

# Understanding Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)

## *An explainer*

**32 Countries**

**590 million people**

Africa: 16 LLDCs  
Asia: 10 LLDCs  
Europe: 4 LLDCs  
Latin America: 2 LLDCs



## ***With challenges...***

### **Lack of access to the sea**

The average distance to the nearest seaport for the LLDCs is 1,370 km. They are dependent on their transit neighbors' infrastructure and administrative procedures for the transportation of their exports and their imports.



### **LLDCs face almost double the trade costs of coastal Countries**

On average, LLDCs currently face significantly higher trade costs—nearly double those of coastal countries—due to high transport costs and non-tariff measures. They also take longer time to send and receive merchandise from overseas markets due to multiple border crossings, cumbersome border procedures, un-harmonized cross-border and transit transport documentation, formalities and procedures.



### **Infrastructure gaps in transport**

Achieving global average road/ rail density will require nearly 200,000 km of paved roads, over 46,000 km of railways, and an investment of more than half a trillion USD.



### **Escaping the commodity trap is critical for LLDCs**

LLDCs exports is characterized by a limited number of products with low value addition. LLDCs continue to be heavily commodity-dependent with primary commodities accounting for more than 80 % of their exports.



### **Confronting Economic and Development Gaps**

LLDCs have faced lower per capita GDP growth in recent years. On average, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in neighboring coastal countries is more than three times that of the 32 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). Furthermore, the average level of the human development index in LLDCs is 19 percent lower than that of coastal developing countries, highlighting the disparity in development outcomes.



## ***And opportunities...***

### **Regional trade growth**

Many LLDCs engage in more trade with neighboring countries than with distant partners. The average number of regional trade agreements (RTAs) for LLDCs increased from 3.3 in 2014 to 4.3 in 2023, with most LLDCs participating in multiple agreements. As a result, regional trade from LLDCs grew by 70% over the past decade under the Vienna Programme of Action.



### **Turning tourism into opportunities**

In 2023, international tourism receipts in LLDCs surpassed pre-pandemic levels, reaching nearly 20 billion USD, with an estimated 43 million international visitors. Harnessing tourism's benefits will be critical to achieving SDGs and implementing the new Programme of Action.



### **Translating critical minerals into development benefits**

Demand for critical minerals -essential for renewable energy technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicles- is set to nearly triple by 2030, offering significant opportunities for LLDCs rich in these resources to promote structural transformation and turn the tide of commodity dependence.



### **Growing markets**

With rapidly growing young populations, many LLDCs offer exciting opportunities for consumer market and product growth, making them attractive destinations for supply chains. Between 2023 and 2050, the population in LLDCs is projected to increase more than 400 million, surpassing 1 billion by 2050.



### **Potential in digital services**

Digital services exports from LLDCs reached \$10.6 billion USD in 2022, with a higher annual average growth rate than that of the world between 2019-2022. LLDCs have scope for much more digital growth: While 95 % of the population is covered by mobile networks, less than half of the population has access to 4G, which is crucial for digital trade.

