

► Just Transition Policy Brief

January 2025

A Just Transition With and For Youth

Key points

- The move towards environmentally sustainable economies in a manner that is fair and inclusive will necessitate targeted action to minimize the negative impacts on youth and provide them with opportunities to thrive in, and contribute to, a just transition.
- To mitigate the disruption of the transition to more environmentally sustainable forms of production, policy efforts should promote green jobs for youth and ensure that they have the skills and training to seize these new opportunities.
- The design of skills-related programmes needs to consider the unique capacities and challenges faced by youth while equally taking into account the emerging demands of the green economy. In particular, eligibility criteria to access social protection and labour market programmes must consider the unique labour market situation of youth, e.g., limited work history. Additionally, the role of industry stakeholders, in particular employers, to designing policies and regulations for employment creation, skilling and retention is central.
- Efforts to support the just transition for youth must be participatory in nature and include youth in the decision-making processes. This can be achieved through social dialogue, tripartism, and initiatives like the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, which promote youth participation in shaping sustainable future opportunities.
- Youth entrepreneurship can drive innovation in the green economy, but young people continue to face steep barriers to entrepreneurship, including high startup costs, regulatory barriers, lack of finances, and a lack of comprehensive support services. Scaling up the entrepreneurship-focused measures of ALMPs, including training, financing, and mentorship, will be especially important to facilitating motivated young green entrepreneurs.
- With labour market adjustments likely to be more frequent in the face of environmental change and economic adjustments, robust social protection systems are needed to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and overall well-being as youth navigate the labour market and economic disruptions associated with the transition to the green economy.

Background

The ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* were adopted by representatives of employers' and workers' organizations and governments in 2015.¹ The *Guidelines* provide both a policy framework and an operational tool to address environmental impacts in a way that promotes the creation of decent work and advances social justice.

In accordance with national circumstances, each country will have different approaches, models and tools available as they pursue sustainable development. The objective of this policy brief is to provide guidance to ILO constituents, governments, workers', and employers' organisations on the linkages between a just transition and youth employment specifically. By highlighting key elements from the ILO's Just Transition Guidelines, this brief is meant to serve as a support to policy makers regarding youth employment. It suggests ways for governments, workers' and employers' organizations to support youth to ensure a just transition.

This policy brief is organized as follows:

- Section 1 discusses the concept of just transition, outlining the Just Transition Guidelines, resolutions, the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, and additional guidance on youth employment. It provides an overview of the nexus between climate change, youth, and decent and green jobs.

- Section 2 outlines the implications of a just transition on youth employment organized according to five thematic areas.
- Sections 3 through 7 examine in greater detail the challenges, responses and strategies for a just transition in the context of youth employment according to the five thematic areas. Each section offers guidance on ensuring a just transition with and for youth by highlighting key elements from the *Just Transition Guidelines* and the *Green Jobs for Youth Pact*. Integrated case studies provide insights into how these efforts are being operationalized.
- Section 8 offers conclusions and key policy recommendations to achieve the mutually reinforcing goals of climate action, sustainable development and social justice in terms of youth employment.

This policy brief is part of a series designed to deepen the technical and policy understanding of how to apply the Just Transition Guidelines. The policy brief series provides stakeholders with information and recommendations to support implementation by countries and other actors. The policy briefs are mutually reinforcing, and together form a body of policy guidance on the Just Transition Guidelines.

¹ ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, 2015.

1. Introduction

The concept of a just transition

A just transition refers to a framework for moving towards environmentally sustainable economies in ways that are fair and inclusive, minimizing negative impacts on workers and communities while maximizing social benefits.² As outlined by the ILO, a just transition seeks to promote decent work and social inclusion for all. The concept of just transition gained prominence with the 2015 Paris Agreement, which emphasizes the importance of just transition and decent job creation in climate responses.

The goal of a just transition is to foster sustainable economies that are not only green but also inclusive and equitable, making sure that workers and communities most vulnerable to climate change are supported and can share in the benefits of sustainable development.³ Achieving this involves coordinated actions across several policy areas, including economic, industrial, environmental, and labour market policies. The framework is grounded in effective social dialogue, respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, and compliance with international labour standards.

In the context of youth employment, a just transition refers to creating pathways into environmentally sustainable jobs that are fair, inclusive, and supportive of young workers' needs.

ILO Guidelines and resolution

In 2015, the ILO adopted the Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All, offering a policy framework and practical tool for transforming to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies while addressing social and employment-related dimensions.⁴ These Guidelines support countries in achieving their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Guidelines provide non-binding practical orientation to Governments and social partners across nine key policy areas:

- Macroeconomic and growth policies
- Industrial and sectoral policies
- Enterprise policies
- Skills development
- Occupational safety and health
- Social protection
- Active labour market policies
- Rights
- Social dialogue and tripartism

Addressing these key policy areas simultaneously can contribute to economic, environmental and social sustainability.

The nine policy areas of the Just Transition Guidelines point to ways to ensure young workers are included in the shift towards sustainable economies.⁵ For example, macroeconomic and growth policies can boost youth employment by creating opportunities in renewable energy, green technology, and eco-tourism, sectors that often appeal to young workers. Industrial and sectoral policies target areas with high youth participation, like digital platforms or agriculture, ensuring young people are involved in industries transitioning towards sustainability.

In 2023, the ILO's constituents adopted a resolution on a just transition, emphasizing the urgent need for inclusive and sustainable policies to address climate change while promoting social justice and decent work. The resolution points to the Just Transition Guidelines as a basis for policymaking, calling for active roles from governments, employers, and workers, encouraging social dialogue, equality, and protection of labour rights.⁶ The resolution also highlights the need for resources, international cooperation, and support for vulnerable populations and to ensure a fair and equitable transition.

² ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

³ ILO, *Climate Change and Financing a Just Transition*, 2024.

⁴ ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

⁵ ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

⁶ ILO, *Resolution Concerning a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, 2023.

Green Jobs for Youth Pact

The Green Jobs for Youth Pact, an interagency partnership formulated in 2022 between the ILO, UNEP and UNICEF, was devised to support a just transition while boosting decent work for youth worldwide with a specific focus on the most vulnerable. The Pact calls for efforts to ensure that green jobs for youth are decent, with fair wages and good working conditions. The Pact identifies several actions and measures that can operationalize the ILO Just Transition Guidelines to effectively support youth employment in green sectors by working on job creation and entrepreneurship, skills development and empowerment.

Additional ILO guidance on youth employment

Additional ILO publications on youth employment offer further guidance to policymakers. The 2012 resolution, *The Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action* addresses the global youth unemployment crisis.⁷ It emphasizes the urgent need for targeted measures, including fostering employment-friendly macroeconomic policies, enhancing skills and education, and securing social protections for young workers. It encourages global and national efforts to create decent jobs for youth, enhance labour market access, and ensure labour rights for all. The resolution also highlights the importance of social dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships in developing sustainable youth employment strategies.

The ILO report *Renewing Commitment to Youth Employment* sets out specific actions for 2020–30, responding to the global youth employment crisis by promoting policies that aim for sustainable, inclusive, and productive employment for young people.⁸ The plan builds on lessons from previous efforts, with a focus on pro-employment macroeconomic policies, labour rights, and entrepreneurship. It emphasizes gender equality and social protection to create decent work for all,

particularly in sectors impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization, and climate change.

Youth have a role in shaping and benefiting from a sustainable future economy

The youth population (age 15-24) numbered over 1.25 billion in 2023, accounting for 15.6% of the global population.⁹ Sustainable development is predicated on the notion that the needs of the present generation should be met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this respect, the needs and aspirations of youth are central to the task of building a sustainable future economy.

The transition to a green economy introduces both opportunities and challenges for youth employment. This next section of this brief elaborates on five broad implications of a transition to a green economy for youth employment. The latter half of this brief then provides guidance on how to achieve a just transition with and for youth, by (i) promoting green jobs for youth; (ii) providing youth with relevant skills and training; (iii) fostering opportunities for green youth entrepreneurship; (iv) ensuring fair wages, decent working conditions, and social protection; and (v) strengthening the voice of youth in decision-making.

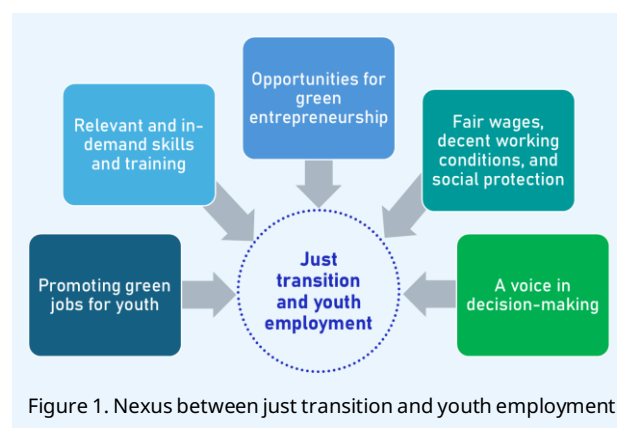


Figure 1. Nexus between just transition and youth employment

7 ILO, *The Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action*, 2012.

8 ILO, *Renewing Commitment to Youth Employment by Endorsing a Follow-Up Plan of Action on Youth Employment for the Period 2020-30*, 2020.

9 UN DESA, *World Population Prospects 2024*, 2024.

2. Implications of a just transition on youth employment

Shifts in sectors and jobs in-demand

The ILO estimates that 64.9 million young people worldwide were unemployed in 2023.¹⁰ While the number of unemployed young people is at the lowest level seen since the start of the millennium, at the same time 1 in 5 global youth (20.4%) were not in employment, education, or training (NEET), two-thirds of whom were women.¹¹

The shift towards environmentally sustainable economic activity will not have a homogenous impact on jobs. On the one hand, some jobs will be at risk of elimination, particularly in sectors with fewer options for transitioning to more sustainable production processes.¹² Some jobs will be substituted, such as landfill-based waste management jobs moving to jobs in recycling.¹³ Other jobs will be transformed alongside adjustments towards more sustainable production patterns. These shifts can impact the ability of youth to secure decent work, and potentially contribute to displacement and new forms of inequality across disadvantaged groups.

Young women in climate-vulnerable sectors are at particular risk of increased inequality. Climate change is not gender neutral.¹⁴ In low-income countries, over 60% of women's employment is in the agricultural sector, which is likely to be highly disrupted by climate change.¹⁵

On the other hand, the shift towards environmentally friendly production processes and outputs holds the promise of creating new jobs in areas such as renewable energy and eco-tourism.¹⁶ Other sectors where employment opportunities are emerging linked to climate

change adaptation and mitigation include transportation, infrastructure, public health, and disaster risk management.¹⁷

Indeed, greening economies are a driver of net-new job creation, especially for youth. Investments targeting net zero carbon emissions by 2050 could create up to 8.4 million jobs for young people by 2030.¹⁸ There is a risk that the benefits from new green job opportunities may not be evenly distributed between young men and young women. Current conditions suggest that there are significantly more men in green jobs than women in both advanced and emerging economies. While over 20% of employed men hold a green job, only 6% of women are employed in a green position.¹⁹

Changing skills and training requirements

The transition to a greener economy generates skills requirements for newly emerging jobs. Core skills like adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving are essential for green jobs.²⁰ High-skilled roles in green occupations often require technical, analytical, and strategic skills.

Skills requirements for existing jobs may also be redefined. For instance, many workers will need to reskill and adopt different work practices that leverage new technology to make more efficient use of resources and reduce waste.²¹

In some respects, young workers still in school may be well positioned to acquire the new skills required by employers in the green economy. But youth often lack the skills and training needed to capitalize on the opportunities presented by green economy transitions, largely due to limited

10 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024*, 2024.

11 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024*, 2024.

12 ILO, "[Why does climate change matter for employment?](#)"

13 ILO, Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programs, n.d.

14 UNICEF and Karama, [Climate change: impact on adolescent girls](#), 2023.

15 UNICEF, PwC and Generation Unlimited, [The net zero generation: Why the world needs to upskill young people to enable the net zero transition](#), 2022.

16 ILO, *Promoting Green Jobs for Youth through National Employment Policies and Programmes*, 2019.

17 Environmental and Energy Study Unit, [Fact Sheet: Climate Jobs](#), 2024.

18 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*.

19 IMF, *Why Women Risk Losing Out in Shift to Green Jobs*, 2024.

20 Hofman et al., *Green Jobs and Skills Development for Disadvantaged Groups*, 2022.

21 ILO, Promoting green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programs, n.d.

awareness of emerging technologies, occupations, and the specific skills these roles demand.²² A lack of basic resources, including internet access, can also stand in the way of skills acquisition for youth.²³

Without targeted support measures, young workers may struggle to transition to new opportunities, limiting their employment success. Over 60% of the youth population will potentially lack the basic required skills in 2030, including those needed for the transition to the green economy.²⁴ For young women in particular, persistent inequalities of opportunities, such as the opportunity to attend schools, mean that they may be prevented from gaining the necessary skills to actively participate in the labour force.

Limitations to green entrepreneurship

The motivation of youth to find solutions to climate change and make a meaningful impact through their work is high.²⁵ Young entrepreneurs also tend to be less bound to traditional methods and more open to using with new business models and experimenting with emerging technologies.²⁶

Yet many young entrepreneurs face significant barriers to starting and scaling green and social businesses. Young green entrepreneurs, especially those in rural areas, do not often have adequate knowledge about environmental concepts and business opportunities in the green sector, which restricts their ability to innovate and develop sustainable business models.²⁷ Young entrepreneurs may also lack the networks and experience needed to successfully launch and sustain their businesses.

In general, young entrepreneurs face difficulty obtaining financing and technical support for their enterprises. This barrier is rooted in a lack of credit history, collateral, and financial networks.²⁸ Young green entrepreneurs face additional challenges in securing financing, as their ventures are often seen as less profitable and requiring longer periods to yield returns on investment. They often encounter high startup costs for green technologies and additional regulatory barriers.

Erosion of wages, working conditions, and social protection

Climate change affects both traditional and emerging job sectors, with young people bearing disproportionate risks.²⁹ Extreme weather patterns, rising temperatures, and natural disasters also impact workers across all sectors – but especially sectors such as agriculture and construction, where many young people find work.

Approximately 70% of the working population are subjected to excessive heat, leading to nearly 23 million injuries, and 18,970 deaths, annually.³⁰ The Europe and Central Asia region has experienced the largest increase in workforce exposure, with a jump of 17.3% between 2000 and 2020. However, the regions with the largest proportions of workforce exposure to excessive heat remain in Africa (92.9%), the Arab States (83.6%), and Asia and the Pacific (74.7%)³¹ – regions which have young populations. In Africa, for instance, the median age is just 19 years³² – meaning that many of the workers exposed to excessive heat conditions are youth. In the Thai context, the association between psychological distress and occupational heat stress was

22 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*.

23 UNICEF, PwC and Generation Unlimited, *The net zero generation*, 2022.

24 UNICEF, PwC, and Generation Unlimited, *The net zero generation: Why the world needs to upskill young people to enable the net zero transition*, 2022.

25 Youth Business International, Policy Paper: Incentivizing and supporting green and social business models among young entrepreneurs to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024.

26 Youth Business International, 2024.

27 ILO, *Promotion of Green Entrepreneurship for Youth*, 2023.

28 YBI, *Incentivizing and Supporting Green and Social Business Models Among Young Entrepreneurs to Advance the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2024.

29 ILO, *Promoting Green Jobs for Youth*.

30 ILO, *Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health*, 2024.

31 ILO, *Heat at Work*.

32 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024*, 2024.

explored, and young men aged 15 to 29 years reported the highest prevalence of heat stress at work.³³

Climate change increases job insecurity due to various extreme weather events,³⁴ but youth also face significant challenges in accessing social protection. Young workers frequently lack access to unemployment benefits due to their participation in short-term contracts, leaving them more vulnerable to the financial burdens of job loss.³⁵

At the same time, the transition towards a green economy has the potential to stimulate improvements in job quality and incomes which can also benefit youth. The growth of greener products and services, and productivity advancements in sectors such as agriculture, construction, recycling, and tourism can lead to improved working conditions and higher wages.³⁶

Access to decision making

In a 2021 study of 10,000 youth from around the world, 45% of young people said that their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning.³⁷ But young people are motivated to be part of the solution in fighting climate change. In a poll of young people from Africa and Europe, 71% of respondents indicated that they want to be actively involved in the transition to a greener economy.³⁸ In the latest round of the People's Climate Vote, focused on G20 countries, respondents under age 18 expressed greater support than adults for some climate-related policies, such as the use of renewable power and climate-friendly farming techniques.³⁹

However, the engagement of young people on climate change decisions may in many cases remain tokenistic, marginal, and inadequately

resourced.⁴⁰ Youth involvement in decision-making related to green sector employment in particular is limited. Without active youth participation in decision-making processes, there is a risk of creating a future workforce that is not adequately prepared to meet the challenges of a sustainable economy.

One example of direct youth participation at the nexus of sustainability and employment is the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, which is designed with and for young people. The Pact is supported by a Youth Advisory Group (YAG) that includes young representatives from major UN youth groups and workers and employers' organizations. Through meaningful engagement, young representatives play a key role in advancing the Pact's priorities and ensuring youth voices are central to its implementation.

The voices of youth are also being amplified at the regional level. A Green Jobs roundtable with young African climate leaders was hosted by the Mastercard Foundation following COP28 (the United Nations Climate Change Conference) in 2024. The central question for debate was the extent to which green jobs can address youth unemployment in Africa.⁴¹

At the country level, almost 80% of more recently completed Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs – countries' climate pledges) include considerations of young people; in comparison, only 40% of previously-completed NDCs contain direct reference to children or youth.⁴² This suggests that progress has been made to consider the perspectives of youth on climate change, however there remains scope to strengthen the voice of youth in decision-making on environmentally sustainable economies and employment.

33 Tawatsupa, Benjawan, Lynette L-Y. Lim, Tord Kjellstrom, Sam-ang Seubsman, Adrian Sleigh, and the Thai Cohort Study team. 2010. "The Association between Overall Health, Psychological Distress, and Occupational Heat Stress among a Large National Cohort of 40,913 Thai Workers". *Global Health Action* 3 10 (1): 5034.

34 ILO, *Ensuring Safety and Health at Work in a Changing Climate: Global Report*, 2024.

35 ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*, 2024.

36 ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

37 Marks et al., *Young People's Voices on Climate Anxiety, Government Betrayal and Moral Injury: A Global Phenomenon*, 2021.

38 African Union, European Union and UNICEF, *Your Voice, Your Future, Final Report*, 2021.

39 UNDP, *Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action*, 2022.

40 UNDP, *Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action*, 2022.

41 Mastercard Foundation, *Green Jobs Roundtable: Youth Voices Paving the Way*, 2024.

42 UNDP, *Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action*, 2022.

3. Promoting green jobs for youth

Promoting green jobs for youth is a crucial component of a just transition. Demand-side policy measures to promote green growth that is job-rich for youth and pro-employment macro-economic policies such as the investment of public funds in greening the economy can foster job creation and help young workers adjust to sustainability policies. The Just Transition Guidelines suggest measures that governments should take in consultation with social partners, including incorporating the just transition framework into macroeconomic policies, adopting growth policies that promote sustainable production and consumption patterns, and realigning incentive schemes to stimulate innovation by enterprises.

National employment policies (NEPs) are a way of aligning economic, social and environmental objectives to promote green jobs for youth. Green jobs for youth should be considered explicitly and continuously throughout each stage of the NEP policy cycle, from the situational analysis undertaken at an early stage, to policy formulation, to planning and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.⁴³

Sectoral policies can involve governments in consultation with stakeholders to establish incentives and send clear signals to investors to develop markets for goods and services in key green sectors and subsectors (e.g. sustainable agriculture, green construction). Other examples of demand-side measures are financial policies (e.g. to boost access to credit for young green entrepreneurs), trade and regional integration policies (e.g. to attract visitors to sustainable tourism offerings where youth are employed); and private sector development (e.g. support for incubators and technology hubs).

Investments in social protection and active labour market measures can foster job creation for youth and help young workers adjust to environmental sustainability policies (e.g. public employment schemes through which youth help build and maintain climate resilient infrastructure).⁴⁴

In combination with a supply-side approach aimed at enhancing the skills of young workers (see next section), these demand-side measures can spur the creation of

green jobs for youth and promote access to emerging opportunities in green sectors.⁴⁵

► Example: Youth Employment for Sustainable Development Project (Kenya)

Initiative name: Youth Employment for Sustainable Development Project (Kenya)

Objective: To empower young women and men through developing their skills and increasing their participation in the rehabilitation and maintenance of roads using employment intensive techniques.⁴⁶

Implementation: This 9-month technical cooperation project was jointly initiated by the Government of Japan and the ILO in 2012. The project focused on creating and developing viable micro and small enterprises owned by young men and women, making use of two employment-intensive and low-cost techniques for road construction ("cobblestone paving" and "Do-nou technology").

The project provided technical skills training to 830 young men and women. Twenty small and medium enterprises owned by youth were established to work on road maintenance using Do-nou technology. Another group of 330 youth registered a business using the cobblestone road paving technology. Among the programme participants trained, 260 (31%) were young women.

Funding: USD \$1.6 million by the Government of Japan.⁴⁷

4. Relevant and in-demand skills and training

A just transition for youth should ensure access to quality education and skills training in green jobs. Skills development prepares young workers for future jobs in green sectors, providing necessary skills through vocational training and higher education focused on sustainability.

43 ILO, *Promoting Green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programs*, n.d.

44 ILO, *Promoting Green jobs for youth through national employment policies and programs*, n.d.

45 ILO, *Promoting Green Jobs for Youth*.

46 ILO, [Employment Intensive Investment in Kenya](#).

47 ILO: Press Release: [Japan and ILO launched new partnership on Youth Employment for Sustainable Development in Kenya](#), 2012.

To support young people in transitioning into these emerging roles, skills development policies must prioritize their engagement and address their relevant needs in a coherent manner. Fostering digital literacy and technical skills is critical, particularly as economies become greener and more digital. Comprehensive support systems, including tailored resources for young women, are essential for enabling all youth to fully benefit from the opportunities in this evolving landscape.⁴⁸

In collaboration with social partners, governments should promote effective labour market policies that assist enterprises and workers in adapting to evolving workforce needs during the shift to the green economy.⁴⁹ This includes enhancing job accessibility, improving employability, and providing targeted training. Additionally, they should support the creation and delivery of customized courses, aligned with specific occupations and entrepreneurial prospects within the green economy, through public and private employment service providers.

The effectiveness of support types varies across income groups. Evidence shows that, in low- and middle-income countries, entrepreneurship supports, and employment services generate the best outcomes (see section 4), while in high-income countries, skills training and wage subsidies typically achieve the best results.⁵⁰

The Green Jobs for Youth Pact emphasizes the need for targeted training programs that equip young people with the skills required for green jobs, so they are prepared for the demands of the green economy.⁵¹ Targeted subsidies can be used to support reskilling and education in green sectors, as well as hiring unemployed individuals in green roles. For example, Slovenia's Climate Change Fund provides subsidies for enterprises to offer a new employee a permanent, full-time green job.⁵²

Fiscal resources need to be allocated by governments to support active labour market policies (ALMPs) that promote job creation and assist young workers in adapting to environmental sustainability initiatives. ALMPs also provide support through employment services, job matching, and training, assisting youth in navigating the labour market and finding positions in emerging green industries.

In general, more localized programs have performed better, and should be prioritized. Additionally, programs that require the collaboration of public and non-public

stakeholders have yielded better results than programs with no collaboration.⁵³

The GJYP calls on educators to take actionable steps toward developing accessible training and reskilling programs that equip young people with the skills needed for sustainable careers. Educators are encouraged to collaborate with other stakeholders to integrate green skills into curricula and align policies with environmental goals. Additionally, GJYP urges educators to inspire their communities by promoting green skills as essential for the sustainable economy.

The Guidelines on the Just Transition emphasize the importance of ALMPs in facilitating the transition to environmentally sustainable economies. Such policies and programmes are needed to help workers adjusting to labour market disruption and improve access to new employment opportunities in the green economy. The Guidelines also place emphasis on the importance of workers, such as youth, that are at higher risk of displacement.

Within ALMPs, the Guidelines highlight the importance of enhancing employability through access to upskilling and retraining, public employment services, public works, wage subsidies as well as work experience and on-the-job training. Moreover, each of these levers need to consider not the unique barriers faced by youth but also be designed in a manner that aligns with the needs of the green economy.

The Science and Technology Internship Program from Canada is an example of an upskilling programme for youth focused on roles supporting environmental sustainability.

48 ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*.

49 ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

50 ILO, *Active Labour Market Programs Improve Employment and Earnings of Young People*, 2024.

51 ILO, *Green Jobs for Youth Pact: Accelerating Young Talent and Skills for Green Jobs*, 2020.

52 ILO, *The Role of Active Labour Market Policies for a Just Transition*, 2023.

53 ILO, *Active Labour Market Programs*.

► **Example: Canada's Science and Technology Internship Program – Green Jobs**

Initiative name: [Canada's Science and Technology Internship Program \(STIP\) – Green Jobs](#)

Objective: STIP – Green Jobs focuses on equipping youth with work experience in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, particularly in roles supporting environmental sustainability.

Implementation: This programme was developed to address rising youth unemployment and meet the demand for skilled labour in environmental and green sectors. The programme is managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and delivered through partnerships with organizations that provide internship placements across Canada. The programme places young workers (15-30 years of age) in short-term internships within industries related to conservation, sustainable resource management, clean technology, and other green fields. Each internship is designed to offer hands-on experience while equipping youth with skills in STEM fields relevant to green industries. Placements are facilitated and monitored by implementing partners, who also manage the payment of incentives for each placement to participating businesses.

By incentivizing paid work placements, the programme helps bridge the gap between educational qualifications and employment, fostering a skilled workforce for the green economy.

Funding: Funded through the Government of Canada.

► **Example: Closing Gender Gaps in Skills Development in the Solar Renewable Energy Sector in Zambia**

Initiative name: Closing Gender Gaps in Skills Development in the Solar Renewable Energy Sector in Zambia

Objective: This project was conceptualized to address systemic barriers limiting women's participation in the renewable energy sector. Project development was guided by a comprehensive analysis of gender disparities and skills gaps in solar energy. Stakeholders, including government entities, educational institutions, and industry players, collaborated to ensure the project aligned with national priorities for renewable energy and gender equality.

Implementation: The implementation strategy emphasized partnerships between vocational training centres, solar energy companies, and women's advocacy groups. The initiative provided targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, and career development support to women, equipping them with technical skills relevant to the solar energy industry. Outreach activities included public campaigns to challenge stereotypes and encourage women's participation in traditionally male-dominated fields. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were established to track progress, address challenges, and refine the approach as necessary.

Funding: Funding priorities included curriculum development, procurement of training equipment, and provision of scholarships or stipends to encourage participation by women from underrepresented communities. Additional financial support was allocated to advocacy campaigns and capacity-building initiatives for training providers.

5. Opportunities for youth green entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship in the green economy has the potential to deliver innovative, technology-driven solutions to environmental challenges while driving sustainable economic growth.⁵⁴ Promoting youth-led enterprises in green sectors, requires targeted financing, awareness campaigns, education, and technical support services to foster eco-entrepreneurship in green technology start-ups.

The Guidelines highlight the importance of fostering green entrepreneurship as part of the transition to environmentally sustainable economies. Key areas for consideration include promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, including financial incentives such as grants, low-interest loans, and tax incentives for businesses adopting environmentally sound practices.

Enterprise policies play a role in encouraging youth entrepreneurship by enabling sustainable start-ups, which not only drive innovation but also create decent jobs as young business owners develop green enterprises. Governments and social partners should support peer learning, along with education and training in green entrepreneurship, to advance sustainable practices and the adoption of green technologies.⁵⁵

Effective young entrepreneurship programs typically provide an extensive range of services, such as training, access to business resources, financing, networking opportunities, and mentoring.⁵⁶ A toolkit developed by Youth Business International tailored to support for young and green entrepreneurs compiles tools covering six key areas: personal development and self-knowledge; business and impact ideation; business model; business validation; legal, governance and finance; and impact measurement and growth.⁵⁷

Furthermore, the Guidelines emphasize the need for targeted business information and advice on green business practices, eco-innovation, and regulatory systems, particularly for MSMEs. Additionally, training opportunities for upskilling and reskilling in green business practices and environmentally friendly technology should be provided to promote sustainable practices and the use of green technologies.

The South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship project in Sri Lanka and Nepal is an example of a programme aimed at promoting green entrepreneurship among youth.

► Example: South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship (SALE)

Initiative name: [South Asia Leadership in Entrepreneurship \(SALE\)](#)

Objective: Beginning in 2021, this programme was developed to promote youth entrepreneurship in Sri Lanka and Nepal. The ILO developed the SALE programme by conducting in-depth assessments of South Asia's entrepreneurial landscape. Key gaps and barriers were identified, including the lack of practical skills, limited mentorship, and societal barriers. Based on these findings, the ILO designed a comprehensive approach to strengthen entrepreneurial capabilities and enhance leadership skills among aspiring young entrepreneurs.

Implementation: The program's implementation involved a series of localized workshops, training sessions, and mentoring initiatives aimed at equipping participants with the necessary business skills, financial literacy, and leadership competencies. The early phases of the programme targeted youth between 15-24 years, more specifically school students, vocational trainees, university undergraduates, employed and unemployed youth groups. The later phases included youth up to 30 years. A series of policy interventions were organized as a core intervention of the project. The third policy dialogue was on the theme of "Promotion of Green Entrepreneurship for Youth". It highlighted the issues of gaps in understanding green concepts; difficulties in changing mindsets; lack of awareness on career paths in green space; issues in inclusivity and scalability; access to technology, finance and support systems; and regulatory barriers.

Funding: Funded through the ILO; US Department of State.

⁵⁴ ILO, *Promotion of Green Entrepreneurship*.

⁵⁵ ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

⁵⁶ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*.

⁵⁷ Youth Business International, Policy Paper: Incentivizing and supporting green and social business models among young entrepreneurs to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024.

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► Example: Integrated UPSHIFT

Initiative name: [Integrated UPSHIFT \(Uganda\)](#)

Objective: The i-UPSHIFT programme is focused on social innovation and entrepreneurship skills building for youth.

Implementation: The Integrated UPSHIFT (i-UPSHIFT) programme was launched jointly by the ILO and WHO during 2022. The context for the programme is northern Uganda, a region previously affected by civil war and currently confronting mounting challenges posed by climate change. More than 350 adolescents and youth in 6 pilot districts have been upskilled by the programme so far.

Funding: Supported by PROSPECTS partnerships funded by the Netherlands Government.

6. Fair wages, decent working conditions and social protection

Creating green jobs for youth and equipping youth with relevant green skills are necessary but not sufficient elements of a just transition for youth. Policies to ensure fair wages, decent working conditions, and robust social protection measures are also integral components. Such measures aim to increase resilience, safeguard populations, including youth, against economic and environmental vulnerabilities, and contribute to productive employment, decent work, social inclusion, and poverty eradication.

Universal social protection has crucial role to play in supporting climate action and a just transition.⁵⁸ Support from social protection can support youth while they are seeking and starting employment. For youth who are already working, including those in vulnerable or informal employment, access to social protection systems can also help to secure their livelihoods during job transitions, including transitions to new green sectors. Ensuring that young workers have access to social protection safeguards their well-being in the face of job displacement associated with economic restructuring.

Examples of recent measures to bolster social protection for youth include the introduction a specific unemployment benefit scheme for youth and new labour market entrants with low incomes (Algeria) and subsidies to incentivize the hiring of recent graduates contingent upon social insurance registration (China).⁵⁹

Social protection policies can be temporarily modified to address groups affected by a climate crisis.⁶⁰ For example, the Philippines has implemented social insurance measures to support groups affected by climate crisis. These include advanced pension disbursements, increased health insurance payouts, and emergency loans at reduced rates.⁶¹

Social protection should be integrated into policies addressing environmental impacts, prioritizing support for young workers reliant on natural resources or undergoing considerable structural transitions.⁶² Working together, social partners and governments can strengthen social protection systems, ensuring access to healthcare, income

security, and social services in line with international labour standards.

In terms of working conditions, occupational safety and health (OSH) policies must also adapt to the emerging risks associated with green industries, ensuring safe working conditions, particularly for youth entering new green sectors.

► Example: Adaptive Safety Nets and Economic Inclusion project, Cameroon

Initiative name: [Adaptive Safety Nets and Economic Inclusion](#)

Objective: The project seeks to expand the coverage and shock-responsive capacity of the safety net system for poor households, and increase access to income generation and support entrepreneurship opportunities for youth in urban areas.⁶³

Implementation: The project is slated to run from 2023 to 2028. The implementing agency is the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Regional Development. The project is a continuation of efforts under a previous Social Safety Net project in Cameroon which was undertaken between 2013 and 2022. The project has 5 programming streams, including support to young business owners, emergency cash transfers for households in areas hit by climatic shocks, and an economic inclusion programme for young people between age 18 and 35 working in the informal sector. Since December 2023, the project has made regular cash transfers to 19,663 households and emergency cash transfers to 11,414 households, and 10,000 beneficiaries are involved in labour-intensive public works.

Funding: In 2022 the World Bank approved a credit of \$160 million from the International Development Association to support the project.

⁵⁸ ILO, *World Social Protection Report, 2024-26*.

⁵⁹ ILO, *World Social Protection Report, 2024-26*.

⁶⁰ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024-26*.

⁶¹ ISSA, *Climate Change and Natural Resource Scarcity*, 2014.

⁶² ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

⁶³ World Bank, "[World Bank to Support More Than 200,000 Vulnerable Cameroonians to Access Social Safety Nets and Livelihood Opportunities](#)", 2022.

7. A voice in decision-making

Achieving a just transition requires nationwide social dialogue among workers, employers, and governments, tailored to each country's unique context.⁶⁴ Social dialogue and tripartism can involve youth in labour market related and sustainability policy discussions. Youth participation in dialogue and decision-making can help shape national just transition plans.

To that end, there is a need for more inclusive policies that include youth in shaping a just transition to a sustainable economy.⁶⁵ It is important to ensure that youth are included in the policy frameworks that define their future opportunities. Giving youth a voice in decision-making processes can ensure their perspectives help to shape policies and programmes affecting their future. Meaningful youth engagement in the context of climate action is defined as “where youth share power to steer the process and outcome of their participation.”⁶⁶

By providing young workers with fair access to new opportunities, a just transition in youth employment not only supports their economic stability but also empowers them as leaders in driving sustainable change across industries and communities.⁶⁷

In the *Green Jobs for Youth Pact*, youth participation is encouraged through social dialogue which ensures that young people have a voice in shaping policies related to green jobs and the transition to a sustainable economy.⁶⁸ The Pact prioritizes youth inclusion through its Youth Advisory Group (YAG), which places young people at the forefront of the initiative. The YAG fosters active partnerships with youth, especially those most vulnerable to climate impacts, and guides the Pact's design and implementation across all areas. Its members include climate advocates, students, and representatives from workers' and employers' organizations, reflecting the vital role of youth in the Pact's success.

The Guidelines underscore the importance of inclusive decision-making processes that actively involve all relevant stakeholders, including youth. They advocate for strong social consensus on the goals and pathways to sustainability, emphasizing that social dialogue must be an integral part of the institutional framework for policymaking and implementation at all levels. This includes adequate, informed, and ongoing consultation with all stakeholders, ensuring that the voices of youth and

other marginalized groups are heard and considered in the transition to environmentally sustainable economies

The European Green Youth Program is an example of direct engagement and participation by youth in shaping the green economy.

⁶⁴ ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*.

⁶⁵ ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition*.

⁶⁶ UNDP, *Aiming Higher: Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action*, 2022.

⁶⁷ ILO, *Promoting Green Jobs for Youth*.

⁶⁸ UNEP, *Green Jobs for Youth Pact*, 2024.

► European Green Youth Program

Initiative name: [European Green Youth Program](#)

Objective: The European Green Youth Program was created in response to several EU policy priorities, including the European Green Deal, which aims for Europe to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Recognizing the importance of youth participation, the EU developed the Green Youth programme which involves investing in young people's skills and entrepreneurial ambitions in green sectors. The development of the programme consisted of consultations with EU institutions, environmental organizations, educational institutions, and youth representatives to align with current sustainability goals and employment challenges faced by youth.

Implementation: The programme is implemented through several pillars, targeting different aspects of youth engagement in the green economy. The programme collaborates with educational institutions and vocational training centres to integrate green skills and sustainability courses into curricula. Partner institutions offer workshops, certification programs, and hands-on training for young people seeking skills that pertain to the green economy.

The Green Youth programme also provides support for young entrepreneurs in green sectors through mentorship, training, and innovation measures that connect youth with industry experts and investors. Networking events, such as the annual EGY Summit, bring young people from across Europe together to exchange ideas, learn from green economy leaders, and access potential partnerships.

In partnership with local authorities and NGOs, EGY funds small-scale green projects led by youth at the community level, such as urban greening, waste reduction, and energy-saving initiatives.

Funding: The European Green Youth Program is primarily funded by the European Union, with additional support from national governments, EU member states, and contributions from private sector partners.

8. Conclusions and key policy recommendations

The *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* provides a framework to support ILO constituents as they make strides towards environmentally sustainable economies in a fair and inclusive manner.

This transition will entail significant adjustments and upside opportunities for youth, if well-managed. While the transition promises new jobs in sectors like renewable energy and eco-tourism, youth often face skill gaps and economic transitions can impact their ability to secure decent work.

This brief highlights the implications presented by the green transition and guidance across five thematic areas to help mitigate the risks for youth, and support youth to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

First, there is a need to place greater importance on ensuring that demand-side measures create green jobs for youth. This must be accompanied by skills development policies. Quality education and skills training for green jobs can ensure equitable access to opportunities in sectors like renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. In many instances eligibility requirements will need to change to ensure youth can access the support they need.

There is also an opportunity to promote youth entrepreneurship that can drive innovation and sustainable economic growth within the green economy. Success, however, will mean addressing the barriers that young entrepreneurs face, such as high startup costs and regulatory barriers, and the need for comprehensive support and wraparound services including training, financing, and mentorship.

Efforts will also be needed to ensure that fair wages, safe working conditions, and robust social protection systems for youth are in place, particularly in the context of the risks posed by extreme weather conditions and a changing climate. Indeed, youth often face vulnerabilities and insecurity due to climate change and economic transitions, stressing the importance of social protection systems to safeguard their well-being.

Finally, this brief underscores the importance of including youth in decision-making processes related to the green economy. It highlights the need for inclusive policies that ensure youth participation in shaping their future opportunities. Social dialogue and tripartism to involve youth in labour and sustainability policy discussions can empower them as agents of sustainable change.

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