

# **End of Project Evaluation of the Technical Assistance to Support the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)**

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**SEPTMEBER 20 2022**

**Final Report**

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACPLRWA	Rwanda Truck Drivers Association
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AR	Advance Rulings
CBT	Cross Border Trade
CEPAR	Coffee Exporters and Processors Association in Rwanda
DGIE	Director General of Immigration and Emigration
EAC	East African Community
EAC CMA	East African Community Customs Management Act
GHG	Green House Gas
GoR	Government of Rwanda
HEAR	Horticulture Exporters Association of Rwanda
ICBT	Informal Cross-Border Trade
ICT	information and communication technologies
JBC	seven joint borders committees
JRMC	Joint Risk Management Committee
KBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards
KII	Key informant interviews
KPA	Kenya Ports Authority
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
KRA	Kenya Revenue Authority
LRC	Law Reform Commission
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MINICOM	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MININFRA	Ministry of Infrastructure
NAEB	National Agriculture Export Development Board
NCTTCA	Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority
NES II	National Export Strategy 2021 – 2030
NMC	National Monitoring Committee
NST1	National Strategy for Transformation 2017 - 2024
NTB	Non-Tariff Barrier
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee
OSBP	One Stop Border Post
PSF	Private Sector Federation
RAB	Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board
RCP	Rwanda Country Programme
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
ReSW	Rwanda electronic single window
RFDA	Rwanda Food and Drug Authority
RICA	Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Agency
RNP	Rwanda National Police
RRA	Rwanda Revenue Authority
RSB	Rwanda Standards Board
RTDA	Rwanda Transport Development Authority
RURA	Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency
RWAFFA	Rwanda Freight Forwarders Association
SPS	Sanitary & Phyto-sanitary
STR	Simplified Trade regime
TA	Technical Assistance
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
TF	Trade Facilitation
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TID	Trade Information Desk
TIP	Trade Information Portal
TMEA	TradeMark East Africa
TWG	thematic working groups
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Rwanda (GoR) ratified the World Trade Organisation Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in 2017. Coordination and implementation of the TFA is led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) through the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). The NTFC is composed of public and private organisations with key roles in trade facilitation (TF). Establishment and maintenance of an institutional framework that fast-tracks implementation of TF reforms and initiatives as well as advocacy for removal of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) is a priority of the Government of Rwanda (GoR) for the country to realise economic transformation.

To support the GoR realise these objectives, TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented the project *“Technical Assistance to support the National Trade Facilitation Committee Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry”* (The NTFC Support project). Project was implemented from May 2018 to May 2021. The end of project evaluation established the extent to which project’s objectives were achieved and any changes that occurred in relevant contexts that could be attributed to the NTFC Support project.

The final evaluation conducted from January to March 2022 used a multi-method consultative approach majorly based on qualitative techniques including in-depth interviews, literature review and field observation to gather necessary information. The theory - based evaluation then conducted its analysis and reporting based on the six evaluation criteria under which the key findings are summarised below.

**Relevance:** The project theory of change is rational with logical interlinkages between the outputs and project impact “improved trading standards”. There is a shortcoming in project impact that is not an end, it could be broadened to demonstrate results of improved trade standards. There is strong alignment between project objectives and the mandates, and missions of organisations in the NTFC. End beneficiaries needs to fit well in project targets.

**Coherence:** The project is as a key contributor to realisation of Rwanda’s vision 2050, National Strategy for Transformation 2017 - 2024 and the National Export Strategy 2021 – 2030. The project implemented anchor initiatives that provided upstream technical resources needed to guide strategic interventions at national level, while synergising with TMEA projects that provided financial resources needed for implementation.

**Effectiveness:** Five out of the seven short-term outcomes were achieved. The project contributed to increased compliance on trade facilitation measures evidenced by increase in implementation of TFA measures from 26.9% to 83.2% in March 2021. Effectiveness of the NTFC was enhanced mostly by TFA awareness creation and capacity building that contributed to achievement of the four outcomes that relate to institutional and operational capacity, reporting and monitoring of NTBs. Partially achieved outcomes are mostly from interventions whose implementation was affected by COVID-19 restrictions such as regional cooperation activities and quantification of NTBs that remains challenging.

Short-term outcomes	Performance
1.0: Enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures	Achieved
2.1: Enhanced NMC operational capacity to coordinate the elimination of NTBs	Achieved
2.2: Enhanced NMC officials’ capacity on quantification of NTBs	Partially Achieved
2.3: Improved private sector awareness on identification and reporting of NTBs	Achieved
2.4: Enhanced NMC institutional capacity and prioritisation of NTBs	Achieved

2.5: Improved cooperation and dialogue in the resolution of existing NTBs	Partially Achieved
2.6: Improved NMC monitoring and reporting of NTBs	Achieved

**Efficiency:** Project operations realised value for money through competitive procurement processes and leveraging human resources such as the technical assistance consultant and young professionals to support delivery at no additional cost. Project timelines were adhered to by adapting virtual tools for implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Equity and effectiveness were realised through outputs that are utilised by most stakeholders and contribute to consumer welfare. The project management and coordination arrangements were coherent with no redundancies or duplication.

**Impact:** Anecdotal change demonstrates project contribution to long-term change. There is a reported US\$ 150 reduction in administrative burden costs and 3 hours reduced in waiting times, attributed to simplification of trade procedures. 8 NTBs were resolved contributing to specific outcomes for especially traders that encounter the specified barriers. There are unintended results such as sustenance of the position of an NTFC coordinator and practices such as policy advocacy through evidence-based research products fostered by the project.

**Sustainability:** Project implementation was embedded in existing public institutional structures with international obligations to the WTO that will continue in absence of project support. The main threat to sustainability is the substantial reliance on external fund to sustain management and coordination of the NTFC. Also competing organisation priorities and funds constrains the implementation of TFA measures which threatens continuity.

### Key recommendations

1. MINICOM needs to prioritise strengthening sustainability of the NTFC by embedding the secretariat in the ministry's organisational structure, work plans, and budget.
2. Public sector organisations' representation in the NTFC should be strengthened by appointing permanent representatives and including the role in their job descriptions.
3. The NTFC needs to be more adaptative and relevant by revising its scope of work to include coordinating implementation of the AfCFTA.
4. The NTFC communication strategy should be strengthened to increase information sharing to enhance visibility of the structure and contributions to trade facilitation.
5. Evidence-based research in areas of restrictions to trade, TF and others that influence policy, inform advocacy, and strengthen implementation should be reinforced.
6. Monitoring and evaluation of NTFC work should be resourced to facilitate a robust M&E framework for implementation of the NTFC road map and NTBs elimination strategy.
7. Prioritise institutional and human capacity development of the NTFC, including private sector members, focusing on emerging areas such as AfCFTA and TF reforms.
8. Develop mechanisms to strengthen the thematic working groups by for example leveraging opportunities such as related development partners' projects.
9. Integrate resource mobilisation for TF in the roles of the NTFC to catalyse implementation of proposed projects and intervention in line with the TFA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Rwanda (GoR) ratified the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in February 2017. Coordination and implementation of the TFA is led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) through the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). In line with article 23.2 of the TFA, the NTFC was created in September 2016 through the merging of the NTB National Monitoring Committee (NMC) and National Trade Policy Forum (NTPF). The NTFC is composed of public and private organisations that play key roles in trade and trade facilitation in Rwanda<sup>1</sup>. The overall purpose of implementing the TFA is to contribute to national trade policy and improvement of the trade environment by promoting transparency, simplification, harmonization, and standardisation of cross-border operations to reduce time and cost of importation and exportation of goods. Therefore, establishment and maintenance of an institutional framework that fast-tracks implementation of trade facilitation reforms and initiatives as well as advocacy for removal of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) is a priority of the GoR for the country to realise its economic transformation priorities as part of the strategy to improve overall economic competitiveness.

To support the GoR realise these objectives, TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented the project *“Technical Assistance to support the National Trade Facilitation Committee Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry”* (The NTFC Support project). The implementing partner of this project is MINICOM, with most interventions for the NTFC managed and coordinated through the Trade and Investment Department. The NTFC is made up of 32 organisations that are the primary stakeholders of this project. Through this project TMEA works with key public and private institutions with various roles in addressing NTBs at different levels. Through this partnership the main target group of the project are private sector entities mostly engaged in import and export trade. The NTFC support project was implemented over three years from May 2018 to May 2021. As the project concludes, an end of project evaluation is required to establish the extent to which the project’s objectives were achieved and any changes that occurred within the relevant contexts that can be partly or wholly attributed to the NTFC Support project.

### 1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The ultimate impact of the NTFC support project is to improve trade standards which the project aimed to achieve through two outcomes: enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures; and evidence-based elimination of NTBs designed and implemented. The project was a second phase of TMEA’s support in form of technical assistance (TA) to MINICOM that hosts and chairs the NTFC. The TA focused on supporting Rwanda’s NTFC to meet WTO notification deadlines of the TFA measures and to set clear direction for five years by developing a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap 2019-2024 and a National Strategy for elimination of NTBs 2020-2025. The strategy and roadmap aimed to support the NTFC perform its role of implementing the WTO-TFA effectively, efficiently, and sustainably.

The WTO TFA is a binding agreement on 154 out of 164 WTO member states that have ratified the agreement. It aims to accelerate customs procedures and ports efficiencies; ease, fasten and cheapen trade; enable access to information on all trade laws and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tradefacilitation.rw>

regulations; reduce bureaucracy and corruption; and leverage technology for efficient trade. As a member state, Rwanda must provide timely “transparency notification” to the WTO.

These notifications are essentially communication with information on how the country has implemented the six TFA measures including: Publication; Internet Publication; enquiry Points; Use of Customs Brokers; Single Window; and Customs Cooperation. Based on implementation timelines, the measures translate to TFA obligations that are classified into three categories (A,B and C) depending on the country’s implementation capacity. Category A commitments refer to TFA measures that were designated for implementation upon entry into force of the TFA within the first year; Category B refer to measures that will require additional time for implementation after entering into force of the TFA; and Category C commitments are measures that require additional time, technical and financial assistance to be implemented<sup>2</sup>. At the start of the first phase of the project when Rwanda submitted its first notification, the implementation rate was 26.89% for category A measures<sup>3</sup>. By supporting the NTFC, the project is enabling an institutional framework to coordinate the implementation, monitoring and reporting of measures in all categories.

In addition to MINICOM, the key implementing partners of the NTFC support project include the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) and the Private Sector Federation (PSF). RRA co-chairs the NTFC and PSF is the secretary. This is mostly because RRA plays a key role in the implementation of most of the TFA measures by its mandate to manage customs laws, regulations and procedures that greatly influence the time and cost of import and export trade, while PSF brings together all entities in the private sector under one platform.

Through a technical assistance facility, in 2019 TMEA recruited a trade expert consultant to serve as the NTFC coordinator for two years to May 2021 till project completion. In the two years of implementation the NTFC coordinator, based in MINICOM, provided technical support in the design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting for the NTFC support project. The interventions implemented were structured under the two intermediate outcomes: enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures; and evidence-based elimination of NTBs designed and implemented, and realised through seven short-term outcomes, delivered by 20 outputs.

## **1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE END PROJECT EVALUATION**

The purpose of the end of project evaluation of the NTFC support project was to provide an independent assessment as to whether the project met its intended outcomes and impacts and what the benefits/changes are to the intended users and beneficiaries of the project interventions. The evaluation assessed the achievements, challenges, and best practices to inform similar projects in future as the evaluation allowed TMEA to develop a better understanding of the pathways and processes of change. The evaluation documented new knowledge and important topics for further inquiry, action, lobbying and influence. The evaluation will also identify, and document key lessons learned and best practices and propose practical recommendations for follow-up interventions. The theory-based evaluation focuses on the OECD-DAC criteria including the project’s relevance and strategic fit, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/WT/L/940.pdf&Open=True>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tfadatabase.org/members/rwanda>

### 1.3 EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The NTFC support project final evaluation was conducted in January and February 2022 using a consultative and participatory approach that focused on assessment of results as well as lessons from implementation that can be used to inform later phases of the project. The theory-based evaluation used mostly qualitative methods including key informant interviews and literature review to interrogate issues around the six OECD-DAC criteria. Quantitative data was mostly gathered from available documented evidence and project implementation records.

The evaluation was structured into four phases including a planning and preparatory phase, data collection and quality control phase, Data cleaning and analysis and report drafting phases. The planning and preparatory phase included a detailed desk review of NTFC support project literature, including relevant regional documentation such as the project appraisal report (PAR). Also, in this stage debriefing meetings were held with TMEA programme managers in the Rwanda Country Programme (RCP) and regional office. During these planning sessions the evaluation methodology was designed, and data collection tools developed. The data collection phase involved further review of literature and key informant interviews, all described below.

**Literature review** of relevant NTFC support project primary and secondary data on project outcomes from annual project performance reports, project fact sheet and the PAR. This enabled understanding of the overall design and status of implementation of the project. Planning documents established design of interventions and approach of delivery. Other documents reviewed included: the NTFC support project results chain and monitoring plan, activity reports and final implementation report. Secondary literature was also reviewed to mostly gather evidence for especially the relevance and strategic fit, coherence, and impact criteria. The documents provided data used to triangulate information gathered from other data gathering techniques and as supporting evidence for information shared from mostly verbal sources.

**Key informant interviews (KIIs)** were conducted with TMEA staff, project implementation team at MINICOM, members of the NTFC and beneficiaries of the project to gain an in-depth understanding of the project design, implementation, results, and lessons. At least 23 individuals were interviewed through KIIs. The list of those consulted is provided in annex 1.

Evaluation findings, specific to effectiveness, are reached by rating performance of the project's short-term outcomes as satisfactory, moderately satisfactory, and unsatisfactory using a traffic lights scale. Performance rating is mostly based on levels of achievement of targets set in the project monitoring plan, as well as findings from interviews that provided varying evidence of project contributions to achievement or progress towards outcomes.

**Table 1: Project effectiveness performance rating scale**

Effectiveness performance rating		RATING DESCRIPTION
3	Achieved	Achieved more than 50% of all performance targets and there is significant evidence of contribution to outcomes
2	Partially Achieved	Achieved 50% of performance targets and there is substantial evidence of contribution to outcomes
1	Not Achieved	Achieved less than 50% of performance targets and there is inadequate evidence of contribution to outcomes

	Not Rated	Not rated because of no data
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#### 1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

The NTFC support project evaluation was conducted under a very constricted timeline. The evaluation commenced in January 2022 with the requirement to produce a final evaluation report before the end of February 2022. This limited the time available for consultations and in-depth engagements. Given that the target group of the project are mostly public sector organisations and associations of the private sector, securing interviews with them within the required time was difficult, mostly because of competing priorities.

Because of the constricted timeline of the evaluation and limited availability of respondents, the planned online perception survey was not conducted because of the identified risk of very low response rates. However, given that the evaluation adopted a theory-based approach, the use of a perception survey is not considered to have substantial impact on the quality or depth of the assessment.

#### 1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

This NTFC support project final evaluation report is structured into five sections. The first section provides a brief background of the project, evaluation scope and methodology. This is followed by the most substantive part of the report which includes key findings of the evaluation. The findings are structured in the six evaluation criteria. The findings are followed by the third section that summarises key lessons and challenges experienced in the project. The fourth section of the main report elaborates conclusions of the evaluation and key recommendations for future implementation. Key Findings of the evaluation

#### 1.6 RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

Key Evaluation Questions:

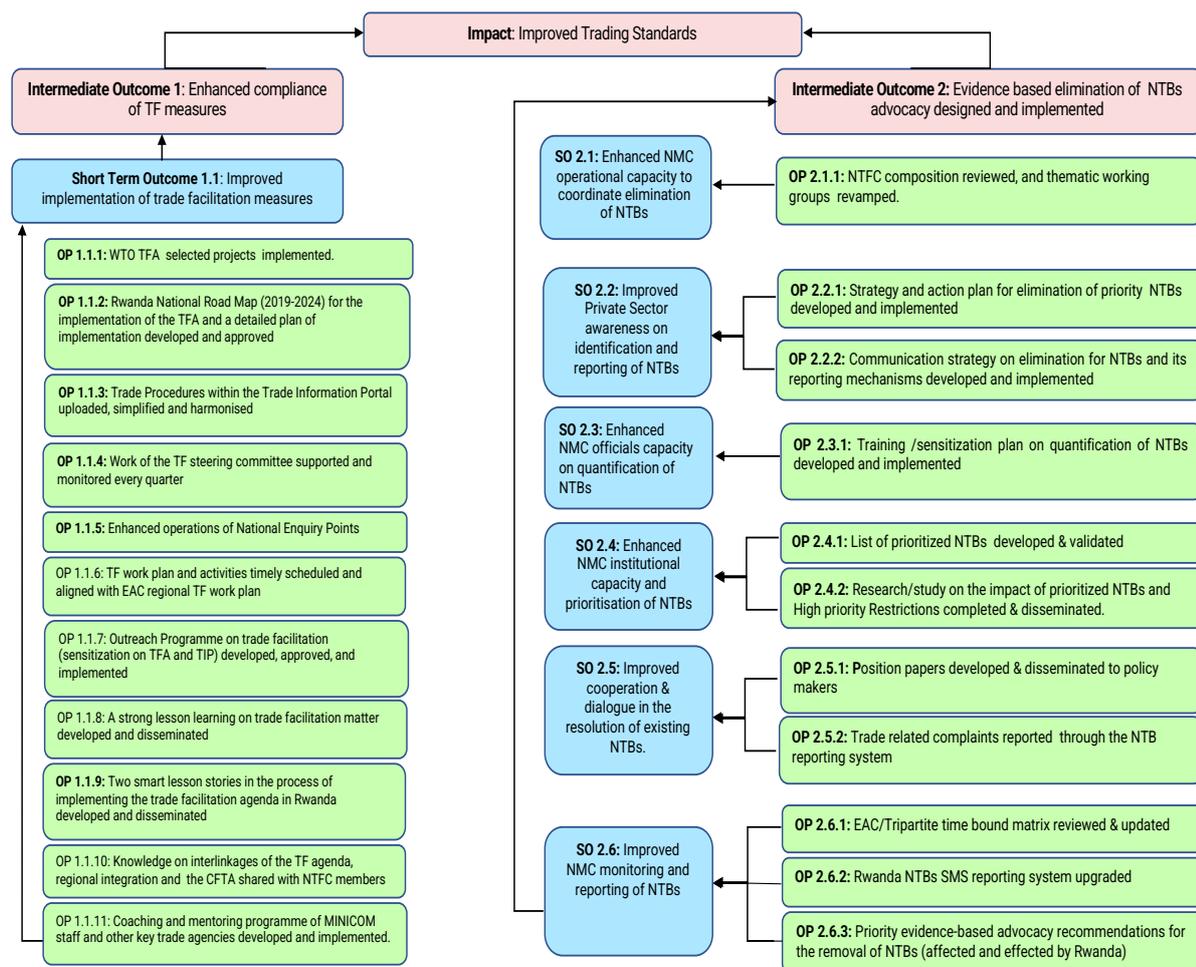
- To what extent were project interventions geared towards the right need (fit for purpose)?

Relevance of the NTFC support project was assessed from two perspectives. The first reviews rationale of the project's theory of change and the second analyses the extent to which the project was responsive to the implementing partners' and target groups needs and priorities.

The NTFC support project's rationale is the impact of "improving trade standards" will be realised through two intermediate outcomes: enhanced compliance to trade facilitation measures and evidence-based elimination of NTBs. The linkage between the project impact and intermediate outcomes is assessed as coherent and rational and largely in line with the WTO TFA expectations. However, the project impact is assessed as rather narrow and could have been broadened to account for the vast potential impact of improving trade standards. Trade standards in themselves are a means to an end rather than the end in this context. For example, the impact of trade facilitation and NTBs elimination could have been widened to capture elements of economic transformation by enhanced competitiveness through time and costs reductions in trade, which implicitly address other relevant aspects such as export contributions to national GDP and poverty reduction, which are ultimately more relevant performance indicators of outcomes for such a national level project. By placing lower-level results at impact and higher outcome levels, many of the key performance indicators (KPIs)

in the project monitoring plan ended up being mostly activity and output-based which limited measurement of the actual effects or outcomes of delivery of outputs.

To realise the intermediate outcomes, the NTFC support project has seven short-term outcomes, of which one “improved implementation of trade facilitation measures” is aligned to the first intermediate outcome on compliance to TF measures. While the other 6 short-term outcomes are aligned to the second intermediate outcome. There is clear alignment between the second intermediate outcome on evidence-based elimination of NTBs and all 6 short-term outcomes that focus on operations, communication, monitoring, capacity, and cooperation necessary for elimination of NTBs.



**Figure 1: The NTFC Support Project Theory of Change**

Regarding the NTFC support project’s fitness for purpose in relation to the NTFC members, there is clear alignment between the aims of the project, reflected in the project results chain, and the mandates and missions of almost all the public organisations that comprise the NTFC, as well as the needs of the targeted private sector organisations. To demonstrate this relevant linkage, in the table below, the evaluation reviewed the mission statements of a sample of 6 member organisations of the NTFC to confirm how aligned they are with the support project’s work. All the organisations reviewed, to varying extents, focus on enhancing business competitiveness, growth and trade promotion, all of which are reflected in the NTFC support project results chain. Hence the project is assessed as fit for purpose as its main objectives align and facilitate its target groups missions and mandates.

**Table 2: Relevance of the NTFC support project to NTFC member organisations**

Organisation	Mission Statement
MINICOM	lead the development of external and internal trade, competitive companies and cooperatives on the market and promotion of investment and consumer rights.
RRA	Mobilise revenue for national development through efficient and equitable services that promote business growth.
PSF	Uphold and promote the business interests and serve as an enabler of business growth and competitiveness.
RICA	promotion of trade through scientific evidence - based decision making and fair professional judgement to ensure sustainable business development as well as protection of plant & animal health and consumer rights.
NAEB	To provide timely and cost-effective support services required for enhanced international competitiveness of the private sector in agricultural and livestock exports.
RSB	To provide standards-based solutions for Consumer Protection and Trade promotion for socio-economic growth in a safe and stable environment.

Regarding the private sector, particularly importers and exporters, as the beneficiaries, but also represented in the NTFC, the project is assessed as fit for purpose as it focuses on addressing issues that present challenges to the traders. The representatives of private sector associations consulted explain how the NTFC has provided them with a platform to interact with relevant government organisations, enabling them to dialogue and raise issues that affect movement of good across borders and subsequently solutions developed address most of the issues raised, as explained in the quote below:

*“We have always complained about the number of steps and paperwork required for one to export any quantities of goods. Through the work of MINICOM bringing all institutions concerned together, we have noticed that in the last three years there have been several reforms that have reduced the number of steps to get an export permit and most of the procedures can be done online, including payments, which has reduced time and costs for many of us exporters.”*

Horticulture Exporter

## 1.7 COHERENCE

Key Evaluation Questions:

- How well do the project interventions fit well in the trade ecosystem?

Coherence of the NTFC support project is assessed through analysis of alignment of the project’s targets and interventions to the implementing partner organisations’ strategies, and interventions. It also reviews the extent of synergy between the project and TMEA’s other work in Rwanda that make up a significant component of the national trade ecosystem.

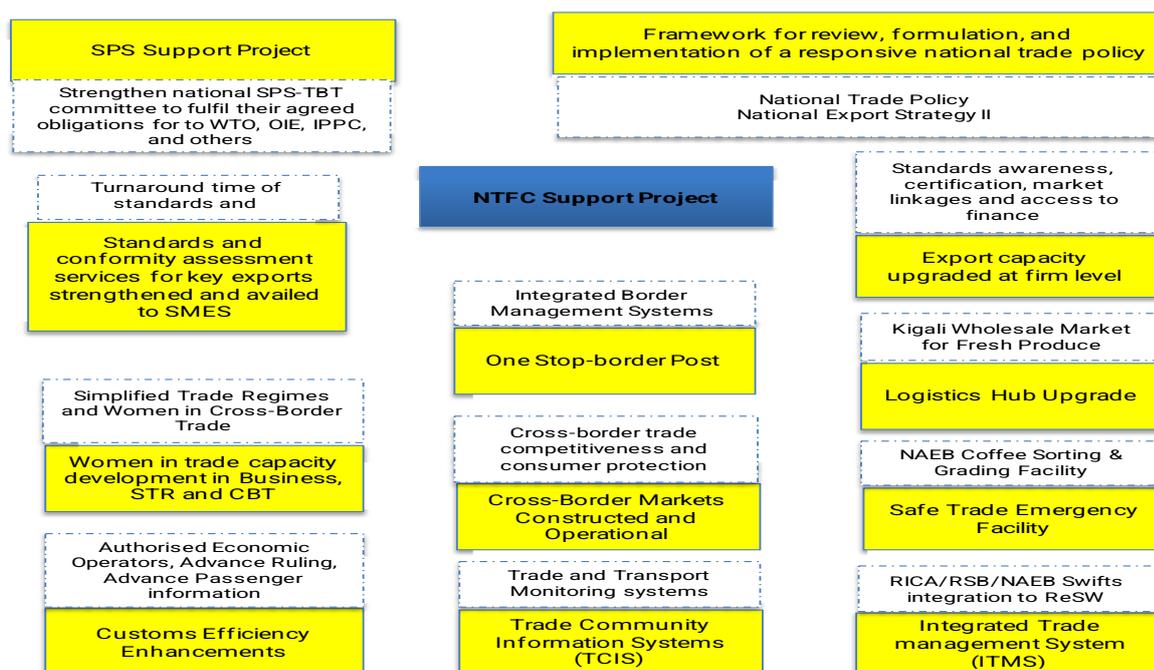
Rwanda’s vision 2050 that articulates the country’s long-term strategic direction is anchored around five pillars that provide the chosen pathways to delivering upper middle income by 2035 and a high-income country by 2050. The second pillar of the vision is “competitiveness and integration” underpinned by eight strategic areas of focus. The seventh focus areas is “strengthening export competitiveness and trade connectivity”. This area aims to foster cross-border and intra-Africa trade through several strategic interventions including, harmonising policies and practices. Based on this vision the NTFC support project is

assessed as fitting well with Rwanda’s long-term vision and a key contributor to interventions that fill the gaps identified as priority areas of action under this vision.

The National Strategy for Transformation 2017 - 2024 (NST1) is the implementation instrument of the first seven years in the journey to vision 2050. The fourth priority under the economic transformation pillar aims to grow Rwanda’s exports by 17% annually through various strategic interventions that include “reducing the cost of doing business and facilitating trade”. This inherently aligns with the intermediate outcomes of the NTFC support project that aim to improve trade standards by enhancing implementation of the trade facilitation measures and elimination of NTBs. Therefore, the support project fully complements the NST1 at both macro and micro levels of the trade ecosystem.

The National Export Strategy 2021 – 2030 (NES III), has five strategic objectives, all of which the support project is assessed as contributing to their realization. The strategic objectives of the NES III to which the project contributes to the most include improving the export business environment; and enhancing cross border trade. Under these two objectives the NES III proposes various strategic interventions including: reducing costs and regulations, sensitizing cross-border stakeholders on trade facilitation, implementation of the regional simplified trade regime (STR) and mitigation of Sanitary & Phyto-sanitary (SPS) issues and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBTs). The project has directly facilitated interventions in these critical areas defined by the NES III. Hence, the support project is assessed as fully aligned to the GoR trade objectives and is complementing strategic interventions coherently.

Within TMEA programmes at country level, the NTFC support project is assessed to have been coherently designed and adherently executed while complementing other projects under implementation by the RCP, but not necessarily financed by USAID. Apart from offering value for money, by achieving more with less, the synergy between projects has enabled the RCP leverage resources and results in work that is reducing time and costs of trade. The figure below demonstrates the complementarity between the NTFC support project and relevant interventions implemented across the entire RCP portfolio.



**Figure 2: Interlinkages between TMEA RCP Projects’ interventions and the NTFC support project**

Key examples in the country programme that interact directly with the NTFC support project include the projects focused on strengthening frameworks to facilitate trade. In addition to the NTFC support project, TMEA provides support to MINICOM under another project that is strengthening the institutional framework by reviewing and developing relevant national trade policies and strategies. This directly links to the NTFC support project as a mechanism to integrate trade facilitation measures into national policies and practices. Other projects such as the development of one stop border posts, women in cross-border trade and automation of information systems, automatically coalesce with the NTFC support project work. This interaction of interventions has contributed to coherence at programme and national levels.

## 1.8 EFFECTIVENESS

Key Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent did the project interventions achieve the intended objectives?

Effectiveness was assessed by analysing the extent to which different targets set at short-term outcomes level were achieved. This analysis is done by comparing views and responses shared by project stakeholders that participated in the NTFC support project interventions and documentation used to verify information gathered from the stakeholders. The findings presented below are structured by the seven short-term outcomes of the project. The first short-term outcome: enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures contributes to the first intermediate outcome: enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures. Then the remaining six short-term outcomes contribute to the second intermediate outcome: evidence-based elimination of NTBs advocacy designed and implemented.

### 1.8.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 1.0

#### ***Short Term Outcome 1.0: Enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures***

Outcome 1.0 is assessed as achieved because all 10 output targets were achieved as shown in the table below. The only partial achievement is in the outcome target that aimed to realise 50% and 20% of category B and C measures, respectively. By the end of the project 56.3% of category B measures had been realised and 0% of category C measures.

Although no category C measures were achieved the project supported the NTFC to select three key projects from the category C measures for implementation in the years ahead. These included enquiry points, advance ruling, and risk management. Also, by the end of the project all category B measures were fully implemented. To support this implementation the Rwanda National Trade Facilitation Roadmap (2019-2024) was developed. This included an action plan with explicit timelines and phases of implementation. Implementation of the roadmap commenced with various actions including updating of the Rwanda Trade Information Portal (TIP) with the trade procedures. In implementation of the TIP, seven working groups for simplification of trade procedures were established. These groups have been effective in identification and removal of unnecessary steps and redundant document requirements that increase the time and cost of trade. Additionally, a trade facilitation repository was added to the TIP and all Rwanda embassies' websites added a link to the TIP, all of which have contributed to meeting the TFA requirement on publication of information. However, the project has encountered challenges in obtaining timely updates on submitted simplification proposals from the different public organisations.

Following identification of enquiry points as one of the key projects for implementation in category B measures and an important contributor to this outcome on enhancing compliance to TFA measures, a gap analysis of the existing enquiry points was conducted. This work resulted in the development of a scope and process map for establishment and operationalisation of a One Stop Centre Enquiry Point and appointment of an interim coordinator which have contributed to augmenting the operations of the national enquiry points.

To support the work of the NTFC steering committee the project facilitated development of a road map, work plan, results framework, and monitoring plan for the NTFC for the first two years (2019 – 2021) of the trade facilitation road map. Functionality of the NTFC was further strengthened by fully establishing and operationalising the Joint Risk Management Committee (JRMC). To ensure the committee was well capacitated to perform its duties the project conducted training needs assessments for the JRMC and risk management staff of concerned government organisations. A training handbook was developed to respond to the needs identified. Subsequently, the JRMC was critical in coordinating efforts to fast-track clearance of goods of low risk, emergency supplies and essential goods at the peak of the COVID -19 pandemic.

Technical capacities of NTFC members were also strengthened to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Nineteen (19) NTFC members were supported to complete an UNCTAD online introductory course on “Understanding Trade Facilitation”. The course was offered jointly with EAC secretariat. To facilitate coordination and sustainability of the NTFC activities, two staff at MINICOM and two young professionals received at least 8 mentoring sessions with the TA throughout the project. These mentoring sessions on TF and elimination of NTBs were also attended by representatives from RRA and PSF. Furthermore, to enhance the NTFC’s readiness to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), 51 individuals including members of the NTFC, JRMC, steering committee and technicians from key Government organisations went through a training and knowledge sharing process on the interlinkages between the AfCFTA and the WTO TFA. Stakeholders consulted elaborate how this helped them better understand the implications of implementing the TFA alongside the AfCFTA and potential impact on trade given the similarities between the agreements.

To enhance use of the project outputs, the NTFC support project developed simplified training manuals and supported mass sensitisation and education of users of the different products and services. The outreach activities included sensitisation of seven joint borders committees (JBCs), traders and staff of relevant public organisations at all border posts on the TFA, NTBs and TIP. The trainings covered critical components such as Advance Rulings (AR) and sensitised key actors in the private sector such as importers, manufacturers, and clearing agents.

To demonstrate the importance and impact of the trade facilitation work, two “smart stories”<sup>4</sup> were published showcasing progress made by Rwanda in trade facilitation and elimination of NTBs. These stories have been able to demonstrate to various audiences how the GoR and partners collaborate to facilitate domestic and regional trade. They also enlightened

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<sup>4</sup> I. Is automation of trade procedures and documents the only way to go after COVID- 19?  
II. Removing standard related NTBs in EAC: progress and challenges from exporters’ perspectives

especially policy makers of potential areas for reforms and sources of inefficiencies that require urgent action.

**Table 3: Performance rating for short-term outcome 1.0**

<b>Short-term Outcome 1.0: Enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures</b>			
<b>Output Results</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Partially Achieved</b>	<b>Not Achieved</b>
1.1.1: WTO TFA selected projects implemented			
1.1.2: Rwanda National Road Map (2019-2024) for the implementation of the TFA and a detailed plan of implementation developed and approved			
1.1.3: Trade Procedures within the Trade Information Portal uploaded, simplified, and harmonised			
1.1.4: Work of the TF steering committee supported and monitored every quarter			
1.1.5: Enhanced operations of National Enquiry Points			
1.1.6: TF work plan and activities timely scheduled and aligned with EAC regional TF work plan			
1.1.7: Outreach Programme on trade facilitation (sensitization on TFA and TIP) developed, approved and implemented			
1.1.8: Two smart lesson stories in the process of implementing the trade facilitation agenda in Rwanda developed and disseminated			
1.1.9: Knowledge on interlinkages of the TF agenda, regional integration and the AfCFTA shared with NTFC members			
1.1.10: Coaching and mentoring programme of MINICOM staff and other key trade agencies developed and implemented			
<b>Overall Performance of Outcome 1.1 Using Triangulation Method</b>			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
<b>Final Position of the Outcome 1.1 performance</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		

Based on the reactions from the stakeholders of the NTFC, this outcome on enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures is assessed as satisfactorily achieved as there is sufficient evidence that many of the planned measures have been implemented and there is a substantial increase in awareness of the TFA measures among the relevant organisations.

Consultations with traders identified the simplification of procedures by reducing the number of steps to obtain export certificates for their goods and automation of processes as the most significant contribution of the NTFC to their businesses. While organisations such as the standards board demonstrate an increase in understanding of their role as trade facilitators, which goes beyond setting, testing, and inspecting standards compliance.

### 1.8.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.1

#### ***Short Term Outcome 2.1: Enhanced NMC operational capacity to coordinate the elimination of NTBs***

Outcome 2.1 targeted to resolve 4 NTBs and increase NTFC membership to 40. The outcome is assessed as achieved because the cumulative number of NTBs removed increased from 4 to 8 and the number of NTFC members increased from 25 to 32.

Since establishment of the NTFC in 2016, following the amalgamation of the NTB NMC and the NTPF, the first review of the composition and structure of thematic working groups was done in 2020, facilitated by the NTFC support project. This review process contributed to strengthening the operations and coordination of the NTFC by including new members and activating thematic working groups. Addition of seven new members<sup>5</sup> increased private sector presence in the NTFC and introduced civil society's representation. To enhance operational efficiencies mostly through segregation of duties to more relevant organisations,

<sup>5</sup> Pro-femme Twese Hamwe, Bollere Logistics, Dubai Port, RURA, Rwanda Tea Association (RTA), Rwanda Airports Company (RAC) and Horticulture Exporters Association of Rwanda (HEAR)

the NTFC established three thematic working groups (TWG), including: NTBs, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Sanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) TWG; market access, trade in services and cross-border trade TWG; and category B and C measures TWG.

**Table 4: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.1**

Short-term Outcome 2.1: Enhanced NMC operational capacity to coordinate the elimination of NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.1.1: NTFC composition reviewed, and thematic working groups revamped			
Overall Performance of Outcome 2.1 Using Triangulation Method			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
Final Position of the Outcome 2.1 performance	Achieved		

### 1.8.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.2

#### ***Short Term Outcome 2.2: Enhanced NMC officials' capacity on quantification of NTBs***

Outcome 2.2 targeted to quantify 50% of removed NTBs in terms of their impact on trade. This is assessed as partially achieved as there is no documented quantification of NTBs.

The NTFC support project facilitated elaboration of the National strategy for elimination of NTBs (2020 – 2025). This strategy also integrates a communication strategy that includes the reporting mechanism. The NTBs elimination strategy has capacitated the NTFC by identifying and recommending strategic interventions in NTFC institutional capacity strengthening, NTBs identification and reporting, research, advocacy, communication, and visibility. Much as the planned outputs were achieved, the targeted quantification of NTBs was not realised, but instead identified as a weakness in the NTBs elimination strategy that designed strategic interventions aiming to provide a rigorous methodology to enable quantification of NTBs.

**Table 5: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.2**

Short-term Outcome 2.2: Enhanced NMC officials' capacity on quantification of NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.2.1: Strategy and action plan for elimination of priority NTBs developed and implemented			
2.2.2: Communication strategy on elimination for NTBs and its reporting mechanisms developed and implemented			
Overall Performance of Outcome 2.2 Using Triangulation Method			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
Final Position of the Outcome 2.2 performance	Partially Achieved		

### 1.8.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.3

#### ***Short Term Outcome 2.3: Improved private sector awareness on identification and reporting of NTBs***

Outcome 2.3 targeted to train and sensitize at least 100 companies in identification and reporting of NTBs. This outcome is assessed as achieved.

The project supported development of the NTFC website that included an NTB reporting system interfaced with an SMS functionality linked to a mobile application. Although no training or sensitisation plan has been developed, the project still conducted training of at least 89 participants in the use of the SMS reporting system. Trainees were from the private sector and included mostly members of Rwanda Freight Forwarders Association (RWAFFA), manufacturers and importers.

**Table 6: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.3**

Short-term Outcome 2.3: Improved private sector awareness on identification and reporting of NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.3.1: Training /sensitization plan on quantification of NTBs developed and implemented			
Overall Performance of Outcome 2.3 Using Triangulation Method			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
<b>Final Position of the Outcome 2.3 performance</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		

There is improved private sector awareness on reporting NTBs in the monitoring system, reflected by the increase in number of issues experienced by traders. It is only the targeted output number of 100 that was partially achieved mostly because of the impact of COVID-19 on planned physical engagements with the private sector.

### 1.8.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.4

#### ***Short Term Outcome 2.4: Enhanced NMC institutional capacity and prioritisation of NTBs***

Outcome 2.4 targeted the development of a list of priority NTBs and, production of research papers in priority NTBs. This outcome is assessed as achieved.

The project produced three research papers including: quantification of the impact of NTBs affecting Rwanda; Assessment of restrictions to Rwanda's Trade in Services; and Impact of COVID-19 on seamless trade and transport across Rwanda's borders. These three papers were instrumental in justifying reasons for prioritising the removal of specific NTBs, including in the services sector in line with the EAC common market protocols, as well as demonstrating the emerging NTBs resulting from the implementation of COVID-19 related restrictions. This enabled policy makers to develop mechanisms to create special exemptions to facilitate safe trade. Furthermore, a list of 86 NTBs based on those recorded in the report system was also developed and is documented in the final project report. The research papers and data generated by the NTBs reporting system has not only enhanced the NTFC's understanding of the NTBs environment and impact on trade, but also provided the institution with strategic insight into what issues to prioritise and which stakeholder to engage to Fasttrack elimination of NTBs and facilitate trade in general.

**Table 7: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.4**

Short-term Outcome 2.4: Enhanced NMC institutional capacity and prioritisation of NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.4.1: List of prioritized NTBs developed and validated			
2.4.2: Research/study on the impact of prioritized NTBs and High priority Restrictions completed & disseminated			
Overall Performance of Outcome 2.4 Using Triangulation Method			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
<b>Final Position of the Outcome 2.4 performance</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		

### 1.8.6 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.5

#### ***Short Term Outcome 2.5: Improved cooperation and dialogue in the resolution of existing NTBs***

Outcome 2.5 targeted to realise 8 national and 8 regional NTFC meetings. This is assessed as partially achieved because most of the national dialogue were held and resolved identified NTBs.

Although the outcome target focuses on the implementation of cooperation and dialogue meetings, the interventions under this outcome focus on production of position papers and

reporting in the NTB reporting system. Two position papers<sup>6</sup> were produced and disseminated to project stakeholders including policy makers. These position papers have been instrumental in demonstrating to policy makers and partners the benefits of reforms implemented as part of trade facilitation. This has contributed to increasing awareness among stakeholders, especially the private sector of available facilities, such as the simplified trade regimes (STR) as well as government institutions confirm how such position papers have revealed to them decisions, they make in good faith but with limited awareness of the potential challenges they present to businesses, including raising operating costs. By the end of the project, the NTB reporting system had received 206 entries that included 86 NTBs. The rest were complaints and tests by participants in trainings.

**Table 8: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.5**

Short-term Outcome 2.5: Improved cooperation and dialogue in the resolution of existing NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.5.1: Position papers developed and disseminated to policy makers			
2.5.2: Trade related complaints reported through the NTB reporting system			
Overall Performance of Outcome 2.5 Using Triangulation Method			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
<b>Final Position of the Outcome 2.5 performance</b>	<b>Partially Achieved</b>		

Overall, planned national meetings were conducted including quarterly NTFC meetings and routine thematic work group meetings that ensured constant dialogue mostly between private sector and Government. However due to the COVID-19 restrictions on travel during project implementation most scheduled regional dialogues were not implemented.

### 1.8.7 EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTCOME 2.6

#### Short Term Outcome 2.6: Improved NMC monitoring and reporting of NTBs

Outcome 2.6 targeted two success stories of NTBs removed during the project's implementation. This is assessed as achieved.

The private sector identified and reported six new NTBs that they encountered during the project implementation period. These were successfully registered in the EAC-COMESA-SADC tripartite online NTB reporting system. Furthermore, the project supported the upgrade of the MINICOM website and web based NTB reporting system that is accessible through various government websites. An SMS reporting system was interfaced with the web-based system and a short-code to access the SMS system was authorised by the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA). Since its launch the SMS reporting system recorded 86 NTBs affecting movement of good in Rwanda and the region. Enhanced reporting and monitoring have provided an evidence-base of NTBs. This has been complemented by the research and position papers produced with project support, and by advocacy, mostly done through the NTFC. Consequently, during the two years of the project the cumulative number of NTBs removed reached eight.

**Table 9: Performance rating for short-term outcome 2.6**

Short-term Outcome 2.6: Improved NMC monitoring and reporting of NTBs			
Output Results	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved
2.6.1: EAC/Tripartite Time Bound matrix reviewed and updated			
2.6.2: Rwanda NTBs SMS reporting system upgraded			

<sup>6</sup> I. Issue paper on the customs threshold to clear goods at borders under the EAC and COMESA STR implemented in Rwanda

II. Position paper on Rwanda FDA requirements for registration and premise licensing of food products with quality marks & high established tariffs/fees and fines for services rendered by the agency

2.6.3: Priority evidence-based advocacy recommendations for the removal of NTBs (affected and effected by Rwanda) implemented			
<b>Overall Performance of Outcome 2.6 Using Triangulation Method</b>			
Using the Output Performance Assessment			
Using the Assessment of the Performance Outcome Indicator			
Using consultant judgement informed by analysis of key findings			
<b>Final Position of the Outcome 2.6 performance</b>	<b>Achieved</b>		

## 1.9 EFFICIENCY

Key Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent were the assess whether the project resources were utilized optimally?

### 1.9.1 EFFICIENCY AT OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Efficiency at the operational level is analysed through the extent to which the NTFC support project presents value for money, i.e., was the work worth the money spent on it. VfM assessment focuses on economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity aspects of the project. In all these aspects we assess how the project leveraged costs and impact, and optimised resources.

**Economy:** The TA was recruited through competitive bidding which ensured the process provided economical pricing of the selected offer. The TA engaged in not only capacity building work but also design and review of strategies and policies at the ministry which complemented project results. For example, support to reviews and design of the National Trade policy and National Export Strategy III (NES II) enabled the project to contribute to wider results within the ministry while complementing the NTFC targets. The TA also filled a critical staffing gap currently experienced by MINICOM. Additionally, engaging young professionals in this project leveraged resources from other donor funded projects under TMEA to deliver results of the NTFC support project. Delegating some of the coordination roles to the young professionals, was also used as a mechanism of achieving more with less.

**Efficiency:** Implementation of activities, especially those that required physical contact such as sensitisations, capacity building activities, regional dialogues and NTFC meetings were in many cases delayed by outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in restrictions on meeting and gatherings. Nevertheless, the project adapted to virtual meetings that not only ensured continuity of activities and compensation for lost time, but also reduced the money required for implementation.

**Effectiveness:** The roadmaps and strategies developed with facilitation of the TA are currently being used by MINICOM to develop specific projects for funding by different development partners. This is evidence that the products from the programme are being utilised even in a resource constrained environment. This also exhibits ownership of the roadmap and strategies and sustainability of the gains from these strategic documents. However effective implementation of the roadmaps and strategies is being impacted by the substantial under staffing at the ministry.

**Equity:** Though not explicitly elaborated in the project's theory of change trade facilitation, and more specifically, elimination of NTBs contributes to consumer welfare by addressing factors and issues that commonly raise market prices for households. Furthermore, NTB elimination has enabled more producers and traders to access more markets, which also in turn increases consumer welfare, hence equity in outcomes.

### 1.9.2 EFFICIENCY OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

The project management and coordination arrangements used a hybrid in which key roles and responsibilities were shared between TMEA, at regional and RCP, public institutions, and beneficiaries of the project. This role sharing is illustrated in figure one below.

The RCP led project design concluding in finalisation of the project appraisal report (PAR) that defined the mission and focus areas of the NTFC support project at country level, in the regional context. The design was completed in consultation with MINICOM. The RCP was also responsible for contract management and M&E of deliverables of the TA. The TMEA regional office led the procurement of the contractor and has provided technical guidance and project oversight through the Trade Facilitation Department. The TA was responsible for delivering the project. Based on the project ToR, the coordinator led facilitation of the development of the NTFC roadmap, the NTBs elimination strategy and overall planning and coordination of the project. The planning was done in close collaboration and guidance of the trade and industry department at MINICOM. The TA was also responsible for project reporting. MINICOM as the lead implementing partner was responsible for the joint project planning and approval of all processes and deliverables of the project. During implementation, MINICOM in collaboration with RRA identified all beneficiaries from the public sector, while PSF identified those in the private sector. Along with members of the NTFC, the external beneficiaries were mobilised for capacity building and technical assistance activities. Much as both the private and public beneficiaries were the target group, by design they were also responsible for implementing some project activities in trade facilitation. For example, standards bodies and revenue authority are key implementers of standardisation and trade procedures simplification. While private sector's reporting of NTBs is used by the project, specifically the NTFC, in prioritisation of activities.

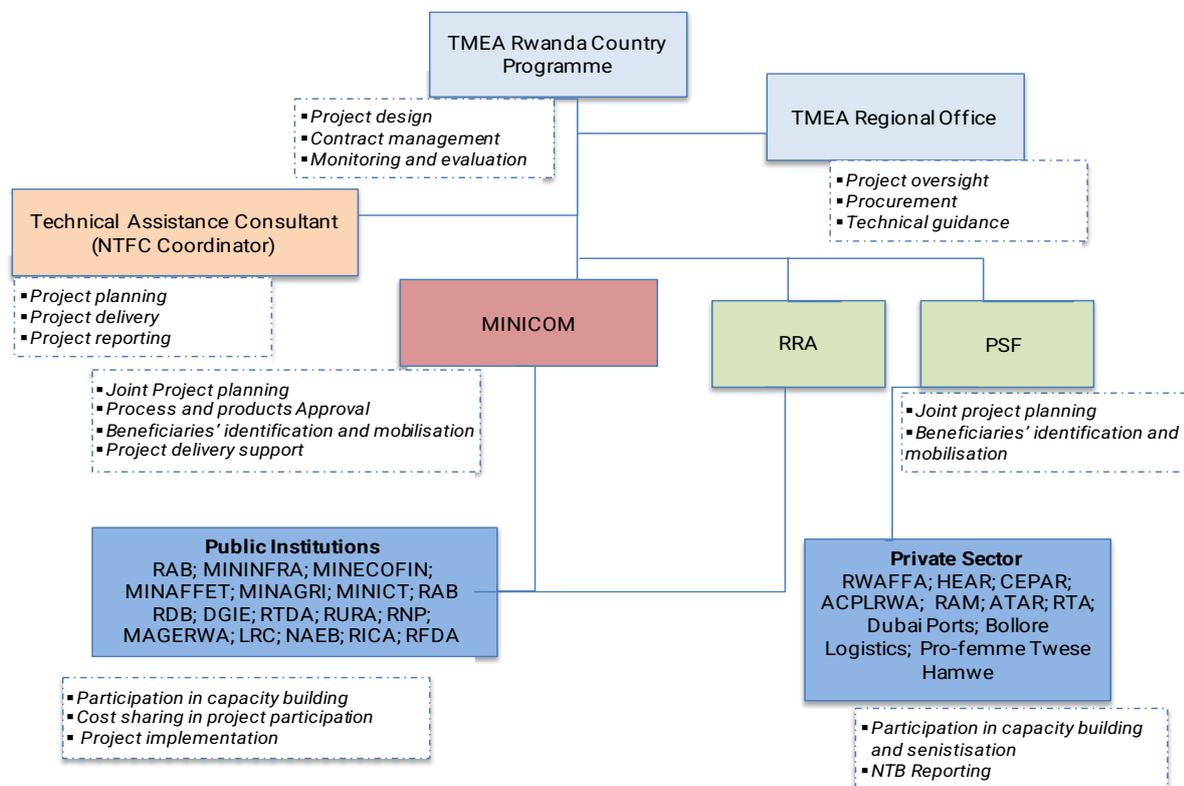


Figure 3: The NTFC support project management and coordination arrangements

The NTFC support project management and coordination arrangements are assessed as coherent with no redundancies or duplication that ensured efficient delivery of the project, reflected in the effective realisation of project outputs.

Involvement of especially MINICOM and RRA in the planning of the project including disclosing of resources available to implementation ensured effective collaboration and efficient delivery of the project.

The only gap in management and coordination, with possibility for improvement, is the M&E mechanism for the project. Much as the RCP led M&E planning and implementation, there is no explicit budget line for M&E activities at project implementation levels, i.e., there are no M&E roles or budget at the implementing partner level. This limited the quality of activity and results performance monitoring at the output level. For instance, there is no systematic mechanisms of establishing and monitoring how enterprises, importers or exporters affected by a particular NTB that has been eliminated are positively affected in a timely manner. Future projects need to consider allocating resources to M&E by implementing partners, not only for accountability purposes but also to strengthen ownership of projects.

## 1.10 IMPACT

### Key Evaluation Questions:

- What were the project interventions impact and who benefited or suffered the intended and unintended outcomes?
- What were the changes in time and cost associated with logistical processes of exporting and importing goods in Rwanda?

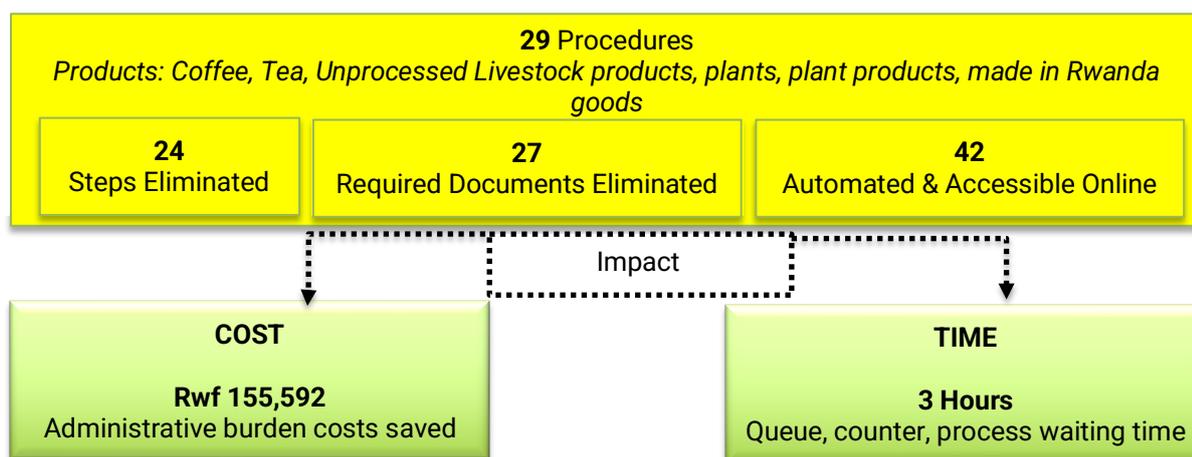
The impact criteria of the evaluation aimed to identify any early changes including positive effects from improved transparency, simplification, harmonization, and standardisation of operations. The impacts of these changes are mostly assessed in terms of reductions in time and cost of importation and exportation of goods. Also unintended changes, both positive and negative were interrogated. Although this is not an impact assessment, this evaluation only takes stock of examples of what “success looks like” within and beyond the outcomes of the project.

### 1.10.1 INTENDED EFFECTS

Notable impact that is attributed to the technical assistance provided through the NTFC support project is in simplification of trade procedures. Under this component trade procedures were simplified for mostly agricultural and livestock products including coffee, tea, unprocessed animal products, plant and plant products and general merchandise with the made in Rwanda Logo. Twentynine (29) procedures associated with the export of these products underwent simplification as demonstrated in the figure below. Simplification of procedures resulted in a reduction of an estimated US\$ 150 in administrative burden cost savings and 3 hours in waiting times<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> NTFC Support project End of project Report, Safari Vincent, 2021



**Figure 4: Impact of simplification of trade procedure**

NTBs eliminated during the two years of the NTFC support project have contributed to facilitating trade for the Rwandan private sector. Consulted representatives of different associations in the import and export logistics chains provide anecdotes of how the eliminated barriers have mostly saved time they previously wasted moving goods in and out of the country. The table below provides a summary of the NTBs eliminated in this period and indications of impact on the target beneficiaries of the elimination.

**Table 10: Impacts of eliminated NTBs 2019 – 2021**

	<b>Eliminated Non-Tarif Barrier</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1	Requirement to foreign exhibitors in Kenya to have a trading license to be able to display their products in the trade fair without which a fine of Ksh 1,000 per day is imposed to the exhibitor by the City Council.	Harmonisation Rwandan enterprises, especially local manufacturers, enabled to participate in Kenyan trade fair exposed their products to customers from the region, boosting intra-EAC and inter-African trade that has grown by 252% and 103% respectively <sup>8</sup> .
2	Multiple police check points from Mombasa to Malaba (Miritini, Samburu, Mariakani, Mtito Andei, Kibwezi, Machakos, Mlolongo, Nairobi, Mahimahu, Naivasha, Nakuru, Salgaa, Molo, Kapsabet, Malaba, Eldoret)	Transparency The toll-free line provided to truck drivers has reduced the number of stops between Mombasa and malaba and saved time of goods transportation along the Northern corridor from the Port to the border. However average transit time increased from 69 to 109 hours between 2018 and 2020 <sup>9</sup> . This is mostly attributed to the COVID-19 preventive measure effect.
3	The newly introduced Rwanda FDA is a double registration and a violation to EAC originating products with standardization quality marks for mutual recognition	Standardisation Traders and Manufacturers from the EAC importing finished good do not have to incur any additional costs of doing business in Rwanda and it has also saved an unascertained amount of time in product testing and certification.
4	Tanzania requires transit trucks carrying chemicals to have export and transport chemical permits. Trucks are charged US\$ 1 per ton and in most cases arbitrary charges which are imposed to transit vehicles only. The amount is applied to entire container weight regardless of the	Simplification Clarification of additional requirements from trucks transporting chemicals reduced time of transit along the southern corridor for such trucks by saving time of undergoing additional checks. Also, clarification of arbitrary charges lowered the administrative burden costs for

<sup>8</sup> TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) Rwanda Country Programme (RCP), Annual Review 2020/2021, Arthur Byabagambi, 2021

<sup>9</sup> Northern corridor transport observatory report, NCTTCA, 2021

	weight of other non-chemical products being transported. Permits are difficult to obtain during weekends and original copies are required at the border.	importers of chemicals, especially manufacturers by ensuring clear item breakdown of the FOB invoices.
5	Rwanda Revenue Authority has denied preferential treatment on silk coat product from Tanzania.	Harmonisation Granting of preferential treatment to silk coat products from all EAC partners lowered the cost of importation and subsequently stabilised pricing of related construction products on the local market
6	Introduction of a verification/inspection tariff at Nairobi ICD (80 US\$ for 20 feet containers and 120 US\$ for 40 feet containers by Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) due to outsourcing of labor to conduct inspections and verification on behalf of KBS and KRA.	Simplification With no charge for sight and release verification and option for customs approval of container release under seal for destination verification has saved time for importers. However, costs remain especially for containers targeted by customs.
7	Unclear and high fine of Ksh 100,000 charged by Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) to trucks without Electronic Cargo Tracking gadget (GPS) based on provisions 73 (1) and 204 (a) and (b) of the EAC CMA 2004 revised in 2017	Transparency and Harmonisation Clarification that the fine for lack of a GPS on trucks is not discriminatory and is provided for by the EAC CMA provided clarity to transporters that now ensure all their trucks are fitted with GPS trackers, hence reducing costs from fined and time delays resolving unnecessary hurdles.
8	Rwanda Authorities didn't approve COMESA certificate of origin which is issued from Egypt as they are objecting that the product is not Egyptian production	Harmonisation Rules of origin required for COMESA certification to Rwanda fully recognised, enabling importers from COMESA countries to trade in Rwanda seamlessly.

### 1.10.2 UNINTENDED EFFECTS

There are positive impacts of the project that were not necessarily included in the project design of results matrix. The technical assistance facility invested significant amounts of time and resources in capacity building through training workshops, coaching, mentoring and knowledge sharing. This has contributed substantially to enhancing coordination capacities in the NTFC. But specifically in capacity development and retention of the young professionals that were also a component of TMEA's support to MINICOM. The skills and knowledge transfer to the young professionals had enabled MINICOM retain two of the young professionals, with one serving as the NTFC coordinator. This contribution of the project and TMEA's other work has safeguarded continuity of the presence of an experienced and knowledgeable facilitator that has ensured the NTFC continues to function efficiently.

Also attributed to strengthening of the NTFC through capacity building and knowledge sharing, member organisations have reinforced some of the techniques used by the project as mechanisms to advocate for implementation of various reforms to facilitate trade. In 2020, PSF in collaboration with the NTFC authored a joint position paper on challenges encountered by Rwanda private sector on the Central Corridor following implementation of measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. The position paper crafted recommendations to address the identified challenges and was used as an advocacy tool at the central corridor secretariat and Tanzanian authorities. Much of the progress realised in resumption of CBT at Rusumo border where flow of goods and services had been halted was based on advocacy done through evidence-based research products coordinated by the NTFC. Ultimately

proposed containment measures such as swapping of drivers was removed and more efficient COVID-19 testing was implemented on both sides of the border.

## **1.11 SUSTAINABILITY**

Key Evaluation Questions:

- To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the end of TMEA support?

The sustainability criteria reviewed the likelihood of continuity of change with focus on institutional capacities developed, mechanisms established to continue the NTFC work and threats to continuity of project benefits.

### **1.11.1 SUSTAINABILITY MECHANISMS**

The NTFC comprises of Government staff from various public organisations whose mandates include strategies and interventions that directly or indirectly aim to facilitate trade, and in some cases eliminate NTBs. For instance, RRA and customs manage most export and import procedures and charges, MININFRA and RTDA coordinate development of infrastructure necessary for efficient transportation of goods, while DGIE handles movement of traders across border and MINICOM coordinated the overall institutional framework for imports and exports. Given these mandates and the presence of these organisations in the NTFC, there is certain likelihood of continuity of trade facilitation and efforts to eliminate NTBs. Having worked with these permanent structures, the NTFC support project has ensured that the work it facilitated is embedded in the institutional framework at national level, this contributed to ownership and sustainability of benefits and actions.

Rwanda' ratification of the WTO TFA is also considered a key contributor to continuity of the work and results delivered under the NTFC support project. The requirement to continue implementation of remaining category B and C measures means the NTFC will continue to be relevant as the apex mechanism responsible for submitting notifications to the WTO.

Enhanced collaboration between the public and private sector is highly regarded by most NTFC members interviewed as a key contributor to sustainability of the work and results supported by the project. Inclusion of associations from relevant sub-sectors of the private sector that encounter most NTBs has ensured the issues addressed are priority issues for the private sector. This appreciation of inclusion of the private sector in the NTFC is seen by representatives in the associations as a proactive effort by the Government to avail and enable responsive environment for them to trade.

The NTFC support project focused its interventions on knowledge transfer, systems development, and communication with key stakeholders. Conventional TA that involves mostly support to development of strategic documents and policies was avoided by this project. The support provided intervened in actual facilitation of implementation, including organising of NTFC minutes, developing information systems such as the NTB SMS reporting system and the TIP. Let alone gaining from being more appealing to stakeholders, especially MINICOM, the project delivered outputs that will continue to function because all have been integrated into the organisation's activities, workplans and budgets.

### **1.11.2 THREATS TO SUSTAINABILITY**

Irregular attendance and high turnover of NTFC members is affecting continuity and institutional memory. During the evaluation at least four public institutions were not able to

immediately identify a representative to the NTFC. This was mostly explained through reassignment of representatives to other roles. Also, the NTFC secretariate confirmed continued changes in organisations representatives to meetings.

Representation from private sector in NTFC meetings is not always guaranteed. In some cases, the staff sent to participate in meetings are not necessarily at the grade that can provide the necessary dialogue on issues or take decisions for associations they represent. More still, consultations with the private sector indicate little interest in methodical outputs of the NTFC such as development and review of policies, strategies, roadmaps and other technical documents that they consider not very relevant to their participation. This is identified as a contributor to inconsistent participation of the private sector in the NTFC.

Competing priorities in organisations not only affect implementation of resolutions from NTFC meetings, but also affect ownership of commitments. Also, many recommendations from the NTFC to participating organisations require financial and technical resources to be implemented. This is mostly identified in category C measures. In absence of the necessary resources, some recommendations and interventions will either not continue or even commence.

## **1.12 CROSS CUTTING ISSUES**

The NTFC project was reviewed to establish the extent to which the cross-cutting issues defined in the project appraisal document have been addressed in project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

### **1.12.1 GENDER AND INCLUSION**

The NTFC has played an instrumental role in reducing barriers to trade, including simplifying travel documents, adopting simplified certificates of origin and customs declarations for STR consignments. Furthermore, through the coordinated work of the NTFC members, trade information desks (TIDs) were established at border crossings with DRC to provide information to small scale cross border traders and information provided has helped in raising awareness and increase knowledge of traders on their rights and opportunities. These resulted in informal cross-border trade (ICBT) with Rwanda's neighbours accounting for 10% of the country's total exports, valued at US\$ 101 million in 2019. This has had diverse positive impact on cross border communities, raising livelihoods and increasing economic opportunities. It is estimated that 74% of ICBTs are women, while 90% of these women traders rely on cross border trade as their sole source of income<sup>10</sup>. Other projects implemented by the NTFC members and TMEA as part of the TFA, such as the One Stop Border Post (OSBP) have benefited small-scale traders especially women by providing more security associated with harassment and gender-based violence, as well as reduced time, money and border clearances required by 30%<sup>11</sup>. Specifically, under activities funded by the NTFC support project, interventions aimed at enhancing community understanding and awareness on COVID-19 preventative measures, protocols on trade facilitation and movement of people during the peak of the pandemic. The target group for the sensitization included border officials, clearing, and forwarding agents, border communities, local authorities, and women associations in ICBT. Additionally, the SMS reporting platform is

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<sup>10</sup> UNWOMEN, 2012. "Report Meeting on Policy and Strategy Development to Promote Cross- Border Trade. Rubavu, 8 February 2012".

<sup>11</sup> World Bank, 2011d. "Risky Business: Poor Women Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes Region of African". Africa Trade Policy Note No.11

confirmed by 10 women interviewed as a confidential reporting mechanism that has enabled them report some of the issues, they encounter in ICBT that they previously could not report openly without fear of repercussions. In conclusion, the National Export Strategy developed with support from TMEA and input from the NTFC support project TA contains a gender and family proportion strategic component that focuses on mechanisms in trade facilitation that enhance women's participation in trade. Overall, though not explicitly elaborated in the NTFC support project's ToC, strategic interventions implemented by NTFC member organisations has contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment from a trade perspective.

### **1.12.2 POVERTY REDUCTION**

The GoR's NST1 top four priorities, out of eight, for economic transformation are productive job creation, accelerated growth of exports, accelerated industrialisation and development of hard infrastructure for trade competitiveness. These four areas aim at improving the livelihood of Rwandans by increasing individual and household incomes and generating national revenues necessary to address social challenges that exacerbate poverty. The NTFC support project has been a main contributor to these areas by providing strategic guidance and technical resources to develop frameworks and interventions that are contributing to sustainable development and catalysing delivery of the four priorities. For example, by simplification of trade procedures through interventions like the STR, small-scale traders were enabled to be more competitive, especially in CBT, which ultimately translates to reducing inequalities, job creation and poverty reduction. However, the contribution to poverty reduction needs to be made more explicit in the project results chain and M&E arrangements by integrating results and performance measures that track project contribution to poverty reduction, otherwise project impact on poverty is inconclusive.

### **1.12.3 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT**

The NTFC support project has contributed to climate change adaptation and mitigation both directly and indirectly. The direct impact on climate change has been through the project's support to automation of systems and processes. Automating for example the NTBs reporting system and facilitating the automation of processes such as the Rwanda electronic single window (ReSW) and its associated processes like the SPS certification application, exporters certificates, license convergence and the others, has contributed in several ways to climate change mitigation. This is mainly through reducing use of paper and elimination of trips to process the now automated procedures. These two outputs will continue to reduce the carbon footprint of trade processes. The indirect contribution of the NTFC project is through its support to other RCP projects that are implementing mostly trade facilitation infrastructure projects. Through NTFC members such as MININFRA and RTDA, projects such as the OSBP and lake Kivu harbours projects, GHG emissions will be substantially reduced by mostly decreasing congestion, transit time and through use of more efficient transport means such as water transport instead of road. The NTFC support project's contribution to this is mainly by bringing together all stakeholders for more coordinated implementation, as well as facilitating development of strategies and policies such as the National Trade Policy and the NES III, that integrate such strategic interventions, linking them to trade facilitation.

## **2. LESSONS LEARNT**

Design and Implementation of the NTFC support project has generated knowledge from experiences which offer opportunities for scaling-up, replication and adjustments. In addition to the lessons that highlight opportunities and gaps in implementation and design, key challenges were identified during this evaluation.

### **2.1 PROJECT LEARNINGS**

Enhancing effectiveness of the NTFC has been instrumental in strengthening inter-agency collaboration for trade facilitation. The strengthened NTFC has managed to bring together at least 20 public institutions that in various ways play a role in trade processes and procedures. The coordinated approach to inter-agency collaboration has mostly been effective in identification and accelerating resolution of NTBs affecting exporters and importers in Rwanda and the Region.

Engagement and inclusion of public institutions, that do not necessarily fall under the implementing agencies of MINICOM has contributed to many of them realising and appreciating their roles in trade facilitation, and more specifically the WTO TFA. Organisations consulted during this evaluation confirmed how they previously considered their roles as primarily enforcement of rules and procedures such as standardisation, compliance, security, among others. However, through sensitisation on the TFA articles and Rwanda's obligations, many realised their role in fulfilling the national commitments, and their need to rethink how they approach their work with the private sector.

Many government-private sector collaboration arrangements have tended to only integrate the private sector apex organisation PSF and somewhat assumed all private players are inherently represented through such institutional structures. However, the NTFC was more pragmatic in its approach and integrated relevant private sector associations, particularly those directly engaged in export and import trade. These included transporters, freight forwarders, horticulture, coffee and tea exporters, manufacturers, and logistics handlers. In addition, civil society organisations were included to ensure the voices of the small-scale traders such as ICBT are included in the trade facilitation discussion. This inclusive approach to cooperation and dialogue has been very effective for example in identification of NTBs, development of practical solutions to problems and ensuring focus on priorities for traders.

The NTFC's work in strengthening cross-border collaboration and cooperation through the EAC secretariat has been influential in contributing to delivery of the project outcomes, especially, elimination of NTBs. Private sector associations consulted confirm how addressing NTBs encountered in partner states before 2017 usually took more than one to two years to be resolved, with many usually going unresolved. However, since creation of the NTFC there is a noticeable difference in the cooperation and dialogue with EAC partner states and more proactiveness to recognise and address reported NTBs. This is also reported to have increased recognition of private sector organisations in the region, for example Rwandan clearing agents' licenses are now recognised in partner states, and they can freely operate and raise issues within those partner states with more confidence than before.

Much as the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on project progress and trade, especially cross-border trade, the pandemic provided an opportunity for all public and private sector organisations, even those not in the NTFC, to recognise the importance and role of trade facilitation in the country. Trade facilitation measures including process optimization, cost

reduction, transparency and cooperation enhancement, and technology were leveraged to facilitate continuity of cross-border trade. Stakeholders consulted realised that almost all implementing measures in the TFA are necessary to ensure trade and transit continue, especially for critical supplies in times of crisis.

Success of the NTFC requires continued regional cooperation and integration. Need for regional cooperation was re-emphasised in the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Containment of the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring continuity of trade required design and enforcement of coherent and congruent standard operating procedures across both sides of the borders. In cases where this did not happen, the disruption to trade was greatly felt and its impact detrimental.

Although the NTFC and its member organisations have continued to strive to harmonize procedures, process and standards and ensure mutual recognition of product standards in EAC, many of the locally encountered NTBs still relate to harmonisation of standards. The NTFC created the SPS and TBT thematic working group to address most of these technical barriers. However, consultations with members of this group indicate the working group has not been very active since its creation. Most of the member organisations still primarily focus on their mandates and given the recent establishment of key members in this group such as Rwanda inspectorate and competitiveness agency (RICA) and Rwanda Food and Drug Authority (RFDA), there is still substantial effort required to revitalise the working group.

Despite the positive outcomes of the project, stakeholders identify issues that impacted delivery of some project outcomes or could affect sustainability of the NTFC and its work. There is dissatisfaction expressed with the planning and coordination of NTFC meetings that stakeholders describe as not always relevant to all members. There are instances of meetings that convene all members of the NTFC to discuss issues that do not necessarily concern all members. For example, stakeholders in private sector identify meetings to discuss policies that they hardly have any background or potential influence on, which limits their participation in discussions and unintendedly affects their subsequent participation.

The NTFC's operations and effectiveness largely depends on availability of its members, yet many claim to be overwhelmed with their primary responsibilities including membership to other committees. This is affecting productivity of technical working groups and the NTFC generally. The effectiveness of the NTFC will continue to require the presence of an assertive coordinator and proactive steering committee.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected implementation of the NTFC support project, planned interventions of the NTFC and overall trade activities. Critical activities such as the EAC Time Bound Programme on NTBs was not reviewed as scheduled in 2020, EAC regional forum on NTBs and other EAC trade facilitation meetings were continually postponed because of mostly technical difficulties encountered in getting required quorum. Planned NTFC training and sensitisation workshops that were planned mostly in late 2021, as well as NTFC meetings and technical work group meetings had to be conducted virtually after a couple of postponements. This affected the project momentum and quality of interaction.

For an NTB to be accepted it is required to have documented evidence, as instructed by a directive from the EAC council of ministers. However, this has continued to be difficult for many emerging NTBs, making it difficult to report them and more cumbersome to address.

Review of resolution of NTBs recorded by the project as resolved indicates that in some cases, what is provided from a partner state is clarification rather than resolution<sup>12, 13, 14</sup>. This implies that the bottleneck encountered by importers and exporters continues to exist but is recorded as an eliminated NTB. Therefore, tracing and tracking some NTBs is challenging.

Although MINICOM leads the management and coordination of the NTFC, the committees' operations are still substantially dependent on external support from development partners. The NTFC coordinator position for the first three years was filled by the support project TA consultant and is currently occupied by a resource also funded externally. The reliance on external financing for the NTFC coordination and failure to embed the committee in the GoR structure is assessed as a major risk to sustainability.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

**Relevance:** The NTFC support project ToC, summarised in its results chain, is assessed as rational with logical interlinkages between outputs, through short-term and intermediate outcomes to project impact "improved trading standards". The only shortcoming is in the project impact that is assessed as the means to an end that would rather have been broadened to demonstrate the results of improved trade standards such as exports' contributions to GDP and poverty reduction. Regarding project fitness for purpose, the evaluation concludes there is strong alignment between objectives of the project and the mandates and missions of the organisations that comprise the NTFC. Ultimately, the end beneficiaries, exporters, and importers', needs fit well into the project targets.

**Coherence:** The NTFC support project is assessed as a key contributor to realisation of Rwanda's vision 2050, NST1 and the NES III. As the vision strives to realise "competitiveness and integration", the NST1 operationalises the vision through strategic interventions to reduce the costs of doing business and trade facilitation. At sector level, the NES III proposes trade intervention to reduce costs and regulations, ease cross-border movement and eliminate barriers to trade. The NTFC support project is assessed a pivotal initiative that has contributed by providing upstream technical resources needed to implement these strategic interventions at national level, while synergising with other TMEA projects that provide the financial resources needed to implement the interventions.

**Effectiveness:** Overall the NTFC support project achieved satisfactory effectiveness as shown in the table below where five out of the seven short-term outcomes are assessed as achieved. There is sufficient evidence that the support project has increased compliance to trade facilitation measures confirmed by the increase in implementation of TFA measures from 26.89% at the start of the project to 83.2% in March 2021. The project has also facilitated enhancing effectiveness of the NTFC, mostly through TFA awareness creation and capacity building that have contributed to achievement of the four outcomes that relate to institutional and operational capacity, reporting and monitoring of NTBs. The partially achieved outcomes are mostly from interventions whose implementation was affected by restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and quantification of NTBs that is a challenge.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://tradebarriers.org/complaint/NTB-000-916>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.tradebarriers.org/resolved\\_complaints/page:2](https://www.tradebarriers.org/resolved_complaints/page:2)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.tradebarriers.org/resolved\\_complaints/page:2](https://www.tradebarriers.org/resolved_complaints/page:2)

**Table 11: Summary performance of the NTFC support short-term outcomes**

Short-term outcomes	Performance
1.0: Enhanced compliance of trade facilitation measures	Achieved
2.1: Enhanced NMC operational capacity to coordinate the elimination of NTBs	Achieved
2.2: Enhanced NMC officials' capacity on quantification of NTBs	Partially Achieved
2.3: Improved private sector awareness on identification and reporting of NTBs	Achieved
2.4: Enhanced NMC institutional capacity and prioritisation of NTBs	Achieved
2.5: Improved cooperation and dialogue in the resolution of existing NTBs	Partially Achieved
2.6: Improved NMC monitoring and reporting of NTBs	Achieved

**Efficiency:** The NTFC project has achieved efficiency in operations as well as in administrative management and coordination. In operations the project realised value for money through ensuring resources are economically utilised by applying competitive bidding processes in procurement and leveraging the TA as a resource to perform more than NTFC support work as well as using the young professionals, paid for by another project to support delivery. Adapting to virtual implementation of activities saved money and ensured efficiency by completing planned activities in disruptive times. Also, equity and effectiveness were realised through delivery of outputs that are being utilised by most stakeholders and contributing to consumer welfare. The project management and coordination arrangements are assessed as coherent with no redundancies or duplication.

**Impact:** The evaluation was conducted within less than a year since the completion of the project. Therefore, conclusive findings on impact at a national level, were not expected or assessed, given the time factor. However, there is anecdotal change identified that demonstrates the projects contribution to long-term change. The most significant change is the reported US\$ 150 administrative burden cost reductions and 3 hours reduced in waiting times, attributed to simplification of trade procedures. Additionally, NTBs resolved during the project time have contributed to specific outcomes for especially traders that encounter the specified barriers. There are also unintended results such as the projects contribution to knowledge transfer that enabled the NTFC sustain the position of a coordinator and other practices such as policy advocacy through evidence-based research products fostered by the project.

**Sustainability:** The project results are assessed as sustainable mainly because the project implementation was embedded in an existing public institutional structure with international obligations to the WTO that will continue to be realised in absence of the project support. However, the main threat to sustainability of the work and results of the project is in the considerable reliance on external funders to sustain the management and coordination of the NTFC. Also competing organisation priorities and funds constrains to implement TFA measures threaten continuity.

### 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recommendations are formulated based mostly on gaps observed in the process, suggestions to address key challenges and leverage potential opportunities identified.

1. **MINICOM needs to prioritise sustainability of the NTFC.** Priority focus should be given to embedding the NTFC secretariat into the ministry's organisational structure and integrating the coordination role and secretariat plans and activities in the ministry's work plans, budgets and performance contracts. Consider resource allocations from member organisations, especially key national implementing partners, RRA and PSF.

2. **Public sector organisations' representation in the NTFC should be strengthened.** The focal points from ministries and agencies need to be assigned to the NTFC as permanent representatives and their role in representing their organisations integrated in their terms of employment /job descriptions, performance targets and appraisals.
3. **The NTFC needs to be more adaptive and relevant by revising its scope of work** to more than the WTO TFA framework as the scope of trade increases from EAC regional trade to continental trade shaped by the AfCFTA. Going forward trade facilitation should be addressed from a continental perspective and efforts to resolve NTBs increase focus to continent barriers.
4. **The NTFC communication strategy should be strengthened.** The National strategy for elimination of NTBs incorporates a communication plan that integrates information, communication, and advocacy. However, there is no clear communication strategy or how objectives of communication will be realised. Going forward the NTFC needs to strengthen its information sharing and dissemination interventions to not only enhance visibility of the structure and contributions to trade facilitation, but also as a mechanism to increase use of some outputs of the TF work such as the TIP and others.
5. **Evidence-based research for policy and practice should be an NTFC priority.** Research in areas of restrictions to trade, TF mechanisms and others that influence policy, inform advocacy, and strengthen implementation should be reinforced. Study reports, policy papers and issues papers should be included in NTFC performance targets.
6. **M&E of NTFC work should be strengthened.** MINICOM should be facilitated to implement a robust M&E framework and dedicated resources availed to ensure its implementation in line with the developed trade facilitation roadmap and NTBs elimination strategy.
7. **Continue to prioritise institutional and human capacity development** of the NTFC, including that of the private sector members. With the advent of the AfCFTA, the members of the NTFC need to remain constantly updated, regularly educated, and consistently informed of latest statuses of policies, actions, and resources relevant to TF.
8. **Develop mechanisms to strengthen the thematic working groups.** Opportunities such as related development partners' projects that focus on thematic areas such as SPS should be engaged to support thematic groups realised national objectives.
9. **Integrate resource mobilisation for TF in the roles of the NTFC.** Various trade facilitation proposals have been adopted but with limited resources within implementing organisations to realise results. The NTFC can support fill this resource gap.

## APPENDICES

### A 1: CONSULTED PERSONS

	Name	Position	Institution
1	Patience Mutesi	Country Manager	TMEA
2	David Butera	Project Manager/Technical Lead	TMEA
3	Jackline Murekatete	Senior Project Manager Trade Facilitation	TMEA
4	Safari Vincent	Trade Facilitation Expert - Consultant	MINICOM
5	Chantal Tuyishimire	NTFC Coordinator	MINICOM
6	Antoine Kajangwe	Director General Trade and Investment	MINICOM
7	James Tayebwa	Cross Border Trade Policy Specialist	MINICOM
8	Martin Ngirabatware	Head of Trade Facilitaion	PSF
9	Theogene Dusabumuremyi	Freight and Logistics Senior Engineer	MININFRA
10	Obald Hakizimana	Economist in charge of Research and Modelling	MINECOFIN
11	Josias Muhayimana	Joint Risk Management Committee – Customs	RRA
12	Erick Ruganintwari	Quality Assurance and Regulatory Division Manager	NAEB
13	Philip Nzaire	In-Charge Import Inspection	NAEB
14	Beatrice Uwumukiza	Director General	RICA
15	Ildephonse NIRAGIRE	Director of farm products and processing inspection	RICA
16	Angellah Kayesu	Food Industry and Outlets Inspection and Compliance Specialist	RFDA
17	Liliane Kamanzi	Director Of Standards Publications, Training, and Technical Assistance Unit	RSB
18	Ruth Ikiriza	Legislative Translation Analyst	LRC
19	Edward Karamuzi	Executive Secretary	RWAFFA
20	Robert Rukundo	Chairman	HEAR
21	Vianney Kabera	Former Chairman	HEAR
22	Valens Nkeshimana	Ag. Executive Secretary	CEPAR
23	Aboubakar Ntakarakurwa	Coordinator	ACPLRWA

## **A 2.1: CASE STUDY ONE: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR TRADE FACILITATION IN A PANDEMIC**

### **Introduction**

Rwanda recorded its first COVID-19 case on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and a nation-wide lockdown was instituted on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 for 6 weeks until 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Even after easing of the nation-wide lockdown, restrictions including limited cross-country travel continue to be implemented. During lockdown, trade across borders continued but was restricted to cargo trucks. After the lockdown, all workplaces were instructed to operate at only 30% capacity, including trading facilities such as markets. International travel resumed on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

Imports and exports across national territory and cargo in transit continued to be facilitated. New clearance guidelines were issued and published on the Rwanda Trade Information Portal (TIP) targeting traders and other stakeholders on how to clear goods while preventing the spread of Covid-19 with priority given to essential goods including food, medicine and preventive equipment and tools.

### **Rationale**

With the new prevention and control measures issued by the Government of Rwanda (GoR), restrictions to movement of people, limitations in physical contact (social distancing), and lowered staffing capacities severely impacted efficiency in supply chains resulting in delays in trade and transit times and increased cost of movement of goods. The average transit time of goods from Mombasa to Kigali increased from 165 to 234 hours between 2018 and 2020<sup>15</sup>, and 90 to 201 hours from Dar es Salaam to Kigali<sup>16</sup>.

Export-import are complex transactions with several intertwined steps including sales, transportation, insurance, payment, and customs clearance. In each of these steps vast amounts of paperwork are involved including issuance of commercial invoices, packing lists, certificates of inspection, export and import licenses, bills of lading, insurance, customs bonds,

customs declarations, etc. Conventionally, this paperwork was exchanged in physical formats among several parties from different countries involved in one or more phases of the transactions.

To address the delays in trade and transit and its impact on the economy and livelihoods of people in Rwanda and neighbouring destination countries, especially Burundi and DRC, the GoR, particularly through organisations in the NTFC leveraged trade facilitation measures, especially those based on information and communication technologies (ICT) to address the bottlenecks that were affecting movement of goods and cargo.

### **Description**

Through implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, use of technology in automation of trade procedures and digitisation of documents were leveraged as a mechanism to speed up processes in trade and customs declarations. Online publication of trade information on platforms such as the TIP customs automation, e-payment, the Rwanda electronic single window (ReSW) and acceptance of digitised documents were identified and utilised as a solution to the blockages resulting from the COVID-19 restrictions, as well as a mechanism to promote safe trade.

Subsequently, spearheaded by members of the NTFC and supported by other TMEA projects, during the peak of the pandemic, Rwanda Inspectorate, Competition and Consumer Protection Authority (RICA) removed the requirements for traders to physically collect hard copies of SPS and Veterinary certificates from their offices by allowing use of scanned copies. Relevant private sector associations such as the Horticulture Exporters Association of Rwanda expressed relief from this action as they were facilitated to expedite exportation of their perishable produce. To follow suite, all the other public agencies in

<sup>15</sup> Northern corridor transport observatory report, NCTTCA, 2021

<sup>16</sup> Northern corridor transport observatory report, CCTTCA, 2021

the agriculture and livestock import and export logistics chains resorted to electronic issuance of certificates of conformity to enable export of produce. these included, National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB), Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority (RFDA) and Rwanda Standards Board (RSB).

Furthermore, as part of the safe trade facilitation process in 2020, to minimize spread of COVID-19 across land borders, especially through truck drivers that were identified as critical risk, new SoPs for transport and transit were established. The GoR instituted that Rwanda-bound goods be offloaded at the borders or transshipped at entry points (Rusumo and Kagitumba Border Posts) except for perishable goods and petroleum products which would be allowed to proceed with a police escort. Later in the year, by September 2020, the police escort service was replaced with more cost-effective GPS tracking technologies fitted on all trucks and allowed to proceed to cargo destinations. This move to ensure continuity of cross-border trade was complemented by implementation of the Regional Electronic Cargo and Driver Tracking System (RECDTS). The system was linked to the national Laboratory repository for all COVID-19 results for each Partner State. Only negative results were automatically linked to the RECDTS. This enabled sharing of information across all transport corridors through a secure mechanism. This was developed by the EAC secretariate with support from TMEA.

### Outcomes

Following automation of the SPS certificate issuance by RICA, there has been a reported 12% reduction in the administrative burden cost for traders. This contributed to reduced costs of trade for exporters of agriculture and livestock products during the pandemic.

Use of electronic tracking of all tracks carrying essentials, especially perishable goods and petroleum products, contributed to ensuring price stabilisation

and continued availability, averting a consumer goods crisis in the pandemic.

### Impact

Subsequently, Rwanda achieved a strong economic recovery in 2021, realising a GDP increase of 11% in the first 9 months of the year following a recession in 2020. The largest contributor to the recovery was traditional exports (tea, coffee, cassiterite, wolfram and coltan) that increased by 35% in those first months.

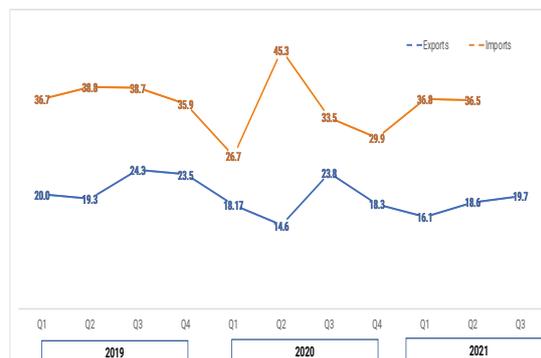


Figure 5: Balance of trade 2019 - 2021

The spike in exports in the third quarter of 2020 is mostly attributed to technology-based TF measure implemented in that period that facilitated continuity of trade at the peak of the pandemic.

### The future

Full automation of trade procedures to create an entirely virtual experience for users encompassing all permits, licenses, and clearance procedures for the trade will require higher levels of coordination and collaboration between border agencies, sharing of trade information and interfacing of electronic systems to expedite movement of goods.

Full digital trade will require change in mindset, good will and dedication from trade facilitation agencies to initiate the required reforms including amendment of regulatory frameworks that make mandatory the exchange of physical trade documents and information. It will also require embracing an immediate switch to paperless trading to fully mitigate the potential implications of COVID-19 and at the same time safeguard and maintain the regional and global trade flow of information on trade in goods.

## A 2.2: CASE STUDY TWO: IMPROVING TRUCK DRIVERS' WELLBEING THROUGH NTB ELIMINATION

### Introduction

Rwanda is a landlocked country and relies mainly on land transport in export and import of goods. This emphasises the importance of trucker drivers and the Association of Rwanda truck drivers (ACPLRWA) in the country's economic development. ACPLRWA has the mandate of assisting truck drivers in addressing challenges encountered in their work and keeps them informed about issues and important developments affecting their line of business.

Rwandan truck drivers endured challenges along EAC highways including high cost of bribes, time wastage negotiating with traffic police, dwell time at ports and borders and overlapping administrative procedures that affected their efficiency. The situation was escalated during the COVID -19 pandemic.

Introduction of the NTFC and placing the institutional structure at the forefront of identifying eliminating and monitoring NTBs in Rwanda and within partner states contributed to providing a coordinated mechanism to address the challenges faced by truck drivers. This coordination mechanism has contributed to tackling several NTBs making ports, borders, and local administrative procedures favourable and safe for trade.



### Rationale

Truck drivers were on roads for days and nights mainly due to challenges such as frequent delays in fulfilling administrative procedures and numerous weighing bridges, which contributed to their insecurity especially from robberies. This in turn affected the sustainability of

businesses in the transport and logistics sector.

### Description

ACPLRWA was invited by MINICOM to be members of the NTFC, mainly to participate in elimination of NTBs through implementation of various trade facilitation measures and reforms to ease trade and reduce trade related costs and time for business community. This aligned with the association's mandate of advocating and defending members interest and addressing challenges encountered in their work. This greatly inspired them to participate and contribute to achieve NTFC objective and enhance efficiency of their transport services.

The association has participated in different committee's activities including identifying and reporting of different NTBs, contributing to reforms and suggesting new solutions to counter existing NTBs. For example, suggestions from the association resulted in measures to reduce the number of weighing bridges along the corridors and introduction of seals for cargo trucks among alternative and affordable measures to address risks associated with transportation.

### Outcomes

Participation of the truck driver association in the NTFC has contributed to easier, faster cheaper, safer and a more pleasant driving environment along the trade and transit routes. This improvement is attributed by the leadership of ACPLRWA to the reduction of weighing bridges, streamlined customs procedures, introduction of single customs and One Stop Border Posts among others. These trade facilitation interventions have significantly reduced workloads in clearance of goods, transit time and related costs. Immediate reporting upon identifying NTBs has made roads safer for truck drivers. For example, truck drivers can report robberies and corrupt police officers along the corridors and access

immediate support. Truck drivers also acknowledge faster resolution or clarification of NTBs from members member states.

*A cargo truck from Kigali to Mombasa or Dar es Salam took weeks but now it takes a few days, never exceeding a week. This is mostly because of reduced weighing bridges, fewer administrative procedures at the borders, installation of the electronic cargo tracking system and introduction of the electronic single window system at customs.*

ACPLRWA Representative

The truck driver association is also able to relate the awareness created and knowledge acquired from training and sensitisation activities organised by the NTFC to their ability to identify and report NTBs, especially via the SMS reporting

system. Also, knowledge of how to use the ReSW has facilitated those that are conversant with ICTs to navigate cross-border customs and ports procedures much faster.

### **Impact**

There is evident reduction in time and costs for truck drivers using both North and Central corridors, two major gateways for Rwandan exports and imports.

Truck drivers recognize that the reduction in time spent in transportation has not only improved their work environment but has also enable them to spend more time with their families and increased their incomes as they now spend less on bribes and other facilities such as meals and accommodation during travel.

### **A 3: TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

#### **End of the project Evaluation**

#### **Project Title: Technical Assistance to support the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM)**

#### **Introduction and Background**

##### **1. Introduction**

TradeMark East Africa supported the NTFC through the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) to eliminate Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and implement the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) through a project implemented from May 2018 to May 2021. Rwanda established National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) in September 2016 to drive the process of reducing NTBs and implementing the TFA. Through the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) housed at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) and with support of USAID through TradeMark East Africa (TMEA), the country has been at the forefront in implementing trade facilitation initiatives and reforms meant at facilitating cross border trade (export, import and transit) including implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Further, the technical support provided by USAID through TMEA was geared towards improvement in the operations of the NTFC for effective advocacy in the elimination of NTBs affecting Rwanda which hinders theseamless movement of goods across borders and restricts access to markets.

TradeMark East Africa (TMEA) is an aid-for-trade organisation that was established in 2010 with the aim of growing prosperity in East Africa through increased trade. It has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya and a presence in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia and Somaliland, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. TMEA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by the development agencies of the following countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, UK, and USA. TMEA works closely with East African Community (EAC) institutions, national governments, national government institutions and bodies, the private sector and civil society organisations to achieve its core objective of developing a sustainable and inclusive trade environment to improve total welfare of communities and households in Eastern Africa.

TMEA's Theory of Change (TOC) is anchored on two strategic outcomes: (i) Reduced Barriers to Trade; and (ii) Improved Business Competitiveness. TMEA is working with several partners and trade agencies in theregion to remove barriers to trade.

##### **2. Background**

Article 23(2) of the WTO TFA calls for the establishment of a national committee on Trade Facilitation or the designation of an existing mechanism to facilitate both domestic coordination and implementation of provisions of the agreement. The TFA contains special and differential treatment provisions for developing and least developed countries. There are 3 categories of provisions A, B, and C. The provisions determine when members will implement individual provisions of the agreement and also to identify provisions that they can only implement once they receive technical assistance and support for capacity building. In order to effectively coordinate the implementation of TFA, the NTFC was legally established and then launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016, to fast-track implementation of trade facilitation reforms and initiatives as well as advocate for removal of NTBs Rwanda established the NTFC to oversee coordinate this work.

Rwanda's efforts to facilitate trade across borders aim to provide a framework for Rwanda to realize its economic transformation as outlined in the NST1 expected to lead to

increased trade, increased economic prosperity which will in turn contribute to reduced poverty. In this regard, Rwanda recognizes the importance of removing internal and external NTBs as a strategy of improving the country's overall economic competitiveness.

### **3. General Objective of the evaluation**

The purpose of the evaluation is to establish and document the impact and effectiveness of project interventions to render accountability to donors. The evaluation is expected to provide data on the performance, impact and sustainability of project interventions. The findings and recommendations will contribute to a learning process which enables TMEA to draw lessons from its experience, assessing the extent to which the outcomes of the project have been achieved, determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions and document new knowledge and important topics for further inquiry, action, lobbying and influence.

#### **Specific Objectives of the Evaluation**

Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, Impact and sustainability of project interventions and activities.

- On relevance- assess whether project interventions were geared towards the right thing;
- On coherence- assess whether the project interventions fits well in trade ecosystem.
- On effectiveness- assess whether the project interventions achieved the intended objective
- On efficiency- assess whether the project resources were utilized optimally
- On impact- assess whether project interventions generated impact (what impact and who benefited or suffered- the intended and unintended outcomes). The evaluation should pay particular attention to change in time and cost associated with logistical processes of exporting and importing goods in Rwanda.
- On sustainability- assess whether the benefits of the project will continue even after the end of TMEA support.
- Identify and document key lessons learned and best practices and to propose practical recommendations for follow-up interventions.

### **4. Evaluation Methodology**

It is expected that the consultant will assess the project's results logic (**Theory of Change**) and draw from the same in the evaluation of various aspects as articulated in the objectives of the assignment. The consultant must employ multiple mechanisms to ensure data quality and appropriate levels of validation. Bidders are required to justify the evaluation approach they intend to use. The Consultant is also expected to use a combination of primary and secondary research techniques, that includes among others, literature/desk review, primary data collection and synthesis, informal and formal stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions and data triangulation. Stakeholder interviews are mandatory. Interviews and data collection activities should be carried out in a manner that observes ethical conduct, confidentiality. The methodology design should be developed by the consultant, however due consideration should be given to the following in the process of data collection, analysis, and storage.

- a. **Representative sampling:** The consultant will be expected to present clear sampling methodology to be applied in the selection of respondents and stakeholders who will be consulted and interviewed during this assignment.

- b. **Existing data collection resources:** The consultant is expected to liaise closely with relevant partners such as MINICOM, RRA, PSF, Rwanda NMC and where necessary the EAC Secretariat.
- c. **Adherence to TMEA's data standardization guidelines:** The methodology that the consultant will develop shall, at the minimum, be compatible with TMEA data standardization guidelines ensuring that best data collection and management practices are observed. This includes the use of computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI) technologies to collect high-quality and high-frequency data. The guidelines will be shared by TMEA.
- d. **COVID-19 Protocols:** The Consultant, in the course of this assignment, shall observe and comply with the applicable COVID-19 guidelines and protocols as issued by the Government from time to time. The COVID-19 protocols to be observed by the Consultant should be documented in the methodology section of the Technical Proposal.

#### 5. Evaluation Type:

End of project evaluation that intends to give feedback on achievement of project objectives, effectiveness of project implementation and lessons for future programming.

#### 6. Evaluation scope:

The evaluation will assess the project implementation period between May 2018- May 2021 for activities conducted under the Technical Assistance to support the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) Secretariat in the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM).

#### The Evaluation Questions:

The following key questions will guide the end of project evaluation:

##### Relevance - Assess design and focus of the project

To what extent did the projects' interventions respond to beneficiaries' needs and priorities (doing the right thing)?

##### Coherence

To what extent were the projects' interventions developed in partnership with Government partners and aligned with the strategies, goals and objectives of those organisations?

How was the project's collaboration with PSF, MINICOM, the Government of Rwanda in general, national institutions, development partners, and the Steering Committee?

##### Effectiveness

To what extent did the projects' interventions achieve and/or exceed targeted (objectives) outputs, short- term and intermediate outcomes as per the monitoring plans and the logical framework/results chain? What are the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

Was the project effective in delivering desired/planned results?

##### Efficiency

To what extent did the Trade Facilitation and NTBs projects' interventions represent Value for Money (VfM)? Of Project Implementation - did the actual or expected results (outputs and outcomes) justify the costs incurred? Were the resources effectively utilized? - Did project activities overlap and/or duplicate other similar interventions (funded nationally and /or by other donors? Are there more efficient ways and means of delivering more and better results (outputs and outcomes) with the available inputs?

## Sustainability

To what extent are the Project interventions' benefits likely to continue after the cessation of TMEA's support?

NB: In all the above the consultant needs to draw the main lessons that have emerged and make recommendations, which should form comprehensive proposals for future interventions based on the current evaluation findings

### 7. Evaluation Products/Deliverables

The evaluator/firm will be expected to submit the following deliverables in line with agreed deadlines:

- A detailed inception report: containing evaluation methodology, work plan/schedule and draft data collection tools. This should be submitted after the introductory session with TMEA and desk review. The detailed inception report should comprehensively demonstrate the technical approach (and datacollection tools) that will be effectively and efficiently address the evaluation questions within the consultancy timeframe
- Draft evaluation report to be submitted after 20 working days
- **Validation workshop and presentation of preliminary evaluation findings:** validation workshop will bring together all the concerned beneficiaries to share initial findings, generate consensus on results and collaboratively develop recommendations.
- **Final Evaluation report:** maximum 25 pages, including a stand-alone executive summary, with further information included as references and annexes additional to the main report. This will be submitted to TMEA Rwanda Country Programme, by the date stated in the Agreement. It should be:
  - a. Thoroughly edited, well-structured and designed.
  - b. Clear and concise, limited to essential points.
  - c. Detailed materials attached as annexes.
  - d. Must be presented in English.
  - e. Main findings of the evaluation should be presented with a view to making recommendations.
- Other documents/ materials: such as raw data files, quantitative data files, photographs taken among other products during the evaluation exercise. To be submitted together with Final evaluation report.
- Two Significant Change Stories: each between 1 and 2 pages, font size 11. To be submitted togetherwith final evaluation report.

### 8. Duration

The evaluation is expected to take 30 working days starting from Mid-December 2021 to End February 2022. This period includes the contracting, desk review, presentation of findings and submission of final deliverables.

#### Consultant Competencies

The consultant/Firm is expected to meet the following specifications:

- Must have a master's degree in Economics, Statistics, Mathematics, Development Studies, International Trade, or relevant social science field. Certificates MUST be provided as evidence.

- At least 5 years of relevant experience in conducting research studies, surveys, or evaluations. Evidence of previous assignments MUST be provided E.g. references letters
- Good knowledge and proven experience in research design, implementation, and data analysis.
- Sound knowledge of the context of trade in the EAC and the geographical scope of the study. In- depth knowledge and understanding of international and regional trade, barriers and issues affecting trade and on-going mechanisms to address the problems at the regional level
- Significant experience designing and leading evaluations and/or reviews related to trade including a demonstrable understanding of qualitative and participatory approaches.
- Strong communication skills to facilitate interviews (including remotely), with a range of actors.
- Strong stakeholders' management skills and ability to work flexibly with donors, partner countries, private sector entities; demonstrated ability to manage and sensitive relationships tactfully and productively.
- The selected company should have a quality assurance processes in place.
- Demonstrable experience of producing high-quality, credible reports in English.