



Regional trends

# Least developed countries



## Highlights

FDI inflows to LDCs increased by 21 per cent in 2025, supported mainly by stronger inflows to a small number of African LDCs. Inflows to those LDCs rose to about \$33 billion, with investment concentrated in a few economies that benefit from natural resources, energy, infrastructure and selected manufacturing projects.

A. The increase in investment to LDCs in 2025 was driven primarily by African LDCs. FDI inflows increased by 22 per cent to \$33 billion, accounting for more than three quarters of total LDC inflows. Greenfield investment and international project finance (IPF) also recorded strong growth, with values rising by 65 per cent and 162 per cent, respectively. However, investment remained highly concentrated in a small number of economies, including Mozambique and Ethiopia, and was largely directed towards energy, infrastructure and extractive industries.

B. Asian LDCs also recorded more dynamic investment activity in 2025, with FDI inflows rising by 16 per cent to nearly \$10 billion. Greenfield investment values increased by 20 per cent and IPF values rose sharply, led by Bangladesh and Cambodia, in that order. However, the number of greenfield projects declined significantly, indicating a growing concentration of investment in fewer, larger projects and continued unevenness across the group.

Despite the overall increase, FDI to LDCs remained highly concentrated (table 1). The 5 largest recipients accounted for about half of total LDC inflows, while the top 10 accounted for about 63 per cent. The increase therefore reflected stronger inflows to a limited number of economies with large projects, natural-resource assets or established investment pipelines, while many smaller and more structurally vulnerable LDCs continued to attract only marginal investment.

The composition of FDI stock in LDCs highlights the growing importance of Asian investors (figure 2). China remained the largest source of FDI stock in LDCs in 2024, with its stock increasing from \$46 billion in 2020 to \$50 billion. Other major Asian investors, including the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, China, Thailand and Singapore, also ranked among the top 10. European economies remained important investors, led by the Netherlands and France, although their FDI stocks were broadly stable or declined slightly over the period. Overall, the ranking suggests a gradual shift in the investor base of LDCs towards Asia, reflecting increasing role of emerging economies in financing development and productive capacity in LDCs.

Announced greenfield investment in LDCs also increased in value, although the picture was mixed (table 2). Project values rose by 56 per cent to \$36 billion, while the number of projects declined by 8 per cent, from 255 to 234. This divergence indicates that the increase was driven by larger average project sizes rather than by a broad expansion in investor activity. Among African LDCs, Ethiopia, Angola and Uganda, in that order, were the largest recipients, attracting about \$6 billion, \$5 billion and \$5 billion, respectively. Together with Mauritania and Zambia, these economies accounted for nearly 60 per cent of all greenfield investment in LDCs. In Asian LDCs, Cambodia remained the largest host economy, followed by Bangladesh and Myanmar.

IPF expanded strongly in LDCs in 2025 (table 2). IPF values almost tripled to \$27 billion, while the number of deals increased by 45 per cent to 68. This growth is particularly important for LDCs because IPF supports infrastructure, energy, transport, industrial capacity and other SDG-related sectors where long-term external financing plays a critical role.

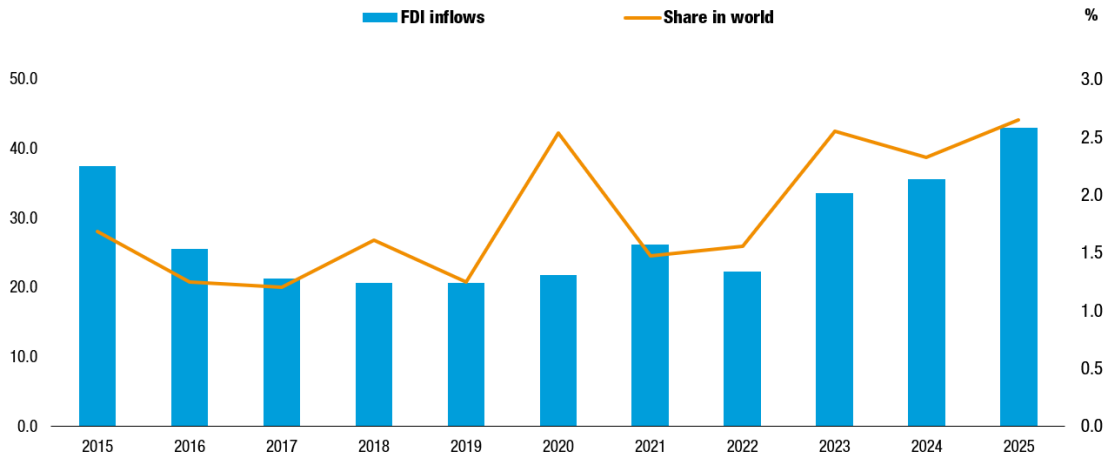
African LDCs accounted for about three quarters of total IPF values, with investment concentrated mainly in infrastructure, energy, mining-related facilities and other large-scale development assets. In Asia, IPF values also increased strongly, led by Bangladesh. As with FDI and greenfield investment, IPF remained highly concentrated: the 5 largest recipient economies accounted for about 57 per cent of total LDC IPF values, while the top 10 accounted for more than 70 per cent.

Cross-border M&A activity remained limited in LDCs. Net cross-border M&A sales fell from \$416 million in 2024 to around zero in 2025, despite the number of deals increasing from 12 to 21. This indicates that M&A activity was characterized by relatively small transactions rather than large corporate acquisitions. African LDCs accounted for most of the increase in deal numbers, but the very low aggregate value suggests that M&As played only a marginal role in the overall increase in investment to LDCs in 2025.

Investment in LDCs remained highly concentrated by industry in 2025 (table 3). Greenfield investment growth was driven mainly by manufacturing, with strong increases in coke and refined petroleum, energy and gas supply, chemicals and extractive industries, while transportation, logistics and information and communication attracted the largest number of projects. IPF was dominated by renewable energy (table 4), which accounted for nearly two thirds of total project values and the vast majority of deals, reflecting growing investment in the energy transition and infrastructure development.

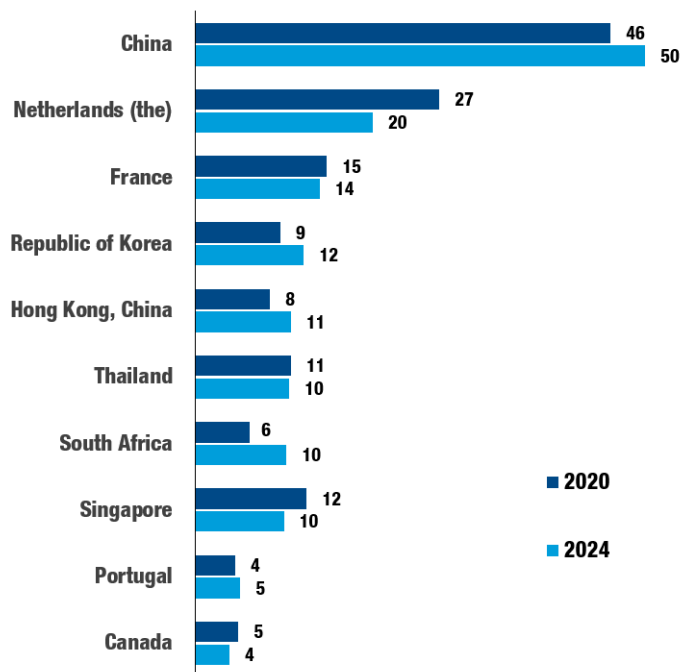
Goal-related investment in LDCs increased significantly in 2025 (table 6). In greenfield investment, announced project values rose across several SDG-related sectors, led by renewable energy (about \$6 billion), agrifood systems (about \$4 billion), telecommunications (about \$1 billion) and power (about \$1 billion). Project numbers also increased in renewable energy, agrifood systems and telecommunications. IPF showed even stronger growth, driven overwhelmingly by renewable energy, where project values reached about \$18 billion and the number of deals rose to 59. Agrifood systems also recorded a notable increase in IPF activity. Overall, investment remained highly concentrated in renewable energy, while sectors such as health, education and WASH continued to attract comparatively limited investment.

**Figure 1**  
**Least developed countries: FDI inflows and share in world inflows**  
 (Billions of dollars and percentage)



Source: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE database (<https://unctad.org/fdistatistics>).  
 Note: Data exclude financial centres in the Caribbean and special-purpose entities in reporting countries.

**Figure 2**  
**Least developed countries: top 10 investor economies by FDI stock**  
 (Billions of dollars)



Source: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE database (<https://unctad.org/fdistatistics>).  
 Note: Data exclude financial centres in the Caribbean and special-purpose entities in reporting countries.

**Table 1**
**Least developed countries: FDI inflows and cross-border M&A sales**

Subregion/selected economy	FDI				Net cross-border M&A sales							
	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025	
<b>LDCs</b>	<b>33 708</b>	<b>36 639</b>	<b>43 109</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>75</b>
Africa (32)	24 874	27 274	33 382	22	183	509	-0.1	..	12	7	18	157
Angola	-2 120	-1 658	1 149	..	-	-766	-0.1	..	-	1	8	700
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2 576	3 113	1 869	-40	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Ethiopia	3 269	3 984	3 796	-5	-	-	-	..	-	-	1	-
Mali	703	921	844	-8	-	-	-	..	2	-	-	-
Mozambique	2 509	3 553	5 693	60	-	-	-	..	-1	-	-	-
Rwanda	716	873	967	11	110	-33	-	..	7	-	2	-
Senegal	4 790	3 319	37	-99	-	17	-	..	0	1	4	300
Uganda	2 994	3 116	3 358	-	-	130	-	..	1	-	3	-
United Republic of Tanzania	1 649	1 656	1 718	4	-1	-	-	..	-1	1	-	-
Zambia	641	2 359	1 293	-45	23	1 162	-	..	3	3	-	-
Asia (8)	8 780	8 304	9 643	16	15	-93	-0.2	..	2	5	3	-40
Bangladesh	1 336	1 231	1 780	45	-	-100	-0.2	..	-	1	-	-
Cambodia	3 959	4 395	5 099	16	5	-	-	..	1	-	1	-
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1 781	1 303	1 405	8	-	-	-	..	-	2	2	0
Myanmar	1 520	1 095	1 067	-3	10	-	-	..	1	-	-	-
Latin America and the Caribbean (1)	24	20	12	-39	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Haiti	24	20	12	-39	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Oceania (3)	31	41	72	74	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Kiribati	5	8	4	-48	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Solomon Islands	25	33	67	104	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
Tuvalu	0.2	0.3	0.2	-9	-	-	-	..	-	-	-	-
<b>Memorandum:</b>												
World	1 320 858	1 531 691	1 624 259	6	402 394	453 805	420 547	-7	7673	7593	7913	4
Developed economies	463 026	649 117	723 464	11	324 256	425 346	403 879	-5	6671	6755	6892	2
Developing economies	857 832	882 574	900 795	2	78 138	28 459	16 667	-41	1002	838	1021	22

Source: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE database (<https://unctad.org/fdistatistics>) and information from LSEG Data & Analytics.

Note: Data exclude financial centres in the Caribbean and special-purpose entities in reporting countries.

Abbreviations: FDI = foreign direct investment, M&As = mergers and acquisitions.

**Table 2**
**Least developed countries: announced greenfield projects and international project finance deals**

Subregion/selected economy	Announced greenfield projects								International project finance deals							
	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025	
<b>LDCs</b>	<b>77 320</b>	<b>23 302</b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>36 144</b>	<b>9 638</b>	<b>27 451</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>45</b>
Africa (32)	68 433	18 392	30 406	65	169	134	156	16	26 182	7 814	20 445	162	57	35	54	54
Angola	607	7 655	5 188	-32	7	8	9	13	2 570	424	310	-27	6	2	1	-50
Burkina Faso	679	190	122	-36	1	4	2	-50	300	144	539	273	1	1	1	0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6 550	1 281	1 158	-10	13	11	8	-27	3 091	200	1 481	641	4	1	2	100
Djibouti	1 705	-	129	-	2	-	2	-	2 000	192	454	137	2	1	3	200
Ethiopia	3 274	783	5 539	607	12	7	5	-29	620	-	2 500	-	1	-	1	-
Guinea	8 600	135	245	81	2	3	4	33	2 000	12	48	308	1	2	2	0
Malawi	851	50	128	155	4	1	4	300	16	346	155	-55	1	1	1	0
Mauritania	34 000	-	3 168	-	1	-	2	-	1 369	200	3 480	1640	5	1	5	400
Mozambique	3 905	1 293	1 493	15	10	6	6	0	932	650	656	1	5	1	3	200
Rwanda	361	307	758	147	13	12	15	25	855	320	-	-	3	2	-	-
Senegal	342	1 542	1 577	2	14	14	14	0	1 339	998	-	-	3	3	-	-
United Republic of Tanzania	1 793	623	652	5	25	26	22	-15	2 621	937	-	-	7	4	-	-
Togo	77	294	12	-96	3	3	2	-33	867	18	-	-	1	1	-	-
Uganda	1 491	323	4 989	1445	19	11	15	36	965	613	1 087	77	3	4	3	-25
Zambia	1 351	1 197	2 665	123	18	12	16	33	2 376	2 070	4 421	114	3	7	16	129
Asia (8)	8 887	4 910	5 884	20	96	121	78	-36	9 962	1 823	7 006	284	20	12	14	17
Afghanistan	1 806	153	82	-46	3	1	2	100	540	405	-	-	1	1	-	-
Bangladesh	2 704	1 731	1 334	-23	34	53	28	-47	3 439	214	3 684	1624	5	2	2	0
Cambodia	2 450	1 704	1 866	9	37	43	32	-26	3 110	372	799	115	5	3	4	33
Lao People's Democratic Republic	756	968	399	-59	7	12	5	-58	1 882	405	730	80	6	2	4	100
Myanmar	79	45	1 149	2476	4	3	1	-67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nepal	800	309	329	6	9	9	8	-11	-	22	350	1456	-	1	1	0
Latin America and the Caribbean (1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Haiti	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oceania (3)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kiribati	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Solomon Islands	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tuvalu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Memorandum:</b>																
World	1 422 369	1 378 521	1 393 023	1	18 917	19 892	17 824	-10	1 354 639	1 152 931	1 182 210	3	3 016	2 479	2 212	-11
Developed economies	626 823	713 500	846 570	19	10 809	11 380	9 693	-15	682 940	630 641	553 217	-12	1 847	1 440	1 354	-6
Developing economies	795 546	665 021	546 453	-18	8 108	8 512	8 131	-4	671 699	522 289	628 993	20	1 169	1 039	858	-17

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from The Financial Times, fDi Markets ([www.fdimarkets.com](http://www.fdimarkets.com)) and LSEG Data & Analytics.

Note: Data exclude financial centres in the Caribbean.


**Table 3**
**Least developed countries: announced greenfield projects, by sector and selected industries**

Sector/industry	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025	
<b>Total</b>	<b>77 320</b>	<b>23 302</b>	<b>36 289</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>- 8</b>
Primary	13 129	9 234	7 479	- 19	18	8	11	38
Manufacturing	9 484	5 111	14 517	184	78	97	75	- 23
Services	54 706	8 957	14 294	60	169	150	148	- 1
<i>Top 10 industries in value terms</i>								
Coke and refined petroleum	1 595	1 006	7 663	662	2	2	4	100
Energy and gas supply	43 360	2 209	7 574	243	25	14	20	43
Extractive industries	13 072	9 234	7 441	- 19	17	8	10	25
Chemicals	385	38	3 438	9 043	3	4	9	125
Transportation and storage	4 623	2 567	1 625	- 37	32	31	32	3
Information and communication	1 803	1 014	1 394	38	38	26	32	23
Basic metal and metal products	337	585	1 285	120	3	5	6	20
Construction	1 595	1 573	1 100	- 30	4	3	4	33
Hospitality	-	468	892	91	-	4	7	75
Water and waste management services	78	-	800	..	1	-	1	..

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from The Financial Times, fDi Markets (www.fDimarkets.com).


**Table 4**
**Least developed countries: announced international project finance deals, selected industries**

Sector/industry	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–20245 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025	
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 144</b>	<b>9 638</b>	<b>27 451</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>45</b>
<i>Top 10 industries by number</i>								
Renewable energy	16 748	6 104	17 455	186	42	32	59	84
Transport infrastructure	3 629	703	360	-49	7	2	2	0
Oil and gas	4 622	1 054	717	-32	6	3	2	-33
Agriculture	580	16	2 500	15525	2	1	1	0
Industrial real estate	451	50	1 500	2884	3	2	1	-50
Mining	3 460	574	742	29	6	1	1	0
Petrochemicals	965	-	3 500	..	3	-	1	..
Power	733	940	677	-28	1	3	1	-67
Residential/commercial real estate	464	-	-	..	1	-	-	..
Telecommunication	2 324	40	-	..	4	1	-	..

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from LSEG Data &amp; Analytics.



**Table 5**

**Least developed countries: net cross-border M&As sales, by sector and selected industries**

Sector/industry	Value (Millions of dollars)			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	Number			Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025	
<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>-0.3</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>75</b>
Primary	55	396	-	..	0	3	7	133
Manufacturing	54	153	0.03	-100	2	4	4	0
Services	89	- 133	- 0.4	..	12	5	10	100
<i>Top 10 industries in value terms</i>								
Food, beverages and tobacco	-	23	0.03	-100	-	2	2	0
Agriculture	-1	-	-	..	-1	-	2	..
Extractive industries	56	396	-	..	1	3	5	67
Wood and wood products	-	-	-	..	-	-	1	..
Coke and refined petroleum	-	-	-	..	1	-	-1	..
Pharmaceuticals	-	0	-	..	-	1	1	0
Furniture	-	0	-	..	-	-	1	..
Utilities	-	-1	-	..	2	-	1	..
Construction	-	-	-	..	1	-	1	..
Transportation and storage	-	-	-	..	-1	1	1	0

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from LSEG Data & Analytics.

**Table 6**

**Least developed countries: investment project announcements in sectors relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals (Billions of dollars, numbers and percentage)**

Goals-relevant sector	Announced greenfield projects				International project finance deals			
	2023	2024	2025	Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	2023	2024	2025	Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
<b>Total</b>								
<b>Value</b>	<b>45 516</b>	<b>3 473</b>	<b>14 296</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>26 182</b>	<b>7 959</b>	<b>20 992</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Number of projects</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>54</b>
Power <sup>a</sup>								
Value	679	37	1 155	3038	733	940	677	-28
Number of projects	1	4	2	-50	1	3	1	-67
Renewable energy								
Value	42 680	2 209	6 419	191	16 748	6 104	17 455	186
Number of projects	24	14	18	29	42	32	59	84
Transport infrastructure								
Value					3 629	703	360	-49
Number of projects					7	2	2	0
Telecommunication								
Value	1 466	636	1 248	96	2 324	40	-	..
Number of projects	13	10	17	70	4	1	-	..
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)								
Value	78	-	800	..	2 166	157	-	..
Number of projects	1	-	1	..	2	2	-	..
Agrifood systems								
Value	444	326	4 138	1168	580	16	2 500	15525
Number of projects	14	9	18	100	2	1	1	0
Health								
Value	122	177	490	178	-	-	-	..
Number of projects	4	16	12	-25	-	-	-	..
Education								
Value	46	88	46	-48	-	-	-	..
Number of projects	4	6	4	-33	-	-	-	..

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from The Financial Times, fDi Markets ([www.fdimarkets.com](http://www.fdimarkets.com)) and LSEG Data & Analytics.

<sup>a</sup> Excluding renewable energy.

<sup>b</sup> Transport services for greenfield projects and transport infrastructure for project finance.

**Table 7**
**Least developed countries: investment project announcement in productive capacity**

(Billions of dollars, numbers and percentage)

Productive capacity-relevant sector	Announced greenfield projects				International project finance deals			
	2023	2024	2025	Growth, 2024–2025 (%)	2023	2024	2025	Growth, 2024–2025 (%)
<b>Total</b>								
<b>Value</b>	<b>37 599</b>	<b>22 293</b>	<b>31 595</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32 220</b>	<b>9 063</b>	<b>26 709</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Number of projects</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>-9</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>46</b>
Energy								
Value	5 042	1 973	3 332	69	23 069	8 098	22 348	176
Number of projects	17	12	17	42	52	38	63	66
Human capital								
Value	131	115	861	651	2 166	157	-	..
Number of projects	7	15	9	-40	2	2	-	..
Information and communication technology								
Value	2 194	1 089	2 103	93	2 324	40	-	..
Number of projects	31	26	38	46	4	1	-	..
Natural capital								
Value	14 723	10 239	15 142	48	580	16	2 500	15525
Number of projects	20	10	15	50	2	1	1	0
Private sector development								
Value	3 195	966	819	-15	-	-	-	..
Number of projects	63	54	43	-20	-	-	-	..
Structural change								
Value	12 190	6 509	8 694	34	451	50	1 500	2884
Number of projects	118	135	107	-21	3	2	1	-50
Transportation								
Value	122	1 402	645	-54	3 629	703	360	-49
Number of projects	3	13	13	0	7	2	2	0

Source: UNCTAD, based on information from The Financial Times, fDi Markets ([www.fDimarkets.com](http://www.fDimarkets.com)) and LSEG Data & Analytics. For the methodology for calculating investment in productive capacity, see WIR 2021, chapter IV, and UNCTAD's Productive Capacities).

