

The United Nations recognizes 49 least developed countries (LDCs): low-income countries that suffer most from structural handicaps to growth and so deserve special treatment from the international community. Here Patrick Guillaumont—who for the past ten years chaired the expert group for identifying LDCs at the UN Committee for Development Policy—strengthens the case for special treatment by examining the category’s rationale, its history and its grounds in growth economics. Guillaumont assesses the two indicators of structural handicaps used to identify LDCs, the human assets index and the economic vulnerability index, and considers how they can be improved by aggregating them in one index—as well as whether both could be combined with per capita income in a synthetic “least likely to develop index”.

Through examining the LDCs category, this book explains why some low-income countries seem to have been caught in a poverty trap while others have escaped.

Patrick Guillaumont, Professor Emeritus at the Université d’Auvergne, is President of the Fondation pour les Études et Recherches sur le Développement International (FERDI). He is editing a companion volume, *Out of the trap: Supporting the least developed countries*.



Professor Guillaumont pioneered work on the vulnerability of the poorest countries. In this important book he sets out an agenda for international action.

—Paul Collier, Oxford University, author of *The bottom billion*

An excellent, comprehensive analysis of the identification criteria for least developed countries . . . essential.

—Ricardo Ffrench-Davis, Chairperson of the UN Committee for Development Policy

The author tells the inside story . . . Anybody who wants to understand the poverty trap of this special category of low-income countries should read this.

—Kerfalla Yansane, former Governor of the Central Bank of Guinea

Who are the least developed countries and how do they differ from other developing countries? Patrick Guillaumont’s book provides an excellent detailed account of a too often forgotten subject in international development.

—Justin Yifu Lin, Chief Economist, Senior Vice-President of The World Bank

A fundamental and penetrating book, compulsory reading for understanding the economic roots of vulnerability, dependence and international poverty, lightening the institutional framework of the international action.

—Jean-Michel Sévérino, General Director of the French Development Agency

This book offers in-depth analytical support to our efforts to reassert the legitimacy of the least developed countries category and to enhance the ongoing international special treatment of countries in this category. Its insights . . . should be an important source of inspiration to the development partners of LDCs and to the LDCs themselves.

—Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD

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Caught in a trap

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# Caught in a trap

## Identifying the least developed countries

Patrick Guillaumont

