UNIDO’s engagement with Landlocked and Least Developed Countries

Background

Currently, 31 countries belong to the Group of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), whereas 15 are located in Africa, 12 in Asia, 2 in Latin America and 2 in Central and Eastern Europe. Out of those 31 countries, 17 are at the same time classified as Least Developed countries (13 in Africa and 4 in Asia).

Persistent challenges to growth and development of these countries are imposed by, among others things, the lack of territorial access to the sea which has been the main factor hindering their ability to develop their industries and better integrate in regional and global value chains. The problems of LLDCs are very specific, as more than half of them are least developed countries at the same time. Consequently, LLDCs are often characterized by low income, low HDI based on the indicators of nutrition, health, education, and economic vulnerability (instability of agricultural production, instability of exports of goods and services, small economies, and economic vulnerability from external shocks).

Moreover, only four countries have graduated from the LDC category (Botswana, Cape Verde, Maldives and Samoa), none of which is an LLDC. However, a number of LLDCs are aspiring to graduate by the year 2020. These encapsulate several LLDCs namely Bhutan, Nepal, Lesotho, Rwanda and Zambia.

International Programmes of Action

In recent years, at the United Nations, there has been an increase in recognition of those specific needs, faced by the landlocked developing countries. The Vienna Programme of Action, was adopted in 2015 as the new holistic document cantered upon addressing the challenges faced by landlocked countries, with an aim to contribute to the eradication of poverty stemming from their landlockedness, through the implementation of specific actions in the priority areas of the renowned document. Moreover, having highlighted that more 17 out of 31 LLDCs are LDCs it is important to underline the significance of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. The overarching goal of the IPoA is to overcome the structural challenges faced by the LDCs in order to eradicate poverty and achieve internationally agreed development goals. It specifically aims to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation.
UNIDO’s role in addressing LLDCs challenges

Aware of the above mentioned specific constraints faced by the LLDCs, UNIDO is consistent in providing its support to address the structural challenges impeding the flow of high value goods in those countries. Moreover, the Organization plays a key role in allaying cumbersome transit procedures by fostering infrastructure development, market access and regional integration. In addition, through its intervention in the area of trade capacity building, SMEs development, policy development, investment promotion and energy and environment, **UNIDO has been recognized as a crucial partner in design and implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) and Istanbul Programme of Action.** Accordingly, UNIDO strongly promotes the integration of industrialization at the very core of the VPoA, as a critical tool supporting LLDCs integration in the global value chains and markets within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the Istanbul Programme of Action. Furthermore, UNIDO is committed to provide targeted assistance to the LLDCs and LDCs in all of the organization’s expertise and capabilities, as reflected in its mandate “ISID” and its LDC operational strategy 2012-2020.

In light of the above, UNIDO also advocates for Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) and SDG 9 to be mirrored as main tools to achieving sustainable industrial development of LLDCs.

**UNIDO provides support to LLDCs of Africa, Asia and Latin America in different areas:**

UNIDO has supported LLDCs governments and relevant stakeholders by gearing technical cooperation towards addressing development challenges in these countries and aligned its technical cooperation through the implementation of a wide array of strategy and innovative tools such as the introduction of a new generation of country programmes as well as its related activities. It is to be noted that these activities are tailored to specific national development priorities and needs of these countries, as reflected in the respective National Development strategies, visions, as well as the UNDAF:

- **Burundi:** In order to support Burundi to improve its competitiveness UNIDO is facilitating local products access to regional and international markets through strengthening the country’s compliance capacity with Sanitary and Phitosanitary measures (SPS).

  By building up a national quality infrastructure (standardization, testing, metrology, etc.) as well as human capital through trainings; UNIDO aims at improving the products quality and ensure knowledge retention while generating extra incomes for small scale producers especially women and youth. To date several achievements can already be underlined: 80 inspectors have been trained in ISO/IEC 17020 and market surveillance; over 100 executives have been sensitized on standardization and regulation. Moreover a pool of national experts on international food safety and environmental standard is currently available. Moreover, 110 executives of processing units have been trained in quality and food safety.

- **Mali:** UNIDO and UNDP are also assisting the government of Mali together with the UNPBF in building economic resilience for youth and women in the region of Gao and Timbuktu subsequent to the armed conflict that rattled the country in 2012.

  Indeed UNIDO IDEA programme (Inclusive, development and Entrepreneurship for All) aims promoting youth and women employment in LDCs by supporting SME creation and development. The project is assisting 700 women through the creation of business networks/clusters, rural cooperatives. It also provides vocational trainings to 400 women and is targeting to create more than 600 jobs in the field of agribusiness, mainly for women. The project is being replicated in Zambia and other COMESA countries, Niger, and Burkina Faso and is successfully ongoing in Senegal (pilot).

- **Sudan/South Sudan:** UNIDO developed a project to modernize artisanal fisheries and create new market opportunities in the Red Sea State in Sudan (now part of South Sudan).
From fish harvesting to handling, processing and marketing, the project modernized the value chain and helped the fishery sector actors reduce post-harvest losses and create additional value. This was complemented by building infrastructure and strengthening public support institutions. The project indirectly impacted over 7,700 people and allowed the creation of fisher associations and cooperative gathering 680 members among which five women’s associations gathering 532 members and currently generating revenues through a variety of small scale businesses.

- **Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, Afghanistan, Zambia, Malawi, South Sudan and Lao: UNIDO’s first West Africa Quality Programme, that includes LLDCs as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, aimed at increasing trade and competitiveness by enabling the targeted countries to comply with the relevant WTO rules and regulations.**

As a result, more than 50 persons were trained in the field of metrology and accreditation in Burkina Faso. In Mali, the project developed more than 150 national standards, and provided training for up to 100 Malians on specific standards. The project also provided a quality assessment for 2 large enterprises in Niger, offered several trainings on particular standards and trained more than 48 laboratory assistants. Based on this experience, UNIDO is now implementing a similar trade capacity and quality programmes in **other parts of Africa and Asia - Afghanistan, Zambia, Malawi, South Sudan and Lao.**

- **Buthan**

UNIDO has developed a project: Entrepreneurship Development in Creative Industry which promotes the Creative Industries in Bhutan, notably the sectors of arts and crafts and traditional/cultural-specific products, as an engine of economic growth through strengthening the institutional support system for creative MSME development, and the facilitation of value-added production and market linkages to promote trade and export of Creative Industries products’

- **Mongolia**

UNIDO has been implementing projects in the area of Energy and Environment with an aim to Reduce the Impacts of Mercury Emission on Human and the Environment through Sustainable Chemicals Management in Mongolia

- **Central Asia – Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia:**

In **Kyrgyzstan**, UNIDO projects to strengthen agro-industries, address food security and alleviate poverty through better agricultural production and processing practices, focus on developing capacities in remote low-growth areas. To increase affordable housing is another UNIDO project that promotes innovative, low-cost sustainable manufacturing technologies and the dissemination of knowledge on cost effective and environmentally friendly building materials, which can easily be absorbed by the local construction industry for housing and irrigation purposes. In **Tajikistan**, UNIDO’s interventions focus on increasing the household incomes of marginalized population groups and strengthening agri-food enterprises and value chains through the establishment of a Center of Excellence for fruit drying. In **Azerbaijan**, the Regional Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production (RECP) demonstration programme provides training, implementation support and monitoring to SMEs and government professionals and institutions – the initiative succeeded in strengthening the national capacity of RECP service delivery. Within the UNIDO project Regional CIS Capacity building for developing programmes for mitigation of global environmental problems, UNIDO builds technical capacities in **Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan**, to develop and implement programmes for climate change mitigation and other environmental issues (e.g. a CIS regional capacity-building programme around the mitigation of global environmental problems).

- **Bolivia**

UNIDO has implemented three projects: on environmental management of 1) wastes from electrical and electronic apparatuses (regional) and 2) support to implement National Poly-Chlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Management Plans; Two projects to assist with formulation of industrial strategies at the regional (El Chaco) and national levels; and one project to develop productive chains on quinoa and camelds.
**Development of Partnership Country Programmes (PCPs), Country Programme (CPs) and regional initiatives:**

Both CPs and PCPs represent custom-built multi-stakeholder formula with each beneficiary country maintaining ownership of the complete process by defining its needs and required support, and thereby ensuring the successful delivery of UNIDO’s technical cooperation. Moreover, CPs, PCPs and intra-regional programmes are strategic instruments to foster ISID on the ground and contribute to the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

Ethiopia as an LLDC, has been selected alongside with Senegal to pilot the new Programmes for Country Partnership (PCP). In addition, UNIDO has developed Country Programmes for 6 LLDCs in Africa namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Lesotho, Niger, Uganda and Zambia. Other CPs for LLDCs such as Rwanda and Burundi are ready to be signed. With regard to the Asia Pacific region the CP for Afghanistan is under formulation. It is to be mentioned that UNIDO’s development programmes targeting LLDCs are in direct correlation with specific national development priorities and needs as reflected in the respective National Development Plans and frameworks.

Finally, UNIDO’s technical cooperation activities also give due importance to mainstream crosscutting programmatic issues: UNIDO contributes to gender equality through its gender mainstreaming policy aiming at ensuring women participation and inclusion in every possible project; It promotes the critical role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in addition to the traditional North-South Cooperation. Indeed, since the inception of the south-south cooperation centers in China and India, UNIDO has played a pivotal role in promoting cooperation among its Member States with a focus on addressing the development challenges faced by LLDCs.

**The way forward**

On account of the momentum generated by UNIDO’s ISID mandate, the number of CPs preparation is expanding at a high rate as demand increases from member states in all regions. These demands and positive evaluations of completed CPs demonstrate the clear value of the approach and the importance of structuring and monitoring yet keeping the needs and the challenges of respective LLDCs into account. Over the coming period, UNIDO foresees the formulation of additional CPs in LLDCs, fully aligned with UNDAFs and other International, national/regional strategic frameworks. It is only through such endeavours that, UNIDO will expand and deepen its cooperation with LLDCs. UNIDO continue fostering successful partnerships, to intertwine the public and private sectors with the research and academia as well as with civil society. Inter and intra-regional programmes, included also in respective CPs, will be promoted to strengthen cooperation between regions and trading blocs for a more inclusive policy direction based on resource endowments and comparative advantages.