2022. In Kenya, the hub is hosted by Abasa Bank (formerly Barclays Bank Kenya) in line with their Women in Business proposition including both training of women entrepreneurs and facilitating access to finance and financial services. In the other hub countries, hubs are typically hosted by the national export facilitation organization, or small enterprise development agency or the government. There is currently little reporting available on the activities of the Hubs and the number of active hubs is also unclear as it varies across different SheTrades materials.
67. **Global support**, including tools development, partnerships, communications, outreach etc., is undertaken through the **SheTrades Initiative umbrella project** which is supported by SheTrades staff, consultants, and other ITC staff outside of the SheTrades team. Activities covered, including staff time, is considered a global trade-related technical assistance project.⁵⁴ This is supplemented by a SheTrades coordination project,⁵⁵ with funding channeled through a multi-donor trust fund.⁵⁶

⁵² SheTrades website.

⁵³ These are: Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Brazil, Argentina, Botswana, Rwanda, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago.

⁵⁴ Described in project document B641.

⁵⁵ Staff and coordination project B642, 2018-2021, \$923,000.

⁵⁶ SheTrades Window 1 (W1) and the ITC W1 Business Development Fund.

3) Findings

Relevance

RELEVANCE: To what extent does SheTrades address the right issues?

- In relation to overall impact goals and ToC
- In relation to overall approach and innovations in delivery
- In relation to ITC's institutional gender mainstreaming

68. **At an overall level there is strong evidence that SheTrades has successfully carved out a niche and created a strong brand in the area of promoting women in trade.** This cuts across all of the different domains of change:
- a. At the **global level** it is evident in the advocacy efforts and follow-up on the WTO Buenos Aires Declaration on women in trade and in successfully creating strategic partnerships with the private sector, other UN agencies and in at least one instance an international NGO (the CARE-SheTrades Impact Fund). These efforts have contributed to putting trade and gender on the international agenda, with numerous actors now entering and seeking to position themselves in this space. This makes even more important to clearly identify where SheTrades and ITC can bring the most added value and where it makes more sense to partner with others to deliver the best possible results for women on the ground.
 - b. At **institutional level** within ITC, the SheTrades initiative has successfully turned a previously patchy and fragmented portfolio of small projects targeting women into a comprehensive initiative with a common narrative and change theory at a higher level (yet still allowing for project- and context-specific differences). This has been an evolving task over the evaluation period (2015-2022) yet is evident in how SheTrades is being referred to in the different ITC Strategic Plans and workplans along with other corporate materials (such as the Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines of 2019). This has likely contributed to the fact that inclusive trade -- including from a gender equality perspective -- takes on a more prominent strategic importance in the new ITC Strategic Plan (2018-22) and recent re-organization.⁵⁷ Stakeholder feedback also talked about an increase in demand for gender-inclusive trade expertise among ITC's key stakeholders.
 - c. At **individual level** among WEs/WOBs, along with some focal points in BSOs, the SheTrades brand was considered strong primarily for the visibility added to their own brands, and since it connected them with a global initiative. This, in itself, was referred to as a way to legitimize and add prominence to the issue of women in trade as an aspect of domestic and international trade that has unique characteristics, and distinct barriers to overcome at several levels. For women who had just started their business, being featured under the broader SheTrades brand (e.g., by having their stories featured and circulated on the SheTrades platform or being sponsored to attend trade fairs alongside other SheTrades WOBs) appeared to be of particular relevance as a way to further establish themselves and their businesses. Certificates gained by attending SheTrades trainings were also used extensively, particularly by newly established WOBs to add credentials and legitimacy to their business.
69. **However, the strong push for creating a strong SheTrades brand and operating space at different levels have also come with considerable trade-offs, compounded by ambitious targets and the need to demonstrate proof of concept and communicate 'quick wins'.** A phase of consolidation, focusing on lessons and gains achieved to date, along with the meaningful use of the operating space may be needed going forward.

⁵⁷ In which a new division for sustainable and inclusive trade is created, and where women and trade is one of three units.

- a. The transition from a fragmented portfolio to a more comprehensive initiative seems to have put a lot of **strain on staff** (see also efficiency section), sometimes ‘retro-fitting’ projects into a more cohesive change model, illustrating quick wins and proof of concept – even for short-term and small-scale projects – in relation to a more systemic approach, with a strong focus on counting the countable instead of more meaningfully tracking value added for different segments of WEs/WOBs.
- b. The push for quickly taking a range of smaller-scale initiatives **to scale and communicate results** was compounded by ambitious internal corporate targets set by the top ITC leadership. Initially, SheTrades announced that the initiative could get 1 million women to market by 2020. This was increased to getting **3 million to market by 2021** by the ITC leadership. This internal target was set and communicated to SheTrades without prior consultation, and the evaluation found no evidence base for the feasibility of SheTrades to deliver on such targets (given the staff and resources available). While intended as a Call to Action and as an external communication message – something which was appreciated particularly by some market partners – it may have skewed attention from delivering on an already ambitious multi-level change model (spanning from global policy to individual on-the-ground support) to chasing number, with the risk of inflating them. One such target in the ITC institutional domain⁵⁸ was the corporate target of getting 3 million women to (international) markets by 2022. The evaluation found little evidence that SheTrades had the capacity to deliver on this target as the main gender focused initiative of ITC, and it is unclear on what basis that target was set by the top management.
- c. The 3 million target was meant to represent the **cumulative achievement** of ITC project delivery, the activities of in-country partners and SheTrades hubs, and through the delivery of independent commitments by other partners (such as private sector partners). Yet it was not possible to verify actual level of achievement against this target given the possibility for double-counting from women participants participating in more than one project, platform or hub-generated activity, or to verify whether commitments by independent partners were actually acted upon. The target also does not differentiate between ‘women reached’ (including via one-off trainings) and ‘women to market’ when numbers are aggregated, and it is unclear how it covers women who just upscale their current business practices, or expand trade activities in the local market without exporting.⁵⁹ A strong focus on the aggregate number of women reached during the first phase of SheTrades operations appears to have come at the cost of more detailed segmentation, with the risk of leaving particularly young women and those who may need more support behind.
- d. In this phase, creating a strong brand and operating space, SheTrades also produced a lot of materials and events – sometime one-offs – without always having the **necessary internal capacity** (human or financial resources) for proper follow-up.
- e. **Inside ITC**, while SheTrades on the one hand managed to establish itself as a strong corporate flagship on women and trade – widely referenced and referred to in ITC’s corporate documents, it may also have contributed to the perception that other programmes were “off the hook”⁶⁰ when it came to further advancing ITC’s gender mainstreaming commitments. Creating a strong internal operating space, with high visibility success stories in internal communications and newsletters, may also have contributed to SheTrades being perceived as operating in its own internal ‘bubble’, rather than being a more extensively used internal knowledge repository on women and trade.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Set out in the ITC 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

⁵⁹ SheTrades’ own estimates of number of women reached by mid-2021 was around 1.9 million women, of which around 1 million from commitments by partners (independent delivery), around 850,000 from in-country partners and hubs, and around 50,000 women entrepreneurs through ITC project delivery.

⁶⁰ Quote from interview.

⁶¹ Based on reflections among interviewees.

70. **Using a holistic model of working at multiple levels and across multiple stakeholder groups (policy makers, BSOs, WEs/WBOs, private sector, other strategic partners as relevant in context) across a range of Global Action Areas (for which there is also global advocacy) was found to be a relevant and appropriate in relation to both overall impact goals and in finding innovative models for delivery.** However, synergies between workstreams need to be further enhanced, and SheTrades' role and value add in relation to different action areas better defined in order to address systemic gender barriers. A stronger analysis and rationale for which action areas to work on, with which partners given the local context, would also add relevance in different settings. A flexible approach to creating strategic partnerships has been found to add relevance in terms of innovative delivery.
- a. The overall SheTrades **change model** and ToC (in its various iterations) was found to be relevant across different stakeholder groups, with policy work adding an important dimension of addressing structural barriers that are gendered in nature and creating an enabling environment for women's participation in trade. From a gender equality perspective – looking at addressing both the symptoms and root causes of exclusion – this adds the potential for creating more gender transformative results in the longer term. The change model, as it is currently perceived at both global and national levels would, however, need **longer-term and sustained efforts (including funding)** to maximize synergies between different types of support and make sure policy initiatives have the intended systemic effects in-country – which has so far been a challenge.
 - b. Every project contains both policy work and support to individual WE/WOBs. However, these work streams are typically **managed and monitored in parallel**. Policy work tends to be reported on primarily at output level with less focus on uptake and use, which makes it hard to assess complementarity in relation to other in-country initiatives. WEs/WOBs, when consulted appreciated that SheTrades also work with local institutional actors and that there is a local focal point in-country (sometimes hired by SheTrades and placed in a local host institution or creating a bridge between individual WEs/WOBs and institutions). From WEs' perspective, it adds legitimacy and raises awareness about the particular challenges for women to enter into trade in the national context. Few interviewees were on the other hand aware of SheTrades' work with policy or institutional actors or had concretely benefitted from the effects.

- c. The SheTrades model outlines **7 Global Action Areas** as a Call to Action. While these were generally all considered relevant by stakeholders it has led to some unmet expectations since SheTrades does not deliver on all of them and only touches on some very peripherally, if at all (such as land ownership by women).
 - d. A flexible approach to creating **context-relevant partnerships** was applied in e.g., the West Africa project where SMEs and extension workers (even if male) in the cashew value chain were targeted and trained in gender issues, allowing them to act as intermediaries to reach women producers and shift gender exclusive practices when trading with women farmers. Such examples of context-relevant and innovative delivery models can add relevance and overcome situations where the more 'traditional' ITC partners (BSOs, Chambers of Commerce) may not have the capacity or incentives to play a more sustained role, or where they do not have the necessary reach beyond the capital.
71. **SheTrades explicitly targets women (women entrepreneurs and women-owned businesses). While this was considered relevant by a large majority of actors given the large gender disparities and barriers where SheTrades operates, it should not exclude working with gender issues more broadly, including with men, and considering how gender intersects with other forms of exclusion from trade.** Moreover, links between SheTrades and other trade support initiatives (provided by ITC or others) where men can also participate was considered important. Gender mainstreaming of other ITC initiatives was also demanded *“so that women’s participation in trade is not siloed or sidelined from other forms of support”*⁶².
- a. Across all interviewees, a large majority of especially WEs found it relevant to have a **designated space** for support and networking in SheTrades for women in trade. Overall, there was also noted to be strong alignment between the objectives and approaches of SheTrades and the needs of WEs/WOBs who are **selected and targeted for projects**. It is less certain that those with a lower degree of involvement (e.g., who only registered on the SheTrades Platform) found the initiative equally relevant based on their needs (see also Effectiveness section).
 - b. In addition to building technical skills, peer support and networking was found to be easier in spaces designated for women – particularly in male-dominated sectors (agriculture). Confidence-building was also frequently quoted by survey participants as well as interviewees when asked how they benefitted from participating in SheTrades’ offerings (see also section on Effectiveness).
 - c. It was pointed out, however, that while SheTrades provides that designated space, **gender-specific issues are rarely discussed or addressed** in SheTrades materials or webinars which tend to focus more on the technical ‘hard’ skills of entering and being competitive in trade – focusing on international markets. Yet, some of the **informal barriers** that women traders may face in the home/local environment or in the sector can also be prohibitive for women to trade internationally with the need for women to come up with coping mechanisms and find (or be referred to) mechanisms support. This could include sexual harassment issues or being asked for sexual favours in exchange for business deals. A quote from a WE illustrates: *“I would need advice on how to cope with the fact that buyers sometimes want sexual favours when I am trying to pitch my products or seek finance. These are common problems, but nobody talks about it openly.”*
 - d. SheTrades WhatsApp groups have emerged organically by country or sector and could allow for **peer exchange** around some of gender-specific obstacles. Survey feedback (open question) illustrated their popularity with multiple requests to join or questions about how to become a member. Feedback suggests that these types of discussions also need to be facilitated by more active moderation.

⁶² Direct quote by WE/WOB interviewee.

- e. Leaving **men** out of SheTrades targeting was noted to be another risk factor. Some WEs expressed concern that targeting only women in certain sectors or communities can create and/or enhance negative reactions among men to women's economic empowerment, with some examples to support the claim.
- f. While WEs/WOBs were overwhelmingly in favour of a designated space and initiative for women in trade, they also emphasized the **need to link SheTrades to other ITC (or other external) channels for support**. For those who had participated in more than one ITC initiative in-country, complementarities between SheTrades and other ITC initiatives were appreciated and noted to be beneficial. A concern was otherwise that initiatives such as SheTrades could be *"keeping women on a parallel track, often in less profitable sectors"*⁶³ (with reference to traditional, local fashion or beauty products).
- g. **Gender analysis taking intersectional dimensions into account** generally appears to be missing when it comes to targeting and selecting beneficiaries. It was noted to be particularly problematic for **indigenous** women and **youth** who may face additional barriers to entry or expansion of their trade practices. *"As an indigenous woman, I meet many more obstacles than usual in business. It would be good if SheTrades could also partner with NGOs to address some of these more difficult barriers."* *"There is no support for young women who are still planning to go into business. SheTrades could consider a mentorship program for aspiring businesswomen, matched with the more established ones."*
- h. The **lack of attracting younger women** as active beneficiaries from SheTrades offerings correspond with the age distribution of survey respondents where only 4 respondents were under 25 years of age and 12% were within the 24-34 years age bracket (Figure 2).

"SheTrades can be an entry-point and special place for women, but we would also like to benefit from other forms of ITC support." (Woman entrepreneur)

Of those who did respond, several took the opportunity to come up with suggestions as to how the initiative could be more appealing to younger women, including: (i) create a special 'track' for younger women with a good business idea on the platform to help with exposure and matching with potential partners/investors – even if the business is not yet registered, (ii) provide special start-up grants for young female entrepreneurs, (iii) indicate which courses are at the beginners level on the VLS and where to start if you want to build up a good profile (including which certificates to start with) via SheTrades online trainings, (iv) create a mentoring programme where more established business women mentor younger ones (in the same country or via South-South exchange), with incentives created for visibility and SheTrades support for taking on the mentorship-mentee roles.

⁶³Direct quote from interview.

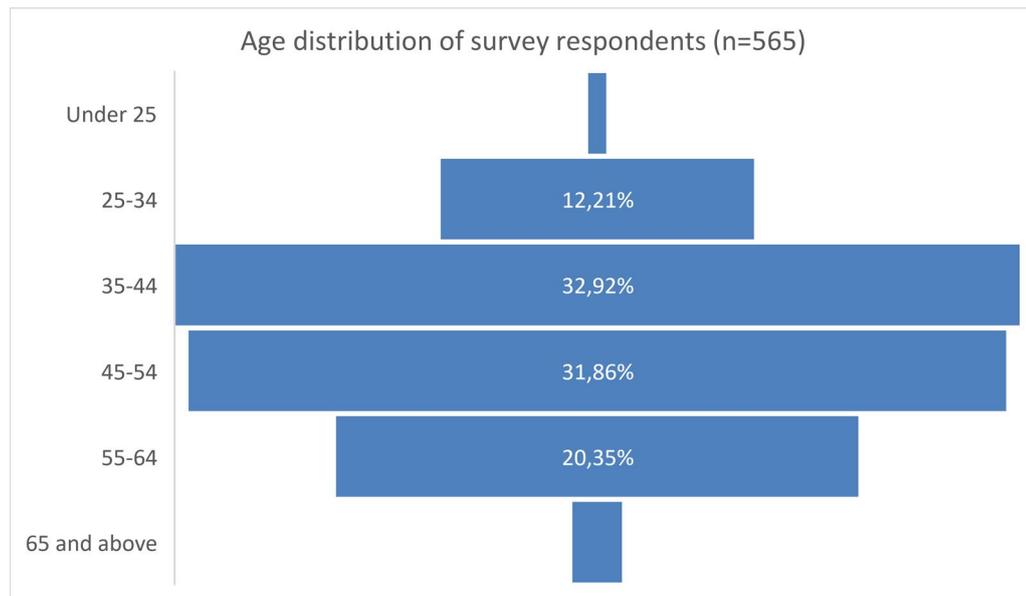


Figure 2. Age of survey respondents

Effectiveness

EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent does SheTrades achieve its objectives? What are the results and feedback on delivery methods?

- Achievements at different levels of action (in different domains of change)
- Degrees to which results advances gender equality
- In relation to notable contextual factors (internal, external)

72. **Projects reviewed as part of the SheTrades portfolio tend to have a high degree of meeting their targets with rigorous quantitative monitoring at output level. Yet, how these targets are set tend to differ depending on donor preferences, and projects with more ambitious targets of number of women to international markets typically leave out women who are more peripheral in the value chain** (suppliers, employees, rural producers, farmers) and/or their benefits are less well catered for and captured. The degree to which projects incorporate more inclusive analysis and tracking of women's economic empowerment at different levels (at different parts of the value chain, and/or at sector level) differs.

- a. While most projects rely on a similar overall change model, targeting the same stakeholder groups, it is notable that some were more focused on getting **a high number of export-ready or near export-ready women to markets** – often with less focus on gender transformative dimensions in the country or targeted sector – while others apply more of a potentially gender transformative approach by also monitoring and tracking aspects of women's economic empowerment also for rural women (e.g. the West Africa project). Donor preferences were often referenced as a main influencing factor for the level and types of targeting and reporting in different projects, along with internal pressures to demonstrate quick results.

SheTrades has supported women entrepreneurs in 30 countries since 2015 and generated more than \$250 million in trade and investments leads. (Source: SheTrades)

- b. At present, how targeting is determined and what to track seems to be largely donor driven with a less clear rationale from SheTrades what segments of WEs/WOBs are being included and how it links to women's economic empowerment more broadly. Indicators such as **jobs generated** (gender disaggregated, as was done in the Commonwealth project) may in fact

show a **more meaningful multiplier effect for women’s economic empowerment** than just number of WOBs who access international markets and/or the value increase of their exports.

- c. **Targeting** – i.e., which WEs/WOBs benefit from sponsorships or more tailored support in SheTrades projects -- was repeatedly referenced as a contentious area, both by BSOs and WEs themselves. BSOs pointed out that they should have a bigger role to play in setting the criteria for selection, or even be in charge of the beneficiary selection process, pointing out that SheTrades beneficiary selection processes often were lengthy and led by SheTrades at a global level without their sufficient involvement. Several WEs/WOBs, on the other hand, had the perception that “the same women always benefit”, and that these are capital-based women with already close ties and connections with BSOs – not those who are less well-connected and in need of support. Although some SheTrades projects support BSOs to come up with more comprehensive directories of women entrepreneurs per sector, these directories do not seem to be extensively used (or referred to) when it came to the selection/outreach to potential SheTrades beneficiaries (nor referred to by the WEs themselves), so their utility could be questioned.
- d. Few indicators or analysis at the outcome level was found, including on **sector level changes**, or why particular sectors were targeted. Several WEs felt that service sectors got less attention, or that only traditionally “female” sectors (apparel, fashion, small-scale food production) were being favoured over more high-growth sectors in the national context. While sectors with a high degree of women’s participation seems to have been targeted across projects (thus with the potential of reaching a large number of WEs), this seem to have been favoured over targeting sector transformation in areas where there are fewer women but possibly larger growth potential. Again, the SheTrades West Africa model of change differs in this regard as agricultural sectors that involve women farmers at the periphery of the value chains were targeted in sectors with clear growth potential in the national contexts. Of interest would be how both rural women benefit in such sectors, and whether it is possible to shape the sector at different levels to be more gender inclusive.

73. **In the ITC institutional domain, the corporate target of getting 3 million women to (international) markets by 2022 was too ambitious and had a negative effect on SheTrades as the main delivery mechanism for this target.** It has put considerable strain on the SheTrades team and put emphasis on a quantitative measure instead of ensuring quality and a deeper country-systems approach. It is unclear how other parts of ITC feeds into meeting this corporate target despite the development of corporate Mainstreaming Guidelines (2019).

- a. The strong **push for counting women** (gender targeted approach on the GRES scale) over tracking more transformative change also came from the overly ambitious corporate target of getting 3 million women to international markets by 2022. While it may have been used as a successful external communications message to mobilize partners (it was found to have resonated in particular with market partners), it had a negative effect on project management and delivery as evidence suggests that it skewed focus to **quantity over quality**.
- b. There is **not sufficient validated evidence** for the evaluation to determine whether and how this internal target was reached. Internal tracking is aggregated from across projects. Yet this aggregate estimate says more about number of women reached in one form or another – not about a shift in their exporting practices. The aggregate figure on the SheTrades internal dashboard does not differentiate between those who already exported at the outset of their involvement with SheTrades and those who started or expanded their export practices after their SheTrades involvement. Moreover, many women who benefit from SheTrades offerings operate at the domestic market. This was also supported by survey findings. Of the around 600 survey respondents, only around one third indicated that they were exporting, while two thirds sold on the local or domestic markets.

- c. Ambitious targets also come with the risk of **overreporting and claiming results** that may not be fully substantiated. This could undermine trust in SheTrades as a high-performing initiative. For instance, the updated and revised SheTrade.com web page⁶⁴ claims that SheTrades with partners have *“already connected three million women to markets by enhancing their competitiveness and working with stakeholders across the trade ecosystem.”*
- d. **Market partners** who also provided in-kind support and funding typically liked the ambitious quantitative target as a way to communicate the potential for scale (to create internal buy-in at their companies), coupling the co-delivering of technical assistance and mentoring services to women with the potential for business development (e.g., providing UPS discounts to women after their participation in training). However, market partners do not themselves track their contributions to meeting the target of getting women to export via their own supplier diversity programmes. Instead, they rely on SheTrades project management and monitoring data. Feedback illustrated that it was often easier for them to support SheTrades as an external initiative promoting women entrepreneurship than to adopt supplier diversity programmes and gender policies internally (an area where SheTrades could play a continued role going forward).
74. **Women who had been selected and participated in projects or had several interactions/levels of support from SheTrades, provided evidence of increased knowledge, changed business practices, upshifted skills and the ability to put these new skills into action.** Capacity-building efforts, and in particular online trainings that led to certification was being particularly appreciated. Benefits went down for those less actively involved. However, barriers of entry into the ‘SheTrades universe’ is still perceived to be relatively high and just registering on the platform is not enough to be able to take advantage of all of SheTrades offerings.
- a. WE/WOB interviewees selected (among those who responded to requests for interviews) all had **multiple levels of interaction** with SheTrades as project beneficiaries, platform users, and often also participated in more organic local WhatsApp groups where applicable. Several of them had also received support from other ITC in-country initiatives and other donors that provide training for women entrepreneurs/exporting potential. These ‘success stories’ have also been widely documented by SheTrades, and the added visibility from having their story written up or filmed was something many of these WEs had used in their own marketing materials and to gain access to potential buyers.
- b. **Success factors** identified were: the timeliness of support (particularly for women who had quite recently started their business), ongoing mentoring and contact with SheTrades team members and repeated training opportunities, access to multiple SheTrades offerings and opportunities – including the participation in trade fairs, frequent communications with the SheTrades team and with other WEs/WOBs. Particularly appreciated among WEs were SheTrades support during the COVID crisis, and the training on how to sell and market products online, including product diversification in times of crisis (leading to several of the WEs changing their product range temporarily to fit needs during the pandemic).
- c. Among **factors that limited success**, the most frequently quoted (both by interviewees and survey respondents) were the lack of access to funding, and the lack of investment in upscaling or improving the quality/efficiency of their production to meet any increased demand that resulted from participating in SheTrades sponsored trade fairs. SheTrades has developed SheTrades Invest to address some of these needs, which initially focused on technical assistance and e-learning to help women-owned firms navigate their fundraising process. A fairly new initiative (launched in 2021) the effects are yet to be documented. In response to more tangible matching with investors, and access to start-up grants (especially for young entrepreneurs), SheTrades intends to further deepen their work with financial institutions and private sector institutions to make the matchmaking more efficient.

⁶⁴ As of April 2022.

- g. While all those interviewed one-one-one had had used multiple SheTrades products, survey respondents generally had used **less products** or services with a large number just registering on the platform and/or attending online training materials or webinars.

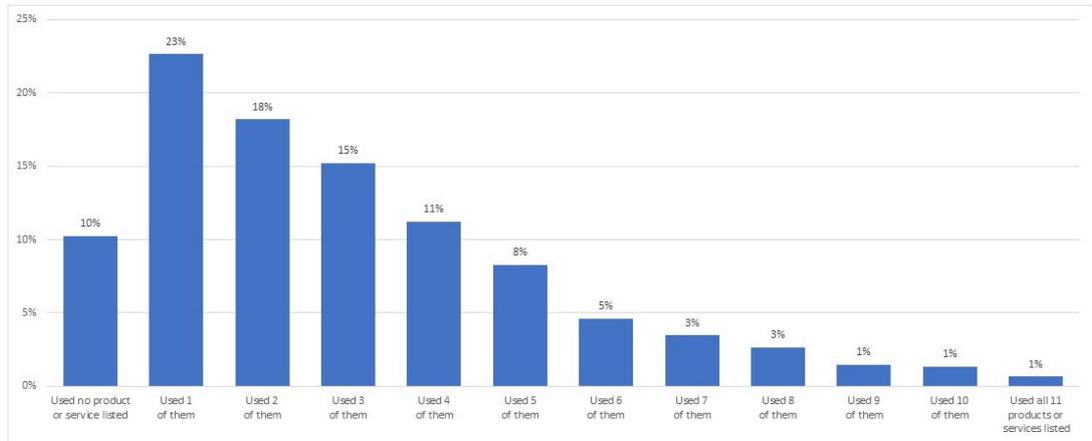


Figure 5. Use of multiple SheTrades products and other offerings

- h. All of the WEs/WOBs who participated in in-depth interviews felt that they and/or their business had **benefitted** from SheTrades’ offerings in different ways. Of survey participants (n=598) just over half (55%) felt that they had participated a lot, moderately or a bit, while around 44% said they had not yet benefited, or that they had not benefited yet, but maybe later. The relatively large percentage of respondents who felt they had not yet benefited may be explained at least in part by the fact that projects have been **short-term** complemented by webinars or initiatives that sometimes are one-off events rather than one of continuous support and coaching. (Figure 6)

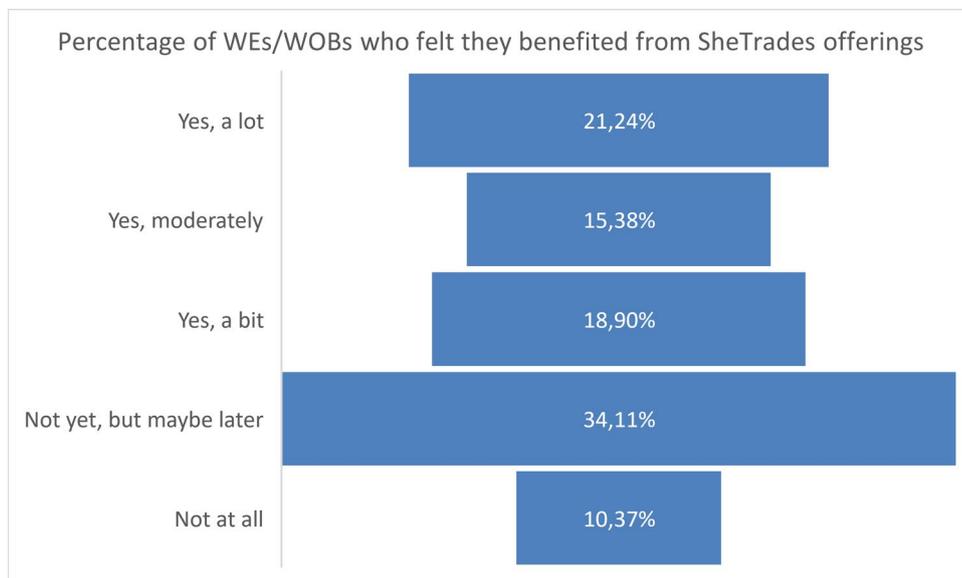


Figure 6. Perceived benefit by WE/WOBs from SheTrades.

- i. Looking at correlations between the extent to which WEs/WOBs felt they had benefited (not asked by service, but only overall) and the use of services, it is possible to see that those more actively engaged in **informal interactions** (e.g., via What's App groups combined with other offerings) generally felt that they benefited more than those who only registered on the platform and attended online trainings.

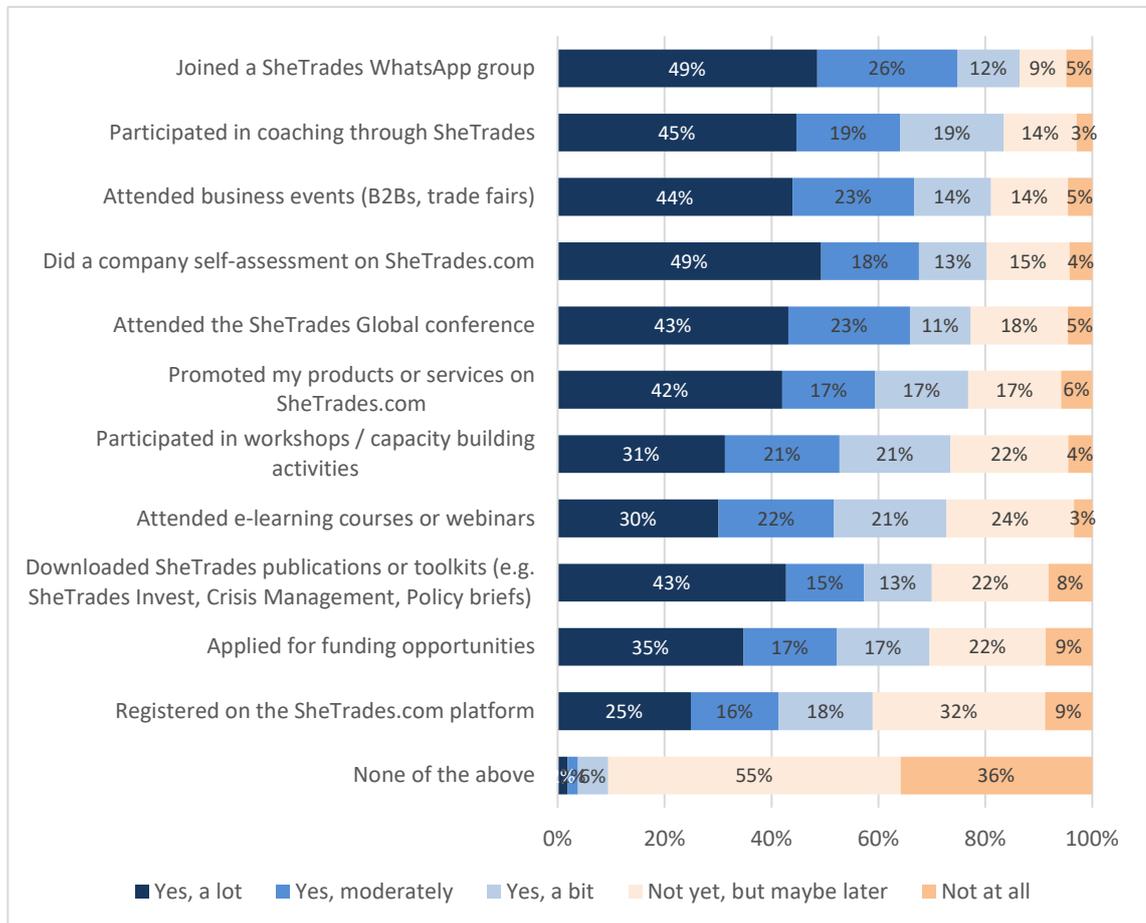


Figure 7. Correlation between use of service and perceived benefits from SheTrades offerings.

- j. Comments from WEs/WOBs illustrate that the **barrier to entry** into the SheTrades 'universe' via the platform alone are high. Around one third of respondents pointed out that internet was unreliable to use for online learning, while for others, internet was too costly (20%). Some also reported low familiarity with some of the online tools used. Many comments also had to do with usability of the platform (suggesting a special online course just to understand how to navigate and make most use of SheTrades offerings), and the need for more 'push' notifications on what's new on the platform since, for many, it is not something they would automatically go on and check otherwise.

Efficiency

EFFICIENCY: How well are activities coordinated, implemented, and available resources used?

- Internal management and use of available resources
- Whether decision-making is informed by evidence and learning
- In terms of coherence and complementarity internally with other actors and/or within ITC

75. **Ambitious targets and an initial pressure to demonstrate ‘proof of concept’ has led to a lot of pressure and responsibility on staff, in particular junior staff, to deliver results and put in long work hours. In the longer term, this is considered unsustainable.**
- a. Being a ‘flagship initiative’ on gender for ITC appears to have come with benefits as well as trade-offs (referenced also under Relevance section). On the one hand there was **high level support and opportunities** for visibility of the initiative. On the other, some high visibility events (such as the launching of new SheTrades Hubs) came at the **cost of added workload** for follow-up.
 - b. Without sufficient number of staff positions to deliver on such follow-up and programme management, **junior staff** and/or younger team members working on short term contracts were often tasked with managing high-profile partnerships and high visibility events.
 - c. Particularly resource intensive were big events such as the **SheTrades Global Conference** (attracting over 3000 participants and with a 6-month preparatory course for participants). Along with multiple other one-off events to generate publicity for the initiative and reach a larger audience including potential partners (e.g., hackathons, Hub launches etc.), the SheTrades Global event seems to have put a strain on the staff capacity with trade-offs in relation to project follow-up and maintaining in-country relations with partners. Although many WEs/WOBs who attended the SheTrades Global events liked them for the purpose of networking, traveling and getting exposure to possible partners, several also pointed out that sector-specific or regional trade fairs actually generated more concrete results in terms of new contracts or collaborations.
 - d. Another issue related to staff capacity was the **insufficient onboarding** and training of staff joining the SheTrades team – most of whom do not have any background on working with gender issues (particularly not on a more inclusive way to address gender issues beyond targeting women). Only some projects draw on external gender expertise when needed, including how to work more comprehensively on gender norms, masculinities, social norms, intersectional issues etc.
 - e. **Staff shortages** were in part due to need to manage many shorter-term projects, and partly due to the fact that there were internal difficulties in acquiring the **right level staff positions for the appropriate number of staff** given the workload. Thus, there has been a lack of opportunities for junior staff to build a professional pathway into ITC from working at SheTrades to date. For some junior staff this served as a steppingstone, where ambitious targets, ‘quick wins’ and a lot of autonomy in terms of programme management was seen as an opportunity to gain experience and track record and then move on. This comes with the downside of lack of institutional learning and continuity in strategic approach in-house – particularly for cross-fertilization of lessons across projects – and in more long-term relationship building with national partners. There were also instances of staff burnout, with the expectations “to be available all hours of the day”⁶⁵.
 - f. **There is a lack of in-house gender expertise**, which was said to be in the domain of a few staff/team members only, who in turn were too busy to coach those with a less clear understanding of gender concepts and how to translate these into programming in SheTrades.

⁶⁵ Quote from interview.

- g. A stronger focus on **creating enabling (and sustainable) systems at country level may require a shift toward more in-county staff**, with sustained support for national coordinators across short term funding cycles.
76. **SheTrades has rigorous monitoring system(s) set up for its projects and a detailed data tracking with efforts to aggregate key figures up to the portfolio level through a common dashboard. These quantitative measures are primarily used for resource mobilization, communication, and internal accountability. Yet findings and lessons are less consistently used for internal cross-project/workstream learning or for critical analysis of methods and strategies beyond project boundaries.** Opportunities for portfolio wide strategic learning involving all (or a cross-selection of) staff are rare, partly because of a heavy workload and lack of time.
- a. SheTrades should be applauded for its motto of “not being afraid to fail” in relation to some of its many ongoing initiatives, and for applying an **experimental approach** to what works in particular contexts accompanied by rigorous monitoring (e.g., the adapted approach in SheTrades West Africa, and the introduction of digitalization in Rwanda). At the same time, the short-term nature of projects created a push for ‘**quick wins**’ and high visibility **success stories** that are less well suited for learning and with risk overselling SheTrades’ contribution to change. This was partly driven by the push for donors to show quantitative results.
 - b. Clear **priorities for internal learning mechanisms for internal knowledge sharing** are lacking and could be further enhanced. This may help to fill the gaps around staff onboarding and staff development, particularly in applying a comprehensive gender approach, with a push for monitoring gender outcomes at both beneficiary and sector levels.
 - c. Applying an experimental and opportunistic approach has served SheTrades well when it comes to building a strong brand and uniting the portfolio under a joint overall change theory (see also Relevance section). However, combined with the lack of internal learning mechanisms that can be used to **critically assess and drop** what has worked less well, more and more tends to be added to the portfolio, consequently spreading resources thin.
 - d. Lately, partly due to the COVID pandemic, big investments in initiatives such as SheTrades Outlook and VLS, such resources tend to have been centered at the **global level** rather than going to strengthening country systems.
77. **The lack of collaboration between SheTrades and other ITC units, particularly when it comes to using each other’s materials, lead to inefficiencies particularly when it comes to the production and use of training materials, and in strengthening and using SheTrades as an internal knowledge hub and repository when it comes to programmatic gender mainstreaming.** SheTrades materials could also be more explicitly addressing how to incorporate a gender transformative lens (including, but also going beyond the targeting of women) in order to positively contribute to gender mainstreaming in ITC.
- a. Tools and materials on the SheTrades.com platform, including VLS, are clearly targeting women, but **contents do not necessarily differ** substantially from others used in ITC and/or the ITC SME Academy. For example, the SheTrades Competitiveness Handbook mentions ‘gender’ once in a document of 126 pages, and ‘women’ 6 times in the main text. Likewise, the SheTrades Competitiveness map could be applicable to any SME. SheTrades materials and insights may be helpful to other initiatives and sections in order promote institution-wide gender mainstreaming, especially **if more explicitly including gender issues and how to incorporate them into programming**. Conversely, SheTrades may be able to better benefit from gender mainstreaming efforts of other sections if the internal knowledge sharing function on gender is strengthened. Positive examples reviewed by the evaluation include e.g., the Agricultural Gender Toolkit and SheTrades Outlook which could have a wider applicability internally in gender mainstreaming efforts.

- b. **Policy related** knowledge outputs typically have a **stronger gender focus**, but the uptake and use of these (internally or externally) and how they are used as part of day-to-day SheTrades implementation processes and/or feed into other ITC gender mainstreaming efforts is less clear, particularly since SheTrades does not have a clear internal mandate, and is not resourced, to take on a more active role in ITC gender mainstreaming efforts to date.
- c. While **incentives for cross-sectoral/unit collaboration** appear to be lacking within ITC at an institutional level, some positive examples could be identified as part of this evaluation (including on e-commerce and digitization in Rwanda), and this could be further built on going forward.

Sustainability

SUSTAINABILITY: How sustainable will effects be?

- In terms of the overall approach and results at different levels
- In terms of how gender issues that intersect with other barriers to inclusion are addressed
- In terms of scale and unanticipated effects that go beyond the scope and/or timeline of specific interventions

78. **For a group of individual WEs/WOBs, there is strong evidence to suggest that getting involved in SheTrades has been fundamentally transformational for them and their businesses**, with effects that will outlast any project or support initiative. However, with the exception of some projects, there is little ongoing analysis of how **gender transformative shifts of power take place also for women producers, small scale traders and workers. Private sector partners** were found to play an important role in this regard in the SheTrades West Africa project taking on the BSO function of training staff and women producers. The role of **international market partners** was found to have the potential to go beyond providing short term funding through private sector foundations to also **connecting with their own internal gender policies and supplier diversity programmes**.
 - a. There are a number of clear WE/WOB '**success stories**'. These are typically well-documented and relate to a number of different SheTrades beneficiaries receiving multiple forms of support, who are selected and targeted for projects, who typically 'upshift' an already established business and who gain visibility through multiple SheTrades channels (see also Effectiveness section). For such individual beneficiaries, shifts in business practices will most likely outlive any targeted project initiative. However, there is little internal analysis of the factors that make these cluster of women successful, and how big the "inner circle" of successful and active beneficiaries are compared to the next tier of participants who participate only occasionally, or who seek out specific one-off support from SheTrades in relation to a distinct problem. Some of this information was found to reside informally among SheTrades national coordinators, but does not appear clearly in the monitoring data, or in relation to more nuanced segmentation to ensure benefits go to also more marginalized women.
 - b. Lack of **funding or support-grants** was most frequently stated as a limiting factor for WEs/WOBs at an individual level and also what hindered them to sustain gains and networks they created with SheTrades' support in the longer term. Suggestions included for SheTrades to more actively provide links to sources of investment to upscale their production capacity⁶⁶ and/or to other donor grants (or NGOs working on women's economic empowerment more broadly) that could help them upscale capacity building of local women suppliers.
 - c. The portfolio and SheTrades strategy also pay less attention to **women producers, small scale traders and workers**. A couple of well-established WOBs who source from rural women felt that they were held back by the fact that these rural women do not have access

⁶⁶ Currently being addressed by the SheTrades team through SheTrades Invests which is still in its initial phases of implementation.

to any technical training and that they receive no support to develop their basic skills (including literacy). To apply a more sustainable approach, it was felt that SheTrades could partner with non-traditional partners (such as NGOs, local associations) to make sure benefits reach all in the value chain. That may mean moving away from solely applying a targeted approach – i.e., getting women into trade as the ultimate objective -- to more of a women’s **economic empowerment** approach -- i.e., women at all levels of the value chain achieve gender equality gains through economic activity.

- d. A more **inclusive approach** would also need to specifically invest in underrepresented groups among beneficiaries, such as young women, vulnerable groups of women (rural women, migrants, women in environmentally disaster-prone areas etc.), indigenous women and women traders in sectors that are traditionally male dominated in a given context. This **may reduce the number of beneficiaries** in the immediate term but would be more in line with the ultimate aims of the initiative and in fulfilling the concept of ‘leaving no one behind’ – a central promise of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. This may require a **broader range of partners** and would increase marginal costs per woman supported in reaching the last mile. Yet, innovative examples of programming and working through partners who are best placed to reach such groups could be considered.
- e. Promoting **gender in the workplace** among **private sector partners**, particularly in companies that ITC/SheTrades work with, has proved to be a successful approach in Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa. This approach is particularly important since implicitly that means that it is **not only up to women to carry the burden of economic productivity in addition to fighting for space and recognition in certain trade settings**. Rather, efforts for inclusion in trade it is coupled with work practices, norms and attitudes that are gender transformative. This has helped **shift power** to women who have previously benefitted less than men from economic activity – even down to household level economic decision-making in rural areas in the SheTrades West Africa project.⁶⁷
- f. For **international market partners**, a more sustainable approach beyond providing short-term funding via private sector foundations would mean coupling that with efforts to **reform their own internal policies on gender, including implementing supplier diversity programmes**. With strengthened in-house gender expertise, SheTrades could play a role in coaching international market partners in such efforts while also connecting them with relevant SheTrades Hubs.

79. **National level support systems to sustain an enabling environment are not strong. Despite efforts to create an enabling environment in-country, these actors (BSOs, government agencies) are often targeted separately with specific activities, only sometimes forging the necessary links to effectively liaise with local SheTrades communities of WEs/WOBs.**

- a. Several national actors at the institutional level pointed out that “the nexus of power is still largely in Geneva with the SheTrades team” while there is **less evidence of local ownership** and running with the SheTrades brand at national level by local institutions. This was at least in part due to the fact that any SheTrades sponsored activities were seen as a project alongside others, and when funding came to an end, so did their SheTrades involvement. Several BSOs spoke of **need for funding** in order to dedicate time to SheTrades activities which appear to run more in parallel than being incorporated into their core support for WEs/WOBs.
- b. WEs mentioned that any communications from SheTrades still comes from Geneva, while local BSOs send “other information, but not on SheTrades”⁶⁸. This was the case even in places where there was a SheTrades Hub embedded in a national institution. Some WEs/WOBs also **doubted the national BSOs’ capabilities for carrying out the**

⁶⁷ Based a review of project documents and consultations with stakeholders in Sierra Leone.

⁶⁸ Quote from interview.

SheTrades agenda without extensive technical support and funding from SheTrades. Most WEs/WOBs therefore preferred to have direct contacts with the SheTrades team as well as any local intermediary.

- c. A couple of BSOs mentioned that SheTrades helped them **consolidate their support to WEs/WOBs** and that there was an increase in internal awareness of the subject of women and trade. It is unclear to what extent such results are sustainable, however, since some BSOs appeared to have low incentives to continue with SheTrades activities after the termination of projects (or in between shorter intervals of project support). Women's Branches of Chambers of Commerce – who already align with SheTrades priorities of targeting women in trade usually proved to be stronger (and more motivated) local partners⁶⁹, but even they struggled with funding gaps, particularly with each donor coming with their own programme branding and ways of doing things -- not necessarily adopting SheTrades which is perceived to be closely associated with ITC.
- d. SheTrades typically **relies heavily on one or a few BSOs for sustained follow-up** and linking policy work with practical support to WEs. While this works well in some countries (with the potential for upscaling reach via a training-of-trainers approach), it was more frequently reported to work less well by WEs/WOBs who did not have full confidence that the BSO could take on the task due to the BSO's own capacity constraints, or for women not yet connected to a BSO. Comments such as *"there is always an inner circle of connected women who benefit from [BSO] support"* illustrate the point. A more critical assessment of how to set up sustainable national support systems may therefore be called on, keeping inclusion in mind. SheTrades could learn from innovative examples where a wider range of partners in-country played a role (private sector, NGOs etc.), and include partners with reach to more underrepresented groups, e.g., youth, rural women.

80. **National and regional SheTrades Hubs were created to address the issue of sustainability through a number of locally embedded structures within national host institutions. In addition to addressing the issue of sustainability, SheTrades Hubs were designed to scale up strategy and serve as effective channels to mobilize women entrepreneurs and bring visibility at domestic levels. While most stakeholders, including a majority of WEs/WOBs⁷⁰ liked the idea of having a national SheTrades in their country, success so far has been limited.**

- a. **Limiting** factors included:
 - i. **Too many** hubs were launched within a short time period with a lack of capacity to follow-up to keep up the momentum. In fact, it was difficult for the evaluation to determine how many Hubs currently exist and their level of activity since internal information varied in different places, and some were initially launched but currently inactive.
 - ii. Lack of **funding**. Hub activity typically went down at the end of a funded project. Some host institutions expected start-up grants or de-prioritized hub activities due to other funded projects.
 - iii. Weak **local ownership**. Even when a budget was available locally, input and guidance from SheTrades in Geneva was expected. If SheTrades did not provide that hands-on support, available budgets in host institutions remained unspent. Despite SheTrades having developed a comprehensive handbook on how to run a national hub, uptake appeared to be low among the host institutions consulted, and it appeared to be unclear what was expected of them as SheTrades hosts with no clear tasks or mandate.

⁶⁹ Based feedback from three separate interviews.

⁷⁰ Of those consulted for online interviews.

- iv. **High expectations** were created by high visibility launches of hubs. When no activities or opportunities to benefit from the collaboration immediately followed, there was a high degree of disappointment and lost momentum among national stakeholders. Potential Hub participants (WEs/WOBs along with a couple of hub hosts) experienced some degree of confusion as to whether the Hub idea had been withdrawn from the SheTrades strategy, or if it was still valid and to be further supported.
 - v. **Lack of collaboration** among the SheTrades Hub host institution and other institutions in-country. Among the hubs reviewed, the type of hosting institution varied from BSOs, Government ministries, and the private sector. The choice of host institution was not always clear and even appeared to **cause some friction between institutions** at national level.
- b. Of survey participants, nearly one third⁷¹ were **not sure whether they had ever been a member of a SheTrades project or Hub**, while 40% had not been either a project beneficiary or Hub member. This indicates that a **majority** (70% of respondents) have not yet heard of or been actively involved in SheTrades Hubs. It should be kept in mind, however, that while the survey went out to all who have registered on the SheTrades.com platform, there are only 10 established hubs presently, of which only some are active.

“I joined the SheTrades Hub, but it does not appear to be active. Does that mean that SheTrades no longer operates here?” (Survey participant)

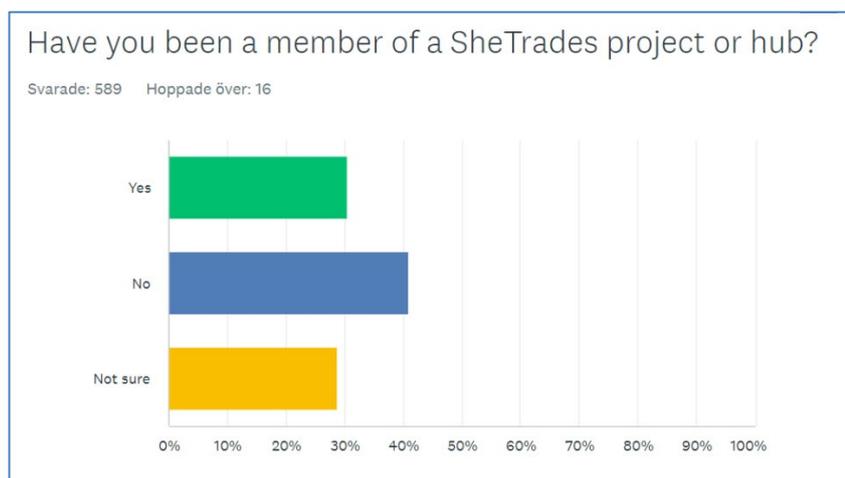


Figure 8. Survey question on whether participants had been part of a SheTrades Hub

81. **At an ITC institutional level, sustainability at country level suffers from weak coordination and/or collaboration between in-country projects. This is a reflection of institutional practices for gender mainstreaming across programmes in ITC.**
- a. As a symptom of weak in-country coordination and collaboration between different ITC initiatives, WEs/WOBs pointed out that cannot currently the SheTrades National Hub or the SheTrades.com platform to **find out information about other ITC offerings** in their country (see also Relevance section). There has also been a recent **proliferation of ITC Hubs** (green hubs, youth hubs...) in-country, without apparent coordination between them.
 - b. Moreover, since SheTrades does **not currently have an institutionalized role and mandate to help advance gender mainstreaming practices in other ITC programmes**, coordination and collaboration with other ITC initiatives in-country are **at best ad hoc**, depending

⁷¹ Of 589 respondents to the survey question.

on individual initiatives rather than institutionalized practice. This appears to be a **missed opportunity** to share relevant knowledge on how to ensure that gender responsive and gender transformative approaches are being applied across ITC's programming. It also increases the risk of targeting beneficiaries in silos. While some SheTrades project beneficiaries had benefited from several ITC initiatives in-country (typically the more successful WEs/WOBs), others are left out altogether.

- c. The lack of in-country coordination and collaboration is a **reflection of ITC corporate gender mainstreaming practices**. Although ITC relies heavily on SheTrades for its yearly UN-SWAP reporting on gender, the use and uptake of SheTrades tools by other ITC programmes is unknown (e.g., the Agricultural Gender Toolkit, SheTrades Invest, VLS, and SheTrades Outlook etc.). For a sustained ITC approach to gender mainstreaming, institutional practices need to be put in place for increased uptake of such tools (where relevant), and for more knowledge sharing across units and sectors on lessons from innovative gender programming. Internal expertise on gender may also need to be strengthened, particularly among new staff joining the SheTrades team, and by having additional professional staff who have a strong gender background and expertise (see also Efficiency section).

82. **SheTrades is well positioned to sustain efforts to connect global advocacy on gender and trade to on-the-ground support systems to individual WEs/WOBs through ITC's involvement in the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender, launched as a follow-up to the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017, and the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment.**

- a. With the global interest in women in trade gaining momentum, particularly at policy level, ITC is in a good position to use the systems and tools set up under SheTrades to connect such policy discussions to **on-the-ground activities and practical lessons** on how to translate policy into practice. It does, however, require a consolidation of support particularly at the country level, including providing **longer-term support to enhance the applicability and uptake of global tools by county actors**, e.g., SheTrades Outlook. More qualitative monitoring on uptake and use of the various global tools – which is currently lacking -- would help strengthen this positioning in the global policy arena.
- b. While ITC through SheTrades helped **pioneer a focus on women in trade** when it came to women's participation in global trade, future engagement to **push the boundaries of the agenda further** could include focusing on more **gender-transformative and inclusive approaches** (e.g. in relation to normative change in male-dominated sectors, how gender intersects with other forms of discrimination and exclusion, informal barriers and sexual harassment of women traders/WEs, getting marginalized women and informal traders to benefit from economic activity and inclusion in international value chains etc.).

Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender

The Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender brings together WTO members and observers seeking to intensify efforts to increase women's participation in global trade. It was established on 23 September 2020 as a follow-up to an initiative launched at the Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in 2017, known as the Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment.

The Group aims to share best practice on removing barriers to women's participation in world trade, to exchange views on how to apply a "gender lens" to the work of the WTO, to review gender-related reports produced by the WTO Secretariat, and to discuss how women may benefit from the Aid for Trade initiative.

Participation in this Informal Working Group is open to all WTO members. The initiative is chaired by Botswana, Iceland and El Salvador.

Source: [WTO | Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender](#)

4) Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion 1: A strong brand and niche for ITC on gender and trade was successfully established via SheTrades since its launch, notably through engagement in international and national policy advocacy and by adopting a holistic, partnership-driven model. Yet high-visibility events and ambitious targets have detracted from monitoring quality in terms of economic empowerment of different groups of women, in particular young women and marginalized groups of women.

Having carved out operating space at multiple levels (in-country, inside ITC and at the global policy arena), a lot of effort has gone into demonstrating proof of concept, showcasing scalability, creating high-visibility tools and events, and getting ‘quick wins’ to mobilize both WEs/WOBs and partners. This push for demonstrating quantitative results came at the cost of monitoring quality, with the risk of leaving certain segments⁷² of women behind. Furthermore, with a sharper focus on getting women to market compared to the Empowering Women to Trade Programme in ITC (2016-21), some of the gender transformative potential in the change model was lost (or not monitored), notably how it has helped shift power to enable women to make and act on economic decisions.

Recommendation 1: SheTrades should use the niche, brand and operating space it has successfully created to deepen its engagement in processes that help transform sectors (and/or specific value chains) to be more gender inclusive, with specific support to groups of women who are currently underrepresented or who benefit less from engaging in trade in the sector.

Presently, the SheTrades change model assumes that if a critical mass of WEs/WOBs are enabled in trade (globally, in a given country context, or sector), this will automatically open pathways also for other women – including younger or less privileged women -- in the same sectors, or as employees of WOBs. While this may be true in some sectors or geographic locations, it would need to be monitored and possibly complemented by other approaches to ensure that women are empowered to trade and benefit from engaging in economic decision-making. This would require a different set of targets that better reflect how sectors become more gender equal and inclusive, and what formal and informal barriers stand in the way. A deepened engagement in carefully selected sectors (or for specific segments of underrepresented WOBs/WEs) may also call for a consolidation of tools and approaches currently offered by SheTrades, possibly dropping some of the resource-intensive events at global level (e.g. SheTrades Global) in favour of approaches that are tailored to the country, regional and/or sector specific contexts.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Be more explicit about the targeting of sectors and groups of women in SheTrades activities in order to enable gender transformative shifts – particularly for those who are underrepresented or benefit less in economic decision-making in the sector at present.*
- b. *Set up a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that systematically track qualitative outcomes over time both at sector level and for different sub-groups of beneficiaries.*
- c. *Critically review the number and scope of high-level visibility events in view of current delivery capacity.*

Note to ITC management: Targets on number of women to market, if used as an aspirational goal at the corporate level, should be set based on evidence, realistic delivery capacity and internal dialogue with clearly formulated expectations on what SheTrades and other gender mainstreaming efforts will contribute. Overly ambitious targets can skew efforts and resources to demonstrating quantity over quality and prevent monitoring of more meaningful gender outcomes.

⁷² Notably young women, rural women further out in the value chain, employees and informal traders and/or women in male-dominated sectors as they would require longer-term processes of support with a higher degree of investment and coaching to get them into domestic or international markets.

Conclusion 2: SheTrades relies to a large extent on the SheTrades.com as a main entry-point into the ‘SheTrades universe’ and its various offerings, and as a way to keep in contact with former project beneficiaries. This was not considered to be enough unless accompanied by other types of support or communications channels to lower barriers of entry and use, both in terms of usability of the platform and related tools, and in the level of technical difficulty of the contents provided.

Those who reported benefitting the most from various SheTrades offerings often used many ways to engage in both formal training and informal peer exchange and as project beneficiaries (e.g., via local or sector specific WhatsApp groups), with a mix of global technical support and localized support and engagement. While the SheTrades.com platform is a good support as a knowledge repository, it is not actively checked by registered members unless there are ‘push notifications’ that correspond to their specific needs or are linked to other project-specific engagements. Different segments of WEs/WOBs may need different types of guidance in how to engage with SheTrades online offerings. A specific SheTrades ‘track’ for young women who are aspiring but not yet established entrepreneurs, was also suggested.

Recommendation 2: Ensure tailored and transparent targeting and tracking, of project beneficiaries, including young WEs/WOBs and those operating in male or male-dominated sectors, with links to other ITC programmes and partners.

The considerably higher benefits gained by project beneficiaries means that the selection, validation and follow-up with those benefiting from sponsorships or more tailored support via SheTrades needs to be carefully considered, including the role of partners in that process (avoiding gatekeeping or concentrating beneficiaries to those who are better connected in the capitals over rural/less well-established WEs/WOBs). Formal directories of WEs/WOBs often leave out informal traders, women employees or small-scale women suppliers (farmers, those engaged in crafts etc.) who should also be considered for tailored forms of support through complementary means and an initial sector/value chain gender analysis. Additional provisions may have to be made for women operating in traditionally male/male-dominated and/or high-growth sectors where a smaller number of women may be reached.

A reframing of the SheTrades platform as being complementary to other forms of support is called for with more navigational support, particularly for less experienced users.

Directed to SheTrades team:

- a. *Improve the validation and tracking of project beneficiaries, working with partners to reach those outside of the capital, young WEs/WOBs, and other women in the value chain (informal traders, women employees, small-scale women suppliers etc.).*
- b. *Promote and position the SheTrades.com platform as a complement to other in-person, peer-based and/or targeted project activities and with links to other ITC projects and resources.*
- c. *Work with partners to tailor and package content on the platform to the specific needs of different categories of beneficiaries (including young women).*

Conclusion 3: The uneven results achieved to date in working with national institutional actors, including those hosting nationally embedded SheTrades hubs, may call for more focus at the national level going forward. National ownership, coordination across actors and linking hubs more actively to opportunities for support via other in-country programmes or to collaborations with private sector/market partners will be key.

Short term She Trades project funding limited the possibility to forge clear links between different stakeholder groups and streams of support (policy and practical support to WEs/WOBs). For SheTrades hubs to become more actively embedded in the local context, they would need to rely less on SheTrades global, but rather be seen as vibrant connection points for WEs/WOBs, local actors and private sector players and serve as an entry-point for new opportunities, partnerships and information about tailored support (by SheTrades, other ITC initiatives in-country, or by other donors and funding partners). High-

profile hub launches -- despite a lack of dedicated start-up funds and personnel for follow-up -- led to unmet expectations among national partners and beneficiaries.

Recommendation 3: SheTrades should seek to re-activate already launched hubs where there is strong local buy-in and/or where there are ongoing projects that can support start-up and coordination costs, while refraining from starting new hubs where there is weaker ownership among national partners, and where there is no dedicated funding. National ownership and alignment with local initiatives should be prioritized over maintaining and promoting SheTrades as a global brand in the local context.

Where buy-in is strong and where there is available projects/funding, it is recommended to pursue the hub model by 'reactivating' them. On the other hand, and as part of broader consolidation efforts, SheTrades is recommended to refrain from launching any non-funded SheTrades Hubs, or to set up hubs that are not clearly linked to in-country project(s) that can also be used for national coordination. In countries where ITC has more than one ongoing initiative, the SheTrades hub could be used to ensure closer collaboration between ITC projects in-country so that gender mainstreaming expertise is shared with other ITC programmes. SheTrades should also consider how best to transfer ownership of the hub concept to a set of national actors in a way that forges closer ties for collaboration in-country and that does not conflict with other nationally branded initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship and trade. SheTrades could play a role in working more closely with local private sector partners by linking them to SheTrades hubs, conducting gender training to pursue gender mainstreaming as part of corporate operations, and to diversify their supply chains in ways that open opportunities for local women entrepreneurs.

Directed to SheTrades team:

- a. *SheTrades should critically assess how to reactivate and continuously support launched hubs to ensure that ongoing communications with hub members can be maintained and local activities conducted. Where there is lack of local buy-in, SheTrades should consider closing hubs and clearly communicate to registered hub members how they can participate in other SheTrades activities by other means.*
- b. *National ownership should be prioritized, including alignment with other national initiatives to promote WEs/WOBs and export promotion.*
- c. *Unless dedicated funding and staff capacity is available, SheTrades should refrain from launching any new hubs.*
- d. *SheTrades should seek to enhance and regularly share information with other in-country ITC projects as part of their national coordination budgets, and as part of its role in institutional gender mainstreaming at ITC.*
- e. *SheTrades should explore how to involve local private sectors partners in creating incentives and skills for work on gender transformative approaches in selected value chains and act as intermediaries for involving women (particularly rural woman suppliers, women farmers) in inclusive sector value chains. SheTrades hubs (where they exist) should be used systematically for sharing lessons and insights.*
- f. *She trades should incentivize and coach international market partners on how to connect short-term funding support and mentoring with internal supplier diversity programmes, potentially with links to established SheTrades hubs and their operations in the national contexts.*

Directed to ITC management:

- g. *To enhance in-country coordination across ITC programmes and avoid a proliferation of thematic ITC hubs (SheTrades hubs, green hubs, youth hubs) it is recommended to have a corporate strategy on how and under what conditions to set up hubs, their mandate for coordination in the country context, and how to ensure that there is knowledge sharing between hubs set up in the same country (and possibly region) to support gender mainstreaming across other thematic initiatives.*

Conclusion 4: SheTrades could be further utilized as an internal resource for how to promote gender equality across ITC programming, particularly if operational lessons are gathered around when and how to move beyond gender targeting to create gender transformative results.

SheTrades appeared to be underutilized in ITC as a dedicated space to learn about how to create gender transformative results from promoting women in trade. Generating information materials with more operational lessons, particularly for sectors where women are less well-represented, may increase its relevance for ITC's broader mainstreaming efforts. It would require shifting its positioning within ITC from being the "one-stop-shop" for women in trade to being more of an internal knowledge hub and a resource for other units.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that SheTrades tools and resources correspond to in-house needs for gender mainstreaming across programmes and as part of ITC's corporate gender mainstreaming strategy, with a clear mandate, expectations, and sufficient resourcing for SheTrades to take on this role.

A repositioning of SheTrades to also fill an internal learning function on gender and trade would require more effort toward documenting programmatic guidance on gender mainstreaming, including how to work with intersectional dimensions and with men/in male-dominated sectors. Concrete examples on how SheTrades tools or resources can add value to gender mainstreaming efforts in other ITC programmes could also be written up and distributed internally. This would include more critical lessons, highlighting programmatic obstacles and how they were overcome in different settings and for different segments of women. Guidance on how to work with different types of partners in order to introduce a gender perspective, drawing on SheTrades' extensive partnership model would also be helpful, including how to tailor the partnership portfolio to respond to gender issues in different settings (considering the need to widen or bring in different types of partners from e.g. NGOs or the private sector as needed), and in how to coach private sector partners to adopt a gender transformative approach in its support to gender in trade (including through its own internal policies). This could help position SheTrades as an internal knowledge and resource hub on gender – going beyond just targeting women in trade – to addressing more systemic formal and informal barriers and intersectional gender dimensions.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Provide space for systematizing internal learning and reflection around programmatic lessons that can be documented and shared with others (in-house and/or externally), including examples of how, in what settings, and under what conditions different SheTrades tools and resources have been successfully applied to advance gender outcomes and how to shift gender targeting into gender transformative results (particularly in male-dominated or led sectors).*

Directed to ITC management:

- b. *Review and consolidate the internal ITC gender mainstreaming architecture and SheTrades' mandate within it alongside gender expertise and internal mechanisms.*

Conclusion 5: During the evaluation period, SheTrades was tasked with advancing a high-profile agenda on women and trade for ITC coupled with limited staff and capacity to deliver on it, including limited opportunities for in-house mentoring and cross-project learning within ITC.

Despite successful external resource mobilization and high-level management support when it came to external visibility, the initiative relied on many consultants and junior personnel (many without any prior experience working on gender issues) to deliver projects, develop global tools, and manage high-visibility events, with limited gender expertise on the team and no time/capacity to mentor staff and facilitate learning across projects or within ITC.

Recommendation 5: Review staff needs to be in line with SheTrades' expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.

A consolidation effort and clarification of mandate of SheTrades within ITC should go hand in hand with a review of staff capacities to deliver on this mandate. This may involve looking at the number and level of staff, including the proportion of junior staff to more experienced internal or external expertise that is being drawn on. The recent reorganisation has led to an opportunity strengthen gender expertise in the new and/or vacant positions created. Additionally, external expertise particularly in women's economic empowerment and gender transformative approaches can be more systematically drawn on to inform the design, monitoring and lessons learning across SheTrades activities and projects. A stronger focus on creating enabling (and sustainable) systems at country level may require a shift toward more in-country staff, with sustained support for national coordinators across short term funding cycles.

Directed to SheTrades:

- a. *Ensure that the SheTrades team has (and/or has access to) sufficient gender expertise, advise and training.*
- b. *Provide clear pathways for junior staff to strengthen their learning and to be able to use their gender mainstreaming expertise as a merit for their career paths within ITC (e.g., by supporting knowledge sharing activities or engaging in gender mainstreaming support for other ITC programmes). Work portfolios and responsibilities should be commensurate with their level of expertise and with clear job descriptions to allow for an adequate work-life balance.*
- c. *Ensure that new staff get sufficient coaching and/or training as well as hands-on exposure to in-country activities and sector-specific gender issues.*
- d. *Review human resources needs at a global level versus in-country to ensure continuity and follow up in-country that bridges various short-term funding cycles.*

Directed to ITC management:

- e. *Ensure that SheTrades management has strong gender expertise and management skills.*

Note to ITC management: Longer-term SheTrades staffing needs should be considered and facilitated depending on the role and expected contribution of the SheTrades team to the various strategic objectives of ITC and in relation to meeting internal gender mainstreaming priorities (see recommendation 4).

Annex 1: Evidence trail

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Finding 1a: SheTrades has successfully carved out a niche in the area of women in trade and created a strong brand during its first years of operation. This can be leveraged to consolidate gains and partnerships going forward.</p> <p>Finding 1b: High-visibility events and the launch of multiple offerings during a relatively short time period came with considerable trade-offs in terms of delivery capacity, approach and focus, compounded by ambitious targets.</p>	<p>Conclusion 1: A strong brand and niche for ITC on gender and trade was successfully established via SheTrades since its launch, notably through engagement in international and national policy advocacy and by adopting a holistic, partnership-driven model. Yet high-visibility events and ambitious targets have detracted from monitoring quality in terms of economic empowerment of different groups of women, in particular young women and marginalized groups of women.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: SheTrades should use the niche, brand and operating space it has successfully created to deepen its engagement in processes that help transform sectors (and/or specific value chains) to be more gender inclusive, with specific support to groups of women who are currently underrepresented or who benefit less from engaging in trade in the sector.</p> <p><i>Directed to SheTrades:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Be more explicit about the targeting of sectors and groups of women in SheTrades activities in order to enable gender transformative shifts – particularly for those who are underrepresented or benefit less in economic decision-making in the sector at present.</i> <i>Set up a monitoring, evaluation and learning system that systematically track qualitative outcomes over time both at sector level and for different sub-groups of beneficiaries.</i> <i>Critically review the number and scope of high-level visibility events in view of current delivery capacity.</i> <p><i>Note to ITC management: Targets on number of women to market, if used as an aspirational goal at the corporate level, should be set based on evidence, realistic delivery capacity and internal dialogue with clearly formulated expectations on what SheTrades and other gender mainstreaming efforts will contribute. Overly ambitious targets can skew efforts and resources to demonstrating quantity over quality and prevent monitoring of more meaningful gender outcomes.</i></p>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Finding 2: Barriers of entry into the SheTrades universe was still considered high for a majority of users, with SheTrades.com not being sufficient on its own as an entry-point into SheTrades' offerings. Yet, for women who had participated in SheTrades projects as beneficiaries, who had several interactions with the SheTrades team, and/or received several types of support from SheTrades and/or other ITC in-country initiatives, benefits were substantial.</p>	<p>Conclusion 2: SheTrades relies to a large extent on the SheTrades.com as a main entry-point into the 'SheTrades universe' and its various offerings, and as a way to keep in contact with former project beneficiaries. This was not considered to be enough unless accompanied by other types of support or communications channels to lower barriers of entry and use, both in terms of useability of the platform and related tools, and in the level of technical difficulty of the contents provided.</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: Ensure tailored and transparent targeting and tracking, of project beneficiaries, including young WEs/WOBs and those operating in male or male-dominated sectors, with links to other ITC programmes and partners.</p> <p><i>Directed to SheTrades team:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improve the validation and tracking of project beneficiaries, working with partners to reach those outside of the capital, young WEs/WOBs, and other women in the value chain (informal traders, women employees, small-scale women suppliers etc.).</i> <i>Promote and position the SheTrades.com platform as a complement to other in-person, peer-based and/or targeted project activities and with links to other ITC projects and resources.</i> <i>Work with partners to tailor and package content on the platform to the specific needs of different categories of beneficiaries (including young women).</i>
<p>Finding 3: Supporting enabling country systems, including through SheTrades Hubs and by relying primarily on BSOs as intermediaries, has achieved mixed success to date. National private sector actors were found to play a positive role in relation to creating more diverse and inclusive supply chains in some countries, but more could be done in terms of working on gender inclusive supply chains for international market partners.</p>	<p>Conclusion 3: Supporting enabling country systems, including through SheTrades Hubs and by relying primarily on BSOs as intermediaries, has achieved mixed success to date. National private sector actors were found to play a positive role in relation to creating more diverse and inclusive supply chains in some countries, but more could be done in terms of working on gender inclusive supply chains for international market partners.</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: SheTrades should seek to re-activate already launched hubs where there is strong local buy-in and/or where there are ongoing projects that can support start-up and coordination costs, while refraining from starting new hubs where there is weaker ownership among national partners, and where there is no dedicated funding. National ownership and alignment with local initiatives should be prioritized over maintaining and promoting SheTrades as a global brand in the local context.</p> <p><i>Directed to SheTrades team:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>SheTrades should critically assess how to reactivate and continuously support launched hubs to ensure that ongoing communications with hub members can be maintained and local activities conducted. Where there is lack of local buy-in, SheTrades should consider closing hubs and clearly communicate to registered hub members how they can participate in other SheTrades activities by other means.</i>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. <i>National ownership should be prioritized, including alignment with other national initiatives to promote WEs/WOBs and export promotion.</i> c. <i>Unless dedicated funding and staff capacity is available, SheTrades should refrain from launching any new hubs.</i> d. <i>SheTrades should seek to enhance and regularly share information with other in-country ITC projects as part of their national coordination budgets, and as part of its role in institutional gender mainstreaming at ITC.</i> e. <i>SheTrades should explore how to involve local private sectors partners in creating incentives and skills for work on gender transformative approaches in selected value chains and act as intermediaries for involving women (particularly rural woman suppliers, women farmers) in inclusive sector value chains. SheTrades hubs (where they exist) should be used systematically for sharing lessons and insights.</i> f. <i>She trades should incentivize and coach international market partners on how to connect short-term funding support and mentoring with internal supplier diversity programmes, potentially with links to established SheTrades hubs and their operations in the national contexts.</i> <p><i>Directed to ITC management:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> h. <i>To enhance in-country coordination across ITC programmes and avoid a proliferation of thematic ITC hubs (SheTrades hubs, green hubs, youth hubs) it is recommended to have a corporate strategy on how and under what conditions to set up hubs, their mandate for coordination in the country context, and how to ensure that there is knowledge sharing between hubs set up in the same country (and possibly region) to support gender mainstreaming across other thematic initiatives.</i>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Finding 4: Targeting women (WEs/WOBs) was considered relevant given the large gender disparities and barriers where SheTrades operates. Lessons applicable to gender mainstreaming more broadly, including how to work with male-led SMEs or in male-dominated sectors, were less well captured, but could be relevant to inform gender mainstreaming across ITC.</p>	<p>Conclusion 4: SheTrades could be further utilized as an internal resource for how to promote gender equality across ITC programming, particularly if operational lessons are gathered around when and how to move beyond gender targeting to create gender transformative results.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: Ensure that SheTrades tools and resources correspond to in-house needs for gender mainstreaming across programmes and as part of ITC's corporate gender mainstreaming strategy, with a clear mandate, expectations, and sufficient resourcing for SheTrades to take on this role.</p> <p><i>Directed to SheTrades:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Provide space for systematizing internal learning and reflection around programmatic lessons that can be documented and shared with others (in-house and/or externally), including examples of how, in what settings, and under what conditions different SheTrades tools and resources have been successfully applied to advance gender outcomes and how to shift gender targeting into gender transformative results (particularly in male-dominated or led sectors).</i> <p><i>Directed to ITC management:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> b. <i>Review and consolidate the internal ITC gender mainstreaming architecture and SheTrades' mandate within it alongside gender expertise and internal mechanisms.</i>

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>Finding 5: Review staff needs to be in line with SheTrades' expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.</p>	<p>Conclusion 5: During the evaluation period, SheTrades was tasked with advancing a high-profile agenda on women and trade for ITC coupled with limited staff and capacity to deliver on it, including limited opportunities for in-house mentoring and cross-project learning within ITC.</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: Review staff needs to be in line with SheTrades' expected workload and mandate, including as an institutional knowledge hub for advancing gender mainstreaming in ITC programmes.</p> <p><i>Directed to SheTrades:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Ensure that senior staff and management has (and/or has access to) sufficient gender expertise, advise and training.</i> b. <i>Provide clear pathways for junior staff to strengthen their learning and to be able to use their gender mainstreaming expertise as a merit for their career paths within ITC (e.g., by supporting knowledge sharing activities or engaging in gender mainstreaming support for other ITC programmes). Work portfolios and responsibilities should be commensurate with their level of expertise and with clear job descriptions to allow for an adequate work-life balance.</i> c. <i>Ensure that new staff get sufficient coaching and/or training as well as hands-on exposure to in-country activities and sector-specific gender issues.</i> d. <i>Review human resources needs at a global level versus in-country to ensure continuity and follow up in-country that brides various short-term funding cycles.</i> <p><i>Directed to ITC management:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> e. <i>Ensure that SheTrades management has strong gender expertise and management skills.</i> <p><i>Note to ITC management: Longer-term SheTrades staffing needs should be considered and facilitated depending on the role and expected contribution of the SheTrades team to the various strategic objectives of ITC and in relation to meeting internal gender mainstreaming priorities (see recommendation 4).</i></p>

Annex 2: List of persons interviewed

Internal stakeholders (ITC) – 13 female, 7 male

Organization	Name	Gender	Function
ITC	Vanessa Erogbogbo	Female	SheTrades, core team, Manager until 05/22
ITC	Simon Balfe	Male	SheTrades, core team, Commonwealth Project
ITC	Judith Fessehaie	Female	SheTrades, core team, Policy
ITC	Amy Fallon	Female	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Nick Schläpfer	Male	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Zong Yao Yap Edison	Male	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Christina Rivera Bono	Female	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Anders Aeroe	Male	Director, Division of Enterprises & Institutions
ITC	Rob Skidmore	Male	Chief, Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness
ITC	Anna Mori	Female	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Juan Hoyos	Male	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Anna Summer	Female	SheTrades, core team (West Africa)
ITC	Hargun Aiden	Male	SheTrades, core team (West Africa)
ITC	Michelle Kristy	Female	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Anahita Vasudevan	Female	SheTrades, core team
ITC	Iris Hauswirth	Female	Chief, Strategic Planning, Performance & Governance
ITC	Khadijatu Barrie	Female	SheTrades West Africa
ITC	Michelle Khodara	Female	Senior HR Officer, Gender Focal Point
ITC	Hannah Reinl	Female	HR Officer, Gender Focal Point
ITC	Chileshe Mwamba	Female	Former SheTrades National Coordinator, now external consultant

External stakeholders (Government Institutions, BSOs, Private Sector, Funding partners) – 8 female, 8 male

Organization	Name	Gender	Function
BUILD Bangladesh	Ferdaus Ara Begum (F)	Female	CEO
Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ghana	Abena Otu	Female	Consultant (former)
EIF	Peter Donelan	Male	EIF Project Coordinator
SME Foundation, Bangladesh	Farzana Khan	Female	Deputy General Manager
BASIS - Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services	Farhana Rahman	Female	Senior Vice President
SheTrades Kenya Hub at Abasa Bank	Susana Situma	Female	Abasa Bank
SheTrades Hub Trinidad & Tobago at Ministry of Trade	Deborah Hoyte-Redman	Female	Ministry of Trade
Kenya Export Promotion and Brand Agency	Christine Sitawa	Female	Partnership Manager
MEL-O Africa Ltd	Isaac Kamara	Male	Manager
The Sierra Leone Chamber of Agriculture (SLeCAD)	Ahmed Nanoh	Male	Executive Secretary
Zambia Development Agency	Albert Halwampa	Male	Director, Export Development
UPS	Maria Luisa Boyce	Female	Vice-President, Global Public Affairs
Balmed Holdings (Sierra Leone)	Medgar	Male	Executive Director
Barefoot Women Cashew Farmers (Sierra Leone)	Edward Musa Anaque	Male	Executive Director
MINICOM (Rwanda)	Jonas Munyurangabo	Male	MINICOM Director General for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Organization	Name	Gender	Function
OLAM Specialty Coffee Europe	Phil Schuluter	Male	Managing Director. Private sector partner, Rwanda supporting the application of OLAM AtSource traceability platform to digitize traceability records and connect with international buyers
FarmerConnect	Kristian Doolan	Male	Integration specialist/ senior project manager. Private sector partner supporting digitization efforts, Rwanda

Women Entrepreneurs (WEs) / Women Owned Businesses (WOBs) – 12 female, 0 male

Organization	Name	Gender	Function
Promane and Promade Ltd (Nigeria)	Opeoluwa Ashimi	Female	CEO
Belo Luxury Safaris (Kenya)	Rose Topisia	Female	CEO
Shea Origin (Nigeria)	Mobola Sagoe	Female	CEO
Nova Coffee (Rwanda)	Agnes Mukamushinja	Female	CEO
Peema Naturals (Ghana)	Patience Owusu Kissiedu	Female	CEO
Queen of Chitenge Fashion (Ghana)	Mercy Chewetu	Female	CEO
Travium Supplies (Zambia)	Chileshe Chewe	Female	Founder and CEO
Woman Entrepreneur (Nigeria)	Agnes Chikezie	Female	Virtual learning space user who took over 30 courses
Almasi Couture (Kenya)	Stellar Gikonyo	Female	Virtual learning space user who took 10 courses and the self-assessment
Ishyo Foods (Rwanda)	Sharon Akanyana	Female	CEO
Avocare (Rwanda)	Euphrosine Mugeni	Female	CEO
Champion Grocers (Rwanda)	Jacqueline Mukashyaka	Female	CEO

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

CRITERIA	QUESTION & SUB-QUESTIONS	Assessment indicators	Methods	Perspectives / Key informants
RELEVANCE	<p>1. To what extent does SheTrades address the right issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the initiative's objectives well aligned with women entrepreneur's needs? Are impact goals and the envisaged results in the programme's intervention logic capturing these needs and are they based on the valid assumptions? How well has the initiative been designed to address relevant priorities and needs? How well-suited is the initiative's specific approach (multi-level and multi-sectoral dimension and system transformative in character)? Are there any innovative elements to be highlighted? To what extent does the initiative provide value to ITC's work and mandate, particularly from the perspective of working with gender issues? 	<p>1.1 Across the different domains of influence (international enabling environment, national enabling environment, WE/WOB's enabling environment)</p> <p>1.2 For levels of targeting (WE/WOBs, market partners, BSOs, policy makers)</p> <p>1.3 In relation to overall impact goals and ToC</p> <p>1.4 In relation to overall approach and innovations in delivery</p> <p>1.5 In relation to ITC's institutional approach and learning</p>	<p>Desk review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Short survey/feedback harvesting</p>	<p>All stakeholder groups</p> <p>Emphasis on policy-makers, market partners, donors and other key informants that can influence scale and overall strategy.</p>
EFFECTIVENESS	<p>2. To what extent does SheTrades achieve its objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main intended or unintended results that the initiative has generated so far? Have any individual projects been particularly effective in contributing to the initiative's higher-level objectives? How do synergies or complementarities across individual projects contribute to the achievement of the initiative's higher-level objectives? Were there any key contextual factors that influenced the achievement of results across the initiative's project portfolio? To what extent has the initiative's particular approach been successful? In which areas has the initiative been most effective so far? What are the main results achieved in each of them? Are there examples of results achieved so far that could be considered responsive or transformative? To what extent have higher-level objectives been achieved so far? What contribution does the initiative make to the s? 	<p>2.1 Effect/results achieved across the global action areas (at system or individual levels)</p> <p>2.2 Extent to which main effects have been significant or transformative and/or aligned with the SDGs</p> <p>2.3 Level of contribution to main effects by specific initiatives or a combination of initiatives (delivery mechanisms)</p> <p>2.4 Notable contextual factors affecting effects (internal, external)</p>	<p>Desk Review and interviews with results pattern analysis + assessment of contribution in main result areas</p> <p>Project portfolio analysis</p> <p>Field validation and user feedback (e.g. via short 3-question online questionnaire or feedback mechanisms)</p>	<p>Emphasis on in-country stakeholders and BSOs/market partners who directly engage with WE/WBOs</p>

CRITERIA	QUESTION & SUB-QUESTIONS	Assessment indicators	Methods	Perspectives / Key informants
EFFICIENCY COST-EFFECTIVENESS COHERENCE	<p>3) How well are activities coordinated, implemented, and available resources efficiently used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the SheTrades Initiative been efficiently managed and delivered? How is the quality of implementation perceived by stakeholders? How has cost-effectiveness evolved over time in relation to the estimated reach and scale of the initiative? What systems are in place for monitoring, evaluation, and learning? Do these enable purposeful steering and accountability? To what extent has the initiative contributed to other ITC interventions, particularly in terms of dedicated support for women and/or working with gender issues? How successful is the initiative in drawing in the expertise of other ITC sections that can help improve its performance? How well do SheTrades activities fit with those of other actors in the local context? Are efforts being made to ensure coherence? 	<p>3.1 Efficiency of management and use of available resources 3.2 Degree to which management is informed by evidence and learning (via M&E and other feedback sources) 3.3 Level (and evolution) of perceived or documented cost-effectiveness, especially in relation to scale 3.4 Level of coherence and complementarity to other actors (internationally/at country levels) 3.5 Level of coherence in approach and strategy in line with other ITC interventions</p>	<p>Desk Review</p> <p>Interviews with an emphasis on core SheTrades management team, consultants, other ITC stakeholders, donors</p> <p>SheTrades Hub field visit (TBD)</p>	<p>Primarily internal stakeholders</p> <p>Scan of other actors active in the area globally and in country contexts (including at SheTrades Hub level)</p>
SUSTAINABILITY	<p>4. How sustainable will the effects be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, inclusion of youth, environmental sustainability, social responsibility and human rights) considered in the design and implementation of activities? What relevance do these dimensions have for the initiative? What are related results in these areas? Is there evidence that the initiative or its effects are likely to grow or be maintained beyond the duration of the programme? What impact does the coronavirus pandemic have on the design of the initiative? How did the initiative adapt to the changed circumstances? Are there any other external factors of influence which should be considered? Are achievements likely to lead to a shift in norms or practices related to gender and inclusion in international trade beyond the individual level? 	<p>4.1 Examples of whether and how the overall approach and focus on women in trade has/can potentially shift systems and norms (at different levels) 4.2. Extent to which CSR approaches are replicable or scalable 4.3 Extent to which gender, youth, environmental sustainability and human rights are directly or indirectly addressed in ways that enhance sustainability 4.3 Availability of formed relationships or networks that go beyond the scope and/or timeline of a specific intervention 4.4 Adaptations during COVID-19 and lessons going forward</p>	<p>Assessment of documented (or potential) gender effects at different levels of targeting and in different domains of influence</p> <p>Interviews with market partners on CSR + looking at scaling potential</p> <p>Data scan of projects and impact stories (including 'harvested' experiences) where youth/young women are targeted or benefiting from SheTrades</p>	<p>Key informants</p> <p>Field validation (harvesting of shorter testimonials from SheTrades Global event)</p> <p>Market partners</p>

Annex 4: Project typology

SHE TRADES TRADE-RELATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS (2015 – JUNE 2016) – TYPOLOGY BY LEVELS OF TARGETS & DOMAINS OF INFLUENCE

Project	Budget (USD)	Targets/ Results (PCR)	WE/WOB connect to internat. market	BSOs/ TSIs	Market partners / buyers	Government	Sector focus	WE/WOB economic empowerment	Sector influence	National enabling environment	Internat. enabling environment
Country specific											
Palestine (A673) – end 2016	462,000	Targets	30	1	5		Textile	✓			
Zambia (A898) – end 2016	750,000	Targets	150	1	Multiple		Agriculture: -Cotton	✓	✓		
Zambia (B785) – end 2021	200,000	Results	164 (761 trained)	Multiple	Multiple + DHL support	Multiple	Agriculture: -Honey -Moringa Textile	✓		✓	✓ (COMESA)
Ghana (A921) – end 2016	633,000	Targets	50	3			Agriculture: -Yam	✓	✓		
Gambia (B751) – ongoing	1,050,000	Targets	500	6	12	Multiple	Agriculture: -Horticulture Textile, garments	✓	✓	✓	
Egypt (B821) – ongoing	350,000	Targets	50	3	15	1	Handicraft	✓		✓	
Rwanda (B950) – ongoing	595,600	Targets	100	1	Multiple	5	Agriculture: -Coffee -Horticulture	✓		✓	
Morocco (B937) – ongoing	331,000	Targets	25	3	Multiple (Europe, Canada)	1	Food & beverage	✓		✓	✓ (Links to Europe, Canada)
Multi-country or regional											
Africa: coffee sector (A933) – end 2016	1,865,358	Targets	250	7	Multiple		Agriculture: -Coffee	✓	✓		
Ethiopia, Mongolia: textile & garments – end 2016	999,338	Targets	25	8	Multiple		Textile, garments	✓	✓		
East Africa (B342) – end 2017	500,000	Targets	40	3	4		Agriculture: -Coffee -Food Textiles Tourism	✓			✓ (EAC strategic partner)

Project	Budget (USD)	Targets/ Results (PCR)	WE/WOB connect to internat. market	BSOs/ TSIs	Market partners / buyers	Government	Sector focus	WE/WOB economic empowerment	Sector influence	in-	National enabling environment	Internat. enabling environment
SheTrades Coffee: Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia (B440) – ended 2017	150,000	Targets	40	5	6		Coffee	✓	✓			
SheTrades Coffee: Ethiopia, Rwanda (B637) – end 2020	202,324	Targets	10	2	2		Coffee	✓	✓			
Indian Ocean Rim Association (ORA) (A285) – end 2018	1,130,000	Targets	120	3	10		Services sectors	✓				
Pacific region (A775) – end 2018	2,599,692	Targets <i>Not achieved</i>	200	24	4	8	Traditional handcrafts (bilum)	✓	✓			
Pacific region: PNG only (B644) – end 2018 (Follow-up to A285)	250,000	Result (PCR)	9	1	4		Traditional handcrafts (bilum)	✓	✓			
Commonwealth (Ghana, Kenya Nigeria, Bangladesh) + global incl. <i>Global Outlook</i> (B578) – end 2021	7,948,950	Targets	2,500	15	10	Multiple	Agriculture Textile & garments	✓			✓	✓
Africa (AfCFTA) (B832) – end 2021	760,361	Targets		WBAs		Policy-makers	All products and services					✓ (Regional, Africa)
SheTrades Connect (Japan) (B516) – Egypt, Ivory Coast, Senegal	110,178	Targets	32		1 (trade fair)		(Not indicated)	✓				
Latin America (B999) – ongoing	350,000	Targets	600	8				✓				
West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone) (B610) – ongoing	5,540,000	Targets	105	40	30	Multiple	Agriculture: -Cashew -Cassava -Shea	✓	✓		✓	
Partnership driven												
UPS (B750) – end 2019 – Vietnam, Nigeria, UAE, Mexico (+ global)	276,000	Results (PCR)	58 (+448 trained)	30	Multiple		(Not specified)	✓			✓	
UPS (B956) – end 2021, Vietnam, Nigeria, Mexico, India (+SheTrades Global event)	800,000	Targets	100	3	Multiple		(Not specified)	✓			✓	✓ (Support to SheTrades Global)

Project	Budget (USD)	Targets/ Results (PCR)	WE/WOB connect to internat. market	BSOs/ TSIs	Market partners / buyers	Government	Sector focus	WE/WOB economic empowerment	Sector in-fluence	National enabling environment	Internat. enabling environment
Mary Kay (B957) – end 2021, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, India + global	350,000	Targets	50	8			No sector – support to entrepreneurship training curriculum	✓			
Global											
Global Platform for Action (A772) – incl. <i>SheTrades App, summits, exhibits</i> , ended 2017	3,130,816	Results (PCR)	400 (850 supported)	90	Multiple	Multiple	Textiles, garments Tourism Coffee IT Food	✓	✓	✓	✓
Global outreach, incl. <i>SheTrades app, online tools</i> (B403), ended 2017	338,000	Results (PCR)	610 (training)	25	Multiple	Multiple	All (not specified)	✓		✓	✓
SheTrades Connect, incl. <i>promoting use of app, connect to investors</i> (B404) – ended 2017	270,808	Results (PCR)	31	8 (target not met)	96		All with special initiatives on: -Textile, apparel -ICT (East Africa)	✓	✓		
Data to address constraints to extra-EU trade (B582) – ended 2019	480,000	Results (PCR)	NA	NA	NA	NA	Research focus			✓	✓
ISO/IWA on WOB definition (B562)	220,000	Results (PCR)	NA	NA	NA	Multiple	Definition of term Woman Owned Business (etc)			✓	✓
SheTrades VLS, post-COVID support, SheTrades Hubs, SheTrades Global, SheTrades Invest, Strategy (B641) – ongoing (ends 2021)	3,808,108	Targets	20,000 overall, 390 transacting internat. business	Multiple (610 incl. Gov, BSOs, bbuyers)	Multiple (610 incl. Gov, BSOs, bbuyers)	Multiple (610 incl. Gov, BSOs, bbuyers)	All with some earmarked events around: -Textiles, garment -Tourism -ITC Beauty, wellness	✓	✓	✓	✓

SHE TRADES TRADE-RELATED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TRTA) PROJECTS – TYPOLOGY BY GLOBAL ACTION AREA

Project	Quality data	Fair policies	Gov contracts	Business deals	Market access	Financial services	ser-	Ownership rights
Country specific								
Palestine (A673) – ended 2016				✓	✓			
Zambia (A898) – ended 2016				✓	✓			
Zambia (B785) – ended 2021	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Ghana (A921) – ended 2016		✓		✓	✓			
Gambia (B751) – ongoing (end 2021)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Egypt (B821) – ongoing (end 2021)				✓	✓			
Rwanda (B950) – ongoing (end 2022)				✓	✓			
Morocco (B937) – ongoing (end 2022)				✓	✓			
Multi-country or regional								
Africa: coffee sector (A933) – ended 2016				✓	✓			
Ethiopia & Mongolia: textile & garments (A771) – ended 2016				✓	✓			
East Africa (B342) – ended 2017 (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda)				✓	✓			
East Africa, Coffee (B440) – ended 2017 (Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda)				✓	✓			
Indian Ocean Rim Association (ORA) (A285) (Kenya, Indonesia, Sri Lanka)				✓	✓			
Pacific region (A775) – end 2018			✓	✓	✓			
Pacific region (B644) – end 2018 (PNG only)				✓				
Commonwealth (incl. SheTrades Outlook with global focus) – ended 2021	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Africa – AfCFTA (B832) – ended 2021		✓						
Connect (Japan-funded) - Egypt, Ivory Coast, Senegal (B516) – ongoing (end 2021)				✓	✓			
Latin America (B999) – ongoing (end 2022)				✓	✓			
West Africa (B610) – ongoing (end 2023) <i>incl. contribution to SheTrades Outlook</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓			
Partner driven								
UPS (B750) Vietnam, Nigeria, UAE, Mexico + global online – end 2019				✓	✓			
UPS (B956) Vietnam, Nigeria, Mexico, India + SheTrades Global event – end 2021 (follow-up)				✓	✓			
Mary Kay (B957) Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, India + global – ongoing (end 2021)				✓	✓			

Project	Quality data	Fair policies	Gov contracts	Business deals	Market access	Financial services	ser-	Ownership rights
Global (not country-specific)								
Global Platform for Action (A772) – incl. <i>SheTrades App, summits, exhibits</i> , ended 2017		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Global outreach, incl. <i>SheTrades app, online tools</i> (B403), ended 2017		✓		✓	✓			
<i>SheTrades Connect, incl. promoting use of SheTrades app, connect to investors</i> (B404) – ended 2017				✓	✓	✓		
Data to address constraints to extra-EU trade (B582) – ended 2019	✓				✓			
ISO/IWA on definition of Woman Owned Business (B562) – ended 2020	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
<i>SheTrades VLS, post-COVID support, SheTrades Hubs, SheTrades Global, SheTrades Invest, Strategy Dev.</i> (B641) – ongoing (ends 2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Annex 5: Survey Questionnaire

The survey was distributed as widely as possible to all registered users of the SheTrades Platform (18,625 people). Of these around 5,329 people opened the email and 605 people filled out the survey. Given that many of those registered on the platform are thought to be inactive members, this was still considered to be a fairly high response rate. A limitation was that the SheTrades platform had just been updated to a new version and was temporarily only available in English. Likewise, the survey was only sent in English, likely skewing the responses toward English-speaking countries. The survey was highly user-oriented – directed primarily to WEs/WOBs.

Hello,

The Independent Evaluation Unit of the International Trade Centre (ITC) is currently conducting an **evaluation of the SheTrades Initiative**. The evaluation seeks to take stock of achievements, strengths, and challenges in promoting women in trade, and to inform the future implementation of SheTrades.

This short survey is for you. We would like to get your feedback on whether and how you have benefited from the SheTrades initiative - regardless of how much you have been involved in its activities so far.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could fill out this survey which should take no more than 5-10 minutes of your time! Your answers will be completely anonymous, but your input will be an important contribution to inform the future work of SheTrades.

We ask that you complete this survey as soon as possible, but no later than **Wednesday 13 April 2022**.

Thank you for your support.

1. **Which of the following SheTrades products or services** have you used? (Select all that apply)

- Participated in one or more **activities organized by a SheTrades project**
- Networked** with other women entrepreneurs
- Registered on the **SheTrades.com platform**
- Attended event(s) organized by a **SheTrades Hub**
- I bought or sold** products or services through SheTrades
- Applied to **job or funding opportunities**
- Did a **company self-assessment**
- Attended **e-learning courses or webinars**
- Attended **global events (SheTrades Global)**
- Attended regional or sector **trade fairs**
- Got access to and support from a **coach**
- Used resources in the online **help centre**

2. Would you say that **you and/or your business have benefited from SheTrades?**

- Yes, a lot.
- Yes, moderately.
- Yes, a bit.
- No yet, but maybe later.
- Not at all.

[if any version of 'Yes' in previous question:]

3. What are the **main benefit(s)** that you gained through SheTrades? (Select all that apply)

- Visibility** for myself or my business
- Learned **new skills**
- Gained **new contacts** / increased my network
- Found **business partners**
- Improved** my work or business **practices**
- Got access to **funding**

Optional: If you want to explain in more detail how you have benefited, please use the text box below.

4. Do you have **any suggestions for improving SheTrades** or any of its offerings?

Kindly provide us with a few more details about yourself.

5. I am **living in:** *[country drop down list]*

6. Optional: I work in the following sector: _____

7. How would you assess your accessibility to the internet for engaging in virtual meetings and trainings?

- Very good
- Intermediate
- Unstable
- Not good

8. Please indicate your **gender:**

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

9. What is your **age group?**

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 and above

10. What is your **professional status?** (select all that apply)

- Manager/CEO/Director
- Employee
- Entrepreneur/ business owner
- Self-employed/ freelancer
- Student
- Other

[if 'employee' in previous question:]

11. Do you **work for a:**

- Business
- Government or a government agency
- Business support organization
- International organization
- Nonprofit organization
- Academic, training or research
- Other

[if 'Business' in previous question]

12. How many **employees** does the business have?

- 1-4
- 5-19
- 20-99
- 100-249
- 250 and more

[if 'Entrepreneur/Business owner' in question 10:]

13. My business sells (click all that apply):

- Products
- Services

[if 'Entrepreneur/Business owner' in question 10:]

14. My business sells (click all that apply):

- Locally
- On the domestic market
- Internationally (exporting)

[if 'Entrepreneur/Business owner' in question 10:]

15. How many **employees** does your business have?

- 1-4
- 5-19
- 20-99
- 100-249
- 250 and more

16. Optional: If you have any other comments that you would like to share with us, please use the text box below.

You have reached the end of this survey.

Thank you very much for your participation!