



# **LDC FUTURE FORUM**

**5–6 March 2024**  
Helsinki / Finland

## **INNOVATION FOR STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN LDCS**

### **THEMATIC SESSION 1**

### **BUILDING INNOVATION CAPACITY THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**



## Background

Education at all levels is lagging behind in LDCs. School closures due to COVID-19 exacerbated the situation. While average secondary school enrollment in LDCs increased until 2020, it stagnated with a rate of 48% in 2023. However, the gender parity index continued to increase and reached 0.94 in 2023. In 2023 the proportion of youth (aged 15 to 24) using the internet in LDCs stood at 54%, while the world average was 79%. As access to internet use is a precondition for online learning this explains the limited use of this tool in LDCs, especially in rural areas and by girls.

Climate change and environmental degradation affect LDC economies and societies. Although LDCs have the potential to go green, they lack the necessary physical, financial, and human resources. LDCs must close the skills gap between available skills and the demand for skills required for green transition.

Higher education as well as vocational training have an important role as a driver for the achievement of all 17 SDGs, through their role in human capital formation, knowledge production and innovation. The limited higher education capacity, including for STEM, contributes to the low number of robust academic research published by the LDCs. Whereas the OECD countries published over 1000 scientific and technical journal articles per every 1 million people in 2018, in the LDCs the number was 11, a marginal increase from six in 2011. This indicates a generally low research capacity, which hinders the adaptation of innovations in the LDCs, which are essential for productivity growth and structural transformation.

To improve skills in LDCs various factors have to work together, from reforming education systems, enhanced investment and use of new tools such as online learning, for example platforms to support online graduate and post-graduate university-level science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in LDCs referenced in the DPoA. In addition, matching skills with demand to promote school to work transition, especially in sectors with growth prospects, such as the green economy is essential.

### Guiding questions:

- How can enhanced access to education through online tools strengthen learning and productivity gains?
- How can LDCs increase access to quality education, healthcare, and opportunities for youth, women, and other marginalised groups?
- How can LDCs promote green school to work transition?
- What role can education in science, technology, engineering, and math enhance productivity and structural transformation?
- What role can universities in LDCs play to enhance innovation capacity in LDCs?