

Ministerial pre-conference for the mid-term review (MTR) of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

Building Quality Human Capital for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development in the context of the Istanbul Programme of Action

**26th May, 2016
Antalya, Turkey**

Background

General Assembly Resolution 69/231 has mandated that the UN system undertake a “comprehensive high-level mid-term review (MTR) of the implementation of the Programme of Action” for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The MTR will be held in Antalya, Turkey from 27-29 May 2016. Resolution 69/231 also requested the funds and programmes to contribute to the comprehensive high level mid-term review.

The Governments of Bangladesh, in its capacity the Chair of LDCs, and Turkey, as the host country, as well as the Office for the High Representative of Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Population Fund are organizing a ministerial pre-conference forum to address the challenges of building quality human capital for economic transformation and sustainable development in LDCs, with a focus on policy, planning, programmes, partnerships and sources of funding support. In addition, the forum will address the issue of mobility and its impact on socio-economic transformation in LDCs. The conclusions of the ministerial pre-conference event will be presented to ministers at the beginning of the MTR on Friday 27th May, 2016 and integrated into the outcome of the review. The report of the pre-conference event will also provide elements for action plans for countries to realize the demographic dividend, among others.

The forum will consist of panel discussions based on the following three (3) themes:

1. Investment in youth to realise the demographic dividend and sustainable development in LDCs
2. Place and Mobility for the socio-economic advancement of LDCs
3. Policies and actions for realizing the demographic dividend

A report on the demographic dividend and demographic profiles for each LDC will be provided as background material.

Thematic focus of the forum

Investments in young people for productive employment enhance the potential for expanded markets, sustainable economic growth and a better quality of life. In this context, policies that promote labour-intensive economic growth are critical as a complement to human capital investment. The outcome document of Rio+20 recognized the importance of job creation by investing in and developing sound, effective and efficient economic and social infrastructure and productive capacities, for sustained, inclusive and equitable development. The 2030 Agenda also refers to the need to ensure that all people, particularly women, girls and young people, have access to opportunities for learning and skills development which will ensure their participation in society, even in circumstances of vulnerability and high mobility.

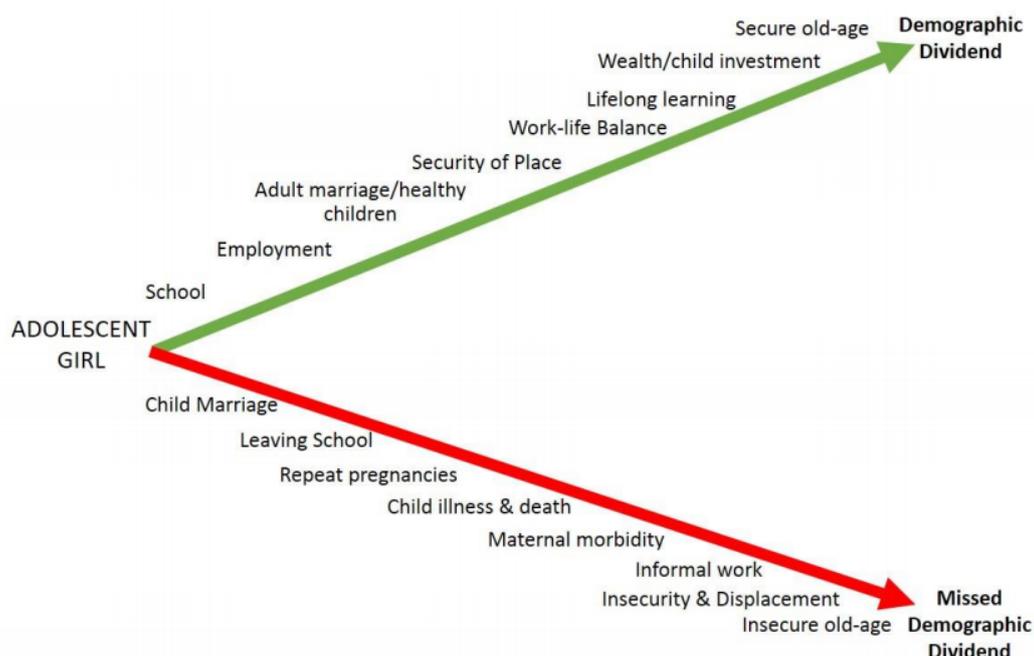
Investments in young people can foster innovation and advance the capabilities of an entire generation in all fields of study, including governance, jurisprudence, management, planning, communications, health, and the arts. Investments in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) contribute to increased industrial innovation, and modern, resource efficient manufacturing, which is needed for a sustainable future. This is particularly critical given that the United Nations General Assembly has endorsed a LDC-focused Technology Bank and Science, Technology and Innovation-supporting mechanism.

While young people make up one quarter of the world population, they represent approximately one third of the population in LDCs. Investments in young people will shape not only their lives, but the future of a world that will be increasingly dependent on them. As many developing countries advance towards a period of demographic transition in which the working age population will grow larger, with a lower proportion of young dependents, their access to the benefits of good health, quality education and decent employment will have transformative effects on development. As a smaller number of children per household generally leads to larger investments per child, more freedom for women to enter the formal workforce, and more household savings for a secure old age, a *demographic dividend* can result.

The Demographic Dividend

Realizing a demographic dividend requires multiple intersecting investments. Yet the most essential, without which no progress will be made, is building the capabilities of people, and ensuring their rights and freedoms to achieve their potential.

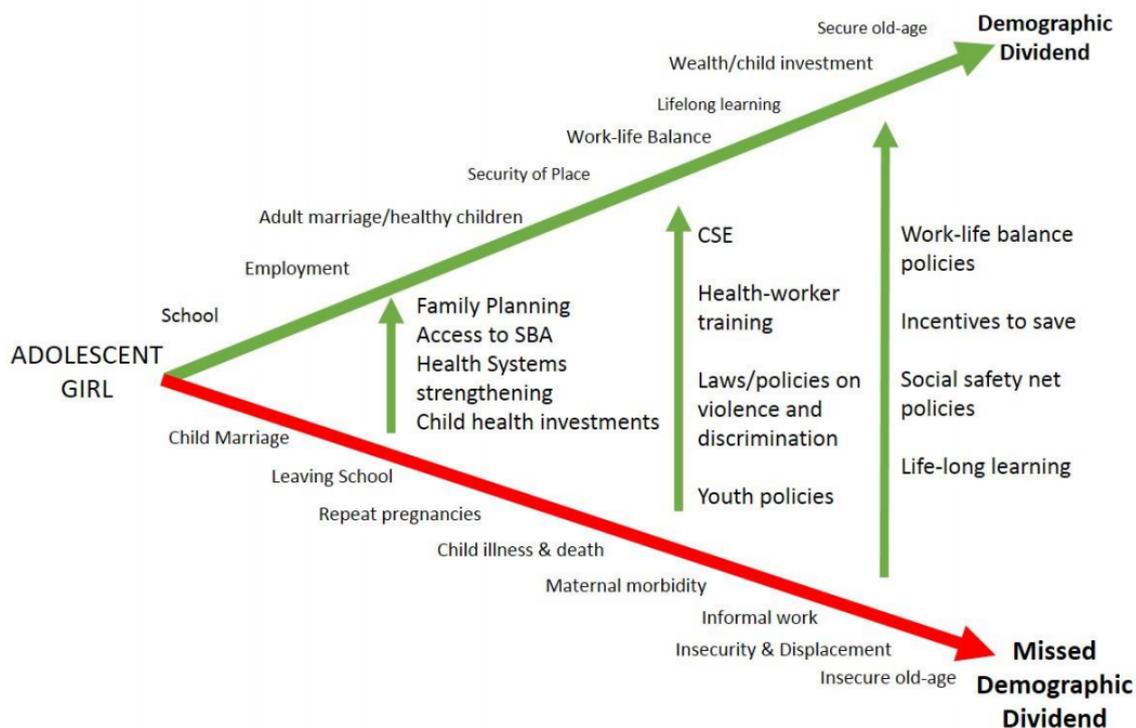
Young people need the chance to gain the education and experience to succeed in a competitive global workplace that demands more skills, education and technical expertise than ever before. Yet, the chance to realize potential is derailed for millions of girls worldwide by child marriage, early and unplanned pregnancies, poor access to health care, and limited education – just because they are female. For the population as a whole, when many people find themselves trapped in this trajectory of restricted opportunities, poor health and limited capabilities, there can be no demographic dividend: an age structure with fewer dependents is unlikely to occur, and each person's ability to achieve their capabilities, save and invest, be resilient in the face of climate change and crisis, and take the risk to innovate, will be permanently undermined. The fulfilment of the right to sexual and reproductive health, therefore, is essential for any society to achieve sustainable development.



Capitalizing on the demographic dividend demands that each country understand the size and distribution of their population, the current and projected age structure, and the pace of population growth. A growing number of analytic tools are available for such “population assessments”, thus shortening the time and resources needed for a situation analysis of national circumstances. *The background materials being prepared by UNFPA for this Ministerial pre-conference include national age-structure profiles for each of the LDCs, and a review of key indicators of empowerment, education and employment.*

National needs must be matched to a sequence of short and medium term investments that assure the rights of all young people to plan their lives, be free of violence and trauma, be assured of essential freedoms and reproductive rights, and with access to quality education and mentoring.

Dividends will be constrained without simultaneous investments in decent job creation, good governance, infrastructure, and a functioning business climate. But all progress will be constrained if the population is under-prepared, and every person, particularly every girl, cannot pursue her education, or navigate her transition to adulthood assured of her human rights. Such assurance includes the freedom to decide when and whom to marry, the timing and number of children, and the security to balance work and family life.



Place and mobility for the socio-economic advancement of LDCs

Populations living in LDCs must navigate life transitions relating to empowerment, education and employment in the midst of significant changes in their security of place and pressure for mobility. The large majority of LDCs are net sending countries with regard to international migration, and in general the flow of international migrants goes from poorer to richer countries, with LDCs as a whole being the point of origin for more than 39 million migrants in 2015. International migration brings significant remittances to LDCs, but may also be responsible for a brain drain which impacts the human resources countries have for innovation and development. Indeed, any significant emigration of doctors and nurses affects the proportion of health-care worker to population ratio and can affect the sustainability of health systems training and delivery. In worst-case scenarios, critical services performed by specialists may no longer become available because there are no new trained cadres to perform them. The emigration of health workers from areas with a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS serves to further destabilize health systems already crippled by staff losses and absenteeism resulting from AIDS-related morbidity and mortality.

In terms of population numbers, the most significant aspect of population mobility is internal migration and displacement, across the spectrum from voluntary (e.g. rural-urban migration) to forced (conflict- or disaster-induced displacement including IDPs). While LDCs with a few exceptions remain majority rural, almost all are experiencing rapid rates of urban population growth – 3.8 percent per year as a whole, a rate that corresponds to a doubling of the urban LDC population in just 20 years. Urbanization generates new opportunities for empowerment, education and employment, but brings risks and challenges given the widespread informality of housing and work, the lack of social protections, and new natural and man-made hazards. Planning for urbanization and population mobility is vital to ensuring that it realizes its transformative development potential.

Yet insecurity of place is a constant threat for many people living in LDCs, whether on a macro scale linked to conflict and natural disaster, or at a micro scale due to poverty, threats of evictions, lack of access to basic services, or limited land tenure or rights. While migration and mobility can be critical strategies for resilience to shocks and crises, far too many are forced to move temporarily and often permanently in LDCs, undermining their efforts to achieve well-being and their ability to succeed in the transitions described above.

LDCs that are currently hosting large numbers of refugees (approximately one in four refugees worldwide live in LDCs, which are home to just 13 percent of global population) face particular challenges in meeting their responsibilities to protect refugees. They need the support of the international community in order to strengthen the delivery of essential services and infrastructure that will serve host communities and refugees, including housing, water and sanitation, education, health care, as well as strengthened security and justice systems.

Format

The ministerial pre-conference forum will be facilitated using the World Economic Forum methodology which is an action-oriented, interactive modality involving ministers and other stakeholders to generate understanding of the demographic dividend linkages and recommendations for the most effective policies, programmes, partnerships and sources of funding for realizing the dividend. The modality will also facilitate understanding of the policy implications for mobility of people and ways to leverage mobility for socio-economic transformation.

Panellists will be guided by the following set of questions:

“Investment in youth to realise the demographic dividend and sustainable development in LDCs”

Questions:

1. What are the principal obstacles to active and productive participation of young people in the social, economic and political life of their communities and countries?
2. Given limited resources and widespread needs, how can building human capacities and health, particularly linked to empowerment, education and employment, receive greater priority in the implementation of the IPoA and the 2030 Agenda?

“Place and Mobility for the socio-economic advancement of LDCs”

Questions:

1. What is the best way to counteract the stereotypical negative perception of migrants that defines mobility and migration as a problem, rather than as a positive force that, given the appropriate policies, can be a means for people to seek out new opportunities resulting in a win-win situation for all?
2. What partnerships, strategies and best practices can facilitate a more welcoming acceptance of, and better support for, migrants and mobile populations, both internal and international, especially in high-risk and humanitarian contexts?

3. What policies can be put in place to attract highly skilled workers, especially in the health and education sectors, back to their countries of origin in order to turn brain drain into brain gain?
4. How can attention to place and mobility be expanded in the MTR and in implementation of the IPoA?

“Policies and actions for realizing the demographic dividend”

Questions:

1. How can governments pursue the kinds of integrated, cross-cutting policies and actions needed to build human capacities and health across the board?
2. How can policies and actions for human capacities and health more effectively reach those being left behind, to ensure the broad-based gains across the population necessary for realizing the demographic dividend?
3. How can we improve data ecosystems to identify and support those young people most in need, especially adolescents, migrants, displaced populations and others who are most frequently uncounted?

Outcome

The outcome will be a report on the key conclusions, recommendations and initiatives for building quality human capital of young people for economic transformation and sustainable development in the context of the IPoA. A summary of the key conclusions of the forum will be presented at the beginning of the MTR and the key conclusions will feed into the negotiated outcome of the MTR.

Organization

A logistics note will be shared with all participants.

Participants

Ministers of Foreign Affairs

Ministers of Planning and Development

United Nations agencies

Private sector representatives

CSO representatives

Other stakeholders