The achievements of the LDCs since 1990 towards the MDGs have been impressive, with many countries recording high economic growth rates and gains in human development. Since 1990, the global Human Development Index value has increased by more than a quarter, while that of LDCs has increased by more than half. That fast progress has improved some countries’ prospects of graduating from LDC status. LDCs as a whole, however, are characterized by constraints such as low per capita income, low level of human development, and economic and structural vulnerabilities. About 400 million people – nearly half the population - live in extreme poverty in LDCs. Within LDCs, the last mile sees poverty, vulnerability, inequalities and exclusion often reinforcing each other. Poor people, for instance, often lack decent shelter, nutrition, or access to finance or clean water, factors which impede their ability to work or live up to their potential. There are also disparities in development progress and poverty reduction within LDCs themselves. Disparities in incomes and living standards are the result of the unevenness of economic development across space and distance, between urban and rural areas, men and women, and ethnic groups.

In order to reach the last mile and permanently improve people’s lives, we need to understand the structural, financial, political and social drivers of inequality and exclusion. More than that, we need to share lessons about the practical and evidence-based solutions which can overcome these constraints, build resilience, and support LDC graduation ambitions under the Istanbul Programme of Action.

With that in mind, UNCDF and UNDP prepared a report for the Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action that presents different lenses for understanding who is being left behind and why that is the case. The report stresses the importance of building long-term resilience, recognizing that in a world of risks, development gains can be unwound. And it highlights - through selected case studies – how these challenges can be overcome so that no one is left behind, and concludes with some recommendations going forward.

The event has two main objectives:

- To share lessons from and identify concrete models and programmes that have worked - and why - in overcoming the last mile challenges in LDCs;
- To share and identify specific lessons and recommendations going forward for how to scale up successes and reach the last mile.

The side event will offer the opportunity to explore some of the following questions:

- What are the primary barriers to reaching the last mile? How can these barriers be overcome?
- How can persistent exclusions and inequalities be addressed in support of LDC graduation goals?
- What financing mechanisms and tools exist to support growth that is inclusive and sustainable?
- What needs to be done differently in order to reach the last mile? What does this mean in terms of building resilience?
- What role can public and private sector actors play in reaching the most excluded populations and localities?
- What role is there for technology in reaching the last mile?

Following opening remarks, the event will adopt a Davos-style format in which panelists will actively engage with the audience.
growth tend to leave people excluded and where development needs are greatest.

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