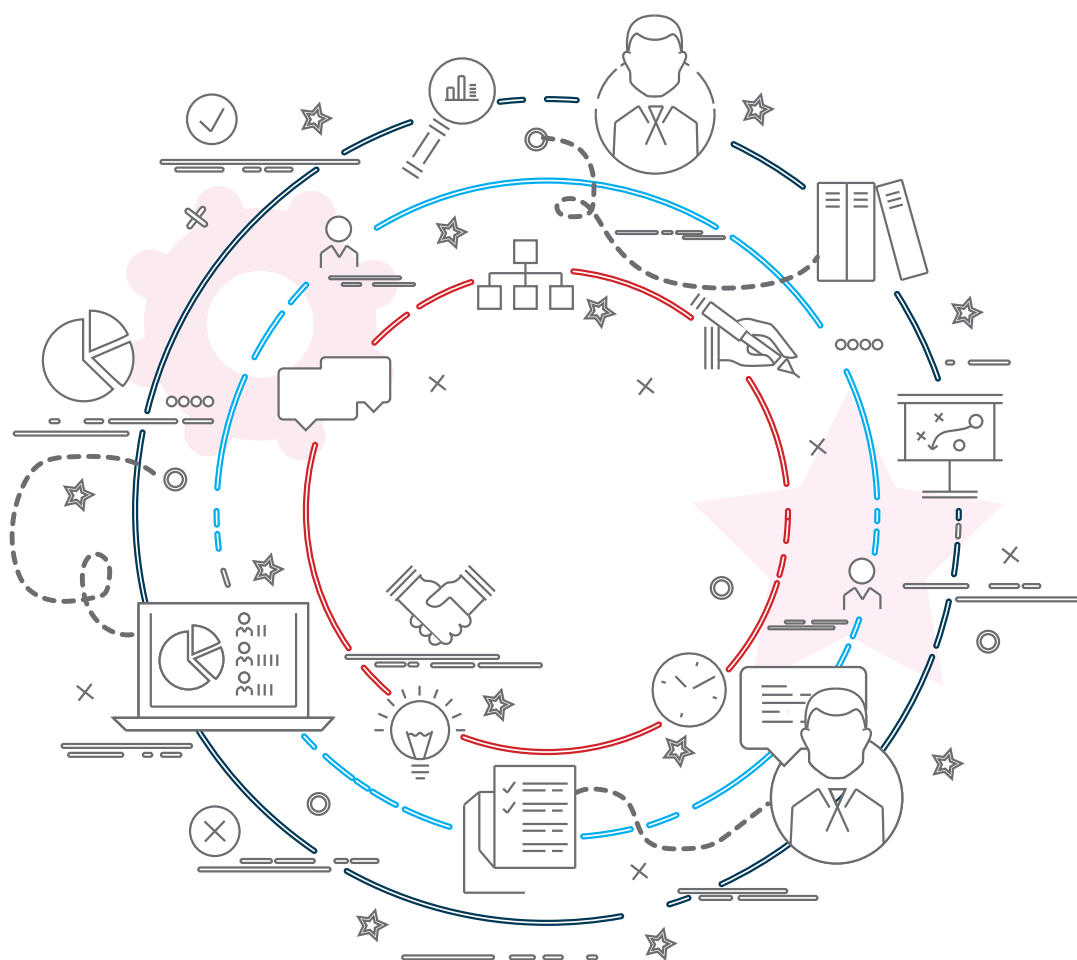# Utility of Evaluation in ITC

A complementary analysis to the 2020 Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report

ITC Independent Evaluation Unit

UTILITY OF EVALUATION IN ITC

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

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

This is an independent publication by the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU), which established a team formed by the Head of the IEU (Mr. Miguel Jiménez Pont), one independent external consultant (Ms. Sara Vaca) and an outside evaluation reviewer (Mr. Wayne MacDonald) for overall quality assurance.

www.intracen.org/evaluation

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Joint Advisory Group on the International Trade Centre
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Geneva, 25 November 2020

Table of Contents

Acronyms

AESR	Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report
CCITF	Consultative Committee of the ITC Trust Fund
IEU	Independent Evaluation Unit
ITC	International Trade Centre
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
PCR	Project Completion Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEC	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Competitiveness (Framework)
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institution
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project

Introduction

1. ***Context –*** With the occasion of the eighth edition of the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Report (AESR), the Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) has taken the opportunity to question the utility of IEU, its services and products. The analysis builds on the evaluation stakeholders' responses via a survey on the utility of the evaluation function (which covered the past five years). In addition, the IEU took a critical eye to analyze the quality of the independent evaluations examined during the drafting of the AESR as well as putting in perspective the elements brought by evaluation stakeholders in terms of IEU's operations. Finally, the document identifies self-defined "opportunities for improvement" on which the IEU will elaborate and work through, with the objective to further improve the utility of evaluation in ITC. On the basis of this experience, the IEU intends to regularly conduct and improve this pilot in-depth self-examination, as a complementary analysis to future AESRs.

2. ***Methodology –*** The IEU carried out an anonymous online survey to client-stakeholders to better understand different perceptions, perspectives and needs about the responsiveness and utility of evaluation services and products. The objective was to build an understanding about ITC's evaluation function, the usefulness of evaluations, and to identify areas for improvement. Recipients included internal and external key evaluation users (senior management, middle management, Consultative Committee of the ITC Trust Fund (CCITF), member states, and direct users and managers of past self-evaluations). Interviews with the IEU team members were also conducted to complement survey results. (Full survey results and comments are available in Annex 1.)

3. ***Limitations –*** The survey took place during the COVID19 pandemic, following the lockdown of ITC headquarters and offices and disrupted regular operations. This brought many difficulties in terms of the availability of the staff for interviews and to answer the survey. Participation of evaluation stakeholders' in the survey on evaluation utility was limited. From the target population (137), 23 respondents replied to the survey (response rate 17%). Certain important groups were under-represented. Participation of ITC management (24%), and project managers subject to an evaluation (29%), was more satisfactory. Different categories of stakeholders were asked different questions. Despite the limitations, the survey responses do provide useful insights and consistent messages. These can be considered both illustrative and indicative of client-stakeholder perceptions on the utility of evaluation. They may form a baseline for future utility of evaluation surveys.

Overall perception

4. Generally speaking, respondents were supportive of ITC's evaluation function. According to the responses to the survey, the areas where evaluation at ITC was identified as useful were mainly in support of organizational learning, enhancing accountability and decision-making. A majority of respondents considers evaluations as an agent of change while there is a more mitigated perception regarding evaluations' contribution to strategic partnerships. Feedback was unanimously positive concerning IEU's contribution to better managed projects.

5. With some exceptions, evaluations were perceived to provide an external and objective overview of ITC's work. At the same time, it was acknowledged that the overall awareness of evaluation's benefits, including the deepening of an evaluation-friendly culture, is still a 'work in progress'. Some project managers still do not sufficiently understand evaluation's advantages, nor even welcome evaluation.

6. The quality of evaluations is perceived to have increased over time. This has contributed to building trust. It has allowed funders to more readily engage with ITC. In particular, donor states appreciate the evaluation session at the ITC's JAG annual meetings as it affords an opportunity to present evaluation findings and recommendations. The dialogue at JAG is considered as a vehicle to reinforce ITC's credibility. However, it is also worth acknowledging that none of the developing country member states responded to the survey, which might reflect a lack of knowledge in ITC evaluation.

7. Respondents estimate that high quality of independent evaluations was supported by the good work, expertise and professionalism of the IEU team. There is also a forthright appreciation of IEU's support during the evaluation process. In particular, IEU's skills and competences, the timeliness and duration of its support. IEU's support during the drafting of management responses is highly appreciated. Satisfaction levels for other type of evaluations in particular self-evaluations are more nuanced. Here, IEU plays a more indirect support role as a secondary resource support.

Role of the Evaluation Unit

Overall appreciation

8. The 2018-2021 ITC Strategic Plan states that a key role of ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) is to promote a culture of accountability and learning within the organization. This is in support of ITC's evidence-based decision-making. IEU has the technical responsibility to support impact assessment methodologies in key areas of work and deepening evaluation processes. (For further details, the IEU's Theory of Change is available in Annex 2.)

Most common terms used by respondents to describe the Evaluation Unit

9. IEU's professionalism and responsiveness is highly commended. This is in spite of evaluation being "often a thankless task" as it was occasionally expressed in the survey. The overall perception is that IEU should continue to provide quality information on how ITC is performing and on how the organization can advance further.

Areas for improvement

10. Respondents also invited IEU to address areas of improvement that may require further reflection and action. These are described below:

11. ***Fostering learning –*** Some respondents suggest moving the evaluation focus that is sometimes perceived as centered on accountability to a function that places greater emphasis on learning. They encourage demonstrating how this learning is fed into the decision-making funding process as a major topic for future action:

12. ***Enhancing IEU's innovation and communication*** – Respondents invite IEU to explore more innovative and effective ways to share evaluation findings and learning. IEU is encouraged to rethink and redouble its internal communications efforts within ITC. For example, the use of visual and one-page summaries is highlighted. The visibility and user-friendliness of the reports is seen to have improved in the recent years. IEU is encouraged to maintain and further promote this trend by finding new ways to communicate results in a digestible manner. IEU is also invited to improve its knowledge management, to make evaluation findings and lessons learned more accessible to staff when they need them.

13. ***Enhancing IEU's interaction within ITC –*** More importantly, IEU is encouraged to play a more active role in inter-sections learning. This would entail including evaluation sessions within other meeting contexts, mirroring the JAG agenda. IEU should have a greater and more systematic involvement with the Project Design Task Force. The intent here is to review projects before their approval, to ensure lessons learned from former evaluations are incorporated into the design, and to improve project evaluability.

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14. ***Enhancing the use of evaluation* –** The current perception is that when evaluation is delivered within a 'no-blame' culture, the process encourages evaluation client-users to take a deep and objective look at the work they do. Evaluation can be a source for boosting innovation and continuous improvement in real-time. Many respondents suggest evaluations gaining a bigger footprint and positioning within the organization. They note that the current AESR report format is particularly useful in capturing and enabling further dialogue around lessons learned in this area.

15. The IEU is encouraged to better highlight the role of the evaluation process and products driving innovation, better understanding beneficiaries' and stakeholders' perspectives, and motivating staff. These are possible avenues to encourage project teams to carry out and participate in more evaluations, within a spirit of good management and open-mindedness.

16. Some respondents also share some skepticism about the actual use of evaluation by management. These touch on, what may be described, as more structural factors. Some have the perception that recommendations are not fully implemented by ITC. They attribute this, in part, to the absence of internal mechanisms to incorporate evaluation learnings into action plans. The main causes may be linked to insufficient funding or leadership commitment. Other structural factors may exist such as funds-led planning where insufficient resources are allocated to oversight and evaluation.

Opportunity for improvement 2:   IEU to explore avenues for evaluations gaining a bigger footprint and positioning within ITC.

Utility of evaluations

Overall perception

17. Independent evaluations conducted by the IEU are considered helpful for improving understanding of what worked and what did not work in their projects / programmes (75% argue that independent evaluation is useful). Evaluations are seen as particularly useful in providing an independent validation of project and programmes. Evidence-based evaluations are considered as providing a means of engaging senior management, and to back up strategic decisions and funding pledges. In addition, evaluations are considered invaluable in creating space to hear and incorporate the voice of all stakeholders.

18. In some cases however, evaluations are perceived as a formality for accountability purposes rather than support to learning and decision-making. Some skepticism is also voiced when evaluations touched on structural problems or on factors beyond ITC's control. Some managers add they are already aware of the challenges and successes of their interventions prior to the conduct of an evaluation.

Types of evaluations

19. ITC has customized the use of different types of evaluations to its context and needs. (Differences and similarities between different types of evaluation at ITC can be found in Annex 3.) The perception of evaluation's utility can be summarized as follows:

20. *Independent evaluations –* These are traditionally focused on corporate and cross cutting issues and on ITC Programmes. They are commissioned internally, endorsed by senior management, and conducted or managed exclusively by ITC's IEU. The consensus was generally positive about evaluators' competencies, inclusiveness in communications and engagement during evaluation process. All respondents that had an independent evaluation (100%), considered the recommendations to be useful.[1] 50% of Project Managers considered the follow-up process to evaluations recommendations as useful to strengthening current and future projects and programmes.

21. *Funder-led evaluations –* These evaluations are designed by the funders. They are guided by the funder's evaluation policy and guidelines. ITC is the object of the evaluation activity. When aware, IEU acts as an internal advisor. In some cases, IEU is not informed by ITC's project managers. When included, IEU works to include ITC's interests, questions and preferences into the evaluation design and process. In the cases where IEU's support was sought and provided, respondents commented on how technically-informed the discussions were with IEU. It helped to better empower and influence the quality of evaluation. This suggests that while this type of evaluation contributes to ITC's evaluation culture, its 'accountability' approach does not always match ITC's needs and interests, especially in terms of learning.

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[1] This number is lower for other type of evaluations, in particular self-evaluations, which is somehow a paradox since project managers directly manage self-evaluations.

22. ***Self-evaluations –*** These are decentralized evaluations. They are conducted internally. They usually involve the support of external consultants. They are managed by the programme or project managers, who are responsible for the initiative being evaluated. IEU provides technical support in particular regarding the Terms of Reference, inception report and draft report: Although in some cases, project managers do not involve the IEU team. Only 25% of respondents consider that the self-evaluation was useful in terms of improving their understanding of what did or did not work in the project / programme. At the same time, 75% of them find overall that the IEU's support to internal self-evaluation process is useful. It was noted that IEU is supportive in contributing to increasing the quality of the process and products.

IEU's takeaways

23. On the basis of the survey responses and the analysis of the evaluations and evaluation–related reports studied during the 2020 AESR excise, the IEU draws the following takeaways with a view to further improve the quality of its work and the utility of evaluation in the ITC.

Self-evaluations

24. Self-evaluations increase ITC's internal capacity of producing evaluations (especially when the IEU cannot commit, due to resource constraints, to include them in the annual evaluation plan of independent evaluations). They provide managers with the opportunity to reflect and analyze their projects beyond daily implementation and reporting. This reinforces managers' evaluation culture to retrofit findings in real-time into project design and monitoring.

25. However, self-evaluations have fewer claims to the independence, neutrality or impartiality of findings. There may exist internal pressures and/or conflicting interests within programme teams. There is little doubt that self-evaluations do bring extra work, particularly for big / complex projects. Self-evaluations also require managers to have a minimum evaluation skill set, especially when dealing with potentially negative findings. Against this background, self-evaluations should always be quality-assured by IEU at key steps in the evaluation process to ensure the credibility of the process. They should only be recommended in cases where those requirements are fulfilled.

> *Opportunity for improvement 3: IEU to clarify and enforce quality-assurance in self-evaluations.*

Harmonization of evaluation approaches and methods

26. As explained above, ITC evaluations are commissioned and conducted by different actors (IEU, project managers and funders). This often includes a broad range of objectives and different perspectives on a wide variety of evaluation topics. It is for this reason that the necessity of 'harmonization' was inserted in the ITC Evaluation Policy. If nothing more, it facilitates the annual comparison and aggregation of evaluation results.

27. When analyzing past evaluations, there is a certain degree of heterogeneity with regard to the way evaluation criteria are used or interpreted. For example, reports use different dimensions when analyzing the relevance criterion. This includes alignment to context, to the clients, to the most vulnerable groups, to the country priorities, to the SDGs, to the Cooperation Framework, to ITC strategic objectives, donors' priorities, etc. Some evaluation reports provide evidence and cover all of these dimensions.[2] Others do so only partially. The same was found in the application of other evaluation criteria. Generally, there is a lack of consistency when selecting dimensions within each criterion. The rationale for such choices is rarely explicitly explained. At the same time, diversity is to be expected, even encouraged. This reflects the wide variety of ITC initiatives evaluated. Proactive guidance from the IEU on consistent use of each criteria and the alignment of results chains with the

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[2] e.g. **YEP Gambia Mid-term evaluation** and the **Trade Facilitation Programme Evaluation**

ITC Results Framework would ease the comparison of evaluation results across evaluation reports and facilitates their aggregation

Opportunity for improvement 4:   IEU to guide evaluations on consistent use of evaluation criteria.

28. It was also observed that evaluation reports do not demonstrate sufficient consistency when assessing ITC performance against expected results articulated in ITC Results Framework. Each ITC initiative varies significantly in context, design and implementation.   A more detailed project logframes could be used to better plan, manage, monitor and evaluate development change, especially how it affects beneficiaries. At the project level, logframes can be more articulated within the results chains corresponding to each component of the ITC Results Framework and in the interrelation between them.

29. Evaluations use a wide array of change measurement tools. These are usually deployed by ITC programmes and utilized as a set of key generic change measurement tools. For example, when analyzing TISIs performance within an intervention, evaluations should be guided by a consistent set of change measurement tools. Ideally, these should be already developed by the **Institutional Strengthening Programme** to assess TISI performance. The same applies when assessing ITC's support to beneficiary MSMEs. The ITC SME Competitiveness Framework provides information on enterprise competitiveness that could be used more systematically. Here again, more consistency in the methods used to assess change (and their means of verification) against the expected results of the ITC Results Framework would greatly facilitate the comparison and aggregation of results, and ultimately the evaluation of ITC's impact.

Opportunity for improvement 4:   IEU to harmonize methods used in evaluations to assess change.

Project Completion reports

30. Project Completion Reports (PCRs) were introduced in 2016. Their aim was to enhance project managers' and designers' oversight of interventions that they were responsible for. It encouraged them to incorporate evaluative thinking into their decision-making.[3] As found in the 2019 PCR Synthesis carried out by the IEU, the PCRs were of uneven quality overall. When project teams better understood how PCRs could be useful in organizing their thinking and post-project learning, motivation was higher and good-quality PCRs were more forthcoming. In such cases, PCRs were not just another procedural step, but viewed as valuable and rewarding. They offered an opportunity to reflect and learn. While there are many PCRs of outstanding quality, most only capture generic messages. There are scant details about what really happened, what the project teams actually learned and what might be useful to other project managers.

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[3] The learning aspects of PCRs have already been treated in the "findings" part of this document and we will concentrate here on what PCRs teach us about progress in the evaluative culture.

31. Currently, the 2019 PCR Synthesis observed that overall use of PCRs is weak. They are not used, for example while designing new ITC interventions. PCRs could be richer, especially if they captured the key findings, messages and takeaways of the whole project team. They would also benefit from participatory inclusion of client-stakeholders. This would give 'voice' to beneficiary post-project insights. In reality, they are often done by one single person, who sometimes is not always best placed to elaborate them. In summary, the utility of PCRs still requires some internal work. This will encourage the rest of ITC to make the best use of PCRs. Teams should be briefed and encouraged on how to better use PCRs and their benefits. Strengthening the internal learning culture to welcome better quality PRCs would be an efficient use of ITC resources. Moreover, it would exemplify how candid self-criticism, within a learning environment, is positive and enhances the professional value of teams and staff.

> **Example from the PCR Synthesis:**
>
> "The […] project, for instance, generated a long list of outputs and outcomes, which demonstrated its substantial intervention. Nevertheless, the lessons learned were just summarized with one sentence, focusing on the regular update of data. It could have shared more information to summarize the key takeaways and to promote learning. Deep thinking in lessons learned is encouraged at all time."

Opportunity for improvement 6:   IEU to facilitate learning in project teams' PCR dialogues.

Annexes

Annex 1: Results of the surveys

Participation

Six different questionnaires were customized for different stakeholders. In total, 137 people were invited to participate, and 17% answered, distributed along all the different groups:

PARTICIPATION	Respondents	Sent to	%
Senior Management	2	5	40%
Middle Management	4	19	21%
CCITF I	0	27	0%
CCITF II	5	45	11%
Independent Evaluations	4	17	24%
Self-evaluations	4	4	100%
Funder-led evaluations	4	20	20%
TOTAL	23	137	17%

Questions and answers

To better customize the information collected from the different stakeholders, each group received the relevant questions. Whenever similar, answers were consolidated.

How useful do you perceive evaluations at ITC regarding the following aspects?

MEMBER STATES PERCEPCION OF EVALUATIONS

	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
Corporate accountability	100%		
Organizational learning	100%		
Strategic partnerships	60%	40%	
Agent of change	80%	20%	
Support decision-making	100%		
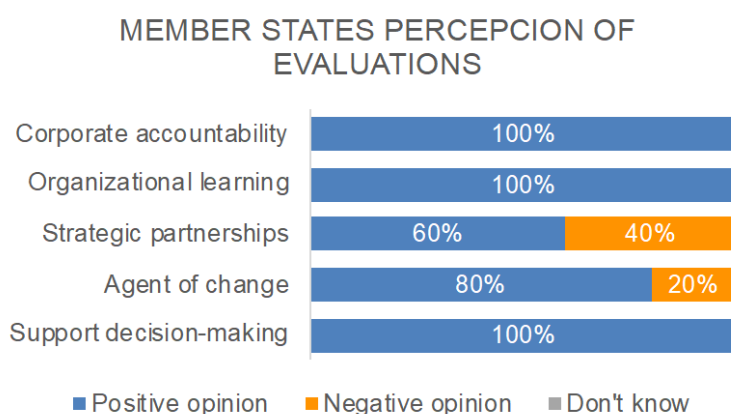
Comments:

- The quality of evaluations at ITC has increased during the last ED tenure and has allowed donors to engage much more with ITC. It helps building trust, which is extremely important for the donor community and it also provide areas for improve ement, which is also very useful for ITC and donors to discuss how they partner together.

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- ITC is 1. an early innovator has 2. quick response mechanisms/ability to implement dynamic programming 3. mixes business approach, high level of expertise and targeted communication and 4. is a convener

MANAGEMENT PERCEPCION OF EVALUATIONS

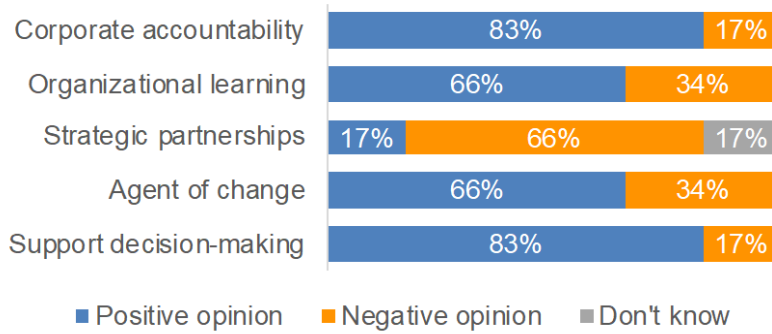|	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
Corporate accountability	83%	17%	
Organizational learning	66%	34%	
Strategic partnerships	17%	66%	17%
Agent of change	66%	34%	
Support decision-making	83%	17%	

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

Comments:

- Many of these things could be made more useful if Divisions and sections prepare actual plans to Incorporate the learnings into their work. The findings are only as good as how well they are used.
- Evaluation process helps us to take a deep and objective look at the work we do. When it is delivered within a no-blame culture it can be a boost to innovation and continuous improvement.
- The evaluation is as good as its recipients- management and staff. Depends how it's received and used.

STAFF SUBJECT TO INDEPENDENT EVALUATION PERCEPTION OF EVALUATIONS

	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
Corporate accountability	100%		
Organizational learning	100%		
Strategic partnerships	50%	50%	
Agent of change	50%	50%	
Support decision-making	100%		

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

Comments:

- N/A

Utility of Evaluation in ITC

STAFF SUBJECT TO SELF-EVALUATION PERCEPTION OF EVALUATIONS

	Positive opinion	Negative opinion
Corporate accountability	25%	75%
Organizational learning	50%	50%
Strategic partnerships	25%	75%
Agent of change	50%	50%
Support decision-making	50%	50%

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion

Comments:

- ITC's senior management used the evaluation as it pleases them - usually just to harass project managers. I haven't seen any strategic decision that has changed because of evaluation results. Especially if the evaluation says that senior management could improve / should clarify / change something… Evidence-based findings have rarely been the basis of SMC decisions or strategic choices. I doubt that more evaluations will change that.
- my experience and observations show that so far ITC is not capable to factor in the recommendations for a positive change due to the well known objective and subjective factors.

STAFF SUBJECT TO FUNDER-EVALUATION PERCEPTION OF EVALUATIONS

	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
Corporate accountability	50%	50%	
Organizational learning	75%	25%	
Strategic partnerships	25%	75%	
Agent of change	25%	75%	
Support decision-making	25%	50%	25%

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know
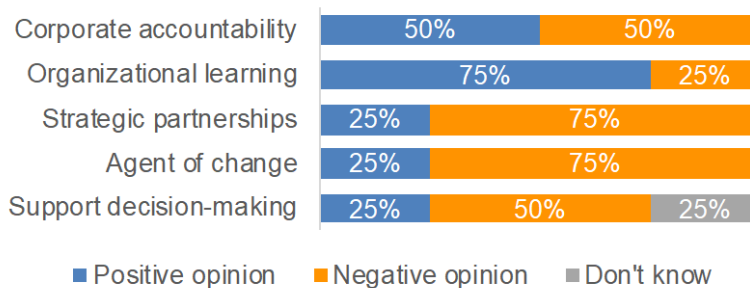
Comments:

- I don't see ITC as a fully developed learning organization. The work of the IEU is good, especially the synthesis report, in documenting lesson learned. The use of that in improving various aspects of ITC's operations is not often inadequate in my view - especially to support decision-making and drive change. Not sure how evaluation can support strategic partnerships, but I have not seen it in our case.
- not useful as there are no internal mechanisms to analyze, learn, implement the challenge leading to concrete positive results.

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In your opinion, to what extent does the IEU contribute to the following aspects?

Most of the answers point at how IEU **contributes (or strongly contributes**) to better **manage projects, better achieve ITC's objectives, reinforce evaluation culture** and **internal capacity**.

MEMBER STATES OPINION ON IEU CONTRIBUTION

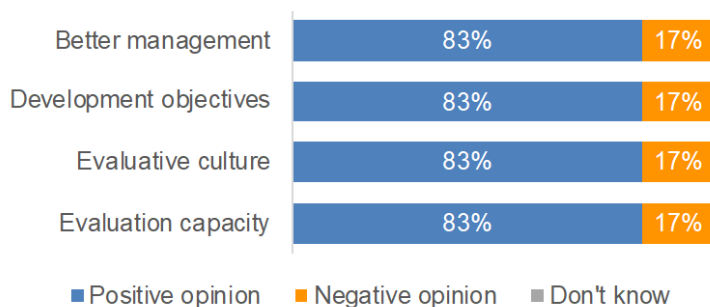| Aspect	Positive opinion	Don't know
Better management	80%	20%
Development objectives	100%	
Evaluative culture	80%	20%
Evaluation capacity	80%	20%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know
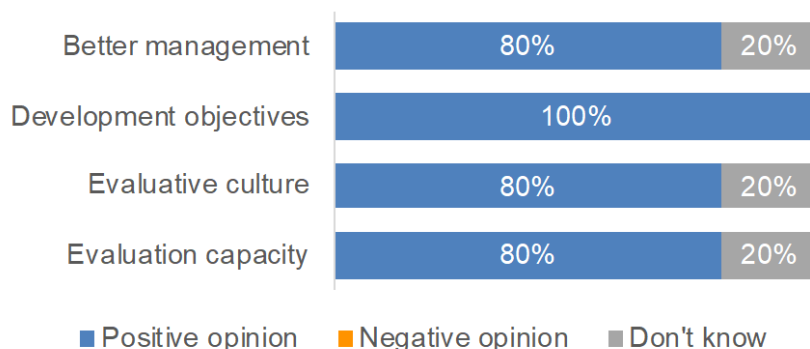
Comments:

- Switzerland strongly support independent evaluation units and processes within partner organizations such as ITC. This goes hand in hand with a strong internal evaluation culture that should serve management decisions at corporate level as well as at projects and programme level.
- I noticed that at ITC's Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meetings, each year, there is a section on evaluation findings and recommendations in the afternoon. It has always been well received by the participants. It contributes to the good reputation of ITC, and it sure is a good idea to keep a section on evaluation findings and recommendations, in one way or another, in JAG and other meetings.
- I have less insight in the ITC evaluation culture. In terms of lessons learned ITC absorbs them easily in new programs.

MANAGEMENT OPINION ON IEU CONTRIBUTION

Aspect	Positive opinion	Negative opinion
Better management	83%	17%
Development objectives	83%	17%
Evaluative culture	83%	17%
Evaluation capacity	83%	17%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know
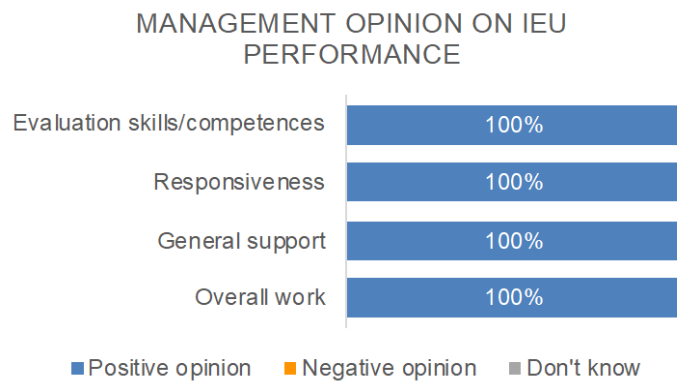
Comments:

- Again it is about how well the methodologies and findings are retailed around the house. Perhaps there is a need to think about about the internal communication strategy around evaluation
- the evaluation process contributes to these things, but there are many other factors that intervene. It is not possible to implement recommendations without the necessary funding or leadership commitment to change.

In your opinion, how do you perceive the IEU regarding the following aspects?

MANAGEMENT OPINION ON IEU PERFORMANCE

Evaluation skills/competences	100%
Responsiveness	100%
General support	100%
Overall work	100%

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

Comments

- Very good professionals with good skills in the team. Perhaps a need to provide additional communication training
- The team works hard to ensure a positive and useful experience for the team being evaluated.

What would you see as main strengths of the IEU?

- Professional competencies
- Competence
- expert
- Evaluation skills and competencies
- Structure and methodology
- Systematic
- Independent - arms length from operations
- Corporate thinking
- client-centric
- Focus on internal and external client needs
- Knowledgeable
- Professional experience from a range of evaluations
- Objective
- Flexible
- Follow up - including management responses
- Helpful

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What would you see as areas that could be improved, regarding the work of the IEU or evaluation in general?

- More involved at an earlier stage - to ensure projects are evaluable
- Better internal communication
- Maybe more checklists and guidance on what could be expected from the team
- Greater (systematic?) involvement of IEU with the Project Design Task Force to review projects
- Speed
- Capacity to undertake more evaluations
- Be coherent. Dare to question SMC and also clearly point at responsibilities for certain failures that lie at the senior management / corporate level. Have better qualified evaluators with technical understanding.
- unless structural change of how ITC and UN system operates no much chances for IEU to serve needs better- needs also are to be defined yet.
- Communicate lessons learned - say in a small newsletter or seminar
- Host sessions for colleagues to discuss results of major evaluations
- More interaction with teams in house
- More triangulation of comments that could be biased
- Focus on internal and external client needs
- Follow up - including management responses
- Helpful

To what extent do you think it would be useful to obtain more feedback from the IEU on evaluation-related issues?

MEMBERS OPINION ON HOW USEFUL IT
WOULD BE MORE EVALUATION
SUPPORT

Usefulness of Evaluation support | 100%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know
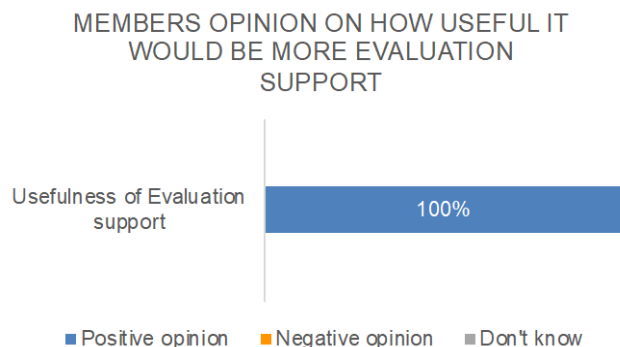
Comments

- Evaluations helps donors to follow-up on level of achievements and accountability.
- Noting that the IEU already presents to the JAG so is providing feedback already via that forum.
- A summary of lessons learned of one page would be useful. As well as presentation of the evaluation during meetings.

To what extent do you think the IEU should be engaged in national evaluation capacity building?

MEMBERS OPINION ON IEU ENGAGEMENT ON NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY

Engagement	75%	25%

■ Should be engaged ■ Should not be engaged ■ Don't know
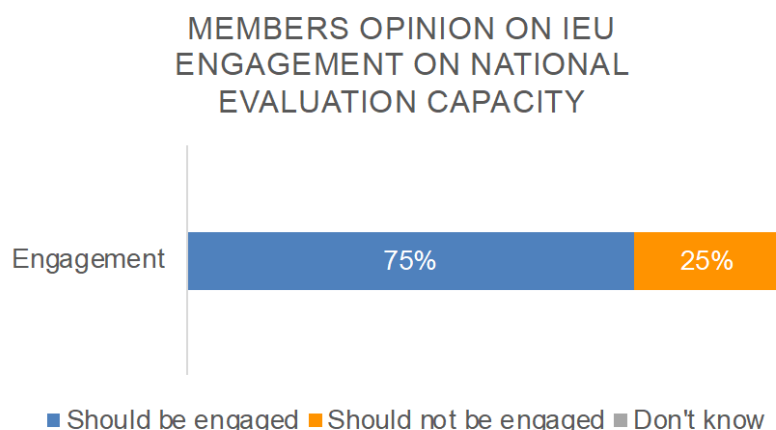
Comments

- I guess I would support this but it would need some discussions to make sure it is coherent with ITC's development priorities.
- If non-existing and no other specialized organizations are in a country, it is logical to introduce medium to longer term evaluation capacity in national, and specifically for trade regional, in country/region. Important to strengthen local existing capacity and not create new structures.

Member States Expectations from the IEU

■ IEU providing more feedback on evaluation issues
■ IEU engaging in national evaluation capacity building
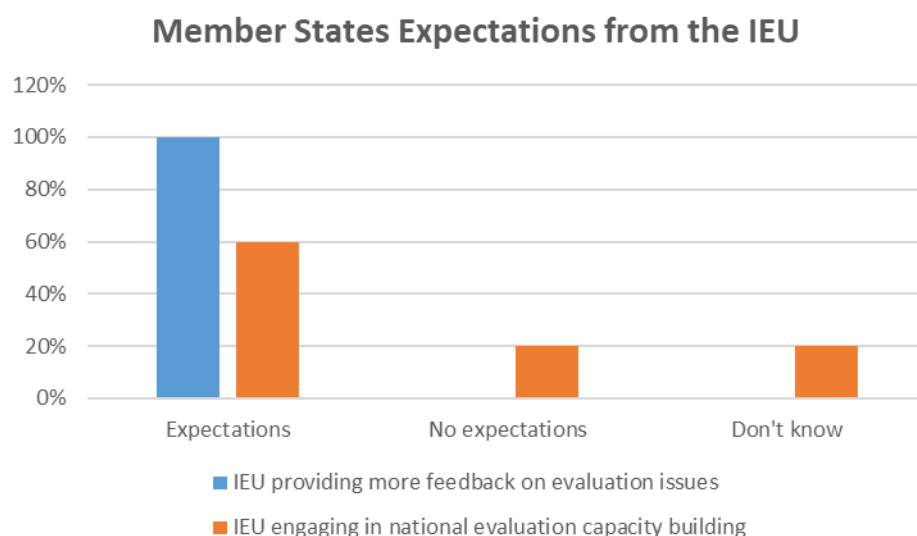
Comments on feedback on evaluation-related issues

- Evaluations helps donors to follow-up on level of achievements and accountability.
- Noting that the IEU already presents to the JAG so is provding feedback already via that forum.
- A summary of lessons learned of one page would be useful. As well as presentation of the evaluation during meetings.

Utility of Evaluation in ITC

Considering the independent evaluation, which evaluated your project / programme, how would you rate the IEU in the following aspects?
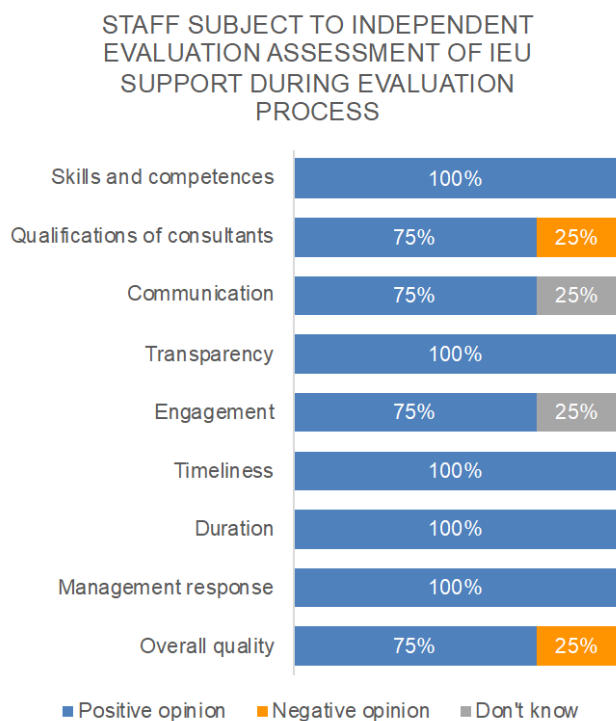
STAFF SUBJECT TO INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION ASSESSMENT OF IEU
SUPPORT DURING EVALUATION
PROCESS

Aspect	Positive opinion	Negative / Don't know
Skills and competences	100%	
Qualifications of consultants	75%	25%
Communication	75%	25%
Transparency	100%	
Engagement	75%	25%
Timeliness	100%	
Duration	100%	
Management response	100%	
Overall quality	75%	25%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know

Comments

- *Please take into consideration that the project manager is no longer at the ITC and I was supporting him at the time the Evaluation was taking place. So there might be some aspects which I am not well aware of.*
- *Wrong choice of evaluator but good learning*

Utility of Evaluation in ITC

Considering the funder-led evaluation, which evaluated your project / programme, how useful do you perceive the IEU's support or advice regarding the following aspects?
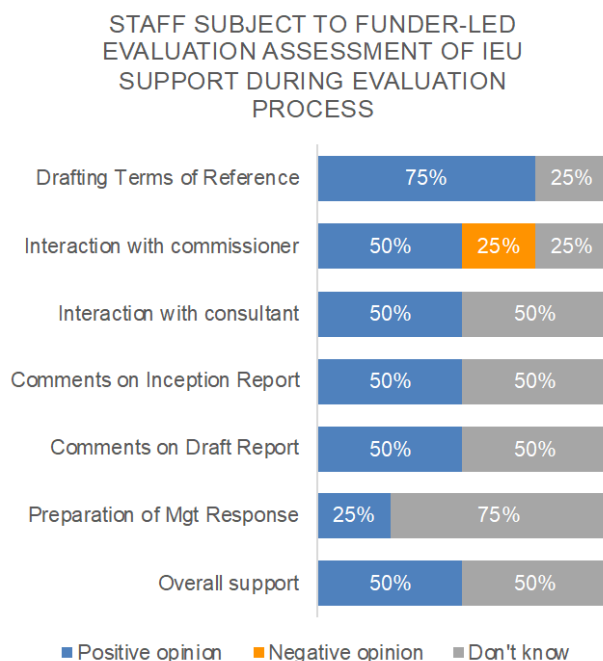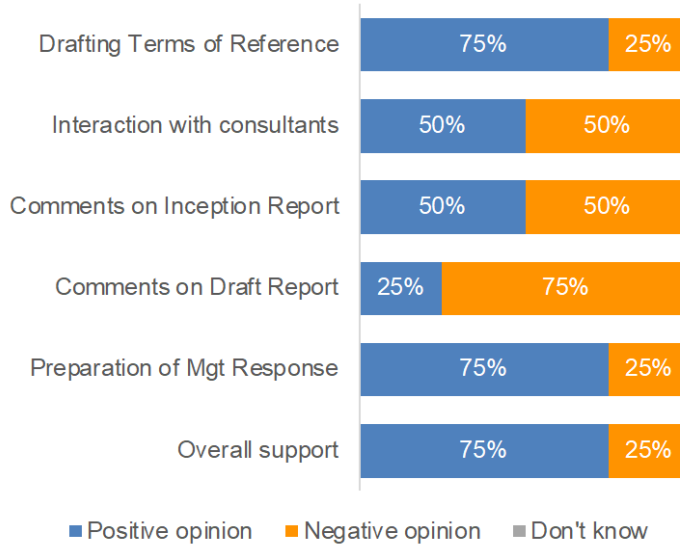
STAFF SUBJECT TO FUNDER-LED
EVALUATION ASSESSMENT OF IEU
SUPPORT DURING EVALUATION
PROCESS

Aspect	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
Drafting Terms of Reference	75%		25%
Interaction with commissioner	50%	25%	25%
Interaction with consultant	50%		50%
Comments on Inception Report	50%		50%
Comments on Draft Report	50%		50%
Preparation of Mgt Response	25%		75%
Overall support	50%		50%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know

Comments

- Please take into consideration that the project manager is no longer at the ITC and I was supporting him at the time of the evaluation process.
- IEU has been responsive and has reached out a number of times to understand our needs and objectives with the evaluation exercise beyond the immediate requirement.
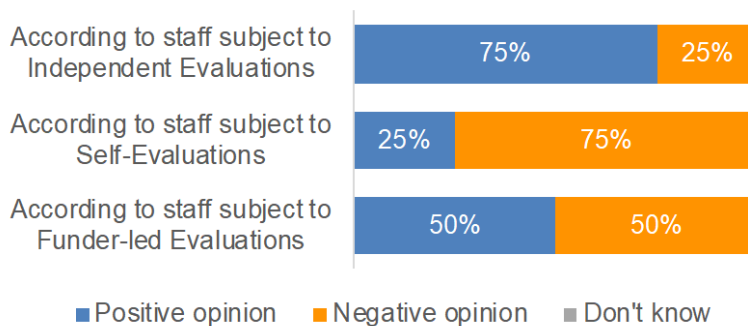- No management response was prepared so I cannot judge

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- benefitted a lot from the review and revision of the final version of the report by the IEU

STAFF SUBJECT TO SELF-EVALUATION EVALUATION ASSESSMENT OF IEU SUPPORT DURING EVALUATION PROCESS

Category	Positive opinion	Negative opinion
Drafting Terms of Reference	75%	25%
Interaction with consultants	50%	50%
Comments on Inception Report	50%	50%
Comments on Draft Report	25%	75%
Preparation of Mgt Response	75%	25%
Overall support	75%	25%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know

Do you think the evaluation was/were useful in terms of improving your understanding of what did or did not work in the project / programme?

THE EVALUATION WAS USEFUL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WORKED

Category	Positive opinion	Negative opinion
According to staff subject to Independent Evaluations	75%	25%
According to staff subject to Self-Evaluations	25%	75%
According to staff subject to Funder-led Evaluations	50%	50%

■ Positive opinion ■ Negative opinion ■ Don't know

Comments Independent Evaluations:

- I think as a project manager you should already be aware of the difficulties in the project implementation.
- Many of the findings were already known to us, but it was useful to get objective confirmation of this, and statistics in support, that helped us to justify strategic shifts and funding to senior management
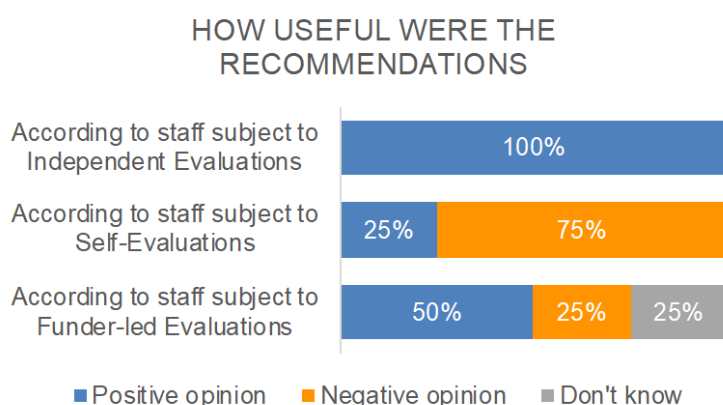
Comments Self- Evaluations:

- I did not discover new things. The findings of the evaluation were already known before. But it helped putting it in paper and by an external expert, vis a vis the donor and project team.

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Utility of Evaluation in ITC

- Little of use in my view as there is no mechanisms to take corrective actions. The system as overall is not flexible and continue to function as can and not as it should be

Comments Funder-led Evaluations:

- In most cases, these evaluations provide a confirmation and better presentation of things we already know and have in many cases been trying to address during implementation. There are few surprises.
- Unfortunately, due to the complexity of the projects, it is hard for any evaluator to assess the project adequately given limited time frame to understand the environment the project operates, the challenges, and the project response. The project team has in depth understanding of the problem and challenges based on the years of operation.

How useful were the recommendations to introduce improvements in your (current or future) projects / programme?

HOW USEFUL WERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS

	Positive opinion	Negative opinion	Don't know
According to staff subject to Independent Evaluations	100%		
According to staff subject to Self-Evaluations	25%	75%	
According to staff subject to Funder-led Evaluations	50%	25%	25%

Comments Independent Evaluation:

- The framing of the recommendations helped to focus and prioritize the strategic review of our work

Comments Self-Evaluations:
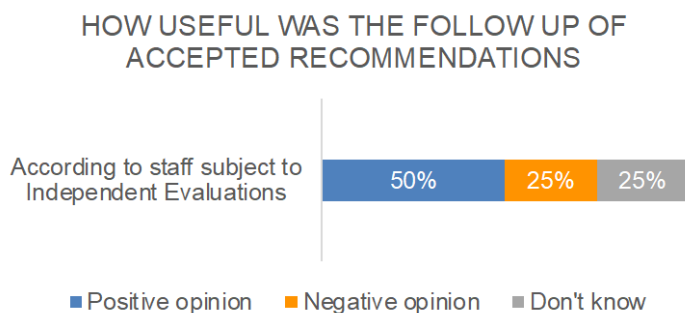
- Little of use as improvement in current and future projects-work is facto of the factors beyond of my control

Comments Funder-led Evaluations:

- The funder wants comfort that we are credible and professional in our design. Just stating lessons learned informally without the support of an evaluation is not convincing (and probably not enough). These evaluations provide the evidence to back up our findings and help us refine them. They also force us to listen to and incorporate the voice of all stakeholders.
- evaluation is more a formality as it happens now, b) even if there are meaningful recommendations, hard to implement given the rigidity of the system.
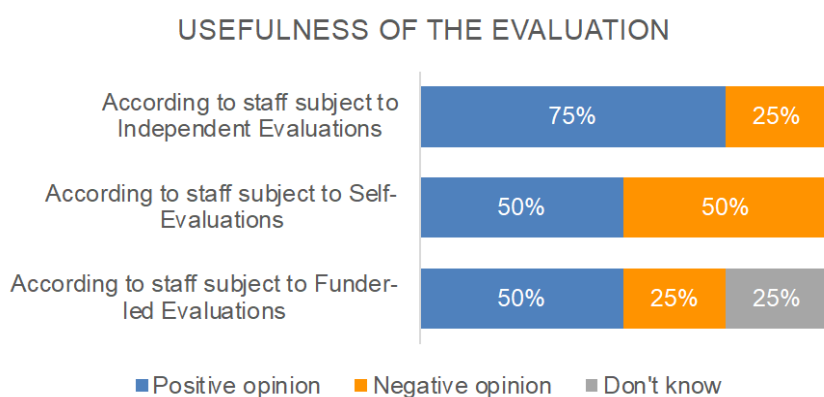
24

How useful has been the IEU's yearly follow up to the implementation of the accepted recommendations in your management response?

HOW USEFUL WAS THE FOLLOW UP OF ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS

According to staff subject to Independent Evaluations: 50% | 25% | 25%
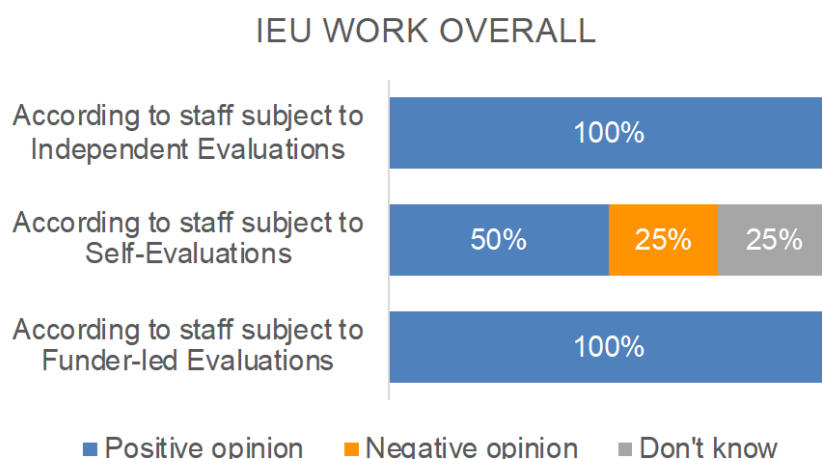
■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

Comments

- Too soon to tell
- This follow up (on accepted recommendations) should be addressed to Country Managers for the countries where the project was active as they have are RB, have continuity and a permanent overview of ITC activities in those countries. Project Managers are XB and therefore would have left the project (or ITC) and working on other projects and therefore would be unfairly subjected to dedicating work time for past projects in addition to their new/current work on new project.

Overall, how would you rate the usefulness of the evaluation?

USEFULNESS OF THE EVALUATION

According to staff subject to Independent Evaluations: 75% | 25%

According to staff subject to Self-Evaluations: 50% | 50%

According to staff subject to Funder-led Evaluations: 50% | 25% | 25%

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

How would you rate the work of the IEU overall?

IEU WORK OVERALL

According to staff subject to Independent Evaluations	100%		
According to staff subject to Self-Evaluations	50%	25%	25%
According to staff subject to Funder-led Evaluations	100%		

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know

Comments (Staff subject to self-evaluations)

- Evaluation approaches, criteria and ratings are incoherent across projects and programmes. However, findings are compared (by directors and of course ITC's stakeholders / donors). Some evaluations take far too long and findings are outdated or irrelevant once they get published. This represent much extra work for project managers (the management response is still required, directors still would like to see follow-up) while the results are disseminated widely and publicly, sometimes damaging the reputation of a stream of work (as results are outdated and the projects already have changed / improved their approach). Besides, for some evaluations, the team of evaluators / consultants changed several times - some of them were technically clearly not able (and sometimes not even willing!) to understand the projects. This is unacceptable.
- Different to judge given the environment the IEU operates in, the overall role and resources devoted to it.

Comments (Staff subject to funder-led evaluations)

- As above, the work is professional and carried out with a focus on the needs of the ITC section, ITC corporate and the funders. It is often a thankless task (e.g. insisting on PCRs), but it is a solid and necessary contribution. Thanks IEU!
- Always responsive and ready to provide with support, advice and guidance.

After having managed a self-evaluation, do you think you have improved your evaluation capacity?

STAFF OPINION ON HOW SELF-EVALUATIONS IMPROVED EVALUATION CAPACITY

Evaluation capacity improved | **75%** | 25%

■ Positive opinion   ■ Negative opinion   ■ Don't know
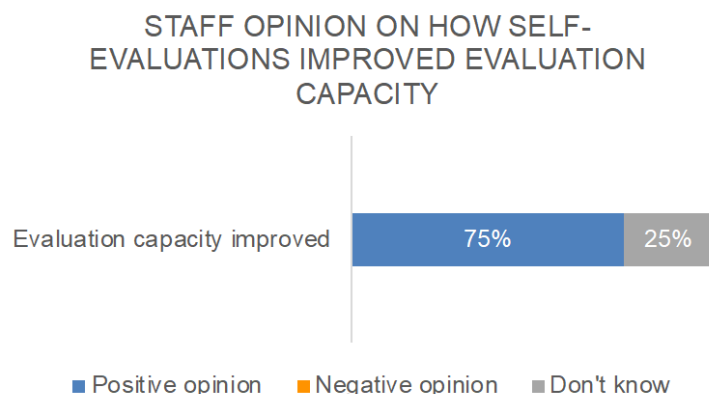
How would you suggest the IEU might better serve your needs and/or those of ITC? (Members opinion)

- IEU should continue to provide information on how ITC is performing, how ITC could improve and on lessons (good and bad) that should be brought to the attention of ITC's management and donors.
- I feel the IEU has stepped up visability and user friendlyness of reports in recent years so it is important that this capacity be maintained and build upon.
- Short messages and communicate results

How would you suggest the IEU might better serve your needs and/or those of ITC? (Management opinion)

- Communicate more on results from evaluations and related insights and lessons learned. A key purpose of IEU is to foster internal learning and competencies
- Knowledge generation and creation in an easy to digest way
- Maybe case stories from teams that have been evaluated on how they have used the process to confirm funding, drive innovation, understand beneficiaries better and motivate staff.

How would you suggest the IEU might better serve your needs and/or those of ITC? (Staff opinion)

- Continue to focus on how the evaluations can go beyond accountability to help us learn about the future -Continue to improve how the findings are fed into decision-making, for instance how are they integrated into management review of projects -Make the results more and more accessible, possibly through electronic means - for instance how can the findings be even more accessible to staff when they needed them.
- difficult to suggest as we are all in boundaries: financial, administrative, internal politics, inertion of the system.
- Be coherent. Dare to question SMC and also clearly point at responsibilities for certain failures that lie at the senior management / corporate level. Have better qualified evaluators with technical understanding.
- unless structural change of how ITC and UN system operates no much chances for IEU to serve needs better- needs also are to be defined yet.
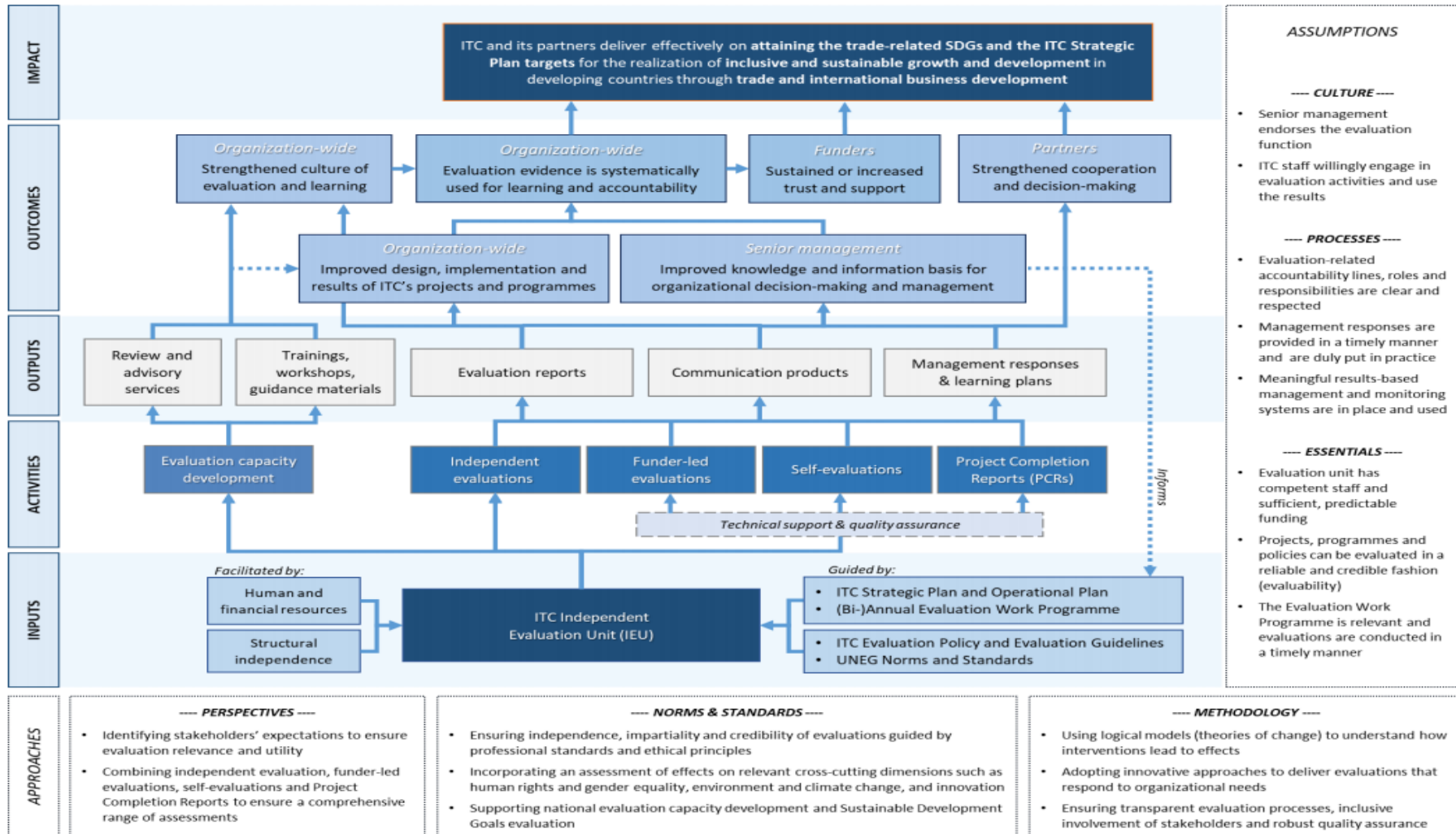
Annex 3: Type of evaluation reports

Dimensions	IEU evaluations	Self-evaluations	Donor-led evaluations
Evaluation commissioners	Independent Evaluation Unit	Project managers	Funders
Type	Centralized	Decentralized	Externalized
Evaluation manager	IEU	ITC Project Managers	Funders
Evaluation teams	IEU/external	External	Funders/external
Support *(when requested by the Project Manager)*		IEU (terms of reference, inception and final reports)	IEU support and coaching
Independence	Yes (internal)	Limited (internal)	Yes (external)
Evaluation object	Corporate, cross cutting issues, large projects and programmes	Projects	Projects
Approval/Quality checking	IEU	IEU	Funder
Guidelines	ITC	ITC	Funder
Number of 2019 reports	4	1	5