

AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Accelerating ‘green’ school-to-work transitions

From challenge to opportunity

Climate change, if left unchecked, will have potentially catastrophic and irreversible impact on our lives, livelihoods and ecosystems. To avert the worst impacts of climate change, global warming must be limited to 1.5°C compared with pre-industrial levels, and emissions need to reach net zero by 2050.

A **green economy** is one that delivers improved well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (UNEP, 2015).

Green jobs are defined by the ILO as “decent jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment” (ILO, 2016).

Green skills are “the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society” (UNIDO, 2022).

The changes required to get to net zero are likely to have a significant impact on the labour markets that young people will be entering. Employers will be looking both for new skills, and for more workers with certain skills that have so far been in less demand. Some skills that are currently highly sought-after may become redundant. International Monetary Fund projections are that a typical emerging economy aiming to reach net zero by 2050 will need to move 2.5 per cent of its employment from higher-emission to lower-emission work over the next 10 years.

Getting to net zero is not just a challenge to be overcome. It is an important opportunity for economic development, job creation and just and decent livelihoods. The International Labour Organization estimates that 25 million net new jobs will be created between 2019 and 2030 as a result of decarbonization of energy and increases in the uptake of circular economy practices.

If young people are to participate in and benefit from these opportunities, they must be equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to make their livelihoods in the green economy, and to become climate and sustainability advocates and change makers. They may even need to drive adaptation and mitigation in their own communities. Many young people are interested in green jobs, but do not feel confident that they have the skills needed to tackle climate change.

However, debate on what we need to do to equip young people to navigate these shifts in opportunities is often limited to consideration of the occupational and vocational skills young people need to develop to secure jobs. This is insufficient. A broader view of 'green skills' – and wider, more integrated and more holistic responses to the green-skilling challenge – are required.

This report sets out what governments and other stakeholders can do to create and expand the school-to-work transition pathways into green jobs and livelihoods that will be necessary if we are to be successful in making the transition to net zero.

Box 1: How do young people view 'green' jobs?

A recent study by Plan International [with 2,229 young people from 53 countries](#) was a deep dive into how engaged young people perceive green skills and jobs.



Young people were not confident they had the skills needed to tackle climate change. Fewer than 30 per cent of those surveyed felt they had the necessary skills.



Generally, young people did not view their careers as being a viable channel for their own direct action on climate change.



What young people want: more training opportunities for green skills (70 per cent); better education on climate change (65 per cent); and more green jobs (64 per cent).






Conceptualizing 'green' school-to-work transitions

'Green' school-to-work transitions refers to the process of moving from education into a livelihood that contributes to preserving or restoring the environment.

Policymakers have tended to pursue a narrower focus of trying to anticipate the 'green' occupational skills employers will want and tailoring training to those predictions. While this should be *part* of the policy mix, taking this focus as a starting point risks creating an education and training system that is always catching up with new requirements rather than in step with them. At the same time, supply-side interventions will not be sufficient and interventions are needed on the demand side to increase the proportion of green employment and entrepreneurship opportunities available to young people.

Figure 1 sets out a lifecycle framework for understanding some of the potential pathways to accelerating 'green' school-to-work transition.

Accelerating 'green' school-to-work transitions

 SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION STAGES		 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ADDITIONAL 'GREEN ECONOMY' STAGE)	
T1 Lay strong 'green' foundations - give young people the knowledge and skills a green economy needs	T2 Prepare young people for transition to green work	T3 Support young people to find green work opportunities	T4 Create more 'green livelihood' opportunities for young people
T = TRANSITION STAGE			
 INTERVENTIONS TO BOOST THE SUPPLY OF SKILLS		 INTERVENTION TO BOOST YOUNG WORKERS' USE OF THEIR SKILLS	 INTERVENTIONS TO BOOST LABOUR MARKET DEMAND FOR GREEN SKILLS
E1 Invest in young people's development of basic skills and adaptable skills	E3 Give young people information, advice and guidance on green jobs and green careers	E5 Confront the barriers that separate young people from green jobs – lack of information, gender etc.	E6 Support sectors, industries and initiatives that will want young people's 'green' skills.
E2 Improve climate change education and young peoples' environmental knowledge	E4 Offer young people work-relevant education and training		E7 Support green youth entrepreneurship
E = THE ELEMENTS KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PROGRESSION BETWEEN TRANSITION STAGES			

Resetting the policy environment for accelerating 'green' school-to-work transitions

Key bottlenecks that stand in the way of efforts to accelerate 'green' school-to-work transitions include:

Policy and financing

At both global and national level there has been too little focus on the education, skills and employment interventions needed to develop the workforce necessary to achieve climate mitigation and adaptation goals. Insufficient resources have been made available to develop, scale and sustain green education, skills and employment policies and programmes. Almost no climate finance is allocated to support education systems, while green jobs interventions are constrained by "inadequate investment".

Coordination and alignment

There is often a disconnect between environmental programmes and the education and employment interventions required to support them. This leads to mismatches between skills demand and skills supply, slowing down the implementation of green policies. Better coordination and collaboration are needed within governments to tackle this disconnect and ensure coherence. In Senegal this has been done through development of a cross-departmental National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs. In the Philippines, strong political backing allowed a 'whole of government' approach to green skills reforms, ensuring alignment between the green jobs policy and implementation with other government policies and priorities.

Gender inclusion and equity

There is a pre-existing employment gender gap in key green economy sectors, with women unrepresented in the areas of the green economy likely to offer better-paid higher-quality jobs. Women and girls face additional gendered challenges in securing opportunities in the green economy such as discriminatory business practices and social norms, lack of role models, and mentoring and career advice relevant to green economy opportunities.

Data, evidence, and research on 'what works'

Efforts to accelerate 'green' school-to-work transitions are hindered by a lack of data, evidence and research on 'what works'. While a growing volume of green skills programming and provision is being piloted and implemented in low-and-middle-income countries, relatively few programmes have been rigorously evaluated. There is a further gap in systematic research on young people's perspectives on green livelihoods, including exploring how they perceive opportunities and challenges in the green economy, and the challenges they currently face in the labour market.

Private sector engagement

The private sector is not engaged effectively. In an average developing country economy, the private sector accounts for 60 per cent of GDP and 90 per cent of job generation. However, coordination is often weak, leading to decisions being made by public and private actors in silos. At the same time, governments must be cognizant of the risks associated with private sector engagement, ensuring that interventions do not have significant deadweight costs, do not privilege larger companies over micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs) and do not distort overall patterns of investment.

Six action points for stakeholders

Recommendation 1

Look beyond a narrow focus on occupational skills for the green economy sector and develop a holistic, lifecycle approach to supporting 'green' school-to-work transitions.

Top priority should be given to making sure young people have the basic and transferable skills they will need to navigate labour market shifts caused by the green transition; to embedding climate change and environmental education into the curriculum; and training teachers to deliver good quality climate change education.

Recommendation 2

Redirect a bigger share of development and climate change funds to education, training and employment interventions.

Adaptation and mitigation policies and programmes cannot be delivered without an appropriately skilled workforce, and this means funders focused on climate change (including multilateral funds, governmental overseas development agencies, philanthropic foundations, and individual donors) should invest in education and skills. There is a strong case to prioritize new international investment for green skills and jobs in countries that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Recommendation 3

Develop a framework for measuring the impact that education and employment interventions have on climate mitigation and adaptation.

A better measurement framework for the impact of investment in green education, skills and employment interventions could unlock more funding for this area of climate change and mitigation intervention. Governments and funders that are particularly focused on carbon emission accounting need good data to determine whether the outcome of investments in human capital compare well with traditional investments in green infrastructure projects.

Recommendation 4

Urge employers and other private sector actors in green economy sectors to invest in their own talent pipelines.

Given the undeniable business rationale for building green economy skills and capacity, the private sector must also invest time and resources in training and skills interventions to develop the talent pipelines on which their future prosperity and sustainability will depend. At every level, the sector has the influence to drive up decent work standards in its own organizations and supply chains. Working with government, the private sector can improve the relevance of employment and skills interventions.

Recommendation 5

Improve join-up between education, labour market demand and environment policy and programming.

Co-ordinating these three key policy areas and integrating them into climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives will avoid inconsistencies between education/employment interventions and environmental programmes that create a mismatch between skills demand and supply, and slow down green policy implementation. Dialogue and collaboration across government departments is key to coherence.

Recommendation 6

Integrate Meaningful Youth Engagement in green transition strategies.

When recognized and valued as equal partners, young people, including the most marginalized, are not only capable of bringing innovative ideas and creative solutions to the table, but they can also feel empowered to take ownership of solutions, aiding in the successful implementation of green initiatives.



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