



International  
Trade  
Centre

REVIEW

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# Means of Verification of Results

## How ITC Projects Measure Change

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Independent Evaluation Unit

December 2020

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.

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

This is an independent publication by the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU). The Review was conducted by Hanna Bucher (external independent consultant) under the overall guidance and quality assurance of Miguel Jiménez Pont (Head, IEU).

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December 2020 Original: English

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## Contents

Introduction.....	4
Observed Tools and Practices for Measuring Change.....	6
Supporting results-focused management .....	6
Impact assessment methodologies .....	7
Understanding whether, how and why change happens .....	8
Assessing “value for money” .....	9
Building partnerships for monitoring.....	10
Adaptive management .....	10
Observed Challenges .....	12
Making ToC and RC tools more user-friendly for project managers .....	12
Measuring longer term changes .....	12
Capturing change at policy level.....	12
Coping with capacity shortages .....	12
Addressing NPP user-friendliness and ITC Results Framework.....	12
Conclusions and Suggestions.....	14
Annexes.....	15
Suggested actions.....	15
ITC project evidence mapped against ITC’s Results Framework .....	17
Abbreviations.....	21

## Introduction

1. This Review was carried out of ten ITC projects, with the purpose of better understanding how ITC projects measure and attribute change. It highlights best practices in planning, managing, monitoring and measuring for change. Based on this, lessons are highlighted, and suggestions made on how to improve change measurement practices in ITC. The Review also mapped evidence from ITC projects against ITC's Corporate Results Framework, providing evidence for ITC's Theory of Change.
2. Overall the Review considered:
  - Whether and how ITC projects are planning and managing for change;
  - Whether and how ITC projects are instrumental in making the change (attribution);
  - Whether the change is meaningful in terms of the country context and the wider aims of SDGs;
  - Whether the change achieved is commensurate to the resources expended (value for money);
  - Challenges to measuring change in an ITC context.
3. For purposes of the Review, several projects and technical sections were interviewed and their change measurement tools were analyzed. The selection aimed to cover a diverse set of projects and programmes in terms of size, timeframe, beneficiaries, geographic coverage and coverage of expected changes as defined in the ITC Results Framework.
4. The projects, tools and practices were:

Projects	Division	Results measurement tools and practices
Alliances for Action (A4A), Ghana, Ethiopia, Caribbean	DEI	<b>SMECS</b> - for baselines and needs assessments of enterprises <b>Alliances with partner institutions</b> – For joint collection of data, monitoring and reporting on the value chain. <b>CUBED</b> – for baseline assessment of capacities of institutional partners
Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), the Gambia	DCP	<b>SMECS</b> - for baselines and needs assessments of enterprises <b>Adaptive management</b> – Re-planning of interventions and indicators to external shocks. <b>Impact monitoring of employment status</b> – Monitoring of youth trained in terms of identifying and retaining work.
INTEGRA, Guinea	DCP	<b>Randomized Control Trial (RCT)</b> approach to test how INTEGRA's trainings of youth affect their employability. <b>SMECS</b> - for baselines and needs assessments of enterprises
National Export Strategy (NES), Myanmar and Sri Lanka	DMD	<b>Monitoring of Strategy Implementation</b> - using SIMT tool to monitor implementation of strategies.
Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) Programme	DMD	<b>Monitoring of Trade Obstacles</b> – raising awareness of trade obstacles with policy makers and monitoring reforms and removal of obstacle.
Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI), various countries	DEI	<b>Socio-Economic Impact Assessment</b> – monitoring impact of orders on livelihoods of artisans. <b>Do no harm</b> – monitoring that outcome level changes (income creation) do not negatively affect community's existing livelihood strategies, but rather act complementary.
Global Textiles and Clothing Programme (GTEX), Kyrgyzstan and various countries	DCP	<b>Trend Comparison</b> - Using national statistics to observe employment trends and then assess divergence in trend from beneficiary companies. <b>CUBED</b> – for baseline assessment of capacities of institutional partners
Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa (SITA), various countries	DCP	<b>Case study</b> - on investment facilitation to understand how investment promotion activities can lead to investments <b>Value for Money calculation</b> – at output and outcome levels <b>Monitoring positive / negative externalities</b> – survey of CSR commitments of companies to hypothesize on possible impact beyond jobs and income <b>CUBED</b> – for baseline assessment of capacities of institutional partners
Institutional Strengthening Section (TISI)	DEI	<b>Institutional assessment tools</b> - used for baselines and monitoring change in institutions and cooperatives. Developed CUBED, Benchmarking, Cooperatives

		Assessment for overall assessment of Institutions' capacities and REAC which assesses capacity of institutions to react to external shocks
Colombia PUEDE, Colombia	DCP	<b>SMECS</b> – for baselines and needs assessments of agricultural enterprises <b>Monitoring positive / negative externalities</b> – assessing perceptions of peace and security situation of beneficiaries. <b>Expert Opinion</b> – to track qualitative changes in good agricultural practices <b>Adaptive Management</b> – responding to opportunities and achieving change (beyond the logframe)
UK Trade Partnership (UKTP)	DEI	<b>Value for Money calculation</b> – to assess Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of facilitating exports <b>SMECS</b> - for baselines and needs assessments of enterprises and expanded to include environment/climate module <b>CUBED</b> – for baseline assessment of capacities of institutional partners <b>TOAM</b> – for raising awareness of trade obstacles with policy makers and monitoring reforms and removal of obstacle

5. At the end, some suggestions for improvement that resulted out of the interviews and from the author's own observations were added in Annex.
6. **Limitations:** The Review's approach is to identify and describe change measurement tools applied within selected projects / programmes. It does not assess their effectiveness and provides only preliminary findings on their impact on project operations and results, which would have required the deployment of a full evaluation approach.
7. The report did not look in depth at results measurement on crosscutting issues concerning women, environment and refugees, which would require more detailed interviews. The report also did not look in depth into ITC's broader results monitoring framework or NPP system, which would also require a different approach.

## Observed Tools and Practices for Measuring Change

### Supporting results-focused management

8. ITC has developed a **range of in-house tools that allow assessment and managing for change**. Feedback from project managers indicate that these are perceived as useful and are being implemented across projects. All interviewed projects indicated having used one or more of these tools. They help to standardize assessments, allowing for faster and for quality survey administration but also provide flexibility to be adapted to project specific needs. If applied well, they can ensure the evaluability of projects at various stages. However, most tools have multiple functions and with various audiences in mind, so not all projects have used them with the purpose of M&E. Most tools were developed relatively recently and/or are still being developed and improved further.
9. The fact that all projects are using a selection of these tools is encouraging as it provides some **degree of evaluability**, as well as ensuring a level of uniformity and depth in understanding of what ITC understands by its key indicators, in particular: 1. International Competitiveness of SMEs (Indicators C3-C5) and 2. Institutions having improved operational or managerial performance (B1).

#### Overview of monitoring and survey tools:

Purpose	Tools	Type of Change Measurement Possible	Link
Measuring Change at Enterprise level	SMECS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline, mid-term and end-evaluation for enterprise capacity change</li> <li>• Project-specific attribution questions need to be developed separately</li> <li>• Benefit: Managers able to draw on a quality (tested) survey and can adapted the form. Allows for data to be used for other purposes (SMECO).</li> <li>• Challenge: Cost of implementing means most projects are not able to repeat the survey frequently</li> </ul>	<p>SMECS (generic) – link to L:Drive</p> <p>SMECS (adapted to project – Colombia PUEDE) – link to L:Drive</p>
	Project Specific Baseline Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline, mid-term and end-evaluation for enterprise capacity change</li> <li>• Benefit: Allows for more customization for project needs and can be implemented independently by project (which at times- may be more cost / time effective).</li> <li>• Challenge: may not be possible to use data for SMECO. May be more prone to quality issues.</li> </ul>	Survey Example from GTEX and SITA - link to L:Drive
Measuring Change at Institutional level	Benchmarking / CUBED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline, mid- term and end evaluation for institutional capacity change</li> <li>• CUBED – originally created as a due diligence tool for selecting project implementing partners. But also used as a mini-benchmarking tool to assess institutional strengths and weaknesses for baselines.</li> <li>• Project-specific attribution questions need to be developed separately</li> <li>• Benefit: Managers able to use a quality (tested) survey and that can be adapted.</li> <li>• Challenge: Cost of implementing means most projects are not able to repeat the survey frequently</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">TISI Benchmarking</a></p> <p>CUBED – link to L:Drive</p>

	<b>Cooperatives Assessment Tool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline, mid- term and end evaluation for institutional capacity change</li> <li>• New tool rolled out with 29 cooperatives so far.</li> <li>• Challenge: greater difficulties to implement due to remoteness esp. during Covid</li> </ul>	Cooperatives – link to L:Drive
<b>Measuring Change at Policy level</b>	<b>Strategies Implementation Management Tool (SIMT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SIMT –designed as a tool for government partners to track implementation of Export Strategies.</li> <li>• Allows monitoring of Strategy implementation (level of outcome – impact).</li> <li>• Challenge: attribution requires further traceability to activities within the strategy / action plan.</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.tradestrategy.org">www.tradestrategy.org</a>
	<b>Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism (TOAM)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TOAM –designed as a tool for government and private sector partners to track and ensure transparency in tackling of NTBs.</li> <li>• Allows monitoring of trade barriers being addressed by policy makers (outcome – impact level)</li> <li>• Challenge: attribution requires further traceability to activities.</li> </ul>	<a href="https://ntmsurvey.intracen.org/what-we-do/trade-obstacle-alert/">https://ntmsurvey.intracen.org/what-we-do/trade-obstacle-alert/</a>
<b>Measuring Change at Individual Capacity Level</b>	<b>Training Feedback Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up surveys to trainings to assess change from activity to output and outcome level.</li> <li>• Allows for attribution to project. Assesses value of project to results achieved by individual / enterprise.</li> </ul>	Survey Examples from INTEGRA: <a href="#">a survey for participants from FRUIT DRYING / PRODUCTION OF JUICE AND MARMELADE</a>  <a href="#">a survey for participants from JOB SEEKING</a>  L:Drive - YEP

## Impact assessment methodologies

10. Several projects have developed and / or applied **methodologies for measuring and attributing “impact”**. The methodologies vary from: 1. Rigorous Randomized Control Trials (RCT), to 2. Quasi-experimental, to 3. Simpler methods of before and after comparison (BACO) and comparing trends. These techniques allow projects to understand whether and how much a project has contributed towards impact. Most of the examples of more rigorous assessment are limited to interventions **working directly with individuals** (e.g. INTEGRA – youth component / EFI –artisans).

11. The majority of these use a form of the BACO. A few challenges mentioned to making deeper impact assessments: 1. The high cost of implementing an RCT or similar, 2. Projects that work at SME, institutional or policy level (the majority of ITC’s projects) are usually not able to attribute change at the higher level i.e. employment or income level (but will track info as a way to show contribution).

### Examples of impact measurement:

Purpose	Tools	Type of Impact Measurement Possible	What is being counted
Rigorous impact assessment	RCT	<b>INTEGRA</b> Use of a "control trial" approach. Objective is to test how INTEGRA's trainings of youth affect their employability.  Attribution is possible. Also requires traceability to project activities -i.e. monitoring of training participants and regular post-training follow up.  Challenge: High cost to implement. Need to incentivize control group to participate - suggestion to give them the opportunity to join at a later time-frame (staggered training), to encourage continued participation in surveys	Full time jobs (xx # of hours). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth find employment as a result of INTEGRA</li> <li>• Youth improving their jobs as a result of INTEGRA</li> <li>• Youth start in self-employment as a result of INTEGRA</li> </ul> Contribution to SDG 8

Impact assessment	<b>Before and after Comparison (BACO)</b>	<b>YEP</b> 2x a year ongoing survey of companies (basis was SMECS) and trainees (indiv. Survey) on employment status in the Gambia  Attribution depending on depth of training (e.g. for micro-companies -count all jobs after 1 intervention / for small companies after 2 interventions / for medium 3 types of support etc)	Count youth and women who report having found employment (disaggregate by sex, temporary / full time, seasonal). Needs to be for longer than 4 months but can count someone who may have found employment e.g. for a year but lost it again later (e.g. due to covid).  Contribution to SDG 8.6, 16.6,
Socio-Economic Impact Assessment - change at level of livelihoods	<b>Before and after Comparison (BACO)</b>	<b>EFI (RESET)</b> Using project specific baseline survey (individual level) which covers socio-economic indicators. Attribution linked by "order based assessments" - i.e. linked to work contracts – and yearly impact assessments allowing for observation of change at livelihoods level.  Challenge: still difficult to monitor environmental impact in supply chain – particularly concerning minimizing negative externalities. EFI organized a hackathon to identify tools to monitor CO2 emissions in fashion supply chain.	Fair labour standards, living wage, formalization, environmental impact  Contribution to SDG 1, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16
Impact assessment	<b>Comparing Trends</b>	<b>GTEX</b> Using national statistics to observe employment trends in textile. Then use survey results from textile companies that have benefited from project to assess divergence in trend from national statistic.  Challenge: National statistics not always reliable.	Jobs created or retained in T&C (both temporary and permanent)  Contribution to SDG 8, 12, 9, 5

## Understanding whether, how and why change happens

12. Some projects go beyond the immediate indicators along the results chain, to better understand **why a change has occurred** or not occurred or to **strengthen a hypothesis for interventions** by predicting likely behavior that could strengthen or weaken the positive impact of a project at higher levels e.g. positive or negative externalities / Do no harm.
13. Best practices looking at capturing this type of information on how and why a change is happening, is mostly through means that allow **qualitative information gathering e.g. Case Studies or via expert opinions**.
14. As a general observation, most – if not all agricultural projects spend a significant amount of time in **qualitatively tracking and understanding behavioral change** as this is linked to the nature of the training i.e. changing agronomic practices takes time and usually includes a complex interplay of planting, harvesting and post-harvest handling techniques. Thus, most projects are monitoring this change from activity - output and output – outcome level through regular technical reports sent by agronomic experts or institutional partners. A project's inability to monitor this behavior closely is often associated with challenges in achieving results, thus a pandemic like Covid-19 or security related travel restrictions are major risks.

Tools	Type of Change Observation
<b>Case Study</b>	SITA: Case study on investment facilitation. Interviews with 5-6 investors who had benefited from ITC outputs (investment promotion missions; market information) and decided to invest (outcome) / or not to invest. The interviews show what role the project played in the decision-making.  Challenge: a project needs to already have achieved a sufficient number of cases to carry out an assessment, which then requires a longer project period.



<p><b>Expert Opinion</b> + <b>Video – Cell phone usage (during Covid-19)</b></p>	<p>Colombia PUEDE: Using 25 agro-experts to track regular changes in behavior in applying good agricultural practices in Colombia.</p> <p>When agro-experts are unable to visit farmers directly, an alternative approach applied was via social media – including Facebook (video tutorials), radio programmes, and pictures to ensure agricultural best practices are being followed.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring positive or negative externalities and change in wider community context</b>  (Outcome - Impact level)</p>	<p>EFI – Do no harm. Monitoring that the increase in income for Maasai artisans, due to the project, does not lead to a replacement of traditional forms of income from livestock herding.</p> <p>SITA –In the baseline survey asked about companies' CSR and community engagement (e.g. infrastructure support to community, provision of educational services for workers or childcare facilities) to understand whether an improvement in company performance could indirectly have effect on community beyond jobs and income (outcome to impact level).</p> <p>Colombia PUEDE - In the SMECS, included a perception question on peace and security. The project only indirectly aims to contribute towards peace and security (highest-level impact) through sustainable income and employment creation.</p>

### Assessing “value for money”

15. Within ITC, most of the DFID / FCDO funded projects have been tracking **Value for Money (VfM) for interventions at output and / or outcome level**. It is a particular angle on the question of monitoring change as in addition to the confirmation of a result, it needs to be put in relation to the cost of the inputs it took to achieve it. While it is still difficult to speak of “best practice” when it comes to VfM – given the many challenges (e.g. differing costs related to country / regional context, type of intervention, length of time required to achieve policy or institutional results), with time and more examples from projects – VfM calculations could become easier to compare, and possibly add another dimension to the toolkit for project managers who need to weigh up the feasibility of results given limited resources.

<b>VFM calculation</b>	<b>Type of Data Needed</b>
<p>Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) calculation for Export Value generated</p>	<p><b>UKTP</b> Requires confirmation of sales / exports by project beneficiaries</p> <p>Requires tallying of input costs related to export promotion activities</p>
<p>Outcome Level: Cost-Benefit of export and investment value created</p> <p>Output Level: Cost of creating 1 business linkage; 1 investment linkage; strengthening an institution; improving capacity of an enterprise</p>	<p><b>SITA</b> <b>Outcome:</b> Requires confirmation of sales/ export or investment value by project beneficiaries</p> <p>Requires tallying of input costs related to export and investment promotion activities</p> <p><b>Output:</b> Requires confirmation of a business or investment linkage established; a change in TISI or enterprise capacity.</p> <p>Requires tallying of input costs related to export and investment promotion and for institutional and enterprise capacity building.</p>

## Building partnerships for monitoring

16. Many projects have found very practical solutions to address challenges in monitoring change through **outsourcing and partnerships**. Examples include: 1. Outsourcing to a company, 2. Using partner institutions for collecting data and monitoring which has the added benefit of building capacities within countries and, 3. Mobilizing broader alliances with buyers and other stakeholders in the value chain.

	<b>Role in Monitoring</b>
Outsourcing parts of monitoring / data collection functions to a company	<p><b>YEP</b></p> <p>Using a professional service company that specializes in surveys and data management. The benefit for a project like YEP, is that it allows a professional data collection and follow up for their very large numbers of beneficiaries. This frees up time from project staff who are focused on implementation and can focus on understanding and using results (rather than on how to collect them).</p> <p>Challenge: may not be affordable for smaller projects.</p>
Working with partner institutions for monitoring results– usually through an MOU or via consultants	<p><b>A4A / NES</b></p> <p>Working with partner institutions (e.g. sector associations, Ministry partners) on monitoring and evaluation – in isolation or usually in addition to implementation. The benefit is that it strengthens the role of partner institutions in a function they themselves need to usually improve on. The partners also often have easier / closer contact to beneficiaries allowing for easier data collection.</p> <p>In the case of NES – it is in fact the governments who own and drive the implementation management process but where ITC's support in monitoring (e.g. through SIMT) becomes an important success factor.</p> <p>Challenge: Depending on the institution-, the quality of monitoring may vary.</p>
Alliances / Partnership approach which includes M&E	<p><b>EFI / A4A</b></p> <p>An interesting approach is taken by projects like EFI and A4A in building alliances amongst actors in a value chain. Here the various actors also carry a role in M&amp;E by contributing in the setting of standards, buyers through self-audits, and joint reporting of the value chain overall.</p> <p>Challenge: a much more time consuming process. Quality of data also depends on willingness and commitment by larger buyers.</p>

## Adaptive management

17. Linked to – but going beyond monitoring per se, it was very interesting to hear of many examples of **how project managers see and take advantage of opportunities - or adapt to challenges and external shocks that diverge from planned logframes and indicators**. Here the best practice is the ability to adapt to the unforeseen and amend logframes, activities or indicators to allow for a revised direction given the new circumstance. Many examples raised related to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

18. Just a few small examples are provided below though it would be interesting to collect more such stories in a more structured manner. While such examples depend to a large degree on **attitudes, values and capacities** of the individuals, however mechanisms to encourage such behavior are also important, e.g. designing M&E systems to allow for flexibility (see YEP example) or using monitoring data for feedback loops to decide on staying on course or re-planning. Within ITC, a change control process allows for a planned / structured change to a logframe or budget during project implementation.

Adapting to opportunities and challenges	Project Example
Adaptive management – reacting to challenges and opportunities of external shocks (COVID-19)	<p><b>YEP</b> -due to the Covid-19 pandemic, borders were closed and imports into Gambia restricted. As a result, in one of the components, the main outcome indicator on exports were unlikely to be reached.</p> <p>Rather than wait out the end of pandemic, the project adapted the approach by linking MSMEs to domestic Gambian buyers (e.g. Hotel chains, Gambian vegetable importers).</p> <p>The border closure, while creating difficulties for export, thus also opened up new opportunities for increasing domestic sales and for import substitution which previously did not exist (due to long-ingrained preferences by buyers for Senegalese vegetables). The pandemic thus provided an opportunity for Gambian entrepreneurs who had benefited from YEP trainings, to prove the quality of their produce could compete with international providers.</p> <p>While the export indicator in its current form will not be met, the re-orientation aligns with the spirit of the outcome by improving the international competitiveness of MSME.</p> <p><b>TISI Section</b> - REACT (Ready, Expert, Agile, Connected and Trusted) – TISI developed a new tool to assess to what degree institutions are equipped to deal with crises, such as Covid-19.</p> <p>The development of the tool itself is a result of an external shock.</p>
Looking to influence changes beyond the project LF	<p><b>Colombia PUEDE</b> – Through the stakeholder consultations, beneficiaries raised the importance of building a bridge and re-furbishing the road to ensure that the increase in productivity and linkage to buyers would not be undermined by logistical barriers.</p> <p>While not within the scope of the project logframe, the project was able to raise the issue with high level policy makers and decision makers. As a result of advocacy – the city mayor has committed to the building of the bridge.</p>
Culture of valuing and using data	<p><b>SITA's</b> baseline survey collected detailed firm-level data of activities of 515 East African processing firms at the task level and mapped to national and international value chains.</p> <p>It was the curiosity of a consultant in DMD and encouragement of the project managers in DCP, to identify that the baseline survey's detailed data allowed for an analysis of firms' differing engagement in south-north vs south-south value chains (filling a gap in academic literature<sup>1</sup>). ITC further enabled the research by providing W1 funds, to develop the findings for a publication presented at the second high level UN Conference on South-South Cooperation (BAPA+40). The results were not part of the planned interventions of the project, but ended up contributed significantly to the overall aim of SITA in making a stronger case for South-South.</p>

1

[https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/Global%20South%20value%20chains\\_final\\_Low-res.pdf](https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/Global%20South%20value%20chains_final_Low-res.pdf)

## Observed Challenges

19. Several challenges were raised and observed during interviews. Many are common to development projects in general but a few were also specific to ITC. While the overall objective of the report was to focus on best practices and less on the challenges, nonetheless a few are mentioned here below in brief.

### Making ToC and RC tools more user-friendly for project managers

20. All ITC projects have logframes and related indicators, risks and assumptions developed, but not all have an underlying **theory of change (ToC) or a detailed results chain (RC)** elaborated. Depending on the donor, either a ToC or a RC can be obligatory in passing a project plan but there is little consistency in requirements. A challenge observed is that often **logframes, ToCs and RCs are confused or conflated** and where these are required, many view it as a **“tick box” necessity**. While this is not an issue in ITC alone (see: [the hidden life of Theories of Change](#)), it does highlight a general problem that these tools are not optimally used. The key challenge is how to make these tools useful for project managers – rather than another obligatory template to fill in.

### Measuring longer term changes

21. A frequent challenge raised by projects was how to measure **impact and results after the end of projects**. This is particularly pertinent to projects with more difficult to achieve results or that require more time – e.g. policy or institutional level change, or in agriculture with crops requiring long maturation periods (e.g. coconut- 4 years; cinnamon – 3 years). Given that, many results are likely only visible after several years; many project time-frames cannot capture longer term changes. In some instances cited, project managers have heard informally from partners of results achieved after the end of projects. However, reporting post-project is usually difficult (even if encouraged) given that, project staff would often have already moved on to new projects. In addition, beyond the anecdotal evidence, there are few mechanisms to follow up properly on what has worked and what has not.

### Capturing change at policy level

22. A general challenge remains how to **capture change at policy level**. Beyond the issue of timing (above), the issue of **attributability** is also difficult. A positive observation is that there are new tools being developed in DMD e.g. TOAM, SIMT to help track implementation / amendments to regulations and policies. These make it much easier to monitor where change is happening and to what extent policy recommendations have been acted upon by partners. However, attribution is difficult given that projects cannot (and arguably should not) unduly push for policy decisions or regulatory change.

### Coping with capacity shortages

23. **Practical challenges to M&E** raised in interviews, relate to common issues with time and resource capacities in projects for monitoring, issues with data gathering including **survey fatigue in partner countries, the problem of “reliability” of national data, positive feedback bias in surveys, to limited capacity of partner institutions in monitoring**. These challenges are not unique to ITC, nor to the private sector development / TRTA area of work.

### Addressing NPP user-friendliness and ITC Results Framework

24. Another common challenge raised across projects is the **time it takes to update the portal for purposes of monitoring**. While most projects interviewed, were generally positive about

the NPP; overall, the feeling is that it could be made easier through simple technical solutions. As a result, some view monitoring as too time consuming. To some degree, there will always be a push and pull between requirements and project managers' demands for simplified processes.

25. A further challenge raised is the perceived **mismatch between the overall ITC Corporate Results Framework and the project specific logframes and changing realities on the ground**. Some indicate that the corporate logic often does not allow results to be well reported. Examples provided include more qualitative changes such as the facilitation / creation of alliances, which can only be reflected generally as "advisory services". Many examples revolved around changing activities, outputs and even outcomes as a result of Covid-19 which do not fit neatly in the results framework. In other cases, challenges raised were around questions of the "level" of change – e.g. indicator C1 is perceived as more difficult to achieve than other indicators at that level.

## Conclusions and Suggestions

26. **Conclusions** – Nearly all of ITC projects interviewed have put in place mechanisms to allow monitoring and evaluating change. The quality of these was not analyzed in detail and will likely vary a lot, but it is important to emphasize that some measure of evaluability was found in all interviewed project.
27. A noticeable positive development is the **consistency in survey tools being applied** – with the majority citing SMECS or CUBED – being applied in the beginning of a project for purposes of needs assessment, selection of beneficiaries and for setting baselines.
28. Practically all projects interviewed, **apply survey tools following trainings and B2Bs**, which track changes directly following an activity as well as several months later to capture higher-level changes. Though not all projects have the follow-up time-period specified in a monitoring plan.
29. At higher level, impact assessment, **most projects apply a form of Before and after Comparison (BACO)**. Most projects aim to show **contribution** and understand the nature of the change at higher level. A few best practices in impact measurement allowing for **direct attribution** have also been identified (using RCT and socio-economic impact assessments). All of these cases of rigorous assessment are specific to interventions targeted at individuals (e.g. capacity building of youth or artisans) and not at enterprise or institutional level.
30. Several **projects go beyond the standard M&E frameworks** and indicators to better understand why a change has occurred or not occurred or to strengthen a hypothesis for interventions by predicting likely behavior that could strengthen or weaken the positive impact of a project at higher levels e.g. **positive or negative externalities / Do no harm approaches**.
31. **Suggestions** – A challenge identified is in **measuring higher-level results for policy and regulatory changes**. This is a common challenge also in other development projects, given the longer time-frame and the attribution gap. Here too, new ITC tools have been developed which makes monitoring change at output and outcome level easier but observing impact level change remains a challenge. A recommendation would be to **invest a bit of time and funds for researching impact from policy change, with the overall aim of strengthening the case for ITC's work in the area**.
32. Another challenge are the differing requirements by ITC and donors in the results planning and measurement tools used e.g. the usage of ToC, RC, VfM, risk registers can be obligatory in some but not in others and there is little consistency in understanding of their format. An observation is that often logframes, ToCs and RCs are confused or conflated and where these are required, many see it as more of a “tick box” necessity than a useful tool. A recommendation is to **support project managers in better understanding the different uses and benefits of the tools – and moving beyond making them simply obligatory**.
33. Many projects are struggling with **time and cost constraints to doing M&E well**. A key challenge is how to reduce time spent on the implementation of monitoring and increasing the time spent on learning and adapting in response to data and results. A final recommendation is to **consider common or broader solutions to simplify monitoring for projects without compromising on quality and creating space for learning and adaptive management**.

*During the interviews, some concrete ideas on how to action the above recommendations were provided. These are listed in Annex I.*

## Annexes

### Suggested actions

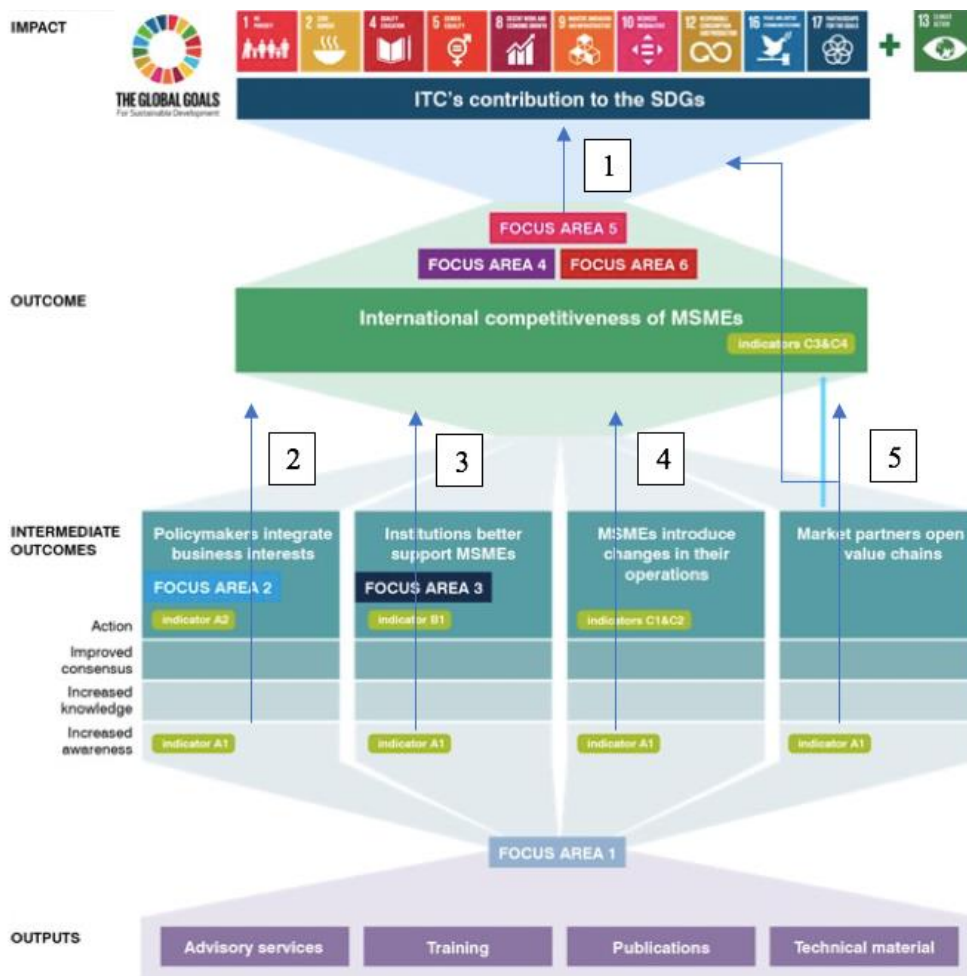
On Tools	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Raise awareness of tools</b> especially the new ones (e.g. cooperatives, SIMT) and especially for new project managers so they are aware of how they can be implemented and used for M&amp;E.</li> <li>• Where possible, develop <b>simplified methodologies for assessments</b> (i.e. mini-SMECS / mini CUBED?) so projects are able to implement them quickly and cheaply, but at a minimum-set quality – which will still allow technical sections to follow up with effective trainings and evaluations and for standardized corporate data collection.</li> </ul> <p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IEU:</b> develop <b>guidance notes on how to roll out tools to ensure usage in mid- and end evaluations</b>. Clarify what project managers need to consider if they wish to pursue various kinds of impact evaluations such as sample size, selection process, costing etc.</li> <li>• <b>SPPG - Project Design Taskforce or E-learning?:</b> Develop an <b>ITC-specific toolbox</b> for project managers which showcases the various tools available for design, implementation and M&amp;E, and how to use them (see GIZ <a href="#">Capacity WORKS</a>, or <a href="#">USAID CLA</a>). Ideally this should include more generic tools e.g. on Stakeholder Analysis, Political Economy Analysis, Risk Assessment but with an ITC point of view. This can also be communicated to donors as a sign of how ITC ensures project quality.</li> </ul>
On impact evaluation	<p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IEU:</b> Detail good options for impact measurement methodologies depending on the size of budget and timeframe and type of project.</li> <li>• <b>IEU:</b> develop guidance notes on how to roll out tools (e.g. SMECS / CUBED) to ensure usage in mid- and end evaluations. Clarify what project managers need to consider if they wish to pursue various kinds of impact evaluations such as sample size, selection process, costing, etc. (as above)</li> </ul>
On Measuring Qualitative change	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG - Project Design Taskforce:</b> Consider how to promote learning through M&amp;E e.g. Facilitate (non-judgmental) discussions on where change has happened and where not, for purposes of learning and exchange.</li> </ul>
On VfM	<p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG – FM:</b> It might be useful for project designers to have a ballpark figure on costing and VfM for standard ITC outputs / outcomes e.g. organizing a B2B, facilitating an investment or strengthening an institution. However, they should not become more than general rules of thumb. A constricting VfM approach could easily disincentivize managers from working on more difficult and more expensive results albeit possibly equally, if not more important, in a developmental context (e.g. policy or institutional level change/ or in fragile state and post-conflict country contexts).</li> </ul>
On Adaptive Management	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight and <b>praise innovative ways of creating and measuring change</b>– e.g. via Annual Report or through communication tools.</li> </ul> <p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG – Project Design Taskforce:</b> Encourage discussion on <b>adaptive management</b> practices and how M&amp;E systems can be designed to allow for flexibility.</li> <li>• Encourage <b>a culture of collecting and valuing data</b> (SMECS usage shows this is already happening to some degree).</li> </ul>
On ToC / RC	<p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG:</b> Provide easy guidance for developing ToC, RC and logframes and the purpose of each (could be part of the toolkit?). Revive best practices folder which showcase good examples of ToCs / RCs?</li> <li>• <b>SPPG – Project Design Taskforce (?):</b> have 2-3 people trained in facilitating team discussions in formulating ToCs / RCs.</li> </ul>
On time-frames	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG:</b> Allow for NPP results reporting post- project end date.</li> <li>• For new projects – simplify ways of linking to results of older projects e.g. using NTM Surveys, TOA or SIMT</li> <li>• <b>IEU:</b> Conduct an in-depth study on how change happened e.g. in a country with many completed and ongoing ITC projects. Not as an evaluation of the effectiveness of a project but for purposes of learning where sustainable results were achieved and the bigger questions of how trade / investment can effectively contribute to job and income creation. Start from the outcomes and work backwards (outcome harvesting approach).</li> </ul>

On policy	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Export Strategy and SPPG:</b> work on linking SDGs to SIMT to allow for easier monitoring of contributions at impact level.</li> </ul> <p><b>Author's suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG &amp; a policy- level project:</b> Design a pilot policy impact measurement - pick 2-3 policy or regulatory reforms already implemented. Identify how / to what extent ITC has contributed and then identify higher level impact as a result of the change. Such impact measurement cases could strengthen future project proposals and implementation hypotheses.</li> </ul> <table border="1" data-bbox="368 389 1430 808"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="368 389 655 416">Example</th> <th data-bbox="655 389 1034 416">Contribution / Attribution</th> <th data-bbox="1034 389 1430 416">Impact</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="368 416 655 640">           NES – Sri Lanka.            1.1.5 Take a policy decision to allow subleasing of space to foreign partners by setting up a JV in order to promote and enable local BOI companies to attract foreign boat builders.         </td> <td data-bbox="655 416 1034 640">           Expert Opinion – provide their view that Sri Lanka boat regulations slipped beneath the radar for decades and only revived with NES.             Back-up with data on last policy related work in sector.         </td> <td data-bbox="1034 416 1430 640">           Outcome: Assess how many JVs set up in the sector / how many foreign boat builders active in sector.             Impact: Identify how many jobs linked to the companies / JVs.         </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="368 640 655 808">           NTM – Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism             Identify obstacles that have been removed         </td> <td data-bbox="655 640 1034 808">           Expert Opinion – Policy makers / ministry partners provide their perspective of how they have gone about removing the obstacle and how the TOAM or Survey have helped them identify which ones to tackle.         </td> <td data-bbox="1034 640 1430 808">           Outcome – Assess how many NTBs removed             Impact- Estimate of cost / time reduction for SMEs due to removal of obstacle         </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Example	Contribution / Attribution	Impact	NES – Sri Lanka. 1.1.5 Take a policy decision to allow subleasing of space to foreign partners by setting up a JV in order to promote and enable local BOI companies to attract foreign boat builders.	Expert Opinion – provide their view that Sri Lanka boat regulations slipped beneath the radar for decades and only revived with NES.  Back-up with data on last policy related work in sector.	Outcome: Assess how many JVs set up in the sector / how many foreign boat builders active in sector.  Impact: Identify how many jobs linked to the companies / JVs.	NTM – Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism  Identify obstacles that have been removed	Expert Opinion – Policy makers / ministry partners provide their perspective of how they have gone about removing the obstacle and how the TOAM or Survey have helped them identify which ones to tackle.	Outcome – Assess how many NTBs removed  Impact- Estimate of cost / time reduction for SMEs due to removal of obstacle
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Coping with capacity constraints	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pooling costs across large EU or DFID / FCDO projects to contract a company for common service of monitoring (e.g. 2x a year proper follow up with companies, e.g. using SMECs survey, but results analysis etc still in hands of project). Benefit: reduce time/ cost per project, ensure quality of survey, no need for project to spend on tools (e.g. tablets, data analysis software).</li> <li>• <b>SPPG or DCP Country Managers?:</b> With a regularized implementation of SMECS and CUBED across countries, there should be more possibilities to share data across ITC projects. Ensure that new projects first consider existing data availability from other projects before starting their own survey.</li> </ul>									
On NPP	<p><b>Interviewee suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SPPG:</b> continue with efforts to improve the NPP to become more user friendly. Key points are around technical solutions to simplify inputting of project data (e.g. on trainings / trainees) and uploading of documents. Concrete suggestions provided in ppt.</li> </ul>									

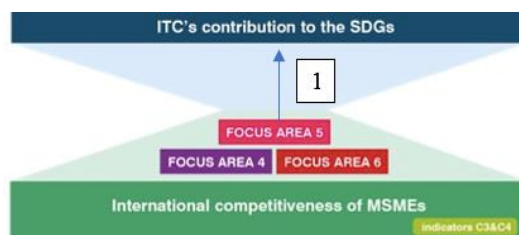


## ITC project evidence mapped against ITC's Results Framework

In its 56 years, ITC has accumulated a good basis of evidence of how trade related technical assistance (TRTA) contributes to economic development and poverty reduction. ITC's results framework provides the higher level theory of change – showing the logic of how this change happens from activity to impact. Mapped to this framework, is a selection of recent project evidence that has shown that change from one level to the next was achieved and the tools used to observe this change. In addition, where available, wider academic literature or other organisations' project evidence is added to support the evidence for the framework.



### Outcome to Impact



## 1. International Competitiveness of MSMEs -- leading to jobs, income & poverty reduction

- Improved Productivity
- Increased Sales
- Increased Exports

Ethical Fashion Initiative – The Ethical Fashion Initiative connects marginalized artisans from the developing world – the majority of them women - to international fashion houses for mutual benefit. The initiative tracks socio-economic impact through “order based assessments”. It has shown how linking social enterprises to international buyers can lead to improved income and savings of artisans. It also shows this can indirectly lead to improvement in health and healthcare access and work environment of artisans. The impact is directly linked- to orders received thereby also enabling attribution to project activities. **Tools:** RESET, EFI Compliance Scheme.

**Other Projects / Academic Literature Evidence:** <https://www.enterprise-development.org/what-works-and-why/evidence-framework/increased-productivity-revenue-leads-to-poverty-reduction/>

### Intermediate Outcome to Outcome

## 2. Policymakers integrate business interest -- leading to International Competitiveness of MSMEs



**NTM** - The ITC Non-tariff Measures (NTMs) Programme ensures that the concerns of SMEs about regulatory and procedural trade obstacles are brought to the attention of policymakers and other stakeholders, enabling them to take concrete actions to address these. ITC uses firm-level surveys and the Trade Obstacles Alert Mechanism to identify obstacles. Since 2010, the programme identified trade obstacles of more than 22,500 exporters and importers employing over 2 million people, which are representative for exporters and importers in 63 countries. As result of ITC’s diagnostic assessments, countries have implemented decisions that evidently resulted in the removal of regulatory or procedural trade obstacles. **Tools:** Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism (TOAM), Comprehensive surveys of exporters and importers, Stakeholder meetings and consultations

**Other Projects / Academic Literature Evidence:** <https://www.enterprise-development.org/what-works-and-why/evidence-framework/firms-change-behaviour-when-market-failures-have-been-addressed/>

### 3. Institutional change -- leading to International Competitiveness of MSMEs



**AIM for Results** - ITC's AIM For Results is designed to improve the managerial and operational performance of Trade and Investment Promotion Organizations (TIPOs). Stronger, better performing TISIs are able to better support their small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) clients to be more competitive and internationalize. TISI Section in collaboration with the University of Geneva, calculated that for every \$1 spent on a TPO, on average leads to an additional \$87 in Exports and \$384 in GDP increase.

**MARKUP** - ITC supported the re-vitalization of the Tanzania Spices Association by supporting membership outreach and strengthening of governance structures. The association in turn was able to organize trainings to spice farmers in cinnamon production and processing as well as linking buyers to farmers. As a result of the strengthened institution, exports of cinnamon increased from \$200,000 in 2018 to +\$800,000 in 2019. **Tools:** Benchmarking, CUBED, Cooperatives Assessment

**Other Projects / Academic Literature Evidence:** <https://www.enterprise-development.org/what-works-and-why/evidence-framework/business-environment-reform-leads-to-new-firms-being-started-or-registered-2/>

### 4. MSMEs change their operations -- leads to International Competitiveness of MSMEs



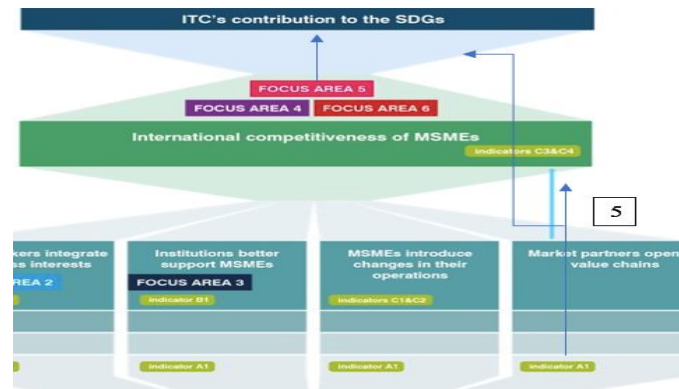
**GTEX** –ITC supported exporting and export-ready SMEs in the Kyrgyzstan Textile and Clothing sector. The project provided a diverse mix of pinpointed training and advisory services, as well as by organizing participation in trade fairs and marketing missions to target markets. Between 2012 and 2015 T&C exports from the Kyrgyz Republic dropped by 75%, yet exports from the 54-core project beneficiary SMEs remained stable. **Tools:** SMECS

**Colombia PUEDE** - Colombia PUEDE works to improve the livelihoods of 2.000 beneficiaries by enhancing their production capacities and the commercialization of their products. Through improving agricultural practices and adoption of international standards, the project has shown how production capacity and commercialization have improved for ca. 500 farmers. Further monitoring of livelihoods

has shown that the project has contributed towards income creation of small producers. **Tools:** SMECS (baseline), expert opinion – qualitative data gathering on changes in good agricultural practices.

**Other Projects / Academic Literature Evidence:** <https://www.enterprise-development.org/what-works-and-why/evidence-framework/firms-change-behaviour-then-become-more-productive/>

**5. Market partners open value chains – leading to International Competitiveness of MSMEs / jobs, income & poverty reduction**



**SITA** – ITC supports south-south trade and investment between India and East Africa. The project engages in investment promotion activities encompassing market information, awareness raising and exposure missions. As a result of the project, Indian investors in the clothing and leather sector were confirmed, which in turn resulted in new full-time jobs and new exports (to third markets) created.

**Tools:** Case Study / Expert Opinion, Company surveys.

**Other Projects / Academic Literature Evidence:**

[https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaeed20095\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaeed20095_en.pdf)

<https://www.intracen.org/publications/Global-South/>

## Abbreviations

A4A	Alliances for Action
BACO	Before and After Comparison
BCR	Benefit – Cost Ratio
CUBED	Institutional due diligence assessment for programme design
DFID	Department for International Development
EFI	Ethical Fashion Initiative
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
IEU	Independent Evaluation unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSME	Micro- Small and Medium sized Enterprises
NES	National Export Strategy
NTM	Non-Tariff Measures
RBM	Results Based Measurement
RC	Results Chains
RCT	Randomized Control Trials
SIMT	Strategies Implementation Management Tool
SITA	Supporting Indian Trade and Investment for Africa
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
SMECO	SME Competitiveness Outlook
SMECS	SME Competitiveness Survey
SPPG	Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institutions
TOAM	Trade Obstacle Alert Mechanism
ToC	Theory of Change
TRTA	Trade Related Technical Assistance
UKTP	United Kingdom Trade Partnership
VFM	Value for Money
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project