International Trade Centre

Evaluation of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme

Independent Evaluation Unit

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EVALUATION OF THE ITC TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMME

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).

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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

CEEAC	Economic Community of Central African States
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DMD	Division of Market Development
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMC	Export Management Coach
EU	European Union
FIATA	International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Country
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NIOE	National Institute of Exports
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
NTM	Non-Tariff Measure
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PPD	Public-Private Dialogue
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SPPG	Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance
TF	Trade Facilitation
TFA	Agreement on Trade Facilitation
TFP	Trade Facilitation Programme
TFPB	Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business
TISI	Trade and Investment Support Institution
TMI	Trade and Market Intelligence
ToC	Theory of Change
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WCO	World Customs Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive summary

Purpose and approach

This evaluation assesses the work of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) in the 5-year period 2014-18. It aims to promote learning, ensure accountability and inform decision-making by assessing how far TFP has achieved its intended results, identifying the areas where it has been most effective in adding value, and providing recommendations for its future implementation.

The evaluation has adopted a mixed method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, it is theory-based, analyzing if programme activities have contributed to intended results and to causal mechanisms as foreseen by the Programme's theory of change (ToC). Contribution analysis was used to determine to what extent results were attributable to programme activities. The evaluation was guided by the ITC Evaluation Guidelines, the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines.

The evaluation is based on a document review, interviews, and an online survey, supplemented by two country case studies (in Sri Lanka and Tajikistan). **The global analysis was limited by significant data gaps** which, given the variety of TFP actions, has made informed generalizations difficult. Consequently, reliance often had to be put on the two case studies, which were explicitly selected as countries in which TFP's activities have been most substantial.

Programme overview and context

The TFP was created following the 2013 WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) which, following entry into force, created obligations for members to: enhance the transparency of trade related legislation and administration; improve the efficiency of cross-border procedures; limit trade-related charges; and strengthen regulatory coordination and public-private cooperation. The TFA has provisions for technical assistance and establishes in particular that the implementation of one, self-designated group of trade-related regulations (Category C) will be linked to the receipt of technical assistance.

TFP has provided technical assistance to help countries ratify and apply the TFA. In producing its outputs, TFP has developed partnerships with 36 organizations in two broad types of relationship, funder or collaborator (with UNCTAD and OSCE as the only ones that fall into both groups).

The balance of TFP work has evolved over time from broad-based awareness raising about the TFA to in-depth country support relating to specific needs. One main category of work has been training and advice (on the categorization of TFA measures, on sequencing and prioritization, and on private sector capacity building); almost two thirds of the 206 activities in the assessed period were in this area. Other work has been to develop project proposals for technical assistance on Category C measures, create or support national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs), implement specific TFA-related measures, and support integrated regional approaches to TFA implementation. In addition, TFP has developed project proposals for programme activities, participated in high-level conferences, contributed to academic courses, and undertaken a range of visibility activities (most substantially seven major publications on trade facilitation, some created jointly with other stakeholders).

TFP's outputs are impressive but disparate. The Programme has operated in 75 countries (5 of which are not WTO Members) and 9 regional economic blocs. But only 19% of these countries have received help in three or more categories, half of them in Africa. Just over one-third of beneficiaries are least developed countries (LDCs).

According to the TFP's ToC, its ultimate intended impact is to increase significantly the exports of developing countries, which would contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.11. The Programme's desired global outcome is a reduction in the cost and time of cross-border transactions for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to be achieved by interventions that increase awareness and interest, leading to increased knowledge and skills that help to develop consensus and agreement on feasible plans, which then lead to action.

A key assumption is that the main challenges faced by the businesses at the border are a non-conducive business environment and SMEs' limited compliance with cross-border requirements. These translate into delays, redundant data and documentation requirements with SMEs subject to disproportionally high inspection rates. These problems have their root cause in a lack of capacity to design, implement and monitor trade facilitation reforms, a control-focused mind-set, institutional and personal vested interest.

Findings

Implementation of the TFA is only a small part of trade facilitation as it is conventionally described and in which ITC as a whole is involved. The TFP has concentrated largely on two aspects of the TFA agenda: awareness raising and fostering public-private dialogue over modes of implementation. Within this area, its inputs are in a narrow, mid-range: more focused on the practicalities of the TFA text than on fundamental analyses of the role and impact of trade facilitation; but at a higher level than many of the details affecting day-to-day commerce, such as the practices of customs departments. Inevitably, implementation depends on a fruitful cooperation with governments, which ultimately determine outcomes.

Relevance and alignment

TFP's activities have been timely, being aligned to the evolution of the TFA and countries' needs for ratification and measure implementation. **They have evolved with beneficiary needs in areas that are flagged by the literature as important to increase trade volumes and lower trade costs.** TFP has addressed the needs of all three of its target groups: policy makers and regulators, trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and SMEs. It has done so by consulting local stakeholders, thereby enhancing its alignment with the needs of beneficiaries. And its interventions have been well aligned to governmental priorities.

TFP's involvement in many of its initial rounds of beneficiary states was modest: almost half of beneficiary states received only one instance of support of any kind. The Programme is now operating in a smaller number of states (12 in 2018) providing more sustained support.

Because TFP has chosen to be guided largely by demand over the countries in which it operates (even during its unearmarked funding period), **there is no clear focus on specific regions or income groups. The Programme is in line with SDG target 17.11. as it contributes in the wider sense to increasing the exports of developing countries.** However, the Programme has so far not specifically focussed on the aspect to double the LDC share of global exports by 2020, as only 31% of the TFP's activities took place in LDCs.

TFP's strategic approach and ToC are closely aligned to ITC's corporate mission, goals, and results framework. Each of its three target groups addresses one of ITC's corporate goals, and TFP relates to ITC's focus on the private sector.

At a global level, TFP has raised ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation, particularly with its publications and its participation in high-level trade events. **At the country/regional and project levels, the picture is mixed**, with visibility actions being more structured where there is an explicit project funder requirement. **TFP's communication activities at the corporate level are very limited**, and ITC appears to be less visible than other international bodies in countries supported by the TFP.

Effectiveness

TFP has effectively raised awareness and interest in the business implications of the TFA and trade facilitation more generally. The team appears either to have led or contributed to an average of one awareness-raising event every two weeks over the last five years.

The available evidence suggests that policy makers, regulators and TISIs have been reached to a greater extent than have private firms in general and SMEs in particular. The training materials tend to be broadly introductory, offering a good insight into the details of the TFA, what countries must do to comply with its requirements, and that the private sector has a right to be involved in these changes. The workshops are appreciated by participants, with SMEs often learning about the potential benefits of the TFA. But, because of its focus some important aspects of trade facilitation are ignored in the training materials, such as distributional impacts (including gender). At times, the private sector is only covered to a minor extent. Practical, country-specific examples are also limited.

To an extent, the Programme has also increased knowledge, skills and exchange within its target groups, through a variety of training modalities. Training national master trainers in Sri Lanka has been flagged as particularly effective in building national TFA training capacity for the private sector, and was reported to have had an effect on SME business decisions. And the online Trade Facilitation Portals supported by the Programme are expected to help SMEs to comply with procedural requirements of cross-border transactions.

Support for private-public dialogue, primarily through NTFCs which TFP has helped to set up in 13 countries, **has supported improved consensus and the creation of feasible plans to act.** A direct **link to actions** has been found particularly in TFP's **support for the implementation of five out of**

the 36 TFA measures, spread over seven countries. Moreover, even if the data is limited, **there are indications of effects on SME's business decisions.**

The wide interest among developing countries to learn more about the TFA has been a major supportive factor as is the fact that much practical work remains to be done. At the same time, implementation depends largely on factors outside TFP's influence. Clear buy-in from stakeholders at a very high level is often required. Trade-offs and related conflicts are seen to be behind the failure of NTFC recommendations to result in concrete action.

Efficiency and synergies

The Programme's delivery is primarily done by the team itself, which closely manages any external consultants that are used. This approach is much appreciated by beneficiaries and has contributed to building longer-term and trustful relationships. The team's presentation skills, in-depth TFA knowledge and flexibility were much appreciated. **At the same time, this business model has led to a very heavy workload on the small Geneva-based team and may be reaching the limit** as profound expertise is needed on a growing range of technical subjects**.**

Project management needs strengthening: programme documentation is fragmented preventing a comprehensive overall view, and monitoring is patchy although improvements have been made recently. Resolving these issues may also involve, to a certain extent, changes to ITC's corporate reporting infrastructure.

The availability and detail of financial information varies considerably between projects, mainly depending on the reporting requirements of the funder. Unfortunately, the evaluation has not been able to reliably assess whether TFP's budget of about $ 7 million (in the reviewed 5-years period) has been spent efficiently with the data available.

The picture on synergies within ITC is mixed. There is smooth cooperation within the section and with some other parts of ITC, but a noticeable absence of collaboration with certain units where active engagement would seem to be beneficial. Using more ITC-originating material could have increased TFP's contribution to ITC's comparative advantage.

TFP has developed a very good collaboration with many development partners notably UNCTAD and UNECE. In a few cases cooperation has been formalized through agreements, but generally it depends heavily on personal relationships. Whilst there is always a risk of overlapping activities between competing organizations, the available evidence suggests that duplication has been avoided.

Impact (long-term change)

Whilst it is too early to conclude that the TFP has yet had any measurable impact on trade volumes, costs and time, inferences can be made from the trade facilitation literature. Studies suggest that TFP support is in an area that tends to have a positive and significant impact on exports and trade costs. There is also some evidence, mainly from Sri Lanka, of a direct TFP impact on SME capacity to connect within the immediate business environment and to compete at both the local and macro levels.

Although enhancing gender equality and environmental sustainability are not a key focus for the Programme, their importance is well recognized among the TFP's staff. The gender dimension is taken into account to some extent by the TFP, particularly by involving women in training. Some TFP work, such as on Single Windows, may also directly enhance gender equality if it avoids female exporters facing more procedural obstacles than their male counterparts.

Sustainability

TFP's exit strategy has been effective for its one-off training activities. When the need for widespread awareness raising about the TFA started to decline, the Programme has re-focused into other areas.

The sustainability of TFP's later work is based on the assumption that the governments and chambers with which the Programme works closely will take ownership after TFP has ended. There is supporting evidence for this in Sri Lanka, West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) countries and, to a lesser extent, in Tajikistan.

Scaling up was achieved very successfully in the TFA awareness raising activities. Recent activities targeting the private sector also have potential for scaling up and replicability (i.e. training-of-trainer events, SME coaching, and e-learning courses). But there are challenges arising from the need for country and issue-specific expertise.

Conclusions and recommendations (with evidence trail)

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Timeliness of the programme (chapter 3.1): From the outset, the programme has been strongly linked to the chronology of the TFA. During the first phase, it focused on preparatory steps for the TFA and then evolved to work more on TFA implementation. **Alignment with government priorities (chapter 3.1):** The choice of countries appears to have been guided largely by demand. Specific requests by developing country governments to inform them about the implications of the TFA were numerous in the early years. More recently, the programme has focused on individual in-depth support for the implementation of TFA measures in a limited number of countries for which there has been a funded request for TFP involvement. **Global pattern of TFP actions (chapter 2.2):** Overall, 36% (27 out of 75) of the countries in which the TFP has been active are least developed countries (LDCs). Of all the countries, in which the TFP has been most active, 43% of them (6 out of 14) are LDCs. Looking at the total number of activities carried out under the programme over the five-year period under review, LDCs received slightly less than a third (31%). **TFP's theory of change (chapter 2.3):** The ultimate impact of the programme is to increase significantly the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDC share of global exports by 2020 (SDG 17.11).	The TFP chose to respond to demand rather than focusing on countries and issues that it considered priorities, partially due to available funding. In its early stages, it responded to widespread interest in learning more about the TFA and its implications. More recently, it has focused on individual countries' requests for in-depth support for the implementation of TFA measures. **There was a certain lack of targeted selectivity in identifying beneficiary countries, and LDCs received only a small share of the total TFP's support.** Just over a third of the countries in which the programme operated so far were LDCs, although the overall objective of the TFP is to help double the share of least developed countries in global exports by 2020 (SDG 17.11). Moreover, literature suggests that the greatest impact of TFA implementation and trade facilitation measures on trade costs and trade performance is expected to occur in low-income countries. Therefore, the programme should align its country focus accordingly to maximize its impact.	**Recommendation 1**: To support effectively SDG 17.11 and to enhance the impact of the programme on the competitiveness of SMEs, the TFP should focus more on low-income countries, especially LDCs. *Responsibility for implementation: chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer*
TFP focus (chapter 3): The TFP has concentrated largely on two aspects: awareness raising about the details of the TFA and fostering public-private dialogue over modes of its implementation. Globally, almost two thirds of the 206 discrete activities in the reviewed five-year period consisted of training and advice (on categorization, sequencing and prioritization, and capacity building for the private sector). TFP inputs are in a narrow, mid-range: more focussed on the practicalities of the TFA text than on fundamental analyses of the role and impact of trade facilitation. This is an important, legitimate focus but it has implications. Distributional trade impacts (such as by gender, firm size or poverty level) will be – at best – very indirect. And it is clear from the TFP's training materials (even those for the 'academic' courses) that distributional effects are not a major concern of the programme. **Increased awareness and interest (chapter 3.2):** The training materials tend to be broadly introductory with a focus that is exclusively on the middle level: public policy relating to trade-related controls, the logistics of commerce, plus conventional, introductory trade theory. Some important aspects of trade facilitation are ignored, such as issues of distributional impacts (and how they may be affected, for example, by partial implementation of reform) or a well-rounded discussion on the impact on government revenue.	The TFP's focus on explaining the details of the TFA has allowed it to use largely generic training materials focused on areas that do not involve a discussion of broader implications of changes to trade policy and administration. But introductory knowledge of the TFA's provisions is now more widely known so any continuing 'awareness raising' needs to be deeper and broader than before, and the in-depth work should recognise that changes in trade policy or administration always have distributional consequences. **Key aspects of sustainable development, such as gender and environment, have barely been touched** in the TFP's activities, even though the programme has devoted some attention to the involvement of women in the organised events. The literature suggests that improving trade facilitation may enhance gender equality by helping countries engage more fully in global value chains. It may also reduce carbon emissions by increasing road transport speed and efficiency at the border crossings, especially in low-income countries and LDCs.	**Recommendation 2:** Programme activities should include a discussion on trade impacts on sustainable development, such as SDG 5 (gender equality) or SDG 6 and 13 (climate). *Responsibility for implementation: TFP senior officer*

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Visibility (chapter 3.1): TFP's work has been relevant in raising ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation at the global level. TFP publications, which were partly done jointly with UNCTAD, UNECE, WEF and others, have been described as timely and to have enhanced ITC's profile in trade facilitation. Similarly, the attendance or collaboration of the TFP team in a large number of high-level trade events and its wide-ranging training have contributed significantly to ITC's profile in this area. **Increased awareness and interest (chapter 3.2):** The TFP has been effective in raising awareness and interest in the business implications of trade facilitation. Activities which contributed in particular to this fundamental and preparatory aim were workshops, contributions to conferences and events, as well as trade facilitation publications. Given the need in the years immediately after the agreement to raise awareness of the TFA as widely as possible, this was a useful and desirable outcome. Moreover, the activities related to the establishment of national TF Portals are expected to enable SMEs to comply with procedural requirements of cross-border transactions by providing them the necessary information in an easily accessible and user-friendly manner. **Increased knowledge, skills and exchange (chapter 3.2):** The programme has used a variety of trainings with different modalities to increase knowledge, skills and exchange within and between its target groups. The training feedback forms available indicate that participants overall improved their knowledge on the topics covered by the courses and their skills. **Improved consensus and feasible plans to act (chapter 3.2):** The programme supports improved consensus and the creation of feasible plans to act in particular through the establishment and support of private-public dialogues, which take place in various formats but primarily in the form of NTFCs. **Impact on trade volumes, cost and time (chapter 3.4):** The promotion of digital trade procedures (which includes national Single Windows and TF Portals) is likely to have a strong impact in reducing trade costs. The impact would be even higher if these initiatives are supported at the regional level.	A variety of activities have contributed to the TFP's achievements to date, particularly the participation to high-level events, publications, public-private dialogues, training, and the establishment of digital trade facilitation mechanisms such as TF Portals. **ITC through the TFP has successfully established itself as one of the key organizations offering 'general support' to implement the TFA** by providing support such as capacity building, creation and strengthening of NTFCs or establishing roadmaps for implementation. Some of this was preparatory work, for which global demand may diminish in the near future (at least for awareness-raising, categorization and sequencing workshops). Nonetheless, there will be a continued need for capacity building on implementation and for information (either broadly introductory or more in-depth). One key 'TFP competence' that may set it apart is the close working relationship that it establishes with governments. Altering on-the-ground practices often involves mediating institutional rivalries as well as dealing with the personal interests, while keeping the focus on improving the trade conditions for enterprises. The establishment of Trade Facilitation Portals is a valuable activity as a step towards developing digital trade procedures which have been shown in the literature to be particularly effective in enabling SMEs to comply with procedural requirements of cross-border transactions. Moreover, **creating an accurate TF Portal plays to TFP's core strengths.** This is because it requires a combination of technological skills (provided by UNCTAD and local consultants) as well as 'intermediation skills' to deal with the sensibilities of the agencies that must supply information and technical skills to analyse and ensure the consistency of trade procedures mapped in the Portal (both provided by TFP).	**Recommendation 3:** TFP should continue helping to establish/support NTFCs and fostering public-private dialogue on trade facilitation reform. *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer **Recommendation 4:** The TFP should continue to work with collaborators with technological skills (notably UNCTAD) on those digital trade procedures such as TF Portals where success requires technological, technical and intermediation skills to be combined. These are likely to contribute to reducing trade costs, benefitting in particular SMEs. In doing so, particular attention should be paid to unlocking the potential at a regional level. *Responsibility for implementation:* chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer
Areas and evolution of programme activities (chapter 2.1): Trainings-of-trainer, on-the-job coaching services and the online learning programme were all introduced in 2018 and form part of TFP's more recent training activities for SMEs. **Increased knowledge, skills and exchange (chapter 3.2):** With regard to the target groups TISIs and SMEs, the training of national master trainers in Sri Lanka has been effective to build national capacity to deliver TFA trainings autonomously to the private sector in the country. Furthermore, the on-the-job export management coaching in Sri	Findings indicate that the TFP's more recent SME training activities (Training-of-trainer and on-the-job coaching) are much appreciated by beneficiaries. Their sustainability is strengthened through the active engagement and ownership of local TISIs (chambers of commerce) and their relevance and effectiveness is enhanced through the delivery by local professionals from the private sector with extensive context-	**Recommendation 5:** An informed decision should be taken on whether the programme should continue to develop its recent initiatives with SMEs (training-of-trainer, SME coaching, online learning) and if it has the necessary capacity to do so. This decision should be taken at the divisional or SMC level, with TFP

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Lanka has so far proven to be of particular merit. The coaches, who were specially trained for this activity, reported that their training course was effective in enhancing their knowledge. Likewise, capacity has been built by training the facilitators for the e-learning course delivered through a local chamber of commerce. The coached SMEs as well as participants to the e-learning courses claimed to have enhanced their understanding of cross-border procedures thanks to the sessions. **Leading to action (chapter 3.2):** With regard to improving TISI's service offering, the TFP's training of trainers has been praised as particularly effective. Aspiring trainers are taught both in content and pedagogical skills, followed by exercises to deliver the training themselves in front of their peers and cameras. This master trainer training has been carried out three times so far, once in Afghanistan, once in Sri Lanka and once in the West African Region (conducted in Togo). Moreover, TISI's service offering has been enlarged through the export management coaching, which was piloted in Sri Lanka, is currently being implemented in Afghanistan and is planned for a future project in Central Asia. **Impact on trade volumes, cost and time (chapter 3.4):** Studies have shown that training activities for employees may at least double the average rate of entry of firms into export markets, and they are particularly effective when they are undertaken for more than one year. **Programme team and means of delivery (chapter 3.3):** There is a very heavy workload on the small Geneva-based team: delivery per person is very high and administrative support appears to be insufficient. Some of the interviewed beneficiaries also highlighted that the TFP has a very small team which seems to be increasingly stretched.	relevant trade experience. Also in the literature, the desirability of such training is well-established. **But whether or not TFP as currently organised is best placed to lead an extension of these activities is debatable.** This is partly due to the fact that the TFP's track record in these areas is too short to support firm conclusions. But there are also a number of challenges with all of them that are already evident: Training-of-trainers is an effective way to scale up effects, reaching a wider number of beneficiaries. However, as these are mainly one-off activities for awareness-raising, their effects remain limited. SME coaching services provide highly context-relevant and longer-term support by local professionals, but the overall number of SMEs successfully coached is so far very limited, also because it is very difficult to find a good match between qualified trainers and suitable SMEs to be coached. With regard to e-learning, there is a trade-off between scalability and specificity. Unless it is limited to disseminating a set of standard messages conveying basic knowledge, it requires in-depth knowledge of the specific subjects covered with relevant situation-specific examples which will tend to limit scalability. So far, TFP has been very successful in replicating training activities with a direct focus on the TFA, but this has been possible by using a large database of generic materials suitable for delivering a similar message to numerous audiences. However, the successful and continuous further delivery of trainings through master trainers, SME coaching through trained coaches or relevant in-depth online learning all require longer-term support and context-specific information, which will be difficult to provide given the already limited and stretched team resources.	providing information on how these initiatives add value to its TF mandate. This discussion should also be attended by representatives of ITC sections working in this field (such as Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness) to identify possible overlaps or synergy potentials. In addition, this discussion should be underpinned by a clear planning of how TFP intends to ensure the implementation of its activities in terms of the team's capacity (see recommendation 6). *Responsibility for implementation: director, DMD*
Programme team and means of delivery (chapter 3.3): The programme's delivery is primarily done by the team itself. Where needed, external consultants are hired to support particular activities, but nothing is fully contracted out. When consultants are involved, the TFP staff directly manages them and remains closely involved. The direct involvement of the team is much appreciated by beneficiaries and has contributed to building longer-term and trustful relationships. The skills and expertise of the team are valued, and its flexibility and responsiveness are highly appreciated in beneficiary countries. At the same time, there is a very heavy workload on the small Geneva-based team: delivery per person is very high and the administrative support appears	The close involvement of the TFP's staff in all the organised activities has been a hallmark of the programme so far and contributed to its success. The team's direct involvement has been highly appreciated by beneficiaries and contributed to build the longer-term and trustful relationships that are central to its core competence. **Despite its merits, the TFP's business model of delivering largely through the in-house team has consequences as the team is becoming increasingly overloaded and stretched.** Moreover, if the programme moves	**Recommendation 6:** The TFP should develop and present a clear and detailed staffing and work plan. This plan needs to ensure that the necessary expertise and capacity can be anticipated and provided in time, depending on the TFP's focus and main activities in the coming years. The planning should cover a clear timeframe and define who is responsible for covering which projects and activities. It

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to be insufficient. The increasing workload is also creating increasing challenges for the team in terms of available knowledge and experience. And the current business model may reach limitations in providing in-depth support on specific trade facilitation needs, where profound expertise on a growing range of technical subjects is needed. **Planning and management (chapter 3.3):** Coping with the workload seems to have been more enabled by a high dedication from the team than by underlying structures and processes. The overall division of tasks in the team seems to be fairly loose, with many tasks being handled on an ad-hoc basis by whoever is available. This has worked fairly well so far, especially as long as the team was still able to keep an overview. However, as the programme is growing, this approach seems to be reaching its limits. With the whole team being strongly tied up in direct delivery, the back office and project management tasks that are increasingly vital with greater programme complexity remain neglected.	further into in-depth technical support for the implementation of specific TFA measure, profound expertise on a growing range of technical subjects would be needed, which currently is not sufficiently covered by the existing team and would therefore need to be provided in other ways. **Moreover, TFP's project management should be strengthened** as the current gaps lead more and more to bottlenecks, increase the risk of shortcomings and jeopardize the effectiveness of the programme.	should also include an assessment of associated administrative effort and how it will be covered adequately. The planning should be discussed and verified with all team or section members involved. In any scenario, internal management should be strengthened to ensure sound project management from planning through delivery to reporting. The planning should therefore explicitly consider this vital function and specify how this is to be ensured. *Responsibility for implementation: chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer*
Planning and management (chapter 3.3): There are only few overarching strategy documents and hardly any final or interim reports of programme activities. Documents seem mostly arranged according to individual activities and consist mainly of project management details and respective activity contents, which are often difficult to place in a wider context. The programme's monitoring mainly consists of a range of performance indicators defined as part of the TFP's theory of change and aligned to ITC's corporate results framework. The degree of available data varies greatly and the overall data is fragmentary. Thanks to more recent efforts, a fairly complete data set is available at least for the year 2018, but the definitions of indicators are often unclear. Generally, there is so far little follow-up with participants. **The programme's theory of change (chapter 2.3):** Instead of clearly outlining the main categories of activities at output level, the theory of change includes many descriptions of what could rather be seen as particular work steps (such as 'advisory services') but it is not clear to which main activities they belong. This makes it very difficult to understand through which main activities the programme ultimately intends to achieve its intended outcomes.	**The overall documentation of the programme is fragmented and hardly allows a comprehensive overall view of the programme's activities and results.** TFP staff have been too busy in 'delivering' to provide clear narratives on exactly what was done, using which resources, and leading to which outcomes. **The Programme's monitoring system is patchy.** While the systematic collection of monitoring data has long been neglected overall, there have been recent improvements. Notwithstanding, the definitions for many indicators remain vague and should be further clarified. **The theory of change is generally coherent but difficult to understand for outsiders.** Just as the limited documentation makes it difficult to understand the Programme's activities, so does the theory of change due to its current structure, where it is not clear which outputs belong to which activities.	**Recommendation 7:** The TFP should improve its planning for and reporting on results. This includes three components: i) the programme should introduce coherent and timely reporting; ii) the theory of change as an essential planning tool for achieving the programme's objectives should be updated and comprehensibly expressed; and iii) the associated monitoring data should be reliably collected and indicators clarified. Furthermore, the programme should strengthen its follow-up with participants of training activities. *Responsibility for implementation: TFP senior officer*

Findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Planning and management (chapter 3.3): There is a difficulty arising from the relationship between monitoring at programme and corporate level. On the one hand, the TFP's indicators are supposed to be aligned to the corporate results framework, with related data being reported through ITC's software platform for reporting, the 'Project Portal'. On the other hand, the programme cannot use the same portal for its own monitoring purposes, since it is project-based and its functionality does not allow management by programmes. These shortcomings are already known to the responsible section. However, so far it has not been possible to remedy them.	**The corporate portal for project management is limited in its ability to effectively support programme documentation, management and monitoring**, since its entire interface and functionality remains focused on the management of individual projects. The portal has the potential to be an effective tool for both project and programme management. However, due to its limited use and features, it is so far rather used as a corporate reporting tool, and even that with restrictions.	**Recommendation 8:** ITC should ensure that the allocation of projects to programmes is done accurately by the project managers. Besides, ITC should enhance the functionality of the project management portal so that it enables programmes to manage their portfolios effectively, allowing work-planning and reporting for programmes, across individual projects. *Responsibility for implementation: chief, SPPG*
Visibility (chapter 3.1): At the corporate level, TFP's communication activities are very limited. More success stories and narratives on programme's contribution to SDGs needs to be provided in order to enhance the credibility and reputation of the programme. At the project level, the programme's visibility actions are very heterogeneous across countries/regions and projects. On one hand, in projects in which funders asked explicitly for communication activities and allocated specific funds to them, several visibility actions have been undertaken by the TFP. On the other hand, in projects where funders did not require visibility activities, communication actions were more individual initiatives.	**Communication activities are scarce and used rather sporadically,** especially when there is no need to do so due to funding requirements. For example, the information on the programme on the ITC website has long become outdated. This constrains the programme's ability to enhance the credibility of its activities in beneficiary countries as well as the reputation and visibility of ITC. A better communication on the programme will in turn require timely reporting on what is being done.	**Recommendation 9:** The TFP should improve its communication activities to enhance the programme's as well as ITC's credibility and visibility. This applies to both the project level in beneficiary countries and the global level using corporate channels. For this purpose, it should be defined which communication activities are envisaged at which level and who is responsible for them. Existing content should be updated. *Responsibility for implementation: TFP senior officer*
Synergies within ITC (chapter 3.3): There is a smooth cooperation within the section (Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business, TFPB) and an overall effective coordination with the Department of Country Programmes (DCP), whose projects the team contributes to. However, it also emerged that the coordination in-house is marked by a strong element of competition, for example in the area of trade portals. Using more ITC-originating material could have increased the programme's contribution to ITC's comparative advantage. For example, Market Access Map (MAcMap), housed in the Trade and Market Intelligence section (TMI) in the same division, is an internationally recognised source of market access data, and although its country coverage for non-tariff import regulations is limited there is some overlap with the countries covered by TFP. Given that a lack of country-specific examples is a recurrent criticism of the TFP training, the failure to take advantage of the in-house data that is available is regrettable.	**In terms of cooperation within ITC, the picture is mixed. Activities in which both TFP and TMI are active have a high potential for overlap or complementarity, in other words for both conflict and synergy.** Competition primarily exists in the area of trade portals. However, there is a potential demarcation line for the division of responsibilities insofar as the TF Portals primarily provide detailed guidance on procedural requirements, an element that is not covered by TMI. There is great potential for synergies with regard to non-tariff measure (NTM) data. The NTM programme is at the bottom of the ITC value chain by providing data and information. Therefore, NTM data should be used to inform TF activities, which intend to address existing barriers to trade. Some of the training activities would have benefitted from integrating such ITC-originating material.	**Recommendation 10:** TFP should take advantage of so far untapped synergies with other ITC teams working in the trade facilitation area. To this end, internal communication and cooperation should be fostered and available in-house expertise and data should be put to the fullest possible use. There should be regular coordination of who is active in which countries and in which areas, and to what extent expertise can be shared in a beneficial manner. *Responsibility for implementation: director, DMD*

1. Introduction and methodology

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the work of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP). Thereby, the evaluation seeks to promote learning, ensure accountability and inform decision-making by providing insights to understand if, how and to what extent results were achieved. In particular, the evaluation aims to:

▪ assess the **extent to which the Programme has succeeded in achieving its intended results**;
▪ provide indications of the **areas of work in which the Programme has been most effective** and where it provides added value, especially compared to other organizations;
▪ serve as a **basis for future improvements by providing recommendations** for the future implementation of the Programme; and to
▪ **ensure accountability towards partners and funders** by reviewing the Programme's performance.

In order to fulfil this purpose, the evaluation examines the Programme according to a set of criteria[1] and related high-level evaluation questions. These are listed in the table below.

Table 1. Evaluation criteria and related evaluation questions

Criteria	High-level evaluation questions
RELEVANCE & ALIGNMENT	To what extent was the Programme consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and supporting ITC's mandate and visibility?
EFFECTIVENESS	In which areas has the Programme been most effective and what were the main influencing factors?
EFFICIENCY & SYNERGIES	To what extent has the Programme been efficiently managed and delivered?
IMPACT (LONG-TERM CHANGE)	To what extent did the Programme contribute to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs, or can it be expected to do so in the future?
SUSTAINABILITY	Is it likely that the positive effects of the Programme will continue after its end?

With regard to the scope, the evaluation encompasses **activities in the Programme's portfolio for a period of five years, from 2014 to 2018**. Within this timeframe, the TFP comprised 11 individual projects with a total budget of roughly seven million US-Dollars. The earliest trade facilitation activities within this portfolio were started in 2014. However, the TFP as such was only established as a distinct Programme in March 2016, when ITC introduced a programmatic approach.[2]

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[1] Which correspond to the [DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance](#).
[2] ITC introduced a programmatic approach with the ITC Strategic Plan 2015-2017 to better achieve and demonstrate development results. The ITC programmatic approach encompasses a comprehensive results framework aligned to corporate goals, a theory of change for each programme as well as monitoring and reporting systems at programme and project level.

The main intended users of this evaluation are:

- The **Trade Facilitation Programme team**, given that the evaluation provides insights about the Programme's process, performance as well as recommendations for improvement;

- **Senior Management**, as the evaluation provides evidence, which may serve as an information base for organizational decisions and management, in relation to ITC's programmatic approach in general and the TFP in particular;

- **ITC staff, in particular project managers or team members**, as the evaluation demonstrates ITC's achievements and provides insights that can be transferred to other areas;

- **Partners and funders**, who want to learn more about the programme's performance;

- and the **general public** that is interested in learning more about ITC's interventions, trade facilitation or the Programme in particular.

1.2. Evaluation process and approach

The evaluation was carried out over a period of seven months. It consisted of four main phases (see Figure 1). During the preparation phase, the cornerstones of the evaluation were laid by preparing the terms of reference and compiling the evaluation team. This was followed by the inception phase, which served to develop a solid initial understanding and a detailed operational plan for the evaluation's main data collection. The inception phase concluded with the inception report that set out the conceptual framework to be used in the evaluation, the evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources and instruments for their collection. This was then followed by data collection, analysis and the reporting phase during which this report was produced.

Figure 1. Overview of the evaluation process
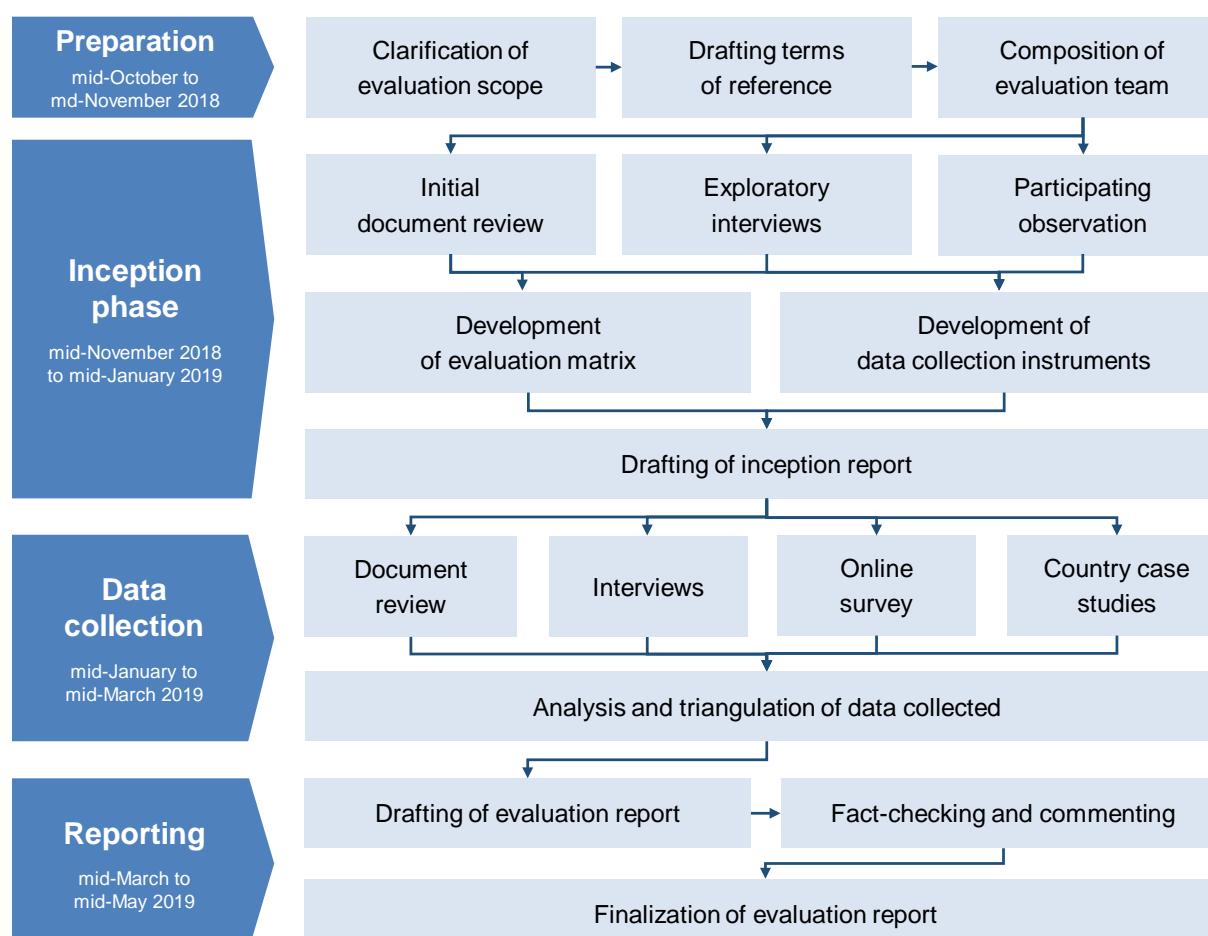
There are many different types of evaluations, which are usually chosen according to the main objectives of an evaluation or to address specific evaluation questions or challenges. An evaluation approach defines the structure and conceptual framework of an evaluation. It forms the chain of reasoning through which credible findings and useful recommendations are to be obtained. The approach followed in this evaluation comprises several elements, which are described in more detail in the following table.

Table 2. Characteristics of the evaluation approach

MIXED METHOD	**The evaluation is mixed method as it relied on the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.** Qualitative data consists of open-ended information, usually gathered through interviews and observations. Quantitative data is in numerical form such as aggregated results from survey. Combining both of them in mixed method approaches provides a more comprehensive basis for an evaluation.
THEORY BASED	**The evaluation is theory-based as it was guided by a theory of change to assess whether and how Programme activities have contributed to observed results.** A theory of change explains how an intervention is expected to produce its results. It clarifies the causal pathways behind an intervention's cause-and-effect logic, which are often just implicitly assumed but not explicitly specified. The theory of change therefore allows to better examine the causal link between delivered outputs and observed outcomes. Evaluations that are based on such logic models allow to not only assess whether an intervention works, but also how and why it does so.
CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS	**The evaluation included a contribution analysis examining the extent to which certain observed outcomes were due to programme activities rather than to other factors.** Contribution analysis assesses the contribution of particular activities to observed results. In essence, the aim is to find out whether the programme has made a difference and if it has added value. Complementary to a theory-based approach, contribution analysis verifies the intervention logic and furthermore identifies and assesses the influence of alternative explanations or contextual factors.
CAUSAL MECHANISMS	**The evaluation assessed the extent to which programme activities have contributed to causal mechanisms.** Evaluations not only ask whether and to what extent activities have an impact, but also how and why they do so. This can be done by identifying causal mechanisms which can explain the linkages between a cause (such as a certain programme activity) and an observed effect. Causal mechanisms allow to unpack the causal black box of why exactly a certain action has led to a certain result by identifying the catalysts behind generated effects. The theory of change in this evaluation is built around social mechanisms, which consist of changes (like increased awareness) that ultimately result in behavioural changes of individuals. The evaluation therefore assessed the extent to which the programme's activities promote these causal mechanisms.

Furthermore, the evaluation was guided by normative guidelines and principles based on good practices in managing, conducting and using evaluations. These included in particular the ITC Evaluation Guidelines (ITC 2018a), the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation (UNEG 2016) as well as the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (UNEG 2008). The evaluation also ensured to address aspects of gender equality to the extent possible and through several means (UNEG 2014).

1.3. Data collection and sampling

In order to provide useful and well-grounded answers to the evaluation questions, the evaluation used an evaluation matrix as its main analytical framework (see Annex C). An evaluation matrix reflects the evaluation questions to be answered and helps the team consider the most appropriate and feasible

method to collect data for answering each question. It guides the analysis and ensures that all data collected is analysed, triangulated and then used to compile the main findings, which in turn lead to conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation relied on a variety of data collection methods and sources, which are listed below.

Table 3. Data collection methods used by the evaluation

DOCUMENT REVIEW	The document review comprised primarily programme documents, such as strategic and operational planning documents, progress or final reports, activity agendas and presentation used, feedback forms from training participants or monitoring data. The review also included publications and databases in the area of trade facilitation to allow insights into the potential impact and limitations of activities in this area.
INTERVIEWS	Interviews were semi-structured and for the most part conducted face-to-face, a few of them by conference calls. The main groups for interviews were the programme's main beneficiaries, the TFP team and other ITC staff as well as development partners, funders and other organizations working in the area of trade facilitation. Interviewees were assured confidentiality insofar as this report does not attribute any findings to anyone by name. A list of people interviewed is available in Annex E.
PARTICIPATING OBSERVATION	During the inception stage, the evaluation team participated in a conference in which the TFP team was involved as co-organizer and speaker.[3] Furthermore, many programme beneficiaries and other key organizations were present. Therefore, this conference provided a good opportunity to observe the work and positioning of the team first-hand as well as to conduct explorative interviews on site.
COUNTRY CASE STUDIES	In order to gain a comprehensive insight into the work, the results achieved and other effects of the programme activities, case studies were carried out in two countries. These visits also enabled an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of various stakeholders and to assess the TFP's work against the background of different country-specific backgrounds.
ONLINE SURVEY	An online survey was conducted to assess the perceived usefulness and impact of training. The online survey was sent to participants of ten different training events that took place in different countries over a period of about one year. The survey was bilingual (English and French) and was online for a total of two weeks. The results of the online survey are presented in Annex F.

A five-year programme with a broad portfolio can only be examined in detail by sampling which could not be done scientifically because of substantial data gaps. Therefore, particular consideration was given to identify meaningful samples using different data collection methods. One of the main choices to be made in this regard was the selection of case studies countries. So far the Programme has been most active in three countries or regions: in Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and West Africa. It was therefore decided to choose among these for the case studies in order to ensure an overview of programme activities that was the broadest possible overview (although not necessarily the most representative).

Ultimately, the choice was made for Sri Lanka and Tajikistan, also because it had already been possible to talk to a number of beneficiaries from West Africa during the participating observation at a conference during the inception stage of the evaluation. In addition, both countries have a number of very different characteristics which allowed the evaluation to assess programme activities against varying country-specific backgrounds (see Table 4).

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[3] First African Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees, 27-29 November 2018, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Table 4. Main characteristics of case study countries

	Sri Lanka	Tajikistan
Population	21.4 million	8.9 million
Area	65 610 km^2	143 100 km^2
GDP (current US$, 2017)	85.02 billion	7.146 billion
GDP per capita (current US$, 2017)	4 073	801
HDI[4] Rank (2017, out of 189)	76th	127th
Ease of Doing Business Score (out of 190)	100th	126th
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP, 2017)	21.9	15.7
Other characteristics	island	landlocked

Source: UNDP Human Development Data, World Bank data

With regard to the consultation of different stakeholders, the evaluation aimed to adequately cover all relevant groups through the different data collections. Table 5 gives an overview of how different stakeholders groups were reached.

Table 5. Distribution of stakeholders consulted by the evaluation

Stakeholder groups	Interviews	Online survey	Total	Men (of total)	Women (of total)
Policymakers and regulators	18	28	**46**	32 (70%)	14 (30%)
TISIs	17	13	**30**	22 (73%)	8 (27%)
Companies (largely SMEs)	9	16	**25**	17 (68%)	8 (32%)
Key organizations (partners & funders)	22	-	**22**	14 (64%)	8 (36%)
ITC staff	23	-	**23**	9 (39%)	14 (61%)
Other or unknown	-	7	**7**	3 (43%)	4 (57%)
Grand total	**89**	**64**	**153**	**97 (63%)**	**56 (37%)**

1.4. Evaluation team and quality control

The evaluation was commissioned and managed by ITC's Independent Evaluation Office (IEU). The IEU established an evaluation team formed by an ITC evaluation officer (Simon Bettighofer) and two external evaluation consultants with extensive experience and expertise in trade facilitation (Isabella Massa and Christopher Stevens).

The IEU internally reviewed and validated the design of the terms of reference, the inception report and of the final evaluation report for quality assurance, to ensure that the process and deliverables were in line with relevant principles and guidelines. In addition, the head of IEU (Miguel Jiménez Pont) provided guidance and oversight throughout the evaluation process.

For fact checking as well as to ensure their ownership and participation, the TFP team was consulted regularly and had the opportunity to provide comments at the drafting stages of the terms of reference,

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4   The Human Development Index (HDI) is a statistic composite index of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators, which are used to rank countries. A country scores a higher HDI when the lifespan is higher, the education level is higher, and the GNI per capita is higher.

for the inception report as well as for this final report. In addition, a wider group of stakeholders was consulted to comment on the draft final report.

1.5. Limitations

The evaluation had to deal with a number of challenges, some of which are outlined below.

- **The available documentation and monitoring data of the Programme was very fragmented.** The TFP´s documentation and reporting has been carried out by different people and in varying formats, depending on the type of activity and the country. There are only very few overarching strategy documents and hardly any final or interim reports of programme activities. Likewise, the Programme's monitoring system appears to be patchy, although improvements have been made recently. Even though the TFP team put in a lot of work since the start of the evaluation to make data available to the evaluators, the documentation still lacked coherence.

- **Corporate data at programme level is limited.** ITC's programmes are implemented through projects that vary in size, source of funding and associated reporting requirements. The corporate monitoring and reporting data is captured at project level through a dedicated project management software (*New Project Portal*). Due to the projects' diversity and because of inconsistencies in their allocation to programmes, it was not possible for this evaluation to obtain aggregated data on the TFP through the available reporting at the corporate level.

- **The evaluated sample of activities has not been randomly selected.** It mainly represents activities judged by the TFP to be 'good examples' of the programme. The main reasons for this were, on the one hand, the limited amount of documentation available and, on the other hand, the fact that only a small number of interventions were sufficiently extensive and long-standing to offer a reasonable perspective to draw broader conclusions.

2. Global context and programme overview

The specific context for this evaluation of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme is provided by the *Agreement on Trade Facilitation* (TFA). Agreed at the 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali (December 2013), it creates binding obligations for WTO members to:

- Enhance the transparency of trade related laws, regulations, procedures, formalities and documentation (i.e. easy and non-discriminatory access to updated information);
- Improve the efficiency of cross-border procedures through the rationalization, simplification, standardisation and automation of import, export and transit formalities;
- Limit the fees, charges and penalties linked to international trade transactions;
- Strengthen the coordination between border regulatory agencies as well as the cooperation between public and private stakeholders.

Since it entered into force in February 2017, the TFA creates binding obligations for WTO members to improve their customs procedures by making them more transparent and efficient in cooperation with border regulatory agencies and the private sector. The Agreement also contains **provisions for technical assistance and capacity building to support its implementation in developing and least developed countries**. The developing and least developed members self-designate, on individual basis, each provision of the TFA into **Category A** (implementation upon entry into force), **Category B** (deferred implementation) **or Category C** (implementation after a transition period and requiring technical assistance) along with the proposed implementation date. Against this backdrop, the TFA implementation process can be broken down into three distinct stages:

- Ratification of the TFA and notification of categorization decisions.
- Preparation of TFA implementation, establishment of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs)[5] and development of national TFA implementation roadmaps.
- Implementation of TFA measures as per the priority and sequences defined in the implementation roadmap.

As the process and speed of implementation varies from country to country, they may be in different stages at a given time. Moreover, these activities are only a part of wider trade facilitation measures. The WTO Agreement itself is situated in this wider context of making it easier for parties that wish to trade to do so. In its documentation (ITC 2016a), the TFP helpfully distinguishes two levels of trade facilitation, the relative importance of which will vary between countries:

- the **'narrow scope agenda'** such as regulatory, organisational and procedural reforms; this would include, for example:
  - Categorization of TFA measures into categories A, B and C;
  - Scheduling the implementation of the provisions in categories B & C;
  - Estimation of the financial resources and technical assistance required to implement category C provisions;
  - Joint ITC-beneficiaries donor approach to raise funds to implement category C provisions;
  - Bringing together private sector and public stakeholders to partner together into concrete cross-sectorial solutions in trade facilitation (i.e. Single Window, electronic customs solutions, e-payment of customs duties and taxes, e-commerce platforms); and
  - Implementation of specific trade facilitation reforms (such as Trade Facilitation Portals, Risk Management or Time Release Study)

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[5] NTFCs are platforms for institutional coordination and stakeholder consultation with a balanced participation of private and public sector representatives. They enable the design, formulation, implementation and monitoring of the TFA and of trade facilitation reforms more broadly.

- the **'broad scope agenda'** covered all the other activities related to the optimisation of cross-border management including infrastructure development, finance, trade law support and logistics services. Within this agenda, ITC has a particular niche supporting the private sector, and SMEs specifically, in developing their exports by reducing the time and cost it takes for SME's to engage in international trade via enhanced capabilities to manage cross-border operations efficiently.

2.1. Areas and evolution of programme activities

Over time, the TFP has developed its work in two main areas: awareness raising of the TFA and in-depth support on country specific trade facilitation needs.

1	Awareness raising of the TFA

Following the conclusion of the TFA negotiations, when several developing countries were seeking support in complying with their new obligations, the TFP organised several activities aiming at informing both the public and private sector on the provisions of the TFA and its implications, on the roadmaps to implement the TFA at the national level, and on how to set up and operationalise the NTFCs. These awareness raising activities were mainly in the form of one-off events, and were realised in a large number of countries, since the nature of the initiatives (ad hoc workshops and capacity building events) was largely the same for all countries.

2	In-depth support on country specific trade facilitation needs

More recently, the TFP has shifted its focus on activities which required more in-depth and long-standing assistance on country-specific trade facilitation needs, implying either a reduction in the number of beneficiary states or a scaling up of inputs. More precisely, the Programme has focused increasingly on providing assistance to beneficiary countries with the implementation of specific trade facilitation reforms, based on their specific needs and priorities (e.g. implementation of Trade Facilitation Portals, support to the implementation of National Single Windows, support to the implementation of customs centric reforms such as Time Release or Integrated Risk-Management, and support to SMEs' cross-border procedures).

Within the two main areas of activity of the TFP, seven categories of activities can be identified. These are:

(1) **Training and advisory services on categorization**

These activities aim at providing assistance to beneficiary countries in the categorization of TFA measures (A,B,C) and notification to the WTO as per agreed timelines.

(2) **Training and advisory services on sequencing and prioritization**

These activities aim at assisting beneficiary countries in developing a roadmap for the implementation of the TFA, and in setting timelines and milestones for the commitments under category A, B and C.

(3) **Private sector capacity building**

This category includes both TFA awareness raising activities and in-depth support on specific trade facilitation needs. In particular, it includes:

- o **TFA workshops** addressed specifically to the private sector.
- o **Training-of-trainer events**: workshops with the objective of training a selected pool of national master trainers on the TFA and its impact for business, in order to enable them to deliver TFA trainings autonomously to the private sector.
- o **On-the-job coaching services**: training of selected local export management coaches (EMCs) on a number of identified trade facilitation-related issues relevant for the

business sector[6], followed by on-the-job coaching missions at the premises of a selected number of SMEs.

o ***E-curriculum***: online courses with the objective of training SMEs on cross-border procedures in identified specific sectors[7].

(4) **Development of project proposals for category C measures**

This category includes workshops aimed at estimating the financial as well as trade assistance and capacity building requirements for the implementation of category C provisions.

(5) **Support for NTFCs**

This category refers to the assistance provided to beneficiary countries in creating or reinforcing their national trade facilitation committees (NTFCs). This assistance may consist of:

o ***Support to set up and operationalise the NTFCs***.

o ***Workshops*** on trade facilitation practices directed to NTFCs' members.

o ***Study tours*** to selected countries where trade facilitation challenges, opportunities, and best practices may be discussed.

(6) **TFA measure implementation activities**

This category refers to the support provided in various forms (e.g. through public-private dialogues or workshops) for the implementation of TFA measures such as Single Windows, Trade Facilitation Portals (TF Portals), Time Release and Risk Management frameworks.

(7) **TFA regional integration**

This category includes activities aimed at enhancing the regional harmonization of trade facilitation practices (e.g. regional trade facilitation workshops, support for the establishment of regional trade facilitation committees, among others).

In addition to the activities above, **the TFP has also focused on project development** (i.e. development of project proposals to raise funding for programme activities), **and on participating in high-level conferences and contributing to academic courses**. For example, the Programme has contributed to master level courses in Berne at the World Trade Institute (WTI), and at the Barcelona-based Masters Programme in International Economic Law and Policy (IELPO).

Moreover, especially in the early stages of the programme, **visibility activities have been undertaken**, some of them in collaboration with UNCTAD, UNECE, UNESCAP, WEF, and others to demonstrate that the programme has the relevant ties and partnerships. Under visibility activities, it is also important to mention the **different publications on trade facilitation**, which have been realized by the TFP team often in collaboration with other stakeholders.

In order to leverage its interventions, the TFP has developed partnerships with 36 different stakeholders (see Table 6): international organizations, national governments, international courier services, global communication companies and others. In particular, it has established two broad types of relationship, **funder or collaborator**, with little overlap between them (only UNCTAD and OSCE fall into both groups). 'Funders', which account for about a quarter of all partners, have provided funding to realize specific projects. 'Collaborators' participate in joint events but without any monetary or technical transfers.

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[6] In Sri Lanka these were (i) packaging and labelling; (ii) mandatory certifications and buyer standards; (iii) customs and duties; (iv) international shipping by sea and air freight; and (v) export planning and pro-forma invoice.

[7] In Sri Lanka, the e-learning course focused on cross-border procedures in the spices, garments, and fresh and processed foods sectors, and it consisted of a number of lectures, case studies and a forum task.

Table 6. TFP Partners by type

FUNDERS:	Denmark, DHL, EU, Finland, Huawei, OSCE, QDB, SECO, UNCTAD, USAID
COLLABORATORS:	AACE, Apex Brazil, Bain, Brazil MDIC, CNI, FIATA, GATF, GCEL, GFP, ICC, ICESA, IFAEO, India, INTRADEBOOK, Lao PDR, LSP, NIOE, OSCE, SKF Logistics, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNESCAP, UPAEP, WCO, WTO, WEF

Source: compiled by the evaluation team, based on data supplied by the TFP.

2.2. The global picture of programme activities

At first sight, the TFP's activities over the time period 2014-2018 form **an impressive package, but one that is also very disparate.** It has operated in 75 countries (5 of which are not WTO Members) and 9 regional economic blocs (see Figure 2, and Annex A for detailed information).

Figure 2: Global pattern of TFP actions 2014-2018[8]
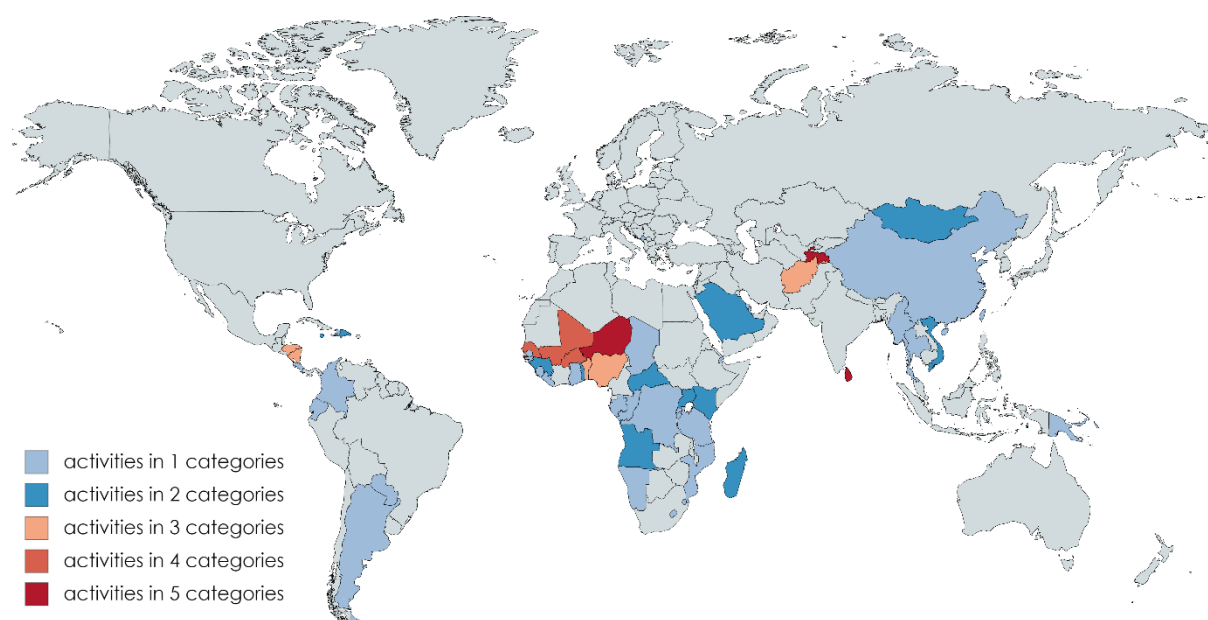
Source: own illustration, based on data supplied by the TFP.

But of all the countries in which the programme has been active, **only 19% have received help in three or more categories**, half of them in Africa:

- three countries had help in five categories (Niger, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan);
- four countries had help in four categories (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal);
- seven countries had help in three categories (Afghanistan, Benin, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan and Saint Vincent & Grenadines).

Only 36% (27 out of 75) of the countries in which the TFP has been active are least developed countries (LDCs). Of all the countries, in which the TFP has been most active (in three or more categories), 43% of them (6 out of 14) are LDCs.[9] Accordingly, 21 of the 27 LDCs received help in one or two categories.

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[8] Countries supported in the context of regional interventions are not captured in the graph.
[9] Afghanistan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal.

Table 7 summarises the **geographical scope of the TFP by activity category**. The entry in each cell indicates the number of TFP activities in countries of the particular region. So, for example, African countries have hosted 26 categorization trainings and 4 sequencing and prioritization trainings.

Table 7: Distribution of TFP activities by region and development status

Activities	Africa	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Latin America & Caribbean	Regional	Total activities	Of which in LDCs
Categorization	26	14	0	14	0	**54**	24 (44%)
Sequencing and prioritization	4	4	0	1	0	**9**	4 (44%)
Private sector capacity building	22	37	0	8	1	**68**	18 (26%)
Project proposals for category C measures	8	0	0	3	0	**11**	7 (64%)
Support for NTFCs	6	9	0	3	0	**18**	3 (17%)
TFA measure implementation	5	7	0	1	0	**13**	5 (38%)
TFA regional integration	4	1	1	0	27	**33**	3 (9%)
Grand Total	**75**	**72**	**1**	**30**	**28**	**206**	**64 (31%)**

Source: compiled by the Evaluation Team from data supplied by the TFP.

LDCs received slightly less than a third of all activities (31%). Categorization activities have been dominant in Africa, in Latin America and the Caribbean and among LDCs. In Asia and the Pacific instead, private sector capacity building was most numerous (largely because of multiple deliveries in Sri Lanka and also in Tajikistan), while they were the second most frequent in Africa and in LDCs.

2.3. The Programme's theory of change and key performance indicators

From 2014 to 2016, trade facilitation activities were not explicitly framed in a dedicated theory of hange (ToC). The programme's ToC was developed in the context of its establishment as a distinct programme in 2016, when ITC introduced a programmatic approach. Figure 3 shows the ToC with the desired results at outcome level and the corresponding activities at output level. The full ToC underpinning the TFP's interventions (including indicators and assumptions) is set out in Annex B.

The ultimate impact of the programme is to increase significantly the exports of developing countries. This is desirable in itself and could also contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.11: doubling the LDC share of global exports by 2020.

The global outcome of the TFP giving rise to this impact is a reduction in the cost and time of cross-border transactions for SMEs. Interventions that **increase awareness** and interest are seen as leading to **increased knowledge** and skills that help to **develop consensus** and agreement on feasible outcomes leading to **action.**

Figure 3: The Programme's theory of change

		Increased awareness and interest	Increased knowledge, skills and exchange	Improved consensus and feasible plans to act	Action
Policy makers and regulators	Intermediate outcomes	Policy makers and regulators are more aware of the business implications and dynamics of trade facilitation	Policy makers and regulators better understand the business implications and dynamics of trade facilitation1 and are better equipped to design reforms	Feasible and desirable trade facilitation reforms are formulated and/or endorsed by policy makers	Policy makers and regulators implement and periodically evaluate trade facilitation reforms
	Outputs	• Awareness raising workshops on trade facilitation • Contributions to conferences and events • Trade facilitation publications	• Training events on trade facilitation • Advisory services to issue client specific policy, regulatory or procedural assessments • Trade facilitation technical notes • Trade Facilitation Guides and training modules	• Workshops to schedule and/or design and/or endorse policy, regulatory or procedural reforms • Advisory services to develop policy options, technical regulatory frameworks or implementation plans • Client specific researches and analyses to support the development of policy recommendations or action plans • Advisory services to establish and/or operationalize and/or strengthen collaborative platforms • Trainings and workshops to strengthen collaboration and cooperation collaborative platforms members	• Advisory services to support the implementation trade facilitation reforms (e.g. policy drafting, technical specifications for facilities and equipment…) • Training and coaching events towards ministries and border regulatory agencies to support the efficiency and quality of the services provided
TISIs / NTFCs	Intermediate outcomes	TISIs are more aware of the business implications of trade facilitation and of the procedural challenges faced by SMEs at the borders	TISIs understand the business implications of trade facilitation and the procedural challenges faced by SMEs at the borders and are able to provide related advocacy, policy monitoring, awareness raising and capacity building services	Policy recommendations for trade facilitation are designed and adopted through an inclusive inter-agency and public-private dialogue process	TISIs actively advocate for trade facilitation reforms and improve their services and improve their services in trade facilitation and cross-border trade management
	Outputs	• Awareness raising workshops on trade facilitation • Contributions to TF conferences and events • Trade facilitation publications	• Training events on trade facilitation (workshop, study tours, face-to-face and e-learning curriculums) • Train-the-trainers events • Advisory services to develop trade related policy, regulatory or procedural assessments • Trade facilitation technical notes • Trade Facilitation Guides and training modules	• Analytical and empirical research to support the development of position papers, policy options or implementation plans • PPDs receive evidence-based private sector inputs to discuss negotiating positions and/or reforms that are enacted/achieved/to be implemented • Workshops to design and adopt recommendations towards policy, regulatory or procedural reforms • Topic specific trainings/workshops to analyse business needs and implications • Advisory services to build an advocacy strategy to develop position papers	• Advisory services to design and deliver new services • Training events facilitated by trainers trained by the ITC • Advisory services and trainings to establish / operationalize / strengthen cross-border trader collaborative platforms
SMEs	Intermediate outcomes	SMEs are more aware of business implications of trade facilitation and of the importance in participating public-private dialogue	SMEs are able to comply with the procedural requirements of a cross-border transaction and to efficiently participate to public-private dialogue platforms		Female and male SME owners/ managers implement business decisions to improve their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements and participate to public-private dialogue platforms
	Outputs	• Awareness raising workshops • Contributions to TF conferences and events • Trade facilitation publications	• SME training on how to efficiently participate to public-private dialogue platforms • SME training on how to benefit from the WTO TFA individual measures • SME trainings on cross-border procedures management and compliance with destination markets requirements (incl. e-learning and train the trainers approaches) • Trade facilitation technical notes • Trade facilitation Guide books and training module		• In-house advisory services (e.g. coaching) on cross-border management • Advisory services to identify and formulate recommendations for policy / regulatory / procedural reforms

SDG 17.11: Increase significantly the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDC share of global exports by 2020

The cost and time of cross-border transactions for SMEs is reduced

Source: TFP strategy document (ITC 2016a)

More specifically the TFP's interventions are seen as enabling trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) to better advocate business-oriented policy recommendations for trade facilitation and to improve their services to SMEs on cross-border compliance management. In turn, this enables policy makers to implement trade facilitation reforms that reflect the needs of SMEs and SME owners and managers to implement business decisions to improve their compliance.

The sequential outcomes of awareness, increased knowledge and skills, improved consensus and action are specified along the three target groups: i) policy makers and regulators, ii) TISIs and iii) SMEs. Each outcome derives from particular activities at the output level. It should be noted that the activities listed here differ from the seven categories of activities mentioned earlier (chapter 2.1.), which were:

(1) Training and advisory services on categorization

(2) Training and advisory services on sequencing and prioritization

(3) Private sector capacity building

(4) Development of project proposals for TFA Category C measures

(5) Support for NTFCs

(6) TFA measure implementation activities

(7) TFA regional integration

The fact that these categories do not appear in Figure 2 can partly be explained by the fact that they cannot be reduced to any particular stages but instead span across them. For example: support for NTFCs (category 5) entails the whole spectrum of activities in the middle TISI column, starting from awareness raising to increasing knowledge, improving consensus up to advocacy for action.

A key assumption of the ToC is that the main challenges faced by the businesses at the border are a non-conducive business environment and SMEs' limited compliance with cross-border requirements. These translate into delays, redundant data and documentation requirements with SMEs subject to disproportionally high inspection rates. These problems have their root cause in a lack of capacity to design, implement and monitor trade facilitation reforms, a control-focused mind-set, institutional and personal vested interest (ITC 2016a).

This assumption is well supported by the literature. The relevance of the programme as set out by TFP is that policy changes required by the TFA, if implemented effectively, will help countries to lower trade transaction costs, which are often high in developing countries and may affect SMEs disproportionately as they often lack the means and capacity to comply with complex rules. The argument is that the implementation of agreements such as the TFA lowers trade costs for all countries, but especially for lower income economies. Analysis suggests that the full implementation of the TFA could reduce global trade costs by between 10% and 18%, varying across country groupings, but with the largest gains accruing to countries in the lower income groupings (OECD 2018a). There are also studies suggesting that trade facilitation measures may enhance trade performance in low-income countries (Moïsé and Sorescu 2013; Massa 2013). Therefore, the full implementation of the TFA as well as trade facilitation measures in the shortest delay possible should be the goal of developing countries and LDCs, and of the international organisations that support them (e.g. McDougall 2017; OECD 2018a; OECD 2018b; WTO 2016).

How does the TFP monitor its interventions? According to the Programme's main strategy documents (ITC 2016a) and as indicated in the comprehensive version of the ToC (see Annex B), the TFP aims to keep track of a wide number of indicators. The **key performance indicators** identified by the TFP are listed in table 8. All are quantitative, located at the highest outcome level and aligned to the corporate results framework.

Table 8: Key Performance Indicators adopted by the Programme

Level	Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Global	The cost of cross-border transactions for SMEs is reduced	**# of SMEs reporting improved international competitiveness** as a result of ITC support
Policy Makers	Policy makers implement trade facilitation reforms that reflect the need of SMEs for enhanced international competitiveness	**# of cases in which trade facilitation policies and-or strategies and-or regulations have been improved** with business sector input as a result of ITC's support
TISIs	TISIs extend and improve their services in advocacy for trade facilitation reforms and in cross-border trade management	**# of TISI that report having improved their portfolio** of services in the area of trade facilitation as a result of ITC's support
SMEs	SME owners and managers implement business decision to improve their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements	**# of SMEs that report having made measurable changes** in their business practices for the purpose of improving their compliance with cross-border requirements

Source: TFP strategy document (ITC 2016a)

2.4. Key aspects of the theory of change and strategy

There are a small number of key aspects of the ToC and the underlying strategy. Four groups emerge from both the ToC and the implicit strategy; a fifth is directly relevant to the underlying strategy noted in Section 2.1. These five key aspects are as follows.

1. **Focus on the private sector in general and SMEs in particular.** SMEs are specifically identified as a principal target in the ToC, and a key 'comparative advantage' of ITC is seen to be that it focusses on the private sector and, especially, SMEs. One aim of ITC work with governments as set out in the ToC is to help them appreciate private sector inputs into the design of trade facilitation. And SMEs are to be made aware of the scope of the new rules and the potential benefits of trade facilitation and on the need to dialogue with government over the design of the measures it introduces to comply with the TFA. The ToC identifies developing a consensus as an intermediate outcome. The ultimate goal is to help SMEs to become more competitive and increase exports.

2. **An emphasis on training** permeates all aspects of the strategy both because it is an easy point of entry that plays to ITC's strengths but also because it is a vital input to trade facilitation at all levels: for public sector trade-related organisations in general and NTFCs in particular, and for private sector operators. The first two rows in the ToC (Figure 2) are to increase awareness and knowledge.

3. **Information and transparency** also permeates all levels as a result of the same two intermediate outcomes in the ToC: companies need to know what is planned (so they may judge how it may affect them) and what is required by any new rules. All trade information needs to be published and made available online, and there must be enquiry points accessible by the private sector. Knowledge is required to meet the ToC outcome of appropriate action.

4. **Leveraging action particularly at the TISIs level** to contribute to the achievement of the intermediary outcomes identified in the ToC. In this context TISIs include not only chambers of commerce, trade promotion organization or business associations but also NTFCs. The Programme aims at improving TISI advocacy for trade facilitation reforms factoring in the business perspective as well as extending and improving their services in the area of cross-border management for SMEs.

5. **Contribution to achieving ITC goals**. Although not part of the ToC, the strategy of increasing the competence of ITC staff in trade facilitation is clearly necessary for successfully bringing about the sought after change. And if, in so doing, it enhances the Centre's international standing as a body able to intervene effectively in this area it may increase the scale of its interventions supporting WTO Members.

3. Findings

The TFP has evolved substantially since 2014 and the evaluation has to reflect this as it affects the assessment and recommendations. Although the chronological boundaries between them are fuzzy, there have been different phases in the programme's evolution. The TFP team recognises this evolution from a very widely spread 'awareness raising' approach towards a tailored, in-depth support on specific trade facilitation needs.

Besides, there are a number of contextual factors that should be kept in mind for this evaluation:

- Implementation of the TFA is only a small part of 'trade facilitation' as it is conventionally described. This is illustrated by the distinction noted in chapter 2 between the narrow and broad definitions of trade facilitation.

- ITC is involved in several aspects of 'trade facilitation' more broadly defined. In Tajikistan, for example, several interviewees were unclear about which ITC trade facilitation interventions we were evaluating.

- Over the full period since 2014, the TFP has concentrated largely on two aspects: awareness raising about the details of the TFA and fostering public-private dialogue over modes of its implementation. Globally, almost two thirds of the 206 discrete activities in the assessed five-year period consisted of training and advice (on categorization, sequencing and prioritization, and capacity building for the private sector).

- Within its chosen area, TFP inputs are in a narrow, mid-range: more focussed on the practicalities of the TFA text than on fundamental analyses of the role and impact of trade facilitation; but at a higher level than many of the details affecting day-to-day commerce, such as the practices of customs departments. This is an important, legitimate focus but it has implications. Distributional trade impacts (such as by gender, firm size or poverty level) will be – at best – very indirect. And it is clear from the TFP's training materials (even those for the 'academic' courses) that distributional effects are not a major concern of the programme. Moreover, for business everyday gains will depend heavily on changes to public policy and administration resulting from institutional reforms supported by the TFP.

- An inevitable consequence of supporting the TFA's implementation is that the programme depends on a fruitful cooperation with governments, as they are ultimately responsible for the implementation. This also means that the programme's overall effectiveness in a given country is largely blocked if there is no interest or buy-in from policy makers.

The two case studies illustrate both phases of the programme and in many respects represent opposite ends of a spectrum, even though neither is an LDC. Sri Lanka has an active private sector and a well-articulated public trade policy; it also attracts many funders. In Tajikistan, by contrast, the private sector is weak, trade faces many physical, infrastructural and policy barriers and exports are concentrated on a very small number of commodities.

3.1. Relevance and alignment

> *To what extent was the Programme consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and supporting ITC's mandate and visibility?*

This section examines to what extent TFP's interventions have been timely, have reflected the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and supported ITC's mandate.

Timeliness of the programme

The programme's activities were timely insofar as they were aligned to the evolution of the TFA and countries' needs for ratification and measure implementation.

From the outset, the programme has been strongly linked to the chronology of the TFA. The initial TFA document (WTO 2013) was signed on 7 December 2013 and within nine days the TFP's section had published a business guide (ITC 2013). This publication was prepared in anticipation of the agreement and was aimed at businesses in developing countries to explain what they needed to know and at policy makers to clarify how to identify their needs for technical assistance.

The programme's initial activities were geared towards evolving needs within the framework of the agreement. During the first phase, it focused on preparatory steps for the TFA: ratification and categorization of its measures as well as general awareness raising. It also assisted countries to develop project proposals for their notifications in category C so that they could be presented early to potential donors. It then evolved to work more on TFA implementation, initially by establishing NTFCs and developing roadmaps, then to help implement specific TFA measures.

Responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs

The Programme's design and its intended outcomes are based on an analysis exploring the needs of its main target groups. These findings are further supported by substantial literature.

The TFP's fundamental rationale, as presented in its key strategy document (ITC 2016a), is in essence the following: trade transaction costs are very high in some developing countries, which are the least able to carry this additional burden. These costs in particular affect SMEs as they often lack the means and capacity to comply with complex rules. The reforms needed to comply with the TFA will tend to lower trade costs.

This rationale is well supported by the literature. One analysis suggests that the implementation of the TFA could reduce global trade costs by between 10% and 18%, varying across country groupings, but with the largest gains accruing to countries in the lower income groupings (OECD 2018a). Such findings are supported by a range of other studies which indicate that the full implementation of the TFA in the shortest delay possible should be the goal of developing countries and LDCs, and of the international organisations that support them (e.g. McDougall 2017; OECD 2018a; OECD 2018b; WTO 2016).

Against this background, the Programme addresses three main target groups: 1) policy makers and regulators with the implementation of the TFA and trade facilitation measures in the wider sense; 2) SMEs, building capacity through dedicated training, coaching and advisory services – explaining the TFA and its advantages for them, and to improve their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements; as well as 3) TISIs to strengthen private sector-led advocacy for trade facilitation reforms factoring in the business perspective and to extend their services for SMEs in the area of cross-border management.

The data collected for this evaluation confirm that the TFP has addressed the needs of all three target groups. Moreover, it has done so by consulting local stakeholders, thereby enhancing its alignment with the needs of beneficiaries. The need of policy makers is evident as in most cases

they explicitly requested assistance with TFA implementation. The focus on informing the private sector about the TFA, strengthening their advocacy in public-private dialogues and improving their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements was unanimously emphasized by the interviewees. However, with regard to the private sector, it is also worth noting that trade facilitation is identified as a clear need but not necessarily as a top priority. Some of the interviewees suggested that other more 'essential' issues can be of greater importance, such as the provision of finance or infrastructure. The need to strengthen the ability of TISIs (in particular NTFCs) to advocate for trade facilitation reforms was also widely recognized, in particular in the conducted case studies.

Alignment with government priorities

As a largely demand driven programme, TFP's interventions have been well aligned to governmental priorities. In the early years, the programme responded to specific requests from governments to inform them about the implications of the TFA. The programme has now moved in several countries and regions from simply raising awareness and facilitating public-private dialogue on TFA-related change towards more focussed support for TFA implementation.

Specific requests by developing country governments to inform them about the implications of the TFA were numerous in the early years. Consequently, in that period the programme was spread thinly while covering a wide range of countries, mainly conducting one-off and standardized awareness-raising and preparatory activities. The choice of countries appears to have been guided largely by demand (which explains why there was no focus on specific regions or LDCs during this period, and training was even provided to non-WTO members which would not be directly affected by the TFA).[10]

More recently, the programme has focused on individual in-depth support for the implementation of TFA measures in a limited number of countries for which there has been a funded request for TFP involvement. By the end of 2018, this entailed 12 countries, seven of them LDCs, plus UEMOA.[11] The continued external funding also suggests that development agencies and host governments consider TFP's in-depth activities to be congruent with needs and priorities.

The programme's activities in the UEMOA were reported to be aligned with regional development policies and to take into account the recommendations of national development plans as well as the diagnostic studies of trade integration. In the two case studies TFP activities were indeed well aligned with governmental priorities and policies. In Sri Lanka, the TFP's activities coincided well with government changes to trade policy, and were timed perfectly according to interviewees. When the TFP's activities started at the end of 2016, the country had recently ratified the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (in May 2016), it was moving to a number of new free trade agreements with China, Singapore, and India, and new set of policies, including a new trade policy and national export strategy, were under development. Activities related to the TF Portal and National Single Window were aligned to these documents and met some of their strategic objectives. In Tajikistan, the programme was associated even more closely with government priorities since it responded directly to the request of the then First Deputy Minister of Trade to ratify and implement the TFA as a matter of priority.

It is also noteworthy that four of these more recent in-depth focus countries have also received the largest number of TFP interventions in the programme's early stages. This suggests that the TFP has been appreciated by these beneficiary states, and their expertise recognised by funders.

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[10] Were these states to apply for WTO membership the issues covered by the TFA would be rolled up in the much broader negotiations over their accession agreements.
[11] Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Egypt, Jordan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Viet Nam.

Coherence with SDG targets

The programme is in line with SDG target 17.11. as it contributes in the wider sense to increasing the exports of developing countries.

Target 17.11:   *Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020*

Indicator 17.11.1: Developing countries' and least developed countries' share of global exports

Due to the effects expected from trade facilitation (including from the implementation of the TFA), the programme is expected to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.11. However, the programme has so far not specifically focussed on the aspect to double the LDC share of global exports by 2020, as only 31% of the TFP's activities took place in LDCs.

This SDG target is also one of the trade-related global indicators[12] for which ITC, together with UNCTAD and WTO, provides and updates the data. According to WTO estimates, developing economies exported 43% of world merchandise exports in 2017. After a positive trend since the beginning of the millennium, the figures experienced a slight decline since 2014 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Share of developing economies in world exports, 2000-2016 (percentages)
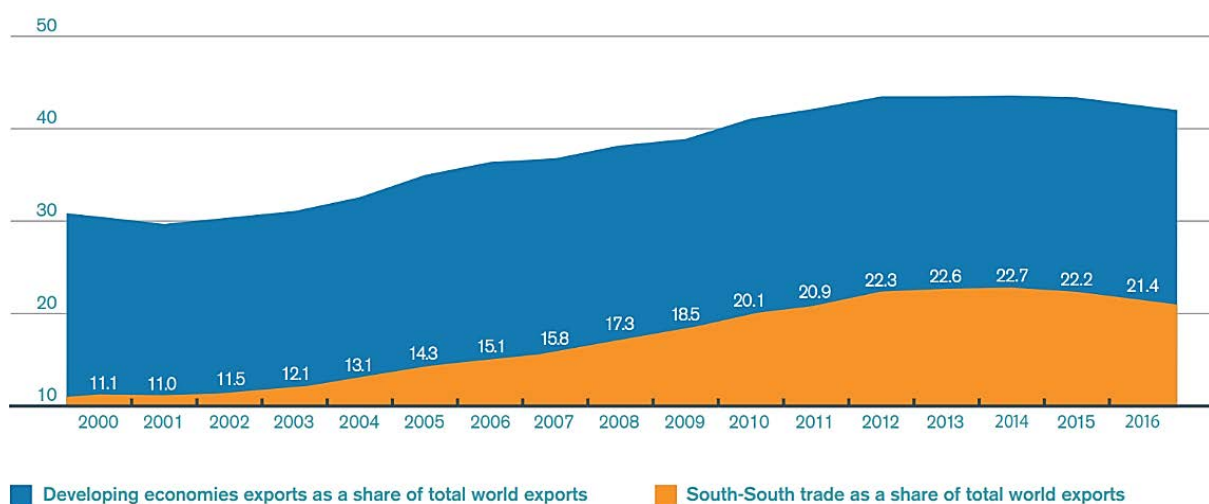
Source: WTO 2018

Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy

ITC is a joint institution of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Within the UN system, the ITC is the focal point for trade-related technical assistance and thus focuses on trade development for developing and transition countries. Furthermore, it is the only international agency dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

ITC defines its objectives in strategic plans. The programmatic approach for delivery is still relatively new. ITC's Strategic Plan 2012-2015 merely announced that the Organization has taken steps to develop larger programmes. The subsequent Strategic Plan 2015-2017 included, for the first time, a programmatic approach framing the organization's activities. This approach also encompasses a theory of change for each programme, including TFP, which are aligned to corporate focus areas, goals and a common results framework.

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[12] Which are SDG targets 17.10, 17.11, and 17.12.

ITC's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 has developed this framework further and aligned it with the SDGs. It defines the Organization's mission and goals as follows (ITC 2018b):

Mission: *To enhance inclusive and sustainable growth and development in developing countries, especially least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition through improving the international competitiveness of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).*

*To achieve ITC's mission **the goals are***:

- ***Improved national business and trade environments for MSMEs***
- ***Improved performance of trade and investment support institutions***
  to offer high-quality, sustainable business services to MSMEs
- ***Improved international competitiveness of MSMEs***

The TFP's strategic approach and theory of change are closely aligned to the corporate mission, goals, and the Organization's results framework. The programme's target groups (policy makers and regulators, TISIs, and SMEs) are fully in line and each address one of the Organization's goals. The Programme also relates to ITC's comparative advantage (i.e. the focus on the private sector).

Visibility

TFP's work has been relevant in raising ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation at the global level. TFP publications, which were partly done jointly with UNCTAD, UNECE, WEF and others, have been described as timely and to have enhanced ITC's profile in trade facilitation. All seven of its publications are in the top third of ITC rankings according to the number of English language downloads. Similarly, the attendance or collaboration of the TFP team in a large number of high-level trade events and its wide-ranging training were also said to have contributed significantly to ITC's profile in this area.

At the country/regional and project level, the evidence on ITC's visibility through the TFP's work is mixed. **First, the number of visibility actions undertaken is very heterogeneous across countries/regions and projects.** On one hand, **in projects in which funders asked explicitly for communication activities and allocated specific funds to them, several visibility actions have been undertaken** by the TFP. That is the case, for example, of the 'EU – Sri Lanka Trade-Related Assistance Project' in Sri Lanka and the 'WAEMU Trade Competitiveness and Regional Integration Support Project' in West African countries, which are both funded by the EU and for which there exists a well-elaborated communication strategy. In Sri Lanka, communication actions have been realised through several different tools including project flyers (often translated into local languages), PowerPoint presentations, dedicated websites, the social media (e.g. Facebook), press releases, news articles, project impact brochures, and project videos. Testimonial videos are also under development.[13] In a similar way, in West African countries, visibility actions have been realised through television, radio, newspapers, Twitter, and other social networks.[14]

A visibility assessment exercise conducted on a selected sample of press releases related to the Sri Lanka and WAEMU projects **reveals that activities undertaken under the TFP are perceived as an important tool to improve the country/regional business environment and competitiveness.**[15]

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[13] For example, a comprehensive communication campaign was launched for the e-learning course, which included: a dedicated webpage under the NIOE website, promotional videos, flyers and brochures, articles in economic magazines, social networks (NIOE Facebook and Twitter are under development), and promotional emails to SMEs.

[14] For example, the regional trade facilitation workshop on the dematerialization of the certificate of origin was covered by the Burkinabé television.

[15] Indeed, there were sentences such as '*SMEs were the victims of red tape and trade assistance programs of this nature assist them to overcome these barriers to tap into the global market*', '[le Projet] *va permettre la mise en œuvre concrète de la facilitation des échanges, la surveillance commerciale, la formation des ressources humaines, le renforcement des capacités institutionnelles et managériales des organismes de promotion commerciale des Etats-membres. Et pour atteindre ces objectifs, l'UEMOA peut compter sur l'expertise du Centre de Commerce international*', among others.

This implies that ITC is getting a very good image in the media through the TFP, and that the messages conveyed by the press are in line with the objectives of the TFP.

On the other hand, **in projects where funders did not require visibility activities, communication actions were more individual initiatives than structured initiatives, and** the general feeling within the TFP team is that **more needs to be done** to increase visibility in these projects by developing communication material and using social media and networks (e.g. twitter). However, the lack of time and resources are recognised as key constraints to achieve this objective.

Second, target audiences are reached to a different degree in different countries/regions. For example, in Tajikistan name recognition of ITC, the TFP team in Geneva and the local project office was universal among the stakeholders consulted, who came from government and trade associations. In Sri Lanka, instead, the feeling among the interviewees was that ITC and the TFP initiatives were well known among government officials, but much less visible among SMEs. This might be partly due to the fact that there is more engagement of funders in Sri Lanka compared to Tajikistan.

Third, ITC appears to be less visible than other international bodies in countries supported by the TFP. For example, in Sri Lanka ITC was said to be less visible than the EU and UNIDO which are involved respectively as funder and implementation partner of the 'EU – Sri Lanka Trade-Related Assistance Project' to which the TFP is also contributing. In Rwanda, according to interviewees, ITC is less visible than UNCTAD in the trade facilitation area. The lower degree of ITC's visibility compared to that of other international agencies might partly be due to the smaller size of ITC.

Whilst some visibility actions are taken at the country/project level (although to a very heterogeneous degree)**, TFP's communication activities are very limited at the corporate level**. Indeed, the conducted interviews in the Geneva headquarter highlighted that TFP's reporting at the corporate level needs to be strengthened. More success stories and narratives on programme's contribution to SDGs needs to be provided in order to enhance the credibility and reputation of the programme. Moreover, it was stressed that it is important in reporting to highlight what the TFP has done and distinguish it from the political part. This is key in making clear in certain cases that certain initiatives did not lead to the expected results not because of ITC's failures but because of some political issues which are beyond ITC's control.

3.2. Effectiveness

> *In which areas has the Programme been most effective and what were the main influencing factors?*

On the basis of the information gathered, it can be concluded that the Programme's activities have corresponded to those defined in the strategic documents and the theory of change. The ToC envisaged four sequential outcomes, each of them for three sets of actors: policy makers and regulators, TISIs, and SMEs.

Our analysis indicates that the TFP has so far been mainly effective in achieving three of its target outcomes: (1) increasing awareness and interest; (2) enhancing knowledge and skills; and (3) leading to feasible plans to act. There is so far limited evidence of significant resulting 'action' which may partly be because interventions are recent but may also reflect current challenges. Of the three target audiences, the TFP has so far been more effective in reaching the public sector than the private sector. However, the recent evolution of the Programme's portfolio indicates that TFP aims to intensify in-depth activities with emphasis on SMEs.

Increased awareness and interest

The TFP has been effective in raising awareness and interest in the business implications of trade facilitation. Activities which contributed in particular to this fundamental and preparatory aim were workshops, contributions to conferences and events, as well as trade facilitation publications. Especially given the need in the years immediately after the agreement to raise awareness of the TFA as widely as possible, this was a useful and desirable outcome.

According to the available data, the team has either led or contributed to 129 events related to awareness-raising over the last five years (which on average corresponds to one event every two weeks). These events mainly consisted of high-level conferences[16] and national workshops. Content presented or discussed at these events covered business implications of trade facilitation, procedural challenges faced by SMEs at the borders and the role of public-private dialogues in this context.

Furthermore, the TFP ran a large number of trainings in many countries in its first phase, raising awareness and supporting countries in complying with their short-term obligations under the TFA, and training continues to form a main part of its activities. The analysis of the training material used shows that the presentations have been well put together, with a clear narrative and plenty of examples together with some basic theory. And in some cases, they draw concretely on the personal experience and expertise of the programme's senior officer.

But to what extent has the training reached its three target groups and covered the learning points foreseen? **In terms of quantitative reach, the evidence available to the evaluation suggests that policy makers, regulators and TISIs have been reached to a greater extent than have private firms in general and SMEs in particular.** Participant lists available to the evaluation team indicate that about two-thirds of participants were from the public and one-third from the private sector (including chambers of commerce).[17] On the question of what has been learned, the training materials tend to be broadly introductory with a focus that is exclusively on the middle level: public policy relating to trade-related controls, the logistics of commerce, plus conventional, introductory trade theory. **They offer a good insight into the details of the TFA, what countries must do to comply with its requirements, and – a point stressed to us by TFP – that the private sector has a right to be involved in these changes.**

But these boundaries have implications for the messages that can be conveyed. **Some important aspects of trade facilitation are ignored**, such as issues of distributional impacts (and how they may be affected, for example, by partial implementation of reform) or a well-rounded discussion on the impact on government revenue are wholly absent. **At times, the private sector is only covered to a minor extent**: during the 4-day course run for the World Trade Institute in February 2016, for example, only 2 of the 19 presentations were focussed on the private sector. Moreover, **practical, country-specific examples are limited.** Of the 148 slides in four presentations at a 2017 Nairobi workshop, for example, there are many, good practical examples – but only three specific references to Kenya (in relation to comparative trade costs). The content is virtually the same as in a private sector course given in Seychelles. Also, specific consideration of special issues relating to small or to female-headed businesses are largely absent.

Notwithstanding this, the **TFP's workshops are overall much appreciated by attendees**. Interviewees emphasized regularly that SMEs in particular were often not aware of their potential benefits of implementing the TFA and that the workshops would definitely meet this need in terms of awareness raising. From the feedback forms accessible to the evaluation team, which were directly handed out and filled after various of the programme's training courses, it appears that they were

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[16] Such as the World Export Development Forum (WEDF) or the World Congress of the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA).

[17] The evaluation team has obtained useable data for only eight trainings, but these included a range of types, including private sector training. The precise breakdown of participants was 64% public and 36% private sector.

consistently found useful by the participants. This has also been confirmed by the online survey, where 94% of the 64 respondents said they found their respective workshops to be very or extremely useful (see Figure 5). In addition, interviewees confirmed throughout that, looking back, they would participate in their workshops again.

Figure 5: Results of the online survey on 'usefulness of the workshops'
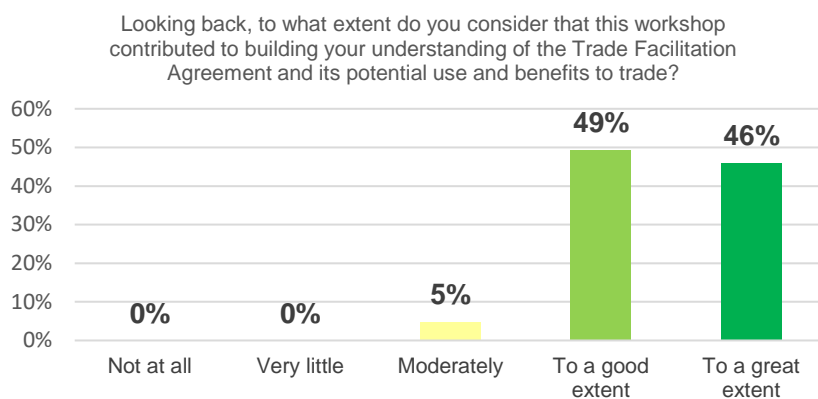

Overall, how would you assess the usefulness of the workshop in retrospect?
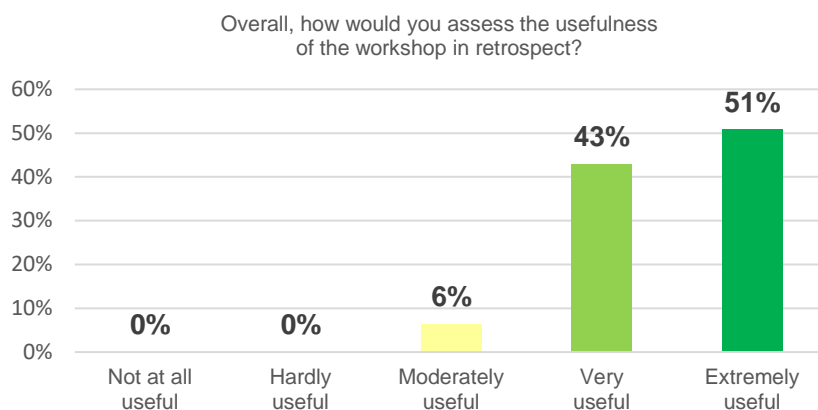
In addition, the **programme has published a number of publications that have further contributed to raising awareness.** Since 2013, seven major publications were released, all of which are explicitly TF-related, were distributed at events, and are freely available on the ITC website.[18] These publications are focussed on areas such as 'WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: A Business Guide for Developing Countries', 'National Trade Facilitation Committees' or 'SMEs and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement'. In terms of download numbers, these publications rank between places 25 and 83 of a total of 363 ITC publications in the period from 2013 to date.

Increased knowledge, skills and exchange

The programme has used a variety of trainings with different modalities to increase knowledge, skills and exchange within and between its target groups. **The training feedback forms available indicate that participants overall improved their knowledge on the topics covered by the courses and their skills.** These findings are largely confirmed by the interviews in relation to all the activities under the TFP. Likewise, the results from the online survey suggest a similar, broad level of satisfaction. Of the 64 respondents, of which each took part in one of eight different trainings, 95% rated the workshop to have contributed to either 'a good' or 'a great' extent to their understanding of the TFA, and the remainder all indicated that it did so to 'a moderate extent' (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Results of the online survey on 'building understanding of the TFA'

Looking back, to what extent do you consider that this workshop contributed to building your understanding of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and its potential use and benefits to trade?

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[18] A list of these publications is available online.

Since the evaluation only had access to a sample of TFP's training material, it is hard to be definitive across-the-board about the extent and the areas in which participants benefitted.

A two-day private sector training in Nairobi in 2017, for example, provides a competent introduction (with exercises) to the subjects covered: 'solving cross-border inefficiencies', 'transparency and fairness', 'faster simpler and cheaper', and 'playing your part'. The training material clearly explains the kind of public decision making needed to comply with the TFA, the need for (and how to engage in) public-private dialogue, how best to do this, and the general border problems faced by SMEs. However, these aspects were all covered in broad terms which also entails a weak point: since the training material does not say anything about what concrete barriers apply in Kenya, SMEs were probably not better informed about the specifics of the trade barriers they face and, in turn, how best to participate in the design of their country's TFA reforms. A similar overall picture emerges from **analysed training feedback sheets**, which are very positive overall, but **occasionally criticise the lack of concrete country-specific examples.**

The picture provided by the more comprehensive information available on the country case studies is also broadly favourable although some nuances emerge. With regard to the target groups TISIs and SMEs, the **training of national master trainers in Sri Lanka has been effective to build national capacity to deliver TFA trainings autonomously (with training material provided by ITC in English as well as local languages) to the private sector in the country.** The seven national master trainers from two different chambers of commerce so far trained more than 400 people, and 80% of the overall participants were from the private sector, including businesses operating in established exports sectors as well as in some of the new focus sectors. Furthermore, the on-the-job export management coaching in Sri Lanka has so far proven to be of particular merit. The coaches, who were specially trained for this activity, reported that their training course was effective in enhancing their knowledge by teaching them new things as well by making them revise basic concepts. Likewise, capacity has been built by training the facilitators for the e-learning course delivered through a local chamber of commerce. In turn, the coached SMEs as well as participants to the e-learning courses claimed to have enhanced their understanding of cross-border procedures thanks to the teaching sessions.

Moreover, the activities related to the **establishment of national TF Portals are expected to enable SMEs to comply with procedural requirements** of cross-border transactions by providing them the necessary information in an easily accessible and user-friendly manner.

In Tajikistan, a **strong public-sector orientation has been notable in training attendances**. Public officials comprised over three-quarters of the group sent on a five-day study tour to Malaysia to help prepare for the establishment of the NTFC. In Sri Lanka, the programme also organised a study trip for NTFC members, in this case to Australia. However, its effectiveness was perceived as limited by some participants due to the fact that it failed to present a practical example of a Single Window since Australia does so far not operate one. Although the NTFC itself selected Australia for the tour, participants afterwards felt that visiting countries such as Singapore, Malaysia or Bangladesh where a Single Window is in place would have better matched their needs.[19]

A successful example for Sri Lanka were the **Time Release Study as well as the Integrated Risk Management workshops, both of which were said to have been useful to improve their participants skills**. Already during the workshop on the Time Release Study, Customs identified an issue where they would be able to save 1.5 hours in release time, and they also started developing a risk management system.

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[19] According to the TFP team, three possible destinations were initially suggested for the study tour: Australia, Chinese Taipei and Malaysia. In the end, the decision by the NTFC was made on the basis that Australia was also in the process of establishing a Single Window.

The area in which TFP has been most effective in Tajikistan is to help create an NTFC as well as to establish and train its secretariat, while working closely with the responsible ministry. By supporting the creation of this public-private forum for discussing trade facilitation, the programme has helped policy makers and regulators to better understand the business implications and dynamics of trade facilitation (better equipping them to design reforms); it has also helped TISIs to understand the procedural challenges faced by firms at the borders. In this respect, this example shows that the **creation and support of NTFCs leads to an increase in knowledge resulting from an increase in exchange.**

Improved consensus and feasible plans to act

The programme supports improved consensus and the creation of feasible plans to act in particular through the establishment and support of private-public dialogues, which take place in various formats but primarily in the form of NTFCs.

In a total of 13 countries[20], the programme has supported NTFCs in defining their governance structure, work plan and membership, while providing capacity building to NTFC Members on the WTO TFA obligations and implementation options. TFP has also supported countries in preparing and notifying their TFA commitments and implementation timelines, partly through its assistance to NTFCs. The programme has assisted countries to review their categorization as well as prioritise and sequence the implementation of their Category B and C commitments, including developing project proposals for these measures.

There is clear evidence in Tajikistan that **TFP activities resulted in feasible and desirable plans for TF reforms being formulated and endorsed by policy makers**. According to the then First Minister of Trade, TFP training and advice played 'a determining role' in enabling the country to identify which measures could be notified to the WTO immediately in Category A and on which further work was needed. In the event, the notification actually made differs from what was recommended by the workshop. The final report allocated some 76% (28) of TFA measures to Category A; by contrast the WTO web site lists Tajikistan as having notified only 53.8% of measures in Category A.[21] But this discrepancy does not detract from the pivotal role of the workshop.
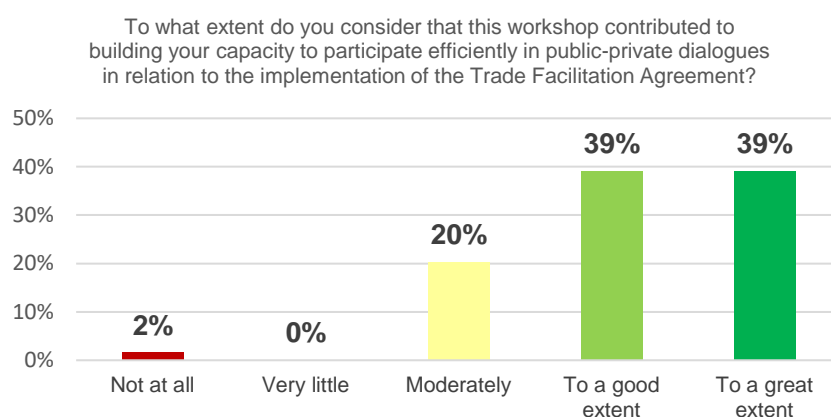
In Sri Lanka, a few **TFP activities appear to have led to feasible plans to act**. For example, the workshop on Time Release Study has led to the development of a national plan for conducting such a study in Sri Lanka before end 2018. Moreover, the recommendations issued during the workshop on sequencing and prioritization have contributed to make a clear plan on milestones for category B and C commitments under the WTO TFA in February 2018, and to the establishment of the Single Window and Transparency sub-Working Groups under the NTFC in early 2018.

The TFP has also been found effective in enhancing consensus among different stakeholders on responses to trade facilitation-related issues. For example, the evaluations of the public-private dialogues (PPDs) on the National Single Window highlight that the first public-private consultation was 'strongly' useful to facilitate consensus on the approaches to develop a Single Window in the country.

In addition to these examples, results of the online survey indicate that the ability to find consensus and create feasible plans among different stakeholders is also supported by the programme's trainings. A large majority of respondents reported that their respective workshops contributed to their capacity to engage in public-private dialogue, with 78% giving the two highest available ratings (see Figure 7).

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[20] Afghanistan, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Guinea Conakry, Honduras, Nicaragua, Niger, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan (Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal in collaboration with UNCTAD)

[21] https://www.tfadatabase.org/members/tajikistan

Figure 7: Results of the online survey on 'efficient participation in public-private dialogue

To what extent do you consider that this workshop contributed to
building your capacity to participate efficiently in public-private dialogues
in relation to the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement?

Leading to action

There is strong evidence on an impact of the programme on the implementation of the TFA by policy makers, but achievements cannot be attributed solely to the TFP. The programme, indeed, has contributed to a better understanding of the TFA but it has done so together with other agencies and with non-governmental training, academic and other bodies all of which have been active in the field. The TFP team is well aware of this.

Despite the uncertainty over causality, the relative figures for TFA notifications and ratification by TFP host states show that **countries assisted by the TFP have ratified more but notified less than have all WTO developing country members**.

- In terms of TFA ratification, whilst 80% of WTO developing country members have ratified, slightly more (83%) of the members listed in Annex Table A.1 have done so.[22]

- On notification, the record is less good: some 84% of WTO developing country members have notified in all three categories while the figure for TFP states is only 61%. But, whilst 33% of WTO developing country members have notified in only Category A, for the TFP sample of states the figure is just 25%. And the share of the cohort that has failed to submit any notifications is lower for TFP states (at 10%) than for all WTO developing country members (17%).[23]

Does this finding indicate that the TFP's TFA-related activities have been unsuccessful or rather that the countries receiving assistance through the programme have greater than average problems to overcome? This is a question that cannot be answered with the data available. Without a much clearer country-by-country narrative on the TFP's TFA-related work it is not possible to conclude further than that TFP has contributed through a variety of activities to global understanding of the TFA and, in some cases, to the start of its implementation.

The **TFP has supported the implementation of individual measures** by contributing or directly enabling implementation for five[24] out of the 36 TFA measures, spread over seven countries. Moreover, the programme has also contributed to TF reform implementation through its support of NTFCs since their establishment is in itself a provision of the TFA (Article 23).

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[22] https://www.tfadatabase.org/ratifications; TFP countries that are not WTO members have been excluded from the analysis.
[23] https://www.tfadatabase.org/notifications/global-analysis
[24] Publication; Information available through internet (implemented via TF Portals); Risk Management, Average release times; Single Window.

As far as the implementation of measures in Tajikistan is concerned, the TF Portal has received most widespread praise (even though it was not yet operational at the time of the evaluation), which will be the first in the region and covering 33 products. Interviewees ranked the implementation modalities for the Portal as *the benchmark* against which other innovations funded by other agencies (notably the uncompleted and long-delayed National Single Window) were unfavourably compared. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the TFP's support for the TF Portal, the Integrated Risk Management and the Time Release Study were perceived by interviewees as very helpful as they would hold great potential to reduce the cost and time of trade.

The evaluation has collected relatively strong information on the TFP's impact on TISIs advocating for trade facilitation reforms. **The Programme has facilitated the creation of NTFCs, supported them, and/or strengthened their capacity in different countries. Nevertheless, NTFCs appear to have still limited authority and accountability.**

In Tajikistan, with the TFP's support, the NTFC was successfully established and according to a private sector organisation interviewed its creation 'was entirely due' to ITC. The NTFC's structure was recommended by an international consultant hired by the TFP and built on stakeholder consultations and a validation workshop. Initially anticipated for September 2015, the actual establishment of the NTFC only occurred in 2017, but this was partly because the establishing decree took over 18 months to be adopted. Nevertheless, widespread dissatisfaction was expressed on the NTFC's score since it was said to be there not to make decisions, but just to refer problems to 'Government' for a decision. The evaluation identified only one example of a problem which had actually been 'resolved', and this involved a large firm that aired a company-specific problem in the forum.

The TFP has also contributed to the establishment of a Regional Trade Facilitation Committee in the UEMOA. In Sri Lanka, according to several of the interviewees, the decision making in the NTFC is very limited. Meetings are not very frequent, and they tend to be more focused on administrative issues rather than on trade facilitation issues. So, the NTFC is not a powerful body to advocate for trade facilitation reforms.

With regard to improving TISI's service offering, the TFP's training of trainers has been praised as particularly effective. Aspiring trainers are taught both in content and pedagogical skills, followed by exercises to deliver the training themselves in front of their peers and cameras. This master trainer training has been carried out three times so far, once in Afghanistan, once in Sri Lanka and once in the West African Region (conducted in Togo). Moreover, TISI's service offering has been enlarged through the export management coaching, which was piloted in Sri Lanka, is currently being implemented in Afghanistan and planned for a future project in Central Asia.

Even if the data is limited, there are indications of effects on SME's business decisions. It is difficult to assess the extent to which SMEs made measurable changes in their business practices to improve their compliance with cross-border requirements as a result of the programme's support. Nevertheless, there are indications of 'actions' that go beyond the already discussed increase of awareness, knowledge and exchange. Two SME participants in the coaching in Sri Lanka stated that this support definitely enabled them to adjust their business practices based on the insights provided. However, the overall number of SMEs successfully coached is so far very limited, also because it is very difficult to find a good match between qualified trainers and suitable SMEs to be coached.

More generally, the responses to the online survey suggest that the TFP's trainings had some impact on participant's concrete working practices. Just over two-thirds of respondents stated that their training 'contributed to a change in their working practices' to a 'good' or a 'great' extent, and only 11% reported that it had done so only to a limited extent or not at all (see Figure 8). Disaggregated by target groups, this positive assessment was strongest among respondents from governmental institutions, followed by TISIs and companies.

Figure 8: Results of the online survey on 'changes in working practices'

Did the workshop lead or contribute to any
changes in your working practices?
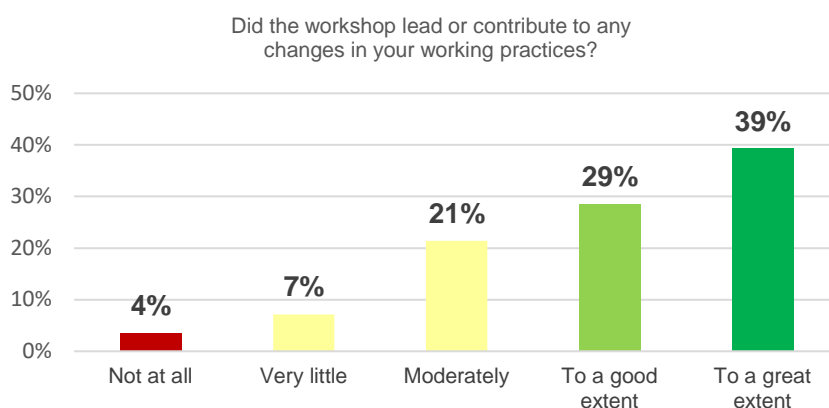
Main influencing factors

The wide interest among developing countries to learn more about the TFA has been a major supportive factor, especially in the programme's early years. As noted earlier, TFP reacted with energy and speed to this interest and was able to respond effectively to the demand for more knowledge. Arguably, this context is changing. The initial supportive factor is now coming to an end as many countries complete the ratification and categorization process.

The main supportive factors now are that much practical work remains to be done in many countries to fully implement the TFA, and that TFP's expertise in this area has become known both to potential beneficiary governments and to funders. TFP has already responded to this changed need. But the new type of demand is very different from the old, requiring more sustained, specialist support.

The new environment has also introduced the possibility of new hampering factors, most notably that **implementation depends largely on factors outside TFP's influence**, which is well recognised by the TFP team. A general comment in Sri Lanka was that the **complex political environment and institutional constraints** affect severely the feasibility and speed of change. This was demonstrated by the fact that during the political unrest in Sri Lanka at the end of 2018, all activities came to a standstill. In Tajikistan, the First Deputy Minister, who was the motive force behind the TFA process and closely involved with TFP's work, was replaced in mid-2017. As a result, the entire ratification process of the TFA was set back and ultimately considerably delayed.

Moreover, trade facilitation reforms were generally deemed as impossible without a **clear buy-in from stakeholders at a very high level** especially since trade policy reform often has strong distributional implications. Decisions tend to be politically sensitive, insofar as they depend on and need to **balance the vested interests of different institutions and sections of society**. Interviewees in Sri Lanka even suggested, for example, that big companies do not always support increased transparency and other measures supporting competitiveness of SMEs because they risk losing their competitive advantage. In Tajikistan there was wide scepticism that it would be possible to reduce administrative duplication because each agency would defend its turf.

These trade-offs and related conflicts are reflected in particular in the NTFC's lack of effectiveness in decision-making. The Sri Lanka NTFC is seen as a weak advocate for trade facilitation reforms by interviewees. The favoured explanation among interviewees was that the public sector is not willing to implement necessary trade facilitation reforms. It was argued that this is because government officers risk losing part of their responsibilities, or even their job. In Tajikistan the prognosis was similar – and is supported by the broader, independent evidence that the Government is strong on 'good policies' but less so on 'good implementation'.

Effective representation of SMEs' interests in NTFC poses a challenge. Interestingly, in both Sri Lanka and Tajikistan some interviewees argued in favour of a 'private sector champion' to participate in the NTFC: someone with private sector experience who can explain and advance the needs of business to public officials. Representatives of associations did not seem to satisfy this role sufficiently or they did not have a strong and unbiased mandate to do so.

Attitudinal issues can be a constraint to reach SMEs. Firms are said to have a very low degree of confidence in people trying to help them. Instead of welcoming people trying to understand which are their problems and needs, such as the export management coaches in Sri Lanka, SMEs were described as afraid to reveal any kind of business information because they think this can be used afterwards against them (e.g. for stealing their buyers, for taxation purposes, etc.). Therefore, some of the interviewees highlighted the importance for the TFP to further enhance its credibility in particular by becoming more visible not only among government officials but also in the private sector and among SMEs. The TFP focus on attempting to facilitate public-private dialogue over trade policy and administration is especially valuable precisely because of these attitudinal constraints. In this regard, encouraging the recognition that the private sector is a legitimate party in shaping trade policy could be one of the lasting legacies of the TFP.

As already mentioned repeatedly, **the limited consideration of country-specific barriers, characteristics and practical examples has affected the effectiveness of the programme**. This was not just an issue with the 'broad but shallow' approach of the programme's initial stages. Although the training in Tajikistan and Sri Lanka was generally highly appreciated, there were some criticisms about the lack of country-specific detail that would have better equipped participants to alter practice. In Sri Lanka the limited focus on practical and local examples was identified as a key weakness of several TFP initiatives, including the training to the private sector delivered by TFP staff, the training-of-trainer event, and the trainings delivered by the national master trainers. The export management coaches also highlighted that the effectiveness of their training would have been increased by more practical examples on the local context and on how to coach.

The case studies also underline the **importance of language in conveying relevant information**. Sri Lanka provides both good and bad examples. The value of both the e-learning curriculum and SMEs' coaching services was said by participants to have been reduced because trainees were not fluent in English. By contrast, the value of the trainings delivered by the master trainers was seen to have been enhanced through the use of two local languages, as were a few of the trainings provided by the EMCs to SMEs. Although not specifically remarked upon in Tajikistan, the fact that the 2018 training materials were available also in Russian, the dominant language of the country's international commerce, must have been an advantage.

Finally, some of the interviewees highlighted the **importance of promoting interaction among the TFP's activity participants to enhance learning through experience sharing**. In Sri Lanka, for example, it was noted that in some of the TFP's activities there is no or very limited interaction between participants. This was the case of the on-the-job coaching activities where SMEs participating to the programme do not know each other, and to a lesser extent of the e-learning courses where there is no interaction among enrolled participants with the exception of that in the occasion of the forum task. The general feeling among interviewees was that the effectiveness of both programmes may be enhanced by allowing for a greater interaction and knowledge sharing among participants.

3.3. Efficiency and synergies

> *To what extent has the Programme been efficiently managed and delivered?*

This chapter provides insights into how well the programme has been managed, how efficiently it has performed and how it has worked with other teams within ITCs and with other development partners.

Programme team and means of delivery

As at March 2019, the team consists of seven people: the senior officer funded on regular budget, three project managers funded by extrabudgetary resources, and three young professionals, who are hired on ITC-based consultancy contracts (and therefore not considered as staff).

The programme's delivery is primarily done by the team itself. Where needed, external consultants are hired to support particular activities, but nothing is fully contracted out. When consultants are involved, the TFP staff directly manages them and remains closely involved. For example, in Tajikistan external consultants were used to draft the NTFC plan and to populate the Trade Portal, while in Sri Lanka external consultants supported the organisation of the PPDs on the National Single Window and to provide capacity-building for the private sector. However, the TFP's staff has remained heavily involved in all these initiatives and actively contributed to them. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the discussions during the PPDs were guided not only by the consultants hired from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) but also by a TFP team member.

The direct involvement of the team is much appreciated by beneficiaries and has contributed to building longer-term and trustful relationships, as it was suggested by interviewees in Sri Lanka and Tajikistan. In both countries, indeed, the TFP's staff was contrasted favourably with people working for other agencies who simply hire consultants to do the job, who then are nowhere to be found once they have finished their work.

The skills and expertise of the team are valued. The case studies showed that the presentation skills and in-depth knowledge of the TFP staff as well as of the external consultants were much appreciated by beneficiaries. For example, in Sri Lanka, according to the training feedback forms, presenters' skills were on average assessed as 'very strong' in the training-of-trainer events delivered by the TFP staff. Similarly, the skills of master trainers and presenters in the consultations on the National Single Window were assessed as 'strong'. These appraisals were confirmed in the interviews.

The team's flexibility and responsiveness are also highly appreciated in beneficiary countries. In Tajikistan, for example, a consistent message from government interviewees was that TFP staff were available to help whenever the need arose. Ministry officials spoke of almost weekly consultations (often by skype) with both the Geneva-based team and the local office – and with the NTFC secretariat the contact was said to be 'virtually daily'. The TFP's staff was contrasted favourably with people of some other agencies who were slow to respond to e-mails. A similar picture of frequent contact also emerged in Sri Lanka, where the TFP's flexibility in adapting to the local context was stressed, especially with regard to the targets and timelines of the on-the-job coaching services. The team's flexibility was also appreciated in Burkina Faso where originally two workshops were planned in Ouagadougou. When it was proposed at very short notice to change the location of the workshops to Bobo-Dioulasso, TFP staff agreed to the proposed change and was able to quickly make the necessary arrangements.

Despite its considerable merits, the TFP's business model of delivering largely through the in-house team has consequences. First, there is a very heavy workload on the small Geneva-based team: delivery per person is very high and the administrative support appears to be insufficient. The interviews conducted in Geneva suggested that the team is critically undersized – notably in view of the increasing programme volume – and shows signs of burnout. The estimated programme volume

for 2019 translates into an average delivery per professional staff that would need to be more than twice the organizational average (see Table 9). Workload is perceived as critical by the team, which also includes administrative support. At the end of 2018, the team faced such bottlenecks with administrative tasks that team members had to withdraw from technical work to cope with the administrative backlog. Some of the interviewed beneficiaries also highlighted that the TFP has a very small team which seems to be increasingly stretched.

Table 9. Anticipated delivery per professional staff in 2019 (in $)

	Delivery (total)	**P-Staff** (as at 31 March 2019)	**Average delivery** (per staff)
ITC	75 000 000	177	423 728
TFP	3 800 000	4	950 000

Source: ITC Operational Plan 2019 and interviews

Note: The figure indicated for ITC P-staff comprises only technical sections (Division of Country Programmes, Division of Market Development, Division of Enterprises and Institutions)

Second, the increasing workload is also creating increasing challenges for the team in terms of available knowledge and experience. To remedy this, more personnel with the right mix of skills is required. It has been stressed repeatedly that the team's work is demanding and requires a range of different competencies: high technical expertise, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and good drafting skills, at best in multiple languages. Moreover, their work entails the participation or negotiation at high-level events, while building long-term trustful relationships with beneficiaries. Qualified and longer-term staff are therefore essential. The current team already has a great deal of expertise to offer, it was able to learn from the experience of its senior officer and staff have even pursued further training alongside their strenuous work. However, while the qualification and strong dedication of the current team has overall been praised, there were also indications that the team is reaching its limits, for example when younger team members have to take over responsibilities for which they may not be entirely suited. In addition, the largely precarious contractual conditions may pose a high risk to the programme's sustainability in terms of retaining its staff.

Third, the current business model may reach limitations in providing in-depth support on specific trade facilitation needs. The existing and relatively small team has enabled the programme's achievements to date, in particular by being able to mobilise quickly and maintain regular, flexible contact with beneficiaries. However, as the TFP moves further into in-depth technical support for the implementation of specific TFA measure, **profound expertise on a growing range of technical subjects is needed, which currently is not sufficiently covered by the existing team and would therefore need to be provided externally.**

Planning and management

Data collected indicate that the TFP's project management should be strengthened. Coping with the workload seems to have been more enabled by a high dedication from the team than by underlying structures and processes. While this seems to have worked reasonably well in the past, there are increasing concerns and indications that a clearer definition of roles and a more thorough planning would be beneficial, if not indispensable in light of a steadily increasing workload.

It appears that the team works mainly in an organic manner. Although the three project managers in the team are each responsible for specific portfolios, the overall division of tasks in the team still seems to be fairly loose, with many tasks being handled on an ad-hoc basis by whoever is available. This has worked fairly well so far, especially as long as the team was still able to keep an overview. However, as the programme is growing, this approach seems to be reaching its limits. With the whole team being

strongly tied up in direct delivery, the back office and project management tasks that are increasingly vital with greater programme complexity remain neglected. While team meetings seem to be rare, section meetings have recently been introduced. These are hoped to improve internal communication and coordination, but probably more on a section-wide level.

Good planning seems all the more important in light of the team's high travel workload and the associated absence times. At times, project managers travel several weeks in a row involving different projects and countries. Therefore, it is important to keep track of people's schedule and to make sure that nobody gets overburdened, be it with front or back office tasks.

The overall documentation of the programme is fragmented and hardly allows a comprehensive overall view of the programme's activities and results. There are only few overarching strategy documents and hardly any final or interim reports of programme activities; with the latter being usually only produced for earmarked-funded large-scale country programmes. Although the TFP team has invested a lot of effort to provide data to the evaluators, the documentation was still far from being clear or comprehensive. Documents seem mostly arranged according to individual activities and consist mainly of project management details and respective activity contents, which are often difficult to place in a wider context. Some of the self-developed documents are very structured and precise (e.g. the team's internal budget planning sheet for individual activities), but what is missing is a comprehensible and coherent higher-level overview. Moreover, there appears to be no quality assurance and no process to ensure that lessons are learnt or best practices exchanged.

Likewise, **the programme's monitoring system appears to be patchy, although improvements have been made recently.** The monitoring mainly consists of a range of performance indicators defined as part of the TFP's theory of change and aligned to ITC's corporate results framework. They mainly consist of participant numbers for different activities, self-reported feedback following training, numbers of advisory services provided, and information on resulting changes of business operations, policies or regulations.

The degree of available data varies greatly, mainly depending on the nature of the programme's activities. In addition, the available data over time is fragmentary. Thanks to more recent efforts, a fairly complete data set is available at least for the year 2018, but the definitions of indicators are often unclear. Some of them are intended to cover essential parts of the programme but which are difficult to define (such as the number of "advisory services").

Generally, there is so far little follow-up with participants. For some activities (like the categorization workshops or private sector trainings) there is usually no follow-up at all, which also means that results cannot be measured with hindsight. By contrast, experience such as the UEMOA project, where the programme has constantly worked with pretty much the same group of people, shows the benefits of a longer-term engagement, as beneficiaries reportedly seem to have become very knowledgeable on the subject over time.

Finally, another difficulty arises from the relationship between monitoring at programme and corporate level. On the one hand, the TFP's indicators are supposed to be aligned to the corporate results framework, with related data being reported through ITC's software platform for reporting, the so-called 'Project Portal'. On the other hand, the programme cannot use the same portal for its own monitoring purposes, since it is project-based and its functionality does not allow management by programmes (see box below for further information).

ITC's programmatic approach and the corporate project portal

ITC's delivers technical assistance and capacity-building through project-based delivery. Moreover, the organization introduced a programmatic approach in 2015, which integrated individual projects within a number of overarching programmes. Around the same time, the '*New Project Portal*' was introduced, the organization's corporate software platform for planning and reporting. However, as the name suggests, **this software was primarily developed as a *project* portal. The entire interface and functionality of the platform is therefore focused on the management of individual projects**.

Projects can either be fully and exclusively part of a single programme (which is then usually the core piece of a programme), **or they can consist of several components, which may contribute to different programmes.** For reporting, project managers communicate all data related to their project via the Project Portal. If their project has components of indirect delivery, they either have to request the figures from the person responsible for this component or this person directly enters these figures him- or herself.

On the Project Portal, projects can be listed by programmes, but this filtering is at present highly inaccurate, probably because project managers do not set their programme markers reliably. And even if they did, the Project Portal would only show which projects have been marked under a particular programme, without any further differentiation or break down of which project components belong to which programme.

A further difficulty in this regard arises with regard to the strategic orientation of the projects: In theory, one of the main benefits of a programmatic approach is the ability to improve coherence and alignment with corporate strategic objectives. For this purpose, projects need to be aligned to programmes and programmes need to be aligned to corporate strategic objectives. Some of ITC's projects are fully aligned with a particular programme and its respective theory of change. However, other projects' intervention logic is aligned with donors' terminology and requirements, which means that the alignment with corporate programmes is much more difficult to establish.

In summary, **although ITC's strategic and operational plans are built around programmes, the project management, at least the planning and reporting, is still carried out on the basis of projects**. The way it is currently configured and used, the Project Portal cannot bridge the gap between a management by programme approach and the underlying project-based delivery model. At best, the portal would allow to show ITC's portfolio sorted by programmes, with their overall volume, activities, expenditure and associated results, including a disaggregated view by contributing projects. Regrettably, it allows none of these. These shortcomings are already known to the responsible section. However, so far it has not been possible to remedy them.

Costs and timeliness of activities

The availability and level of detail of financial information varies considerably between projects, depending on the reporting requirements of the funder. In order to reliably assess whether the money has been spent efficiently, the evaluation would have required more detailed narratives of what exactly has been done, together with detailed budgets for specific activities.

First of all, it can be noted that at the end of 2018, the programme had an overall budget of almost seven million dollars (see Table 10), consisting mainly of its core funding through Window I and seven other projects (all funded through Window II) .[25] Three of the latter projects were still in progress at that time and therefore their funds had not yet been fully spent.

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[25] ITC relies on two sources of funding: the regular budget (RB) and extrabudgetary funding (XB). The regular budget is approved on a biennial basis by the United Nations General Assembly and the World Trade Organization (WTO) General Council. Extrabudgetary funds are voluntary contributions, which include two categories of funds known as windows. Window I (W1) consists of unearmarked and soft-earmarked contributions from funders, while Window II (W2) is composed of earmarked bilateral contributions for specific projects and programmes.

Table 10. Programme budget including past and ongoing projects (at end 2018)

Project	Budget (in $)	Start Date	End date	Key activities
Trade Facilitation (Window 1 funding)	3 270 000	May 2014	Dec 2018	Activities under W1 have been implemented in over 60 countries over the past five years and cover a very diverse range of interventions: • Support to TFA categorization • Private sector capacity building • Public sector capacity building • Participation to 3rd party events • Support to TFA implementation, TF Portal in particular • Publications
Afghanistan: Trade-related assistance	820 000	Aug 2016	Jul 2019	• NTFC strengthening • Build capacity of SMEs to comply with export procedures
Sri Lanka: Trade-related assistance	1 100 000	Nov 2016	Oct 2020	• NTFC strengthening • PPDs on implementation modalities of a Single Window • Implementation of a TF Portal • Build capacity of SMEs to comply with export procedures
Tajikistan: WTO accession negotiations - Policy advice and capacity building	200 000	Jan 2015	Dec 2017	• Support to TFA categorization • Establishment of NTFC • Capacity building of public and private sector on TFA
Tajikistan: Improving the […] competitiveness of the textile and clothing sector	500 000	Jan 2018	Dec 2020	• Establishment and operationalization of a NTFC secretariat • Establishment and operationalization of a TF Portal
Asian LDCs: Enhancing export capacity for intra-regional trade	200 000	Jan 2017	Dec 2017	• Development of export management guides • Private sector capacity building on export procedures
UEMOA: Projet d'Appui à la Compétitivité du Commerce et à l'Intégration Régional	575 000	Jan 2017	Aug 2018	• Establishment of a regional TF committee • Digitalization of UEMOA Certificate of Origin • Development of regional trade policy reports
Arab countries: Overcoming Trade Obstacles related to NTMs	250 000	Jan 2018	Dec 2018	• Regional capacity building events for public officials • Support regional harmonization of customs and reforms
Total:	**6 915 000**			

Source: data provided by the TFP team

It should further be noted that in the past, the major part of the staff cost did not have to be covered from this budget as the programme's senior officer is funded by ITC's regular budget and two of the project managers were funded by donor countries through the UN Junior Professional Officer Programme. However, the funding for one of these subsidized positions has meanwhile ended and the other will expire in October 2019. As things stand at present, all personnel costs with the exception of the senior officer will have to be covered thereafter through project funding.

Now, as far as the evaluation of expenditure is concerned, the first challenge is that the **availability (and level of detail) of financial information greatly varies among the projects**, which is due to the fact that they come with different reporting requirements depending on the funder. For Sri Lanka for example, because of the EU's reporting requirements, there is well-documented data on expenses per output. In such cases, the team uses an elaborate spreadsheet that they have developed themselves. There is however no data that would allow for a comprehensive analysis across all projects. Reporting on W1 budget, by contrast, is much less detailed.

Secondly, **the programme's budget has been used very disparately:** in different country and project contexts and for a variety of activities with highly varying dimensions. To illustrate the range: according to the programme team, an average of $12 500 was spent for one-off workshops (for categorization, sequencing or private sector workshops). On the other hand, the expenses for a national Trade Portal are calculated with $500 000 over a period of two to three years, which includes licensing fees, salaries

for consultants, IT equipment, regular travel as well as organizing an event for the launch of the portal. However, these figures are difficult to verify since there was no information available, which would have enabled a programme-wide break down by activity.

With regard to the timeliness of activities, it emerged from the documentary review and interviews that a number of actions were delayed, albeit for different reasons. For example, in Sri Lanka activities related to the design of a roadmap for the implementation of a Single Window and to the establishment of a National Trade Portal were postponed up to 2018 to avoid overlaps with the World Bank's activities. Moreover, due to a delay in the production of the SME coaching manual, the EMCs' training was postponed from May to July 2018.

Synergies within ITC

In terms of cooperation within ITC, the picture is mixed and it is noticeable that there is an absence of cooperation with certain units, although it would seem beneficial.

There is a smooth cooperation within the section (Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business, TFPB) and an overall effective coordination with the Department of Country Programmes (DCP), whose country projects the team contributes to. However, it also emerged that the coordination in-house is marked by a strong element of competition and at times apparently beneficial cooperation does not take place. Technical divisions, including TFP, compete for engagements in country projects administered by DCP and the subsequent coordination in delivery faces occasional challenges. Furthermore, the TFP is cooperating with the online learning platform 'SME Trade Academy' housed in the same section, but there is no cooperation (or at least consultations) with other teams in-house working in this area.

Using more ITC-originating material could have increased the programme's contribution to ITC's comparative advantage and the absence of such material is a noticeable feature. For example, Market Access Map (MAcMap), housed in the same division, is an internationally recognised source of market access data, and although its country coverage for non-tariff import regulations is limited there is some overlap with the countries covered by TFP. Afghanistan is one such overlap country. But a 124-slide presentation in May 2018 for a sequencing workshop contained no specific illustrations of the Afghan situation apart from its TFA status and notifications. Product specific examples drawn from MAcMAp could have been used – and arguably *would have been used* by an external training provider – to illustrate features of the TFA sequencing mechanics that form the bulk of the presentation. Given that a lack of country-specific examples is a recurrent criticism of the TFP training, the failure to take advantage of the in-house data that is available is regrettable.

Coordination and cooperation with other development partners

The TFP is one of several agencies working in the area of the trade facilitation. **The evidence available suggests that the Programme has developed a very good collaboration with a number of development partners such as UNCTAD, UNECE, WTO, WCO, ICC, UNESCAP or the WEF**. The TFP, for example, works closely with UNCTAD and UNECE, with whom ITC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU states that UNCTAD and UNECE are the standard-setting and recommendation bodies, covering intergovernmental contacts, while ITC focuses on the private sector. But in practice this distinction is not so clear cut. The TFP also collaborates with WCO in the trade facilitation field on the basis of a MoU. The collaboration with ICC and WEF has led to a number of joint publications.[26]

As mentioned above, **in a few cases cooperation was formalized through agreements and a number of initiatives have been put in place to ensure coordination among different**

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[26] For example, '*SMEs and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. A Training Manual'* in collaboration with ICC as well UNCTAD and UNECE; '*Enabling Trade: Catalysing Trade Facilitation Agreement Implementation in Brazil*' and '*Enabling trade: increasing the potential of trade reforms*' in collaboration with WEF.

organisations working on trade facilitation. These include meetings; a calendar where activities are reported; a list of events on trade facilitation updated every six months; and retreats. **Moreover,** the interviews conducted indicate that the **collaboration between the TFP and other organizations depends heavily on personal relationships and is supported by informal exchanges.**

The collected evidence also shows that new opportunities of collaboration with other development partners may be exploited in the future. In Sri Lanka, for example, given their common focus on SMEs and their previous strong relationships in projects developed in other countries, there is a potential for collaboration between the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the TFP in two areas: the Trade Portal, and the SME coaching initiative.

The collaboration with other development partners, and in particular with UNCTAD and UNECE, was described by interviewees to be **mutually beneficial to increase the scope and reach of trade-facilitation initiatives as well as to enhance institutional visibility.** It was said that by collaborating, UNCTAD and the TFP were able to contribute more than they would have been able to do by acting independently. For example, by exchanging the training material, they were able to quickly provide capacity building to several economies including Sri Lanka and the West African countries. UNCTAD and the TFP also collaborated in creating Trade Portals in different countries using the same software platform. The TFP has also made a number of joint publications with both UNCTAD and UNECE. The presence of the three logos in these joint publications contributed to enhance the visibility of the three organisations.

Nevertheless, the collaboration with other development partners can inevitably create some confusion among beneficiaries in terms of who does what. This was confirmed by interviews with some of the beneficiaries of the TFP who stated that their close cooperation would make it difficult to understand which activities are supported by the TFP and which are supported by UNCTAD.

In the area of trade facilitation, the TFP is competing with several other organizations. **Especially in cases of weak donor coordination at country level, there is a risk of overlapping activities between competing organisations. Nevertheless, the evidence available suggests that although formal donor coordination has been limited, duplication has been avoided so far and activities have been mutually supportive.**

For example, as the TFP team readily confirms, in the early years after its conclusion, several agencies were active in raising awareness about the TFA. But the view expressed by interviewees from other agencies is that the relationship with the TFP was nonetheless positive and there would have been no issues of duplication. The Programme is perceived by others as providing a unique 'private sector orientation' to awareness raising about the TFA.

The evidence from the two case studies confirms that the TFP was able to work well with other competing agencies by avoiding duplication of effort. In Sri Lanka, donor coordination for smaller projects is weak, but the TFP has managed to avoid a major potential overlap and duplication with the World Bank in three areas.[27] Indeed, after a series of consultations with the World Bank, the TFP decided to adjust its activities under one project and postpone the other two until the World Bank had completed its complementary projects in 2018. In such a way, risks of overlapping were avoided and synergies and complementarities were leveraged.

In Tajikistan, where there is less donor activity in the area of TFA implementation, TFP has worked well with other donors to the extent that ITC was offered the vice-chairmanship of the Donor Coordination Committee alongside with UNDP. Two agencies provided funding to allow work on the TF Portal to continue when there was a funding gap between phases of the SECO project. Others have offered practical support to initiatives taken by the TFP, such as recruiting staff for the NTFC Secretariat.

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[27] NTFC strengthening, Single Window, and on the TF Portal.

3.4. Impact (long-term change)

> *To what extent did the Programme contribute to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs, or can it be expected to do so in the future?*

According to the TFP's mission statement, the highest-level objective of the Programme is to increase the competitiveness of the private sector, especially SMEs, by building export capacity, and reducing the costs and time of cross-border transactions.

Impact on trade volumes, costs and time

It is too early to conclude that the TFP has had any measurable impact on trade volumes, costs and time. With a small, highly distributed programme of short-duration like the TFP, high level impacts are hard to discern and it is particularly unrealistic to expect to find any evidence yet on the impact of the Programme on trade. Indeed, even if exports had increased, they would not yet be recorded in published *current* trade data. In the case of Tajikistan, a time series from the World Bank database on the Cost of Doing Business shows no reduction since 2015 in four indicators relating to the *cost* of documentary and border compliance for importing and exporting, and a reduction in the *time* required for some indicators between 2015 and 2016. According to evidence obtained during the field visit the fall is not directly related to the measures covered by TFP's programme.[28] But this is not a criticism of the TFP; it is instead a reflection of the physical, policy and administrative situation in Tajikistan and the slow pace at which it changes.

Nevertheless, some inference on future possible impacts can be made on the basis of the literature on trade facilitation. First, TFP provides support in an area (change to trade policy and regulations) which studies suggest tends to have a positive and significant impact on exports, trade costs, and time of trading. There is strong evidence from the literature that trade facilitation reforms are a cost-effective way of enhancing trade volumes (OECD 2018b). The evidence on the relative importance of change to trade policy and regulations compared to other forms of trade facilitation is mixed (see, e.g., Ivanic et al. 2006; Busse et al. 201; Helble et al. 2009; Cali and te Velde 2011; Vijil and Wagner 2012). But even some analyses that attribute the greatest impact to infrastructure improvement, place as second and third in importance the enhancement of customs efficiency and improvements to the regulatory and business environment (Moïsé et al. 2011; Felipe and Kumar 2012; ADB 2009; Moïsé and Sorescu 2013; Wilson et al. 2003; Portugal-Perez and Wilson 2012).

Second, the promotion of digital trade procedures (which includes national Single Windows and TF Portals) is likely to have a strong impact in reducing trade costs. The impact would be even higher if these initiatives are supported at the regional level. If countries move into the full digitisation of trade procedures, a paper by Duval et al. (2018) shows that this may nearly double the trade costs reductions expected from the WTO TFA compliance alone. At the individual country level, it is expected that full digital trade facilitation would generate trade costs reductions of around 20% in Sri Lanka, and of more than 20% in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Greater gains would arise from success in introducing digital procedures at a regional level: while reduction in trade costs comes essentially from a country's own implementation, significant additional trade costs reductions can be expected if trade partners act in the same way.

Third, TFP's SME training initiatives have the potential to have a positive impact on exports, and their impact is expected to be higher when they are a continuous process rather than a one-time event. There is evidence from the literature that training employees has a positive and significant impact on the export status of a firm (Blyde 2016). Indeed, training at least doubles the average rate of entry into export markets. Moreover, training in more than one year is found to be more effective than training only one year.

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[28] The argument made was that it was a result of improved political relations with Uzbekistan.

Impact on SMEs' competitiveness

Among the three key determinants of SMEs' competitiveness as identified by ITC (2015), **there is evidence that the TFP has had an impact on SME capacity to compete within the immediate business environment and at the macro level, and on SME capacity to connect within the immediate business environment.** In relation to the former, the programme in Sri Lanka had an impact especially on the time component of firms' operations. For example, in a few cases interviewees claimed that, as a result of the programme's interventions, operations have been streamlined. It was also stressed that TFP's activities have brought a network of contacts useful to improve the efficiency of the daily work. This was the case of the many workshops organised by the TFP, which were successful in making private parties meeting with government officers; of the SMEs coaching missions which allowed firms to create strong relations with all the EMCs, who proved to be helpful in providing advice on practical issues even after the training; and of the several TFP trainings including the e-learning curriculum which have been found useful to identify the right people or institutions to be contacted when dealing with trade facilitation-related issues. Other initiatives in Sri Lanka supported by the TFP are also expected by interviewees to reduce the time (and cost) of trade. This is the case of the National Single Window, once it is operational.

TFP has also made a contribution to SME capacity to connect. It has done so by helping firms/TISIs to understand better the need for linkages with other actors in the economy. For example, in Sri Lanka there were firms that claimed to have improved their marketing strategy as a consequence of the TFP's activities. But it has also enhanced SME capacity to connect more directly through work on TF Portals. The TF Portal initiative in Sri Lanka supported by the TFP is perceived by interviewees to have a great potential to reduce the cost and time of trade. Similarly, in Tajikistan the TF Portal, once it is launched, is expected to help achieving a reduction in the costs and time of cross-border transactions.

Impact on gender equality

Although enhancing gender equality is not a key focus area for the Programme, the gender dimension is taken into account to some extent in the TFP. In particular, **the involvement of women in training activities is considered important by the TFP**, which keeps record of the number of female participants in the organised events. Data on activities undertaken in 2018 show that 21% of the total number of participants to group trainings and coaching sessions were women (see Figure 9). It is worth noting that the share of female participants was slightly higher in the workshops directed to SMEs (26%) compared to those directed to policy makers (20%). Workshops directed to TISIs involved the smallest share of female participants (13%).

Figure 9. Gender of training and coaching sessions participants by beneficiary group (2018)
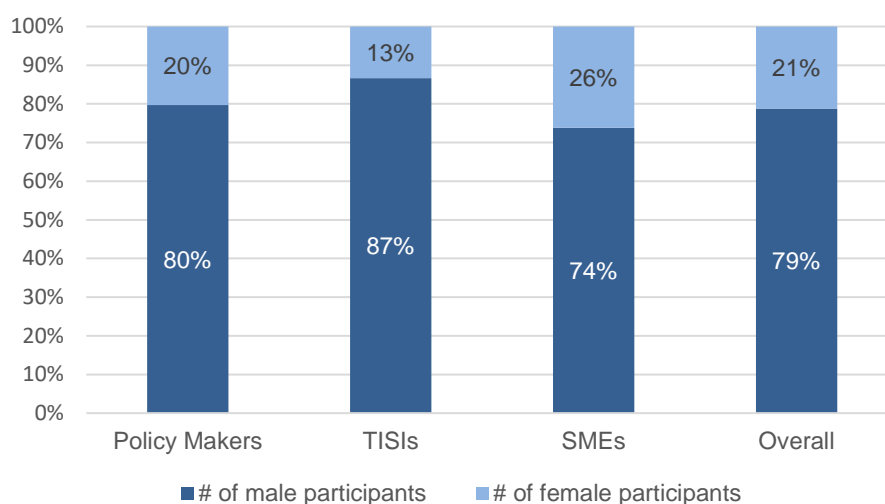
The country case studies seem to confirm that the TFP may contribute to some extent to enhance gender equality. In Sri Lanka, for example, women were involved in several of the workshops and activities organised by the Programme. In 60% of the analysed activities and for which information on participants is available, women represented a share of more than 40% of the attendees. Moreover, in 33% of the trainings delivered by national master trainers, the number of female participants even exceeded the number of men. Interestingly, the TFP has involved to a large extent women (i.e. share of female participants higher than that of men) in activities undertaken in the Northern and Eastern provinces, which are post-conflict areas where gender inclusion is particularly critical.

By improving the trade facilitation environment the TFP may contribute to enhance gender equality. The economic literature suggests that improving trade facilitation may help countries, including low-income countries and LDCs, engage more fully in global value chains (GVCs), and firms with international linkages tend to employ higher proportions of female workers (Saslavsky and Shepherd 2014; Shepherd and Stone 2013). **Besides this, the TFP tends to contribute to enhance gender equality also by supporting the automation of cross-border transactions through initiatives such as Single Windows.** A recent ITC's study shows that female exporters face more procedural obstacles than male exporters due to discriminatory behaviours on the borders by customs officials or clients (ITC 2016b). Therefore, automation of cross-border transactions may reduce this potential gender bias by reducing the number of face-to-face interactions and therefore encourage women to participate to trade activities.

Impact on the environment

Environmental sustainability is not a key focus of the Programme, although its importance is well recognized among the TFP's staff. Trade facilitation may have two opposite effects on environmental sustainability. As suggested by Shepherd (2016), on the one hand, improved trade facilitation leads to GVC expansion and consequently to increases in the demand of transport services and associated carbon emissions. On the other hand, improved trade facilitation, especially in low-income countries and LDCs, may increase road transport speed and efficiency at the border crossings thus reducing carbon emissions. The expansion of green logistics into new markets through trade facilitation may also limit the negative impacts on the environment. In the literature, no evidence is yet available on the balance between these two opposite effects, which remains therefore still unclear.

3.5. Sustainability

> *Is it likely that the positive effects of the Programme will continue after its end?*

The TFA recognises through its extended deadlines for developing countries and LDCs that implementation will take time to complete. The process of providing direct support to SMEs on which TFP has embarked, for example in Sri Lanka, may take even longer. The literature also suggests that training is likely to be more effective in enhancing the probability that a firm becomes an exporter when it is viewed as a continuous process rather than as a one-time event (Blyde 2016).

So **sustainability is critical to the long-term success of the work that TFP has been doing. But it is hard to achieve in a demand-driven programme run for the most part by staff whose employment is funded through unsteady, extrabudgetary resources.** This sub-section reviews the evidence that we have obtained on the TFP's strategy for the sustainability of its work after its exit, by distinguishing between one-off interventions and longer, bigger projects.

Exit strategy for one-off interventions

It is recognised both by the TFP staff and by interviewed external observers that **one-off training activities such as the TFA awareness raising workshops are unlikely to be sustainable. Nevertheless, the TFP has proved to have an exit strategy.**

Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the TFA being agreed, the TFP was invited to inform governments and businesses about the TFA's requirements and potential implications, and to assist building a public-private consensus on how best to adhere to such requirements. As more countries ratify and begin to implement, the need for widespread awareness raising about the TFA is declining. The TFP has already responded promptly to this change by re-focussing on other activities more related to the optimisation of cross-border management with a specific country focus.

Sustainability of in-depth projects

Interviews with TFP staff indicate that **the sustainability of the Programme's activities may be ensured by working in close cooperation with local governments and chambers which will take ownership after TFP's inputs have been completed.**

Evidence of this sustainability strategy can be found in TFP's projects realised in Sri Lanka, UEMOA, and to a lesser extent in Tajikistan. In Sri Lanka, for example, local people were directly involved and actively participated in the development of several trade facilitation-related activities. This happened for the on-the-job coaching services which were developed in close collaboration with the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC); for the PPDs on the National Single Window for which the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has prepared background papers and policy briefs; and for the e-learning courses which relied on an online platform developed jointly with the National Institute of Exports (NIOE), which was also trained on how to manage the e-learning portal. Thanks to this close collaboration, the majority of interviewed people stated that TFP workshops and trainings have empowered them to carry on without further technical assistance, and the general feeling is that the TFP's activities will contribute to continued long-term benefits and increased resilience because skills on trade facilitation-related issues and best practices once acquired are not forgotten.

Similarly, the TFP's progress reports for work with UEMOA indicate that, in order to enhance the sustainability of the undertaken activities, the Programme has involved where possible people from the UEMOA Commission, from the Regional Consular Chamber (CCR), as well as from the member countries.

In Tajikistan, the national consultants supported by the ITC (and two other funders) are expected to continue to run the TF Portal during 2019 but also to provide on-the-job training to the NTFC Secretariat staff. Then, in 2020, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade staff will take over full responsibility for the operationalisation of the Portal and will assume all the functions of the national consultants (ITC 2018b: page 5). Some interviewees noted, however, that another portal (on the WTO) was not kept up-to-date and concern was expressed about the TF Portal given the need for regular updating. The sustainability issue facing the NTFC is different. Several quarters (funders as well as the private sector) said that the most recent meeting of the NTFC had been a disappointment without translation and with hardly anyone from the private sector speaking. Some fears were expressed (again, not just from business) that the private sector is losing its passion, its trust, and its hope that this platform can bring about change. The TFP supports the NTFC and its secretariat partly by paying salaries. It was made clear at the outset that the government would take over responsibility once the Global Textiles and Clothing project (GTEX) ended and that secretariat staff would be required to remain in post, but such things are hard to enforce.

According to the conducted interviews, **another factor that may enhance the sustainability of the TFP is the translation of the training material into local languages**. This may facilitate the transfer from TFP staff to local people of the technical knowledge necessary to continue or to replicate trade facilitation-related activities in the long-run. In Sri Lanka, for example, the translation into local languages (i.e. Sinhala and Tamil) of the teaching material in the training-for-trainer events, and in the trainings delivered by master trainers, was said to be useful to make activities sustainable in the long-term.

Issues of financial sustainability were highlighted by some of the interviewed people. For example, in Sri Lanka, the continuation of some of the training activities (e.g. the SMEs' coaching program) was thought not to be financially sustainable in the long-run without either user fees or continued aid support.

Scaling up and replicability

Scaling up represents deliberate efforts to increase the impact of well-proven activities so as to benefit more people. Replicability refers to the suitability of an intervention to be duplicated in another context.

Scaling up as well as replicability were achieved very successfully in the programme's TFA awareness raising activities as the workshops were largely generic. TFP has achieved clear 'economies of scale' by compiling a large library of slides relevant to many aspects of TFA implementation which it is able to combine and re-combine to suit the needs of any workshop within its mid-level, public policy territory. Even the two more substantial 'academic' courses seem to be using largely the same materials.[29]

This library it has built up is certainly a valuable resource especially when considering that some of it has been translated into several languages. One huge presentation, for instance, running to 120+ slides and identifying point by point areas covered by the TFA, has appeared in French (for the Central African Republic in May 2018 and Niger in July 2018), in Russian (for Tajikistan in August 2018) and in English (for Afghanistan in May 2018). And the same material was already used as the core of even larger workshop material in earlier years (such as a 235-slide presentation in Antigua in October 2015).[30]

Especially **with regard to recent activities targeting the private sector, there is much potential for scaling up and replicability**, which is partly already exploited. The master trainers for private sector workshops, the export management coaches as well as the e-learning curriculum are all of such a nature that they can fairly easy be scaled up or replicated. Indeed, the master trainer training has been carried out three times so far, once in Afghanistan, once in Sri Lanka and once in the West African Region (conducted in Togo). Moreover, the export management coaching, which was piloted in Sri Lanka, is currently being implemented in Afghanistan and planned for a future project in Central Asia. These activities, however, should take context specificities into account as much as possible.

Nevertheless, scaling up and replicability is increasingly posing a challenge for the more recent orientation of the programme. By definition, in-depth, sustained support in individual beneficiary countries requires a great deal of country and issue-specific expertise which will not be directly relevant in other situations. Enabling the TFP to acquire the necessary competences to successfully scale-up or replicate in this new environment is one of the key challenges identified by this evaluation and will therefore be dealt with again in the conclusions.

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[29] The uncertainty arises from the absence in the data supplied to the evaluators of information about two of the four days of one of the two courses.
[30] It can only be assumed that these mega-files were not actually presented, but were available to inform and respond as required.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This evaluation is forward-looking and aims to help the TFP move in the right direction, especially because the programme has already evolved considerably since its launch. The findings presented assess to what extent the Programme:

- is consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and supporting ITC's mandate and visibility;
- in which areas it has been most effective;
- to what extent it has been efficiently managed and delivered;
- the extent to which it contributes to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs; and
- if it is likely that the positive effects of the programme will continue after its end.

Tailoring the conclusions to the Programme's evolution

The substantial shifts in TFP's focus over the observed five-year period have implications for the conclusions. The evaluation can confidently make conclusions that relate to the early activities or to aspects of the programme that span both early and late phases. But innovations made during the current phase in a small number of countries have occurred so recently and are so context-specific that caution is required about basing firm recommendations on them. To address this, the conclusions initially focus on the evidence regarding TFP's core competences, where it has most clearly added value through its expertise and approach. Where appropriate an assessment is then made about how far more recent activities build on and extend these strengths.

Central to the difference in conclusions (and derived recommendations) for the 'established' and some of the 'more recent/planned' actions is that the latter may require a shift from practices that have served TFP well in its 'established' work. This gives rise to questions that the evaluation cannot answer definitively but where it can illuminate the choices that TFP and ITC will need to make:

- how far are TFP's core competences central to some more recent activities (all of which are desirable in themselves);
- is service delivery by TFP acting alone and as currently organised necessarily the only possible or most efficient ITC response (even though the available evidence suggests TFP action has been appreciated by beneficiaries)?

Relevance and priority setting

TFP's approach and main target groups are in line with ITC's mandate, mission and goals. The Programme's choice of countries has been guided largely by demand, and activities have been developed in consultation with local stakeholders. As a result, the Programme was able to meet the needs of beneficiaries, and this was highly appreciated by all its main target groups, whether policy makers and regulators, TISIs or SMEs. However, there is room for improvement in adjusting the priorities of the Programme.

The TFP chose to respond to demand rather than focusing on countries and issues that it considered priorities, partially due to available funding. In its early stages, it responded to the widespread interest in learning more about the TFA and its implications. More recently, it has focused on individual countries' requests for in-depth support for the implementation of TFA measures. The strength of this demand-driven approach is that the Programme's activities were strongly coherent with beneficiary needs. However, it should be noted that some private sector representatives pointed out that trade facilitation is a clear need but not necessarily a top priority compared to other issues, such as the provision of finance or infrastructure.

Nevertheless, this demand-driven approach also had downsides. **There was a certain lack of targeted selectivity in identifying beneficiary countries, and LDCs received only a small share of the total TFP's support.** Just over a third of the countries in which the Programme operated so far were LDCs, although the overall objective of the TFP is to help double the share of least developed countries in global exports by 2020 (SDG 17.11). Literature suggests that the greatest impact of TFA implementation and trade facilitation measures on trade costs and trade performance is expected to occur in low-income countries. Therefore, the Programme's should align its country focus accordingly to maximize its impact.

Directed to chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer

Recommendation 1: To support effectively SDG 17.11 and to enhance the impact of the Programme on the competitiveness of SMEs, the TFP should focus more on low-income countries, especially LDCs.

The TFP's core competences have been its knowledge of the TFA, the strong training skills of its staff and efforts to build consensus, particularly between the public and private sectors, in areas that are both technical and essentially political, as they affect institutional mandates and the distribution of gains from trade. Its focus on explaining the details of the TFA has allowed it to use largely generic training materials focused on areas that do not involve a discussion of broader implications of changes to trade policy and administration.

Whilst this may have been justified in the TFP's earliest activities, when there was a strong need for easily replicable explanations of the TFA's requirements, it now needs to change. Introductory knowledge of the TFA's provisions is now more widely known so any continuing 'awareness raising' needs to be deeper and broader than before, and the in-depth work should recognise that changes in trade policy or administration always have distributional consequences.

Key aspects of sustainable development, such as gender and environment, have barely been touched in the TFP's activities, even though the Programme has devoted some attention to the involvement of women in the organised events. The literature suggests that improving trade facilitation may enhance gender equality by helping countries engage more fully in global value chains. It may also reduce carbon emissions by increasing road transport speed and efficiency at the border crossings, especially in low-income countries and LDCs.

Directed to TFP senior officer

Recommendation 2: Programme activities should include a discussion on trade impacts on sustainable development, such as SDG 5 (gender equality) or SDG 6 and 13 (climate).

Effectiveness and activity focus

The Programme has been effective in achieving its intended results through its various categories of activities, primarily in increasing awareness and interest on the TFA, enhancing knowledge and skills in the area of trade facilitation, and leading to improved consensus and feasible plans for trade facilitation reforms. A number of interventions have developed into proven core support activities, which were successfully replicated. Others are relatively new and, in some cases, deserve further consideration on how best to be extended.

A variety of activities have contributed to the TFP's achievements to date, particularly the participation to high-level events, publications, public-private dialogues, training, and the establishment of digital trade facilitation mechanisms such as TF Portals.

ITC through the TFP has successfully established itself as one of the key organizations offering 'general support' to implement the TFA by providing support such as capacity building, creation and

strengthening of NTFCs or establishing roadmaps for implementation. Some of this was preparatory work, for which global demand may diminish in the near future (at least for awareness-raising, categorization and sequencing workshops). Nonetheless, there will be a continued need for capacity building on implementation and for information (either broadly introductory or more in-depth).

One key 'TFP competence' that may set it apart is the close working relationship that it establishes with governments. Altering on-the-ground practices often involves mediating institutional rivalries as well as dealing with the personal interests, while keeping the focus on improving the trade conditions for enterprises. Major reforms like the creation of a Single Window are not only technical exercises; they are also an exercise in institutional diplomacy. As the successful population of the Tajikistan TF Portal has demonstrated, the TFP approach can succeed where others fail.

Directed to chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer

Recommendation 3: TFP should continue helping to establish/support NTFCs and fostering public-private dialogue on trade facilitation reform.

The TFP has also helped establish Trade Facilitation Portals providing guidance on procedural requirements for importation, exportation or transit. This is a valuable activity as a step towards developing digital trade procedures which have been shown in the literature to be particularly effective in enabling SMEs to comply with procedural requirements of cross-border transactions. As the Tajikistan case study illustrates, **creating an accurate TF Portal plays to TFP's core strengths.** This is because it requires a combination of technological skills (provided by UNCTAD and local consultants) as well as 'intermediation skills' to deal with the sensibilities of the agencies that must supply information and technical skills to analyse and ensure the consistency of trade procedures mapped in the Portal (both provided by TFP).

Directed to chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer

Recommendation 4: The TFP should continue to work with collaborators with technological skills (notably UNCTAD) on those digital trade procedures such as TF Portals where success requires technological, technical and intermediation skills to be combined. These are likely to contribute to reducing trade costs, benefitting in particular SMEs. In doing so, particular attention should be paid to unlocking the potential at a regional level.

Some of the more recent training of the Programme includes new initiatives for SMEs, such as trainings-of-trainer, on-the-job coaching services and an online learning programme. Although these initiatives are still very recent, findings indicate that they are much appreciated by beneficiaries. Moreover, their sustainability is strengthened through the active engagement and ownership of local TISIs (chambers of commerce), and their relevance and effectiveness is enhanced through the delivery by local professionals with extensive context-relevant trade experience.

The desirability of such training is well-established. Studies have shown that training activities may at least double the average rate of entry of firms into export markets, and they are particularly effective when they are undertaken for more than one year. But whether or not TFP as currently organised is best placed to lead an extension of these activities is a discussion to which this evaluation can contribute information, but cannot offer a definitive view.

This is partly due to the fact that the TFP's track record in these areas is too short to support firm conclusions (trainings-of-trainer, coaching services and online learning were all introduced in 2018). **But there are also a number of challenges with all of them that are already evident.**

Training-of-trainers is an effective way to scale up effects for private sector workshops, reaching a wider number of beneficiaries. However, as these are mainly one-off activities for awareness-raising, their

effects remain limited. SME coaching services provide highly context-relevant and longer-term support by local professionals, but the overall number of SMEs successfully coached is so far very limited, also because it is very difficult to find a good match between qualified trainers and suitable SMEs to be coached. With regard to e-learning, there is a trade-off between scalability and specificity. Unless it is limited to disseminating a set of standard messages, conveying basic knowledge, it requires in depth knowledge of the specific subjects covered with relevant situation-specific examples which will tend to limit scalability.

So far, TFP has been very successful in replicating training activities with a direct focus on the TFA, but this has been possible by using a large database of generic materials suitable for delivering a similar message to numerous audiences. Even so, the effectiveness of training activities has sometimes been limited by a lack of practical and concrete country-specific examples (as well as by language barriers). The new training initiatives are more difficult to replicate. On the one hand, some of their aspects can be well replicated, such as the training courses for master trainers and export management coaches, the training manuals, or the online learning platform. However, the successful and continuous further delivery of trainings through master trainers, SME coaching through trained coaches or relevant in-depth online learning all require longer-term support and context-specific information, which will be difficult to provide given the already limited and stretched team resources.

Moreover, these training initiatives are broad fields in which many other public and private organisations are already active. In this context, the extent to which TFP initiatives offer a comparative advantage or added value remains questionable, especially since there is no comprehensive track record so far.

Directed to director, DMD

Recommendation 5: An informed decision should be taken on whether the programme should continue to develop its recent initiatives with SMEs (training-of-trainer, SME coaching, online learning) and if it has the necessary capacity to do so. This decision should be taken at the divisional or SMC level, with TFP providing information on these initiatives add value to its TF mandate.

This discussion should also be attended by representatives of ITC sections working in this field (such as Sector and Enterprise Competitiveness) in order to identify possible overlaps or synergy potentials. In addition, this discussion should be underpinned by a clear planning of how TFP intends to ensure the implementation of its activities in terms of the team's capacity (see recommendation 6).

Team capacity and delivery model

The close involvement of the TFP's staff in all the organised activities has been a hallmark of the programme so far and contributed to its success. However, the team's capacities are reaching their limits both technically and in terms of the team size and administrative support, particularly in view of the steadily growing programme scale.

The programme's delivery, indeed, is primarily done by the team itself. Where needed, external consultants are hired but nothing is fully contracted out and the TFP staff always remains closely involved. The direct involvement of the TFP staff, perceived as talented and flexible, has been highly appreciated by beneficiaries and contributed to build the longer-term and trustful relationships that are central to its core competence.

Despite its merits, the TFP's business model of delivering largely through the in-house team has consequences as the team is becoming increasingly overloaded. First, there is a very heavy workload on the small Geneva-based team: delivery per professional staff is very high (more than double the in-house average) and the administrative support insufficient. Second, the increasing workload is also creating increasing challenges for the team in terms of available knowledge and experience. If more

staff were to be hired, they would need the right mix of skills: sound technical expertise, strong interpersonal and communication skills, and good drafting skills, at best in multiple languages. Third, if the TFP moves further into in-depth technical support for the implementation of specific TFA measure, profound expertise on a growing range of technical subjects would be needed, which currently is not sufficiently covered by the existing team and would therefore need to be provided in other ways.

Moreover, TFP's project management should be strengthened. The overall division of tasks and responsibilities in the team seems blurry, with many tasks being handled on an ad-hoc basis by whoever is available. With the whole team being strongly tied up in direct delivery and that with a high travel volume, the back office and project management tasks, which are increasingly vital with greater programme complexity, remain neglected. Overall, these gaps lead more and more to bottlenecks, increase the risk of shortcomings and jeopardize the effectiveness of the Programme.

Directed to chief, TFPB, and TFP senior officer

Recommendation 6: The TFP should develop and present a clear and detailed staffing and work plan. This plan needs to ensure that the necessary expertise and capacity can be anticipated and provided in time, depending on the TFP's focus and main activities in the coming years. The planning should cover a clear timeframe (of at least six months, preferably longer) and define who is responsible for covering which projects and activities. It should also include an assessment of associated administrative effort and how it will be covered adequately. The planning should be discussed and verified with all team or section members involved.

In any scenario, internal management should be strengthened to ensure sound project management from planning through delivery to reporting. The planning should therefore explicitly consider this vital function and specify how this is to be ensured.

Planning and reporting on results, and visibility

Planning and reporting on results have been irregular and communication activities limited. This makes it difficult to obtain a comprehensive overview of the programme's activities and results and limits the visibility of ITC. TFP must be more proactive in telling the many 'good news stories' on its trade facilitation work that exist, but are not being told.

The Programme's documentation is very limited. TFP staff have been too busy in 'delivering' to provide clear narratives on exactly what was done, using which resources, and leading to which outcomes. There are very few overarching strategy documents and hardly any final or interim reports of programme activities.

The theory of change is generally coherent and has been validated by this evaluation. However, just as the limited documentation makes it difficult for outsiders to understand the Programme's activities, so does the theory of change. Instead of clearly outlining the main categories of activities at output level (as they have been identified in chapter 2.1), it includes many descriptions of what could rather be seen as particular work steps (such as 'advisory services') but it is not clear to which main activities they belong. This makes it very difficult to understand through which main activities the Programme ultimately intends to achieve its intended outcomes.

The Programme's monitoring system is patchy. While the systematic collection of monitoring data has long been neglected overall, there have been recent improvements. Notwithstanding, the definitions for many indicators remain vague and should be further clarified. Besides, there is no follow-up with participants for many activities so results cannot be measured with hindsight.

Directed to TFP senior officer

Recommendation 7: The TFP should improve its planning for and reporting on results. This includes three components: i) the Programme should introduce coherent and timely reporting; ii) the theory of change as an essential planning tool for achieving the Programme's objectives should be updated and comprehensibly expressed; and iii) the associated monitoring data should be reliably collected and indicators clarified. Furthermore, the Programme should strengthen its follow-up with participants of training activities.

Moreover, **the corporate portal for project management ('*New Project Portal*') is limited in its ability to support effectively the documentation, management and monitoring of the programme**, since its entire interface and functionality remains focused on the management of individual projects. The portal has the potential to be an effective tool for both project and programme management. However, due to its limited use and features, it is so far rather used as a corporate reporting tool, and even that with restrictions.

Directed to chief, SPPG

Recommendation 8: ITC should ensure that the allocation of projects to programmes is done accurately by the project managers. Besides, ITC should enhance the functionality of the project management portal so that it enables programmes to manage their portfolios effectively, allowing work-planning and reporting for programmes, across individual projects.

Communication activities are scarce and used rather sporadically, especially when there is no need to do so due to funding requirements. For example, the information on the Programme on the ITC website has long become outdated. This constrains the Programme's ability to enhance the credibility of its activities in beneficiary countries as well as the reputation and visibility of ITC. A better communication on the Programme will in turn require timely reporting on what is being done.

Directed to TFP senior officer

Recommendation 9: The TFP should improve its communication activities to enhance the Programme's as well as ITC's credibility and visibility. This applies to both the project level in beneficiary countries and the global level using corporate channels. For this purpose, it should be defined which communication activities are envisaged at which level and who is responsible for them. Existing content should be updated in good time, for example the outdated Programme presentation on the ITC website.

Cooperation and synergies

The Programme has developed a very good collaboration with several development partners but has not used relevant in-house technical expertise. The latter seems to be due to the fact that in some cases there is rather an element of competition than cooperation between technical departments within ITC.

The TFP has succeeded in establishing exceptionally good and close cooperation with other key organizations in the trade facilitation area. These have increased the scope and reach of TFP initiatives as well as enhanced ITC's visibility. Cooperation was particularly successful with UNCTAD and UNECE. In this case, individual comparative advantages have been well combined, making the cooperation mutually beneficial and an excellent example of a successful partnership. The collaboration between the TFP and UNCTAD made it possible to quickly provide capacity building to several economies and to create TF Portals in different countries using the same software platform. Although in a few cases collaboration was formalised through agreements, it still depends heavily on personal relationships and is mainly supported by informal exchanges. Besides, **new opportunities of beneficial**

collaboration may be exploited in the near future, such as the potential forthcoming partnership with GIZ in Sri Lanka, which is mainly due to the TFP's local market niche of SME training.

In terms of cooperation within ITC, the picture is mixed. There is a smooth cooperation within the section and a mostly effective coordination with the Department of Country Programmes (DCP), to whose projects the team contributes. However, it also emerged that the coordination in-house is marked by an element of competition and at times cooperation does not take place.

Activities in which both the TFP and TMI are active have a high potential for overlap or complementarity, in other words for both conflict and synergy. Competition primarily exists in the area of trade portals. However, there is a potential demarcation line for the division of responsibilities insofar as the TF Portals primarily provide detailed guidance on procedural requirements, an element that is not covered by TMI.

There is great potential for synergies with regard to non-tariff measure (NTM) data. The NTM programme is at the bottom of the ITC value chain by providing data and information. Therefore, NTM data should be used to inform TF activities, which intend to address existing barriers to trade. Some of the training activities would have benefitted from integrating such ITC-originating material. A recurring criticism of the training is that it lacks country-specific examples, which, to an extent, could have been obtained from ITC resources such as MAcMap.

Integrating relevant expertise available in ITC would enhance the extent to which TFP could extend its reach without greater use of consultants. It would also reinforce ITC's visibility as a wider source of trade facilitation expertise.

Directed to director, DMD

Recommendation 10: TFP should take advantage of so far untapped synergies with other ITC teams working in the trade facilitation area. To this end, internal communication and cooperation should be fostered and available in-house expertise and data should be put to the fullest possible use.

There should be regular coordination of who is active in which countries and in which areas, and to what extent expertise can be shared in a beneficial manner.

Sustainability

Whilst it is too early for firm conclusions, the evaluation's findings suggest that the positive effects of the TFP may well continue after its end. But it does not appear that TFP is currently monitoring sustainability.

Two main factors contribute to the sustainability of the Programme. First, the fact that TFP staff works in close cooperation with local stakeholders in organizing its activities enhances the likelihood that they will take ownership once TFP activities are phased out. Second, the fact that on several occasions TFP has translated training material into local languages thus facilitating the transfer of technical knowledge necessary to continue or to replicate trade facilitation-related activities in the long run. Improvements to the Programme's monitoring system (recommendation 7) should at best also include follow-ups to determine the sustainability of programme activities.

Annexes

Annex A: Distribution of TFP activities (2014-2018)

Annex B: Theory of Change

Annex C: Evaluation Matrix

Annex D: Bibliography

Annex E: List of people interviewed

Annex F: Results of the online survey

Annex G: Data collection instruments

Annex H: Terms of Reference

Annexes

Annex A: Distribution of TFP activities (2014-2018)

Countries assisted	Categorization	Sequencing and prioritization	Private sector capacity building	Project proposals for category C measures	Support for NTFCs	TFA measure implementation	TFA regional integration	*Activities in total*	*Categories in total*
Afghanistan *	3	1	2					6	3
Angola *	1						1	2	2
Antigua and Barbuda	1							1	1
Argentina			3					3	1
Bahrain	1							1	1
Benin *	1			1	1			3	3
Botswana			1		1			2	2
British Virgin Islands **			1					1	1
Burkina Faso *	1	2	2	1				6	4
Burundi *						1		1	1
Cabo Verde	1							1	1
Central African Republic *	2			1				3	2
Chad *	1							1	1
China							1	1	1
Chinese Taipei			1					1	1
Colombia			1					1	1
Congo	1							1	1
Costa Rica			1					1	1
Côte d'Ivoire	1	1	1		2			5	4
Curaçao **	1							1	1
Democratic Republic of the Congo *	1							1	1
Djibouti *							1	1	1

Countries assisted	Categorization	Sequencing and prioritization	Private sector capacity building	Project proposals for category C measures	Support for NTFCs	TFA measure implementation	TFA regional integration	*Activities in total*	*Categories in total*
Dominica	1							1	1
Dominican Republic	1				1			2	2
Ecuador	1							1	1
Eswatini	1							1	1
Fiji			1					1	1
Gabon	1							1	1
Gambia *	1							1	1
Ghana			1					1	1
Grenada	1							1	1
Guinea *	1				1			2	2
Guinea-Bissau *	1							1	1
Haiti *	2							2	1
Honduras	1		1		1			3	3
Jamaica		1				1		2	2
Kenya			1				1	2	2
Lesotho *	1							1	1
Liberia *			1					1	1
Madagascar *	1		1					2	2
Mali *	1		2	1		3		7	4
Marshall Islands	1							1	1
Mauritius	1							1	1
Micronesia (Federated States of)	1							1	1
Mongolia	2		1					3	2
Montenegro							1	1	1
Mozambique *	1							1	1

Countries assisted	Categorization	Sequencing and prioritization	Private sector capacity building	Project proposals for category C measures	Support for NTFCs	TFA measure implementation	TFA regional integration	*Activities* in total	*Categories* in total
Myanmar *			1					1	1
Namibia			1					1	1
Nicaragua	1			1	1			3	3
Niger *	1	1	2	1		1		6	5
Nigeria	1		2	1				4	3
Pakistan	1	1	1					3	3
Palau	1							1	1
Papua New Guinea			1					1	1
Paraguay	1							1	1
Qatar			1					1	1
Rwanda *			1					1	1
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1			1				2	2
Saint Lucia	1							1	1
Saint Vincent & Grenadines	1		1	1				3	3
Samoa			1					1	1
Saudi Arabia	1		1					2	2
Senegal *	1		1	1	1			4	4
Seychelles			1					1	1
Sierra Leone *	1							1	1
Solomon Islands *			1					1	1
Sri Lanka	1	1	20		3	2		27	5
Suriname	1							1	1
Tajikistan	1	1	2		6	4		14	5
Thailand			1					1	1
Togo *	2			1				3	2

Countries assisted	Categorization	Sequencing and prioritization	Private sector capacity building	Project proposals for category C measures	Support for NTFCs	TFA measure implementation	TFA regional integration	*Activities* in total	*Categories* in total
Uganda *			2				1	3	2
United Republic of Tanzania *			2					2	1
Viet Nam			2			1		3	2
Regional economic groups									
Arab States							2	2	2
AU							1	1	1
EAC							2	2	1
ECOWAS			1				1	2	2
CEEAC							9	9	1
COMESA							1	1	1
OSCE							1	1	1
SACU							1	1	1
UEMOA							9	9	1
Total	**54**	**9**	**68**	**11**	**18**	**13**	**33**	**206**	**-**

Source: compiled by the evaluation team, based on data supplied by the TFP.

Non-WTO Members: British Virgin Islands, Curaçao, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau

*   countries classified as least developed countries (LDCs)

**   not independent states, but with some economic and political autonomy

Annex B: Theory of change

Impact: **SDG 17.11 - Increase significantly the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDC share of global exports by 2020**

Global outcome: **The cost and time of cross-border transactions for SMEs is reduced;**

Indicator: Number of enterprises reporting improved international competitiveness as a result of ITC's support (corporate indicator C1)

	A) Increased awareness and interest	B) Increased knowledge, skills and exchange	C) Improved consensus and feasible plans to act	D) Action
Policy makers and regulators	**Intermediate outcome:** Policy makers and regulators are more aware of the business implications and dynamics of trade facilitation[1] Indicators: # Participants after awareness raising events stating improved interest; # (annual) downloads of publications; # (annual) publications printed and distributed Outputs: • Awareness raising workshops on trade facilitation[1] • Contributions to conferences and events • Trade facilitation[1] publications Assumptions: • Level 1: Increased awareness motivates future constructive engagement in public-private dialogue, supports consensus building process and lays foundation for informed actions • Level 2: Policy makers and regulators are proactive/disciplined to read technical contents / publications are actively advertised and disseminated by ITC counterparts • Level 2: Policy makers and regulators are not ideologically opposed to trade liberalization and/or to private sector involvement in the policy making process	**Intermediate outcome:** Policy makers and regulators better understand the business implications and dynamics of trade facilitation1 and are better equipped to design reforms Indicators: # Participants after training events and advisory services stating improved understanding; # of policy, regulatory or procedural assessments conducted; Outputs: • Training events on trade facilitation[1] • Advisory services to issue client specific policy, regulatory or procedural assessments • Trade facilitation[1] technical notes • Trade Facilitation[1] Guides and training modules Assumptions: • Level 1: Better understanding of the business implications and dynamic of trade facilitation[1] contributes to improved policy design and ensures private sector concerns are better taken into account • Level 2: Policy makers and regulators have prior knowledge of trade facilitation[1] matters and sufficient absorption capacities • Level 2: Policy makers and regulators are not ideologically opposed to trade liberalization and/or to private sector involvement in the policy making process	**Intermediate outcome:** Feasible and desirable trade facilitation reforms are formulated and/or endorsed by policy makers Indicators: # of policy recommendations adopted / # of stakeholder agreement reached / # of platforms for interagency coordination, public-private dialogue established and/or operationalized and/or strengthened Outputs: • Workshops to schedule and/or design and/or endorse policy, regulatory or procedural reforms • Advisory services to develop policy options, technical regulatory frameworks or implementation plans • Client specific researches and analyses to support the development of policy recommendations or action plans • Advisory services to establish and/or operationalize and/or strengthen collaborative platforms • Trainings and workshops to strengthen collaboration and cooperation collaborative platforms members Assumptions: • Level 1: consensus on policy recommendations limits resistance to change and creates constituencies for future implementation • Level 1: collaborative platforms ensures that the needs of all stakeholders are factored in the policy design • Level 2: consensus on policy recommendations is a prerequisite for decision making • Level 2: there is enough political will and stability to allow for a sustainable and inclusive policy design process • Level 2: the political and cultural environment is not structurally opposed to an inclusive policy design process	**Intermediate outcome:** Policy makers and regulators implement and periodically evaluate trade facilitation[1] reforms Indicators: # of measures of WTO Agreements that were implemented according to international best practices / # of cases in which specific changes were made in the legislation, regulation, budget provisions, practices, procedures etc. that positively affect the cost, time and/or quality of trade / # accreditation or international recognition delivered to border regulatory agencies Outputs: • Advisory services to support the implementation trade facilitation[1] reforms (e.g. policy drafting, technical specifications for facilities and equipment…) • Training and coaching events towards ministries and border regulatory agencies to support the efficiency and quality of the services provided Assumptions: • Level 1: trade facilitation[1] reforms contribute to reducing the time and cost of trade • Level 2: Sufficient political will to bring momentum to the reform process and to address resistances to change • Level 2: existence of sufficient political will and bureaucratic reactivity to implement recommendation

	A) Increased awareness and interest	B) Increased knowledge, skills and exchange	C) Improved consensus and feasible plans to act	D) Action
TISI [2]	**Intermediate outcome:** TISIs are more aware of the business implications of trade facilitation[1] and of the procedural challenges faced by SMEs at the borders Indicators: # Participants after awareness raising events stating improved interest; # (annual) downloads / print-outs of publications Outputs: • Awareness raising workshops on trade facilitation[1] • Contributions to TF conferences and events • Trade facilitation[1] publications Assumptions: • Level 1: Enhanced awareness will lead to increased interest by TISI to develop advocacy and cross-border management services • Level 2: TISIs are convinced that the public sector will be mobilized to implement trade facilitation[1] reforms taking into account private sector needs and constraints	**Intermediate outcome:** TISIs understand the business implications of trade facilitation and the procedural challenges faced by SMEs at the borders and are able to provide related advocacy, policy monitoring, awareness raising and capacity building services Indicators: # Participants after training events and advisory services stating improved understanding; # of client-specific researches and analysis Outputs: • Training events on trade facilitation (workshop, study tours, face-to-face and e-learning curriculums)[1] • Train-the-trainers events • Advisory services to develop trade related policy, regulatory or procedural assessments • Trade facilitation[1] technical notes • Trade Facilitation[1] Guides and training modules Assumptions: • Level 1: TISIs increased understanding of trade facilitation[1] will lead to strengthened advocacy initiatives towards policy makers • Level 2: TISIs have prior knowledge of trade facilitation[1] matters and sufficient absorption capacities • Level 2: TISI have sufficient resources to relay their knowledge and skills to their Members and to have a multiplier effect	**Intermediate outcome:** Policy recommendations for trade facilitation[1] are designed and adopted through an inclusive inter-agency and public-private dialogue process Indicators: # of policy recommendations adopted / # of stakeholder agreement reached Outputs: • Analytical and empirical research to support the development of position papers, policy options or implementation plans • PPDS receive evidence-based private sector inputs to discuss negotiating positions and/or reforms that are enacted/achieved/to be implemented • Workshops to design and adopt recommendations towards policy, regulatory or procedural reforms • Topic specific trainings/workshops to analyse business needs and implications (including experience sharing on policy reforms) • Advisory services to build an advocacy strategy to develop position papers Assumptions: • Level 1: Position papers, reflecting an inclusive private sector consultative process, are sympathetically considered by the policy makers • Level 2: TISIs have the legitimacy and resources to build private sector consensus • Level 2: TISIs are willing to participate to the policy design process and understand that policy makers cannot systematically accommodate their requests	**Intermediate outcome:** TISIs actively advocate for trade facilitation reforms and improve their services and improve their services in trade facilitation and cross-border trade management Indicators: # of TISI that report having deepen and widen their portfolio of services in the area of trade facilitation[1] as a result of ITC's support / # of policy recommendation submitted to policy makers / # of trainers trained on trade facilitation[1] and cross-border management / # of group trainings on cross-border management facilitated by TISIs trainers trained by the ITC / # of new support providers including cross-border trader collaborative platform / # Outputs: • Advisory services to design and deliver new services • Training events facilitated by trainers trained by the ITC • Advisory services and trainings to establish / operationalize / strengthen cross-border trader collaborative platforms Assumptions: • Level 1: Policy makers sympathetically consider private sector needs and preferences in the policy design process • Level 2: TISIs have the sufficient resources and network to deliver advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building services
SMEs	**Intermediate outcome:** SMEs are more aware of business implications of trade facilitation[1] and of the importance in participating public-private dialogue Indicators: # Participants after awareness raising events stating improved interest; # (annual) downloads / print-outs of publications Outputs: • Awareness raising workshops • Contributions to TF conferences and events • Trade facilitation[1] publications Assumptions: • Level 1: Increased awareness will lead to an enhanced willingness of SME to improve their compliance capabilities and to engage in public-private dialogue • Level 2: SMEs have the time and resources to participate to awareness raising activities	**Intermediate outcome:** SMEs are able to comply with the procedural requirements of a cross-border transaction and to efficiently participate to public-private dialogue platforms Indicators: # of male and female clients who participate in trade facilitation1 and/or cross-border management trainings and pass knowledge/skills tests Outputs: • SME training on how to efficiently participate to public-private dialogue platforms • SME training on how to benefit from the WTO TFA individual measures • SME trainings on cross-border procedures management and compliance with destination markets requirements (incl. e-learning and train the trainers approaches) • Trade facilitation[1] technical notes • Trade facilitation[1] Guide books and training module Assumptions: • Level 1: SMEs increased understanding of trade facilitation[1] will lead to strengthened participation in PPD platforms • Level 1: SMEs increased understanding of cross-border requirements will lead to changes in their business practices • Level 2: SMEs have prior knowledge of trade facilitation[1] matters and sufficient absorption capacities • Level 2: SME have sufficient resources to participate in trade facilitation[1] trainings		**Intermediate outcome:** Female and male SME owners/ managers implement business decisions to improve their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements and participate to public-private dialogue platforms Indicators: # of SMEs that report having made measurable changes in their business practices for the purpose of improving their compliance with cross-border requirements / # of SMEs that join trade facilitative schemes or participated to PPD platforms as a result of ITC's support / % of Women Business Enterprises among this group Outputs: • In-house advisory services (e.g. coaching) on cross-border management • Advisory services to identify and formulate recommendations for policy / regulatory / procedural reforms Assumptions • Level 1:na • Level 2: SME have sufficient resources to participate in public-private dialogue forums • Level 2: Policy makers sympathetically consider private sector participation to the policy design process

1. Trade facilitation includes compliance and conformity with SPS and TBT agreements
2. In the context of the TF programme, the National Trade Facilitation Committee, as a mandatory requirement of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, will assume the role of a TISI

Annex C: Evaluation Matrix

Below is a simplified version of the evaluation matrix, indicating which data collection methods have been used to answer the evaluation questions.

RELEVANCE & ALIGNMENT: To what extent was the Programme consistent with the needs of beneficiaries and supporting ITC's mandate and visibility?	Interviews					Online survey	Programme documents	Literature review
	Policy-makers	TISIs	SMEs	Key organizations	ITC staff			
Were TFP's activities timely?	●	●			●			
Were TFP's activities responsive to beneficiaries' needs?	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
Were TFP's activities aligned with government priorities?	●				●		●	
Is the TFP coherent with SDG targets?					●		●	
Is the TFP conform with ITC's mandate and strategy?					●		●	
Did the TFP contribute to enhance ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation and its visibility?	●	●	●	●	●		●	
EFFECTIVENESS: In which areas has the Programme been most effective and what were the main influencing factors?	Interviews					Online survey	Programme documents	Literature review
	Policy-makers	TISIs	SMEs	Key organizations	ITC staff			
Did the TFP contribute to increase awareness and interest within its target groups?	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Did the TFP contribute to increase knowledge, skills and exchange within and between its target groups?	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Did the TFP improve consensus and lead to feasible plans to act?	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Did the TFP lead to actions?	●	●	●		●	●	●	
Which factors affected the effectiveness of the TFP?	●	●	●	●	●		●	

EFFICIENCY & SYNERGIES: To what extent has the Programme been efficiently managed and delivered?	Interviews					Online survey	Programme documents	Literature review
	Policy-makers	TISIs	SMEs	Key organizations	ITC staff			
How well is the programme carried out? Does the Programme have the necessary staffing?	●	●	●	●	●		●	
Is the Programme well managed?				●	●		●	
Does the Programme have the necessary financial resources?					●		●	
Does the Programme exploit synergies within ITC?					●		●	
How is the TFP's coordination and cooperation with other development partners?	●	●		●	●		●	

IMPACT (LONG-TERM CHANGE): To what extent did the Programme contribute to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs, or can it be expected to do so in the future?	Interviews					Online survey	Programme documents	Literature review
	Policy-makers	TISIs	SMEs	Key organizations	ITC staff			
What is the impact of the Programme on trade volumes, costs and time?	●	●	●		●			●
What is the impact of the Programme on SMEs' competitiveness?	●	●	●		●			●
What is the impact of the Programme on sustainable development?					●		●	●

SUSTAINABILITY: Is it likely that the positive effects of the Programme will continue after its end?	Interviews					Online survey	Programme documents	Literature review
	Policy-makers	TISIs	SMEs	Key organizations	ITC staff			
Does the Programme have an exit strategy?	●	●			●			
Are the TFP's activities sustainable in the long term?	●	●	●		●			
Can the TFP's activities be scaled up and/or replicated?	●	●			●		●	

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Annex E: List of people interviewed

Interviews at the first African Forum for NTFCs, Addis Ababa, 27-29 November 2018

Name	Position / organization	Gender
Beneficiaries		
Adrian Njau	Trade & Policy Advisor, East African Business Council (EABC)	M
Balla Moustapha	Chief Customs Inspector, Niger	M
Edouard Batiebo	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Burkina Faso	M
Kolawole Sofola	Principal Programme Officer, Multilateral Trade, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	M
Mounkaïla Hassane	Director General of Trade, Niger	M
Souleymane Ouedraogo	General Directorate of Trade, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Crafts, Burkina Faso	M
Vincent Safari	Consultant and NTFC coordinator, Ministry of Commerce, Rwanda	M
Zakari Chaibou	Commercial Attaché, Permanent Mission of Niger, Geneva	M
Key organizations		
Jan Hoffmann	Chief, Trade Logistics Branch, UNCTAD	M
Manuel Henriques	Senior Private Sector Development Specialist, WBG	M
Maria Teresa Pisani	Acting Head, Sustainable Trade and Outreach Unit, UNECE	F
Milena Budimirovic	Technical Officer, Compliance & Facilitation, WCO	F
Philippe Isler	Director, Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation	M

Interviews in Geneva

Name	Position / organization	Gender
Key organizations		
Maria Rosaria Ceccarelli	Chief, Trade Facilitation Section, UNECE	F
Mark Henderson	Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Facilitation Section, WTO	M
Poul Hansen	Chief, Trade Facilitation Section, UNCTAD	M
Sheri Rosenow	Counsellor, Counsellor, Trade Facilitation Section, WTO	F
ITC staff		
Alina Fetisova	International consultant, TFP team	F
Arianna Montemarano	Secretary, Trade Facilitation & Policy for Business	F
Eman Beseiso	Trade Promotion Adviser, Department of Country Programmes	F
Iris Hauswirth	Chief, Strategic Planning, Performance & Governance	F
Margaret Goggin	Senior Administrative Assistant, Trade Facilitation & Policy for Business	F
Marion Jansen	Director, Division of Market Development	F
Mohammad Saeed	Senior Trade Facilitation Officer, TFP team	M
Mondher Mimouni	Chief, Trade and Market Intelligence	M
Pierre Bonthonneau	Trade Facilitation Adviser, TFP team	M
Raghad Al Tali	Associate Programme Adviser, TFP team	F
Rajesh Aggarwal	Chief, Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business	M
Raphaëlle Lancey	Project Quality Assurance Officer	F
Sylvie Cochin	Senior Trade Promotion Officer, Department of Country Programmes	F
Ursula Hermelink	Senior Market Analyst	F
Victoria Tuomisto	Associate Expert, TFP team	F

Interviews for the country case study in Sri Lanka

Name	Position / organization	Gender
Beneficiaries		
Achala Chandrasekare	Deputy Director, Customs	M
Chandrarathna Vithanage	Assistant Secretary General, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)	M
Dinesh de Silva	Export Management Coach, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)	M
Kasun Hewamallika	Director, KRH Trading International Ltd.	M
Kevin Edwards	Vice Chairman, National Chamber of Commerce & Industries (GNCCI)	M
Kishani Wickramasinghe	Assistant Director, Department of Commerce	F
Kumudini Vidyalankara	Assistant Controller, Department of Import and Export Control	F
Lakmini Vaz	Fanam International	F
Manori Dissanayaka	Assistant Secretary General, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce (CCC)	F
Nalaka Rathnayake	Export Management Coach, Manager Export Dept., Hayleys Group	M
Nathali Fernando	Executive Technical Service National Chamber of Exporters (NCE)	F
Nishantha Rajapakse	Director, Sales & Marketing, Origin Tea Exports Ltd.	M
P.S.M. Charles	Director General, Customs	F
Sadisha Gunarathna	Veterinary Surgeon, Animal Quarantine Station	F
Sarada M. De Silva	Chairman Darsin de Silva & Sons Ltd.	M
Shiham Marikkar	Secretary General CEO, National Chamber of Exporters (NCE)	M
Sonali Wijeratne	Director General, Department of Commerce	F
Sunith Gunawardena	General Manager, Cropwiz (Pvt) Ltd.	M
Upali W. de Zoysa	Additional Managing Director, Ports Authority	M
Upul Jayatissa	Director Logistics, Ports Authority	M
Key organizations		
Dinesha Samaranayake	Consultant, WBG	F
Hasitha Wijesundara	Advisor, GIZ	M
Janaka Wijayasiri	Head of Economic Policy Research, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)	M
Sabaratnam Rajendran	Senior Consultant, WBG	M
Subhashini Abeysinghe	Research Director Verité Research Ltd	F
ITC staff		
Dayaratna Silva	National Project Coordinator	M
Devika Mendis	National Project Assistant	F
Raashid Riza	Media Consultant, EU-Sri Lanka Trade-Related Assistance	M
Suwendrani Jayaratne	National Project Advisor	F

Interviews for the country case study in Tajikistan

| Name	Position / organization	Gender
Beneficiaries		
Abdurakhmonov Safaralievich	Head of Department for WTO Affairs, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M
Bakhtovar Mahmadullozoda	NTFC Secretariat, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M
Dilovar Mahmadnazar Pirnazarzoda	First Deputy Director, Tajikstandard	M
Dilshod Sharifi	Head of Department of International Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M
Eshonov Abdurasulovich	Vice President, Association of Road Carriers of Tajikistan (ABBAT)	M
Firuza Mahmudova	Chair, Association of Customs Brokers of Tajikistan	F
Larisa Kislyakova	Chair, Union of Professional Consultants of Tajikistan	F
Najibulloi Zaydullo	NTFC Secretariat, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M

Name	Position / organization	Gender
Nozigul Khushvakhtova	Consultant, formerly for GIZ	F
Pavel Fedorov	Logistics Director, Auchan, Tajikistan	M
Rahmonsho Davlatzoda	Head of Conformity Assessment Department, Tajikstandard	M
Sadykov Rizo	Head of department, Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI)	M
Saidrahmon Nazrizoda	former First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M
Sharofat Darlatova	NTFC Secretariat, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	F
Shodmon Tagaey	Director, Association of Customs Brokers of Tajikistan	M
Zavqizoda Zavqi Amin	First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade	M
Key organizations		
Alijon Aliev	Consultant, Central Asia Trade Logistics Project, IFC	M
Edward Safaryan	Head of Economic Unit, OSCE	M
Malika Ibrohimova	National Programme Officer for Economic Affairs, SECO	F
Parviz Rashidov	Trade Policy Specialist, UNDP	M
Parviz Akramov	Programme Manager, UNDP	M
Parviz Kamoliddinov,	DAI Tajikistan Country Director, USAID	M
Rustam Abdusalomov	Consultant, IFC and UNECE, Former Customs Officer	M
Violane Konar-Leacy	Manager, ECA Trade Facilitation Support Program, IFC	F
ITC staff		
Abuali Turabekov	National consultant (Trade Facilitation Portal)	M
Jalol Islomov	National consultant (Trade Facilitation Portal)	M
Nargiza Abdumajidova	National Programme Assistant	F
Saidmumin Kamalov	National Project Manager	M

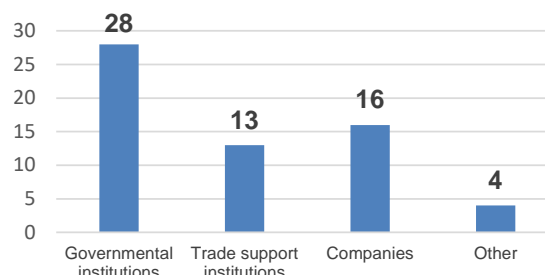# Annex F: Results of the online survey

Workshops included (in chronological order)	Respondents
TFA regional integration (digitisation), UEMOA (Ouagadougou), November 2017	18
Private sector workshop, Sri Lanka (Kandy), December 2017	5
Private sector workshop, Sri Lanka (Jaffna), March 2018	8
Private sector workshop, Sri Lanka (Ampara), May 2018	0
Categorization, Central African Republic (Bangui), May 2018	0
Train the trainers, Sri Lanka (Colombo), July 2018	8
Private sector workshop, Vietnam (Hanoi), August 2018	12
Sequencing and prioritization, Tajikistan (Dushanbe), August 2018	4
Train the trainers, Afghanistan (delivered in Colombo), December 2018	7
Private sector workshop, Niger (Niamey), December 2018	10
Total	**72**

Note: The available mail addresses of workshop participants contacted for the survey were often incorrect and resulted in error messages. Therefore, a calculation of response rates was not carried out.

Is it correct that you participated at a workshop related to trade facilitation, which was organized by ITC?

- Yes, I did.
- No, I did not.
- I do not remember.

8% (6)
3% (2)
89% (64)
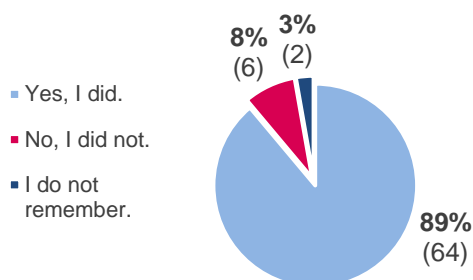
All following results only for confirmed participants:
What is your professional background?

28 — Governmental institutions
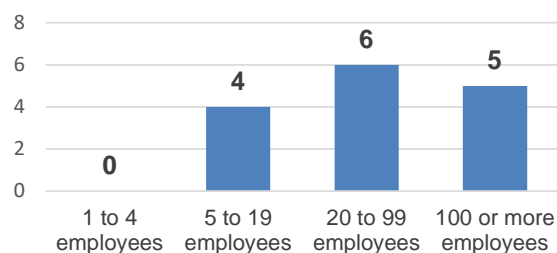13 — Trade support institutions
16 — Companies
4 — Other

For governmental institutions:

Does the work of your institution involve interests of small or medium sized enterprise?

- Yes
- No

7%
93%
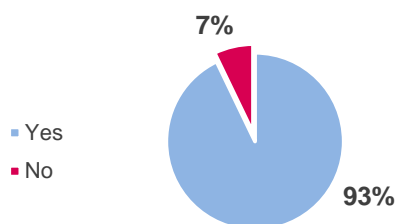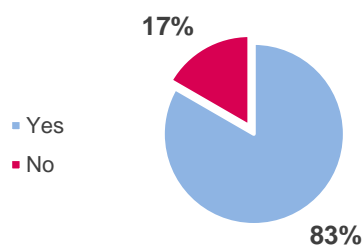
For companies:

How many employees are working in your company?

0 — 1 to 4 employees
4 — 5 to 19 employees
6 — 20 to 99 employees
5 — 100 or more employees

For trade support institutions:

Does your institution represent small or medium sized enterprises?

- Yes
- No

17%
83%

How many small or medium sized enterprises does your institution represent?
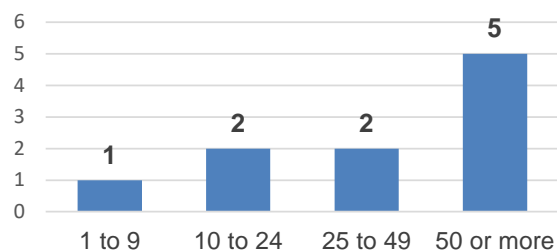
1 — 1 to 9
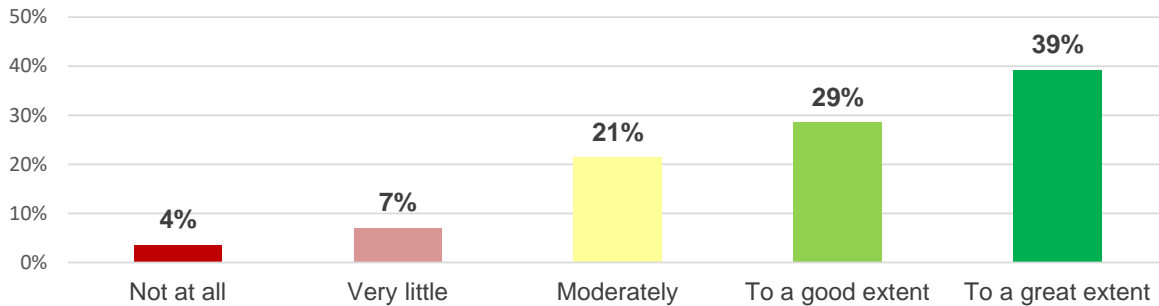2 — 10 to 24
2 — 25 to 49
5 — 50 or more

Looking back, to what extent do you consider that this workshop contributed to building your understanding of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and its potential use and benefits to trade?
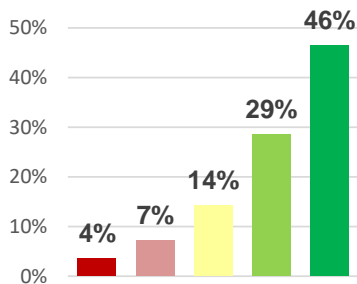
0%	0%	5%	49%	46%
Not at all	Very little	Moderately	To a good extent	To a great extent

To what extent do you consider that this workshop contributed to building your capacity to participate efficiently in public-private dialogues in relation to the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement?
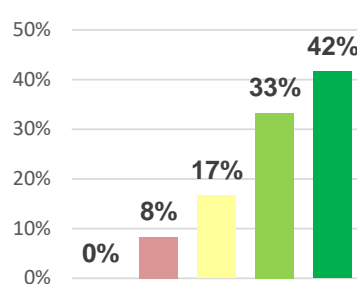
2%	0%	20%	39%	39%
Not at all	Very little	Moderately	To a good extent	To a great extent

Did the workshop lead or contribute to any changes in your working practices?

4%	7%	21%	29%	39%
Not at all	Very little	Moderately	To a good extent	To a great extent

For governmental institutions:

4%	7%	14%	29%	46%

For trade support institutions:

0%	8%	17%	33%	42%

For companies:

6%	6%	38%	25%	25%

Overall, how would you assess the usefulness of the workshop in retrospect?

Not at all useful	Hardly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
0%	0%	6%	43%	51%

Please indicate your gender:

- Female
- Male
- Other

2% (1)
35% (22)
63% (40)

What is your age group?

Under 30 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-59 years	60 years and above
10	18	20	12	3
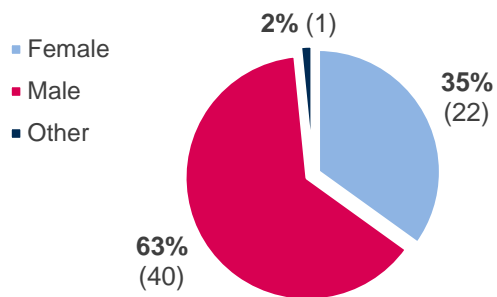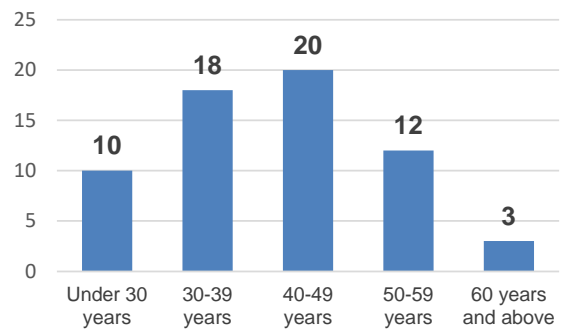
Language of survey respondent

39% (28)
61% (44)

- English
- French
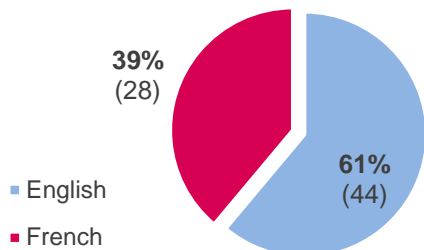
What is your highest level of education?

No formal education	2
High school or college degree	3
Technical/vocational training	1
Bachelor's degree	11
Master's degree	33
Professional degree	12
Doctorate degree	1
Other	1
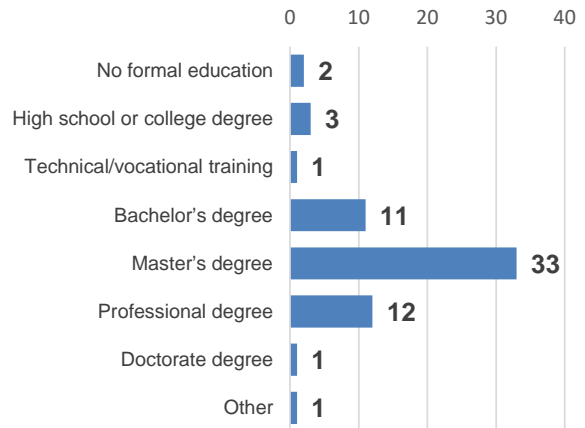
Annex G: Data collection instruments

Interview guide for the evaluation of the ITC Trade Facilitation Programme	
Group:	---
Name and function:	---
Location and time:	---

Introduction: The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the quality and achievements of the ITC Trade Facilitation programme and to provide recommendations for its implementation. Depending on your availability, the interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will focus on your personal experience with the Programme, for example activities you are familiar with, any positive aspects, challenges or suggestions for improvement. We will take notes, but rest assured that this conversation will be confidential, as the report will not attribute any names to individual statements or findings.

Background of interviewee	Could you please briefly describe your area of work and your relationship to the programme?
Alignment with needs and priorities	To what extent does the programme meet the actual needs and priorities of its target group?
Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy; alignment with ITC's comparative advantages	What distinguishes ITC's work in this area from that of other organizations? To what extent does the programme reflect ITC's organizational profile and strengths? To what extent does it contribute to raise ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation? Was the media coverage or any event related to the programme effective in enhancing ITC's visibility among targeted audiences?
Programme's ability to achieve its intended (intermediate) outcomes	How successful is the programme in your view? What does it do well? What are its main achievements so far? What do you see as the main challenges for the programme?
Contextual factors, scaling up and adjustments	Are there any major changes in the overall context that have affected or are likely to affect the programme's implementation and overall results?
Adequacy of human and financial resources	From your experience: How well is the programme carried out? Is it well managed? Does it have the necessary staffing and financial resources? How would you score the programme on a scale from 1 to 10 in terms of speed, adequacy of staffing and financial resources, and quality of management (if applicable, also compared to other organizations' trade facilitation programmes)?
Coordination, complementarity and coherence	How would you assess the partnership with other organizations? Is the programme's delivery well-coordinated between implementing partners?
Programme's ability to achieve intended outcome and impact	From your experience: Does the programme contribute to reduce cost and time of cross-border transactions for SMEs? Does it contribute to enhance SMEs' competitiveness? Are there any other positive or negative effects that result from the programme's interventions?
Likelihood of continued long-term benefits	How do you see the likelihood of continued long-term benefits following the programme's completion?
other	How could the programme be improved? What would be your main suggestions? Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Annex H: Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme

Independent Evaluation Unit

31 October 2018

Background and rationale

1. Bureaucratic regulations are a burden to cross-border trade. Goods can get delayed for days or weeks, slowing trade flows and adding costs that are often passed on to consumers. Trade transaction costs are highest in developing countries, which are the least able to carry this additional burden. Trade facilitation seeks to improve procedures and controls for cross-border trade in order to reduce costs and maximize efficiency while preserving legitimate regulatory frameworks.[1]

2. In December 2013, World Trade Organization (WTO) members concluded the negotiations of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) at the 9th Ministerial Conference in Bali. Upon entry into force, the TFA creates binding obligations for WTO members to improve their customs procedures by making them more transparent and efficient in cooperation with border regulatory agencies and private sector. The Agreement also contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building to support its implementation in developing and least developed countries. Nevertheless, trade facilitation goes beyond the scope of the WTO TFA as it encompasses all other activities related to the optimization of cross-border management and the improvement of national supply chains.

3. ITC´s Trade Facilitation Programme works with policymakers in developing and least developed countries to implement trade facilitation reforms aimed at reducing the cost of doing business, including the TFA. It also works with logistics operators and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to ensure that they understand border procedures and are able to comply efficiently with customs and other border requirements. Furthermore, it assists regional institutions to establish processes and mechanisms to implement the TFA in a harmonized manner at the regional level.

4. For its Evaluation Work Programme 2018-2019, ITC´s Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) proposed a number of programmes that have so far never been independently evaluated. Following a discussion of ITC´s Senior Management Committee on 1 February 2018, it was decided to conduct an independent evaluation of the Trade Facilitation Programme.

Programme description

5. ITC Trade Facilitation Programme's mission is to increase the competitiveness of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), by building export capacity, reducing direct and indirect trade transaction costs and deepening regional integration through trade facilitation measures.[2]

6. The Programme assists policy makers to implement trade facilitation reforms that reflect the need of SMEs for enhanced international competitiveness. It builds on the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement that establishes an internationally binding framework to enhance the transparency and predictability of trade related laws, regulations and formalities, to improve the efficiency of cross-border procedures and

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[1] There is no commonly used definition of trade facilitation. The World Trade Organization (WTO) defines trade facilitation as the "*simplification and harmonization of international trade procedures, including practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data required for the movement of goods in international trade".* (WTO, 2003: World Trade Report, p.138)

[2] ITC website, http://www.intracen.org/itc/trade-facilitation-programme/

to limit the fees, charges and penalties linked to international trade transactions. The Programme also leverages other international agreements such as the SPS and TBT agreements as well as international best practices to promote a conducive business environment.

7. The Programme systematically promotes public-private dialogue mechanism to reflect private sector needs in the policy design and implementation processes and to ensure that cross-border reforms will effectively contribute to enhancing SME competitiveness. It also puts a strong emphasis on inter-agency coordination to allow for comprehensive and coherent policies that addresses the regulatory and procedural obstacles at all stages of the cross-border transaction process.

8. Complementarily, the Programme assists SME owners and managers to implement business decisions to improve their compliance with cross-border procedural requirements. It enhances the SMEs capabilities to understand and comply with import, export and transit transaction formalities and to take advantages of the new rules and regulations implemented by policy makers to facilitate cross-border procedures, including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The Programme builds SMEs capacity through dedicated training curriculum, coaching and advisory services to strengthen their export management practices in a view to increase their productivity, to reduce their risk profile with border regulatory agencies and to help them access trade facilitative schemes.

9. Since it entered into force in February 2017, the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) creates binding obligations for WTO members to improve their customs procedures by making them more transparent and efficient in cooperation with border regulatory agencies and private sector. The Agreement also contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building to support its implementation in developing and least developed countries. The developing and least developed members self-designate, on individual basis, each provision of the TFA into Category A (implementation upon entry into force), B (deferred implementation) or C (linked with acquisition of capacity through assistance and support) along with the proposed implementation date. The TFA implementation process can be broken down into three distinct phases that guided ITC interventions over the past years:

    Phase 1:   Ratification of the TFA and notification of categorization decisions.

    Phase 2:   Preparation of the TFA implementation through establishment of National Trade Facilitation Committees and development of national TFA implementation roadmaps.

    Phase 3:   Implementation of TFA obligations as per the priority and sequences defined in the implementation roadmap.

10. From 2014 to 2016, the programme focused on Phase 1 requirements. ITC supported 57 countries in complying with their short-term obligations under the TFA (i.e. ratification of the TFA and categorization of TFA commitments) through dedicated trainings, workshops and advisory services. Phase 1-related activities have been gradually decreasing since 2017 and now only represent a marginal proportion of the current programme portfolio (i.e. two categorization workshops held in 2018).

11. In addition, in the early stage of the programme, ITC participated in numerous third party events to establish ITC in the area of trade facilitation and to increase the organization's visibility. Similarly, the managing ITC section was very active in developing partnerships with other public and private organizations involved in the area of trade facilitation (i.e. UNECE, UNCTAD, WCO, World Economic Forum, Bain & Company, Brazil Ministry of Economy and Trade) to further deepen its institutional credibility.

12. From late 2016 onwards, the programme's activities shifted to Phase 2 interventions, which still constitute the bulk of ITC interventions today: support to the establishment of National Trade Facilitation Committee and support to the development of national TFA implementation roadmaps.

13. Since early 2018, the programme is gradually gaining momentum on Phase 3 interventions. ITC is now providing assistance to beneficiary countries with the implementation of specific TFA reforms, based on the countries specific needs and priorities (i.e. implementation of Trade Facilitation Portals, support to the implementation of Single Window, support to the implementation of customs centric reforms such as Time Release Time, Risk-Management).

14. While Phase 1 interventions could be implemented in a large number of countries due to the nature of activities (ad hoc workshops and capacity building events), Phase 2 and Phase 3 interventions require more in-depth and long standing assistance. Therefore, the programme has narrowed down the geographical span of its activities (from 57 countries in phase 1 to currently around 10). Similarly, it is important to note that while the interventions under Phases 1 and Phase 2 were the same for all countries, the nature of Phase 3 activities will differ from country to country.

15. The programme is overall demand-driven with the portfolio and countries being mainly the result of the available funding. Ideally, activities would be bundled in the same region as this would be the most efficient approach and regional trade is very important. Currently, the programme operates mainly in West Africa (UEMOA), Tajikistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Purpose and objectives

16. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the programme is achieving its intended results. In particular, the evaluation is supposed to meet the following objectives:

    a) Assess to what extent the programme has so far succeeded to achieve its intended outcomes and an indication of the extent to which it has contributed to the intended impact (summative component);

    b) Serve as a basis for future improvements by providing recommendations for the implementation of the programme (formative component);

    c) In particular, provide indications as to in which areas of work (i.e. reforms) the programme is most effective or provides added value, especially compared to other competitors;

    d) Provide lessons learned, examples of good practice or transferable findings that may benefit the design, implementation and results of other ITC projects and programmes;

    e) Build trust and legitimacy among stakeholders and ensuring accountability towards partners and funders by verifying the programme's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

Intended users

17. The main intended users of this evaluation are:

    - The *Trade Facilitation Programme team*, given that the evaluation will provide insights about the programme's process, performance as well as recommendations for improvement;
    - *Senior Management*, as the evaluation will provide evidence that can serve as an information base for organizational decisions and management in relation to the programmatic approach ITC´s in general and the Trade Facilitation Programme in particular;
    - *ITC staff, in particular project managers or team members*, as the evaluation will demonstrate ITC's achievements and may likely also provide knowledge that can be transferred to other areas;
    - *Partners and funders*, who want to learn more about the programme's performance;
    - and the *general public* that is interested in learning more about ITC's interventions, trade facilitation or the programme in particular.

Scope

18. The scope of the evaluation will encompass activities in the programme's portfolio from 2014 to 2018. The Trade Facilitation Programme comprises 11 individual past or current projects with a total budget of roughly seven million US-Dollars. The earliest activities within this portfolio were started in 2014. However, the Trade Facilitation Programme was only established as a distinct programme in March 2016, in the context of ITC's Programmatic approach.[3] From 2014 to 2016, Trade Facilitation activities were not explicitly framed in a dedicated theory of change.

Evaluation criteria and questions

19. The evaluation is expected to answer a set of questions on the issues considered to be the most important to meet the purpose and objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation questions are formulated at the ToR stage and further refined in the Inception phase. The questions are directly linked to a number of fundamental evaluation criteria that reflect the core principles for evaluating development assistance and have been adopted by most development agencies as standards of good practice in evaluation.

20. The following set of questions is suggested for this evaluation:

Criteria & focus aspect	Evaluation questions
Relevance	
Alignment with beneficiaries' needs, governmental and partners' plans; Coherence with SDGs	▪ Are the programme's objectives relevant to beneficiaries' needs and priorities? ▪ To what extent is the programme aligned with governmental policies and plans? ▪ To what extent is the programme aligned with strategies and interventions of other UN entities or development partners? ▪ Is the programme coherent with SDG targets?
Conformity with ITC's mandate and strategy; alignment with ITC's comparative advantages	▪ Are the objectives and design of the programme in line with ITC's mandate, corporate objectives and strategic plan? ▪ To what extent does the programme build on ITC's strengths and comparative advantages, in particular regarding its positioning against competitors? ▪ How did the programme contribute to raise ITC's profile in the area of trade facilitation?
Conceptual foundation and maturity of the programme	▪ Did the programme's design and implementation take into account available knowledge (e.g. recent studies, evaluations, experiences from similar interventions)? ▪ Does the programme have a comprehensive, consistent and well-defined intervention logic, including causal effects that lead from activities to intended objectives?
Effectiveness	
Programme's ability to achieve its intended (intermediate) outcomes	▪ To what extent do the programme's activities correspond to those defined in the strategic documents and the intervention logic? ▪ Are the activities leading to causal effects as defined in the intervention logic? ▪ What are the main results achieved regarding the programme's intended outcomes? Is it likely that so far unattained outcomes will be achieved over time?

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[3] ITC has introduced a programmatic approach with the ITC Strategic Plan 2015-2017 to better achieve and demonstrate development results. The ITC programmatic approach encompasses a comprehensive results framework aligned to corporate goals, an enhanced theory of change for each programme as well as monitoring and reporting systems at programme and project level.

Criteria & focus aspect	Evaluation questions
Contextual factors, scaling up and adjustments	- Are there any major changes in the overall context that have affected or are likely to affect the programme's implementation and overall results? - Was the programme able to scale up activities or to acquire new projects? - Was the programme adapted to reflect different contexts or changes over time?
Efficiency	
Adequacy of human and financial resources	- Does the programme team have the necessary staffing, skills and expertise? - Are the programme's financial resources sufficient to achieve the intended objectives and are they available timely? - To what extent has the programme's business model (i.e. relying on internal resources rather than on external consultants) supported the achievement of the objectives?
Timeliness and quality of outputs	- Were the programme's outputs delivered on time (as planned)? - Were the outputs produced at a reasonable cost and with acceptable quality? - Are the administrative costs of the programme reasonable?
Coordination, complementarity and coherence	- Does the programme rely on beneficial collaboration and existing knowledge in ITC? - How has the programme leveraged partnerships with other public and private organization to enhance its technical assistance services?
Quality and adequacy of planning, monitoring and evaluation system	- Does the programme have a well-functioning planning and project management? - Are there appropriate monitoring mechanisms to inform the programme's implementation and progress towards targets? - To what extent do corporate results-based management and planning tools inform or support the programme's implementation?
Impact	
Programme's ability to achieve intended global outcome and impact	- To what extent does the programme contribute to reduce cost and time of cross-border transactions for SMEs? - To what extent does the programme contribute to increase SMEs competitiveness? - To what extent does the programme contribute to increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the LDC share of global exports by 2020 (SDG 17.11)? - Are there any other relevant positive or negative effects that result from the programme's interventions?
Sustainability	
The extent to which partners and beneficiaries are enabled, committed and likely to contribute to ongoing benefits	- What is the likelihood of continued long-term benefits and increased resilience of beneficiaries following the programme's completion? - Does the programme have an exit strategy, globally or for particular countries? - To what extent is there a local ownership of achieved results and developed capacities? - Do government, partners and beneficiaries have sufficient abilities and means to sustain the programme's positive effects?

21. The evaluation may also address cross-cutting dimensions, which are then systematically examined within the evaluation criteria, if applicable. Examples for cross-cutting dimensions are the following:

   - *Human Rights and Gender Equality:* The extent to which aspects of human rights and gender equality are embedded in the programme and its contribution to their enhancement.

   - *Environment and climate change:* The extent to which the programme contributes to protection and rehabilitation of the environment as well as to climate adaptation and resilience.

   - *Innovation:* The extent to which the programme has introduced innovative approaches to achieve ITC's goals or better adapt to emerging contexts or if innovations have been replicated or scaled up by development partners.

Methodology

22. The evaluation process and methodological approach is expected to follow the principles set forth in the ITC Evaluation Guidelines. Furthermore, it shall be performed in line with the Norms and Standards for Evaluation and respecting the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation published by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

23. The methodology will be designed during the inception phase, which will entail the following:

   - Verify the **theory of change** developed by the programme and adjust it if necessary.

   - Develop an **evaluation matrix**[4] defining which data sources will be used to answer the evaluation questions while taking into account data availability as well as budget and time constraints.

24. The evaluation should be based on a rigorous and transparent methodology ensuring impartiality and lack of bias. To this end, a mixed method design is foreseen, which allows triangulation of multiple data sources and stakeholder groups. The evaluation will mainly rely on the following data collection methods:

   a) **Document review**, which will comprise mainly relevant documents related to the implementation and progress of the programme (e.g. strategic and operational planning documents, work plans & budgets, progress or final reports, monitoring data). In addition, the review will include relevant databases and publications in the area of trade facilitation to allow insights into the potential, impact and limitations of activities in this area.

   b) **Key informant interviews** will be conducted with the programme's internal and external stakeholders. The interviews will be semi-structured and conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. Internal stakeholders are first and foremost the programme team as well as staff members with an interest or particular knowledge of the activities in this area. External stakeholders for this evaluation are policymakers, small and medium-sized enterprises, implementing partners, funders, UN agencies (in particular UNCTAD), the WTO as well as relevant research institutes, agencies and academia.

   c) An **online survey** may be used to assess the impact of particular programme activities. It is most likely that these surveys will be aimed at training participants in order to assess their appreciation of these measures and the extent to which training has led to benefits for their entrepreneurial activities that improve their international competitiveness.

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[4] An *evaluation matrix* is an organizing tool to help plan for the conduct of an evaluation. It is prepared by the evaluation team during the inception phase of the evaluation, and is then used throughout the data collection, analysis and report writing phases. The Evaluation Matrix forms the main analytical framework for the evaluation. It reflects the evaluation questions and to be answered and helps the team consider the most appropriate and feasible method to collect data for answering each question. It guides analysis and ensures that all data collected is analysed, triangulated and then used to answer the evaluation questions, leading to conclusions and recommendations.

d) **Field visits** will be an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of the various stakeholders around the evaluation questions and collect additional secondary data, in particular from external stakeholders.

25. To ensure participation and ownership among key stakeholders, regular consultations will be conducted during the evaluation process. In concrete terms, this implies that key stakeholders (in particular the programme team) will be consulted at the drafting stages of the terms of reference, inception note and evaluation report and will have the opportunity to provide comments.

Evaluation team and management

26. The evaluation will be commissioned and managed by ITC's Independent Evaluation Office (IEU). The IEU will establish an evaluation team formed by an ITC evaluation officer and an external evaluation consultant. Additional IEU staff or external consultants may support the evaluation if needed. The evaluation team will report to the head of IEU in his capacity as evaluation commissioner.

27. The ITC evaluation officer will be the team leader and act as the evaluation manager. External evaluation consultants must sign non-disclosure agreements to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

Timeline and deliverables

28. The evaluation is planned to be conducted in a timeframe of six months, between October 2018 and March 2019.

29. The evaluation report will present the evidence found in response to all evaluation criteria and questions. It should be relevant to decision-making needs, written in a concise, clear and easily understandable language, of high scientific quality and based on the evaluation information without bias. The report will include an Executive Summary and evidence-based recommendations directly derived from the evaluation findings and conclusions. It will be prepared in English and will preferably comprise not more than 40 pages, excluding annexes