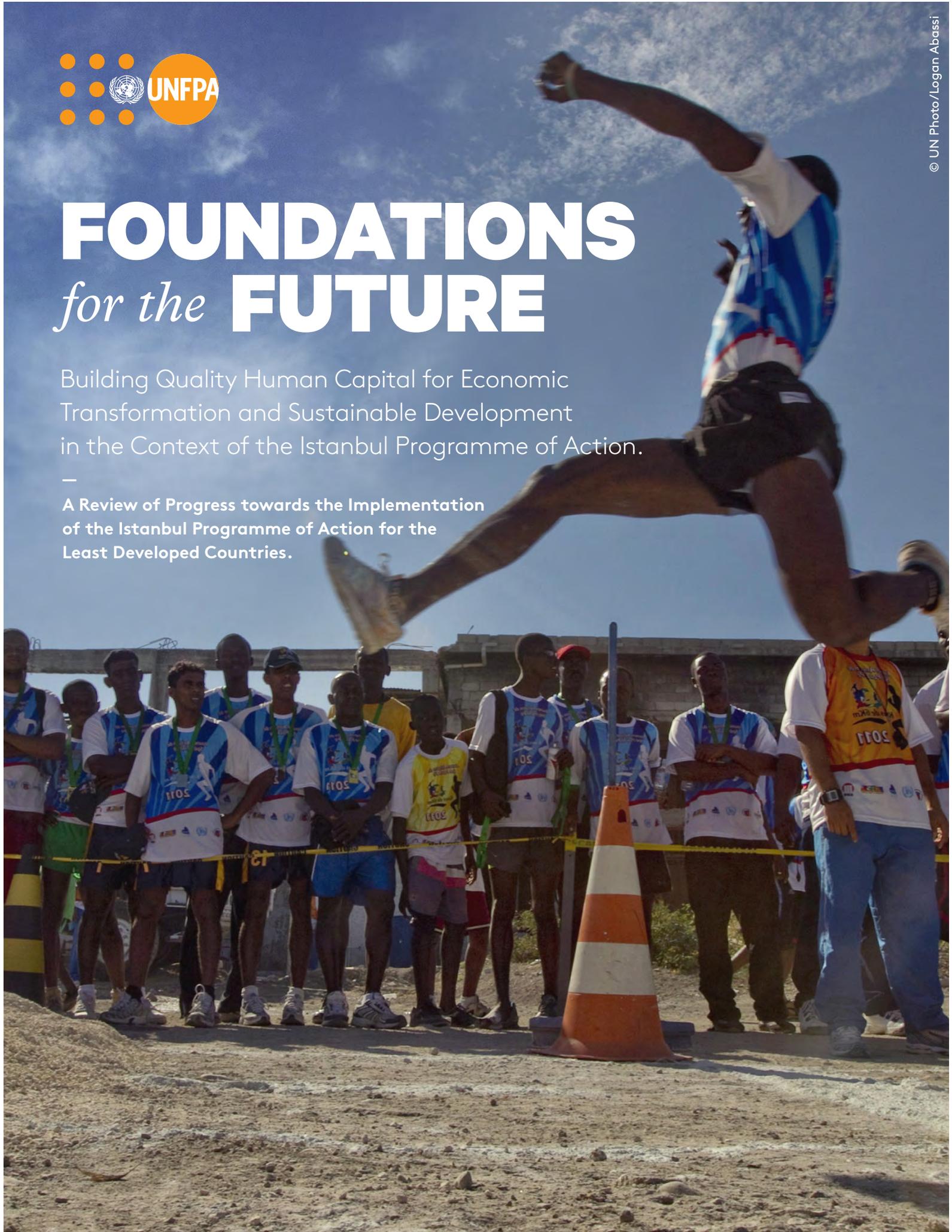




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Building Quality Human Capital for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development in the Context of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

—
A Review of Progress towards the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.



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Preface

Investments in human capital are the foundation of sustainable development. Nowhere is this truer than in the world's 48 least developed countries, which need to urgently accelerate development to deliver for their people and close the gap with other countries. Human capital investments can set the stage for a demographic dividend that can advance transformative change within a generation.

The Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, adopted by UN Member States in 2011, affirmed the centrality of investing in human capital. It also recognized the widespread barriers that least developed countries face in making these investments, and in creating new opportunities and ensuring that they reach everyone. The Mid-Term Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action in 2016 drew renewed attention to these issues, especially in light of global commitments in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following report was prepared for a ministerial pre-conference forum held in the lead up to the Mid-Term Review. Entitled “Building Quality Human Capital for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development in the context of the Istanbul Programme of Action,” the forum was co-sponsored by UNFPA with the Governments of Bangladesh and Turkey, and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The report profiles populations in the least developed countries, looking at their age structures, geographic distribution and well-being, across a range of factors essential to realizing a demographic dividend. It especially follows young people from childhood into adolescence and adulthood, as they pursue empowerment, education and employment to improve their lives and the lives of those around them.

The report explores the rapid demographic, social, economic and environmental changes the least developed countries face, including insecurity, crises and disruptions that threaten tenuous recent gains. These changes underscore the urgent need for people who can marshal their full capabilities to meet the challenges they face. Only then can they play their integral—and rightful—role in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The recommendations outlined in this report, the outcome of the ministerial pre-conference forum, and the strengthened commitments in the Mid-Term Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action together can help deliver this ambition, for and with the people in the world's least developed countries.



Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin

Executive Director, UNFPA

Meeting Summary and Outcome

Ministerial Pre-conference Forum: “Building Quality Human Capital for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development in the Context of the Istanbul Programme of Action”

The Istanbul Declaration and Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, adopted by Member States of the United Nations in 2011, articulated the importance of human and social development for the transformation of the least developed countries and their achievement of sustainable development. The Programme of Action stated that these countries, with the support of their development partners, needed to invest in young people, strengthen health systems, and ensure that the rights of women and girls are upheld and gender equality is achieved.

As the United Nations agency with a cross-cutting mandate derived from the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is committed to supporting the least developed countries to achieve their human and social development objectives.

UNFPA, in line with that commitment, co-sponsored with the governments of Bangladesh and Turkey and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States a ministerial pre-conference forum on the demographic dividend, “Building Quality Human Capital for Economic Transformation and Sustainable Development in the Context of the Istanbul Programme of Action.” It was held on 26 May 2016 in Antalya, Turkey, before the Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action from

27-29 May 2016. Participants included ministers, senior government officials, UN organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

The forum was opened by the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management), the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of OHRLLS, the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development of Bangladesh and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. Opening and closing plenary sessions bracketed three interactive panels on:

1. Investment in youth to realize the demographic dividend and sustainable development in the least developed countries;
2. Place and mobility for the socioeconomic advancement of these countries; and
3. Policies and actions for realizing the demographic dividend.

The forum drew on a background report, “Foundations for the Future: A Review of Progress towards the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries.” The report was prepared as UNFPA’s contribution to the High-Level Mid-Term Review, in accordance with paragraph 33 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/231. It showed that the least developed countries face a major human capital deficit. Quality education is lacking, and too

many young people do not transition from primary to secondary school, with even fewer attaining tertiary education. Child marriage and early pregnancy remain high in many contexts, and many women and girls lack access to sexual and reproductive health services, resulting in ill-health and profoundly limited opportunities. Gender-based violence and discrimination remain prevalent.

To address these challenges, the participants made the following concrete recommendations on investments, policies and actions. These comprised the outcome of the forum and were conveyed to the High-Level Mid-Term Review by the Honourable Minister of Local Government and Rural Development of Bangladesh, Chair of the Least Developed Countries.

Outcome of the Ministerial Pre-conference Forum, Investments, policies and actions for realizing the demographic dividend in the least developed countries

Ministers, senior officials, and private sector and NGO partners identified the following priorities for investments, policies and actions at the ministerial forum held in Antalya, Turkey on 26 May 2016:

Prioritized areas of investments:

- Investments in child health, particularly immunization and nutrition, and child protection.
- Adolescent sexual and reproductive health in schools, including education on family planning.
- Ensure systemic improvements in educa-

tion, while targeting all individuals and ensuring that young people, women and marginalized groups are empowered to take advantage of such systemic improvements.

- Mainstreaming responses related to gender norms and stereotypes.

Policies to create conditions for the demographic dividend

- Consider a transformation in approaches to budgeting, prioritizing investments that bring long-term returns and that go beyond current revenue to consider needs for transformation, rather than just focusing on distributing existing resources for immediate priorities.
- Ensure that national budgets are gender responsive, and help both women and youth by ensuring funds target issues critical to those groups.
- Prioritize domestic resource mobilization.
- Expedite domestic capital formation and use capital market strategies to drive the creation of and expansion of small and medium enterprises, including under youth ownership. Uganda's programme of small loans for groups of young people to generate jobs and entrepreneurship was cited as an example.
- Least developed countries need to curb the focus on exporting raw materials and start exporting processed goods, as a means of increasing domestic financing.

- Ensure effective regulation of the investment market, along with strong anti-corruption policies.
- Build capacities for data to inform policies and actions to support human capital and development, and base actions on demographic research, and the characteristics and dynamics of the population.
- Make focused efforts to eradicate diseases such as malaria and prioritize prevention in the health sector to generate significant savings for investment in productive capacities.
- Given the increasing representation of women and girls among migrants, and the importance of mobility for the demographic dividend, it is critical to integrate mobility into priority policies on:

- o Education;
- o Support for unpaid care work;
- o Access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and
- o Strong legal and regulatory environments to eliminate discrimination and build protections against gender-based violence.

Institutional and other arrangements for a conducive environment for the demographic dividend

- Ensure curricula review with a technical, vocational and entrepreneurship emphasis through systematic consultation and engagement with the private sector to match training with job needs, while promoting stronger partnership between academia and the private sector, and using public-private partnerships to facilitate fellowships/internships/apprenticeships for young people as a way of developing work experience required by employers. Also promote meaningful volunteerism for apprenticeships to prepare young people for the job market.
- Create mechanisms for effective coordination and systematic consultation on investments to realize the demographic dividend among national institutions, working across agencies and ministries, through a coordinated, multisectoral approach, as well as with partners, the private sector, young people, traditional leaders and communities. This should include building on partnerships with the United Nations system to support national strategies on the demographic dividend.
- Create or reform planning and population institutions to ensure coherence around national policies and programmes for the demographic dividend.
- Build political will, including at the highest decision-making levels, through information and communication, and take measures to foster broader changes in behaviour, and empower and give hope to young people to eliminate

potential sources of alienation.

- Enhance use of social media networks and other technologies to engage young people. This agenda needs full youth participation.
- Establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms for youth-focused investment policies and programmes.
- Increase the engagement of the private sector in the delivery of health and education services – but with a balance to ensure access for the poor.
- Promote exchanges between countries to understand and implement best practices.

Additional actions related to mobility

- It is critical to address the informality of housing and employment, focusing on improving social and economic supports, delivering services and protecting the rights of informal settlers.

- o Bilateral agreements between countries of origin, transit and destination;
 - o Protection, relief assistance and support for repatriation;
 - o Stronger data on migration; and
 - o Mobilization of diaspora communities.
- It is also vital to create a welcoming environment for return migration, including through access to capital, professional advancement and security for educated populations. Preventing brain drain requires expanding opportunities in places of origin. Once a certain threshold of investments in empowerment, education and employment is achieved, the incentive to stay will grow exponentially.

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