

Dubai PAGE Conference Parallel Session Report

Green Jobs: Seizing the Opportunities for Decent Work

1. Background

In a context of global employment crisis, with unemployment standing at close to 200 million people (74 million youth) in 2012, and nearly 400 million workers remaining in what the ILO defines as working poverty (workers earning less than USD2/day) governments around the world are searching for ways to stimulate job creation and to improve the quality of existing jobs. Against this backdrop, the Rio+20 Outcome Document “The Future We Want”, devoted a full section on promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all, and social protection. It encouraged each country to consider the implementation of green economy policies and strategies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, in a manner that endeavours to drive sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and job creation, particularly for women, youth and the poor.

Global research and practical experiences from a range of countries provide growing evidence that greening economies could be a means to create more and better jobs in sectors and activities that reduce energy and material consumption; minimize waste and pollution; limit greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impact; or protect and restore ecosystems – in other words, green and decent jobs.

However, understanding the labour market dynamics is critical in terms of the shifts in the volume, composition and quality of employment across sectors; the levels and distribution of income; and how to ensure that jobs created are green and decent are important policy issues. Addressing these issues and challenges is fundamental for a green economy to really hold promises of a new and more inclusive path of growth and development leading to jobs, income and social inclusion, particularly for the vulnerable and marginalized groups.

2. Content of the session

The session titled “Green Jobs: seizing the opportunities for decent work” discussed the implications for employment in the transition to greener economies. The panellists and participants addressed the overall question of how can green economy approaches lead to more and better jobs, by providing access to new employment and livelihood opportunities as well as by raising the standards of quality (decency) among existing occupations.

The session was co-chaired by Ms. Cynthia Cruz, Executive Director, Institute of Labour Studies, Department of Labour and Employment of the Philippines and Mr. Peter Poschen, Director, Enterprises Department, at the International Labour Organization. Panellists were Mr. Osman Mahomed, Executive Chairman of the “Mauritius Sustainable Island” Commission, Ms. Nompumelelo Barbara Mnconywa, Head, Labour Activation Program, Department of Labour, South Africa, and Mr. Steve Bass, Head, Sustainable Markets Group, International Institute for Environment and Development and co-founder of the Green Economy Coalition.

By way of introduction, Mr. Peter Poschen pointed out that greening the economy refers to the broad category of work to be done in a range of productive activities across sectors, whether formal or informal, in realizing the new clean economy transformation. It can refer to creation of new jobs but can refer to upgrading of existing jobs as well.

Ms. Cynthia Cruz highlighted the approach of the Philippines of greening of the economy as a strategy to advance on the job agenda and noted that climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies are complementary initiatives to the green economy to the extent they contribute to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability.

Mr. Osman Mahomed presented that Maurice-Ile-Durable (MID) Policy Strategy and an Action Plan towards 2020 as an example of “an indigenous strategy with political commitment”. He indicated that an assessment conducted in collaboration with the ILO revealed that out of the current total employment, 6.3% are green jobs. The MID action plan –resulting from tripartite national dialogue– aims to reach a target of 10% green jobs by 2020 with substantive government investments and subsidies on renewable energies; waste management, sustainable agriculture, tourism and integrated natural resource management, resource efficiency and cleaner production.

Ms. Nompumelelo Barbara Mnconywa discussed the Green Economy Accord signed by the South African Government in 2011 with private sector, trade unions and civil society organisations. Anchored on sound research and political will, the Accord encourages Government to work in partnership with private sector and local communities to boost job-rich growth. The key initiatives which should lead to the creation of 6 million new jobs, are focused on recycling, buildings retrofitting, solar-powered traffic lights and eco-vehicles to be promoted at municipal level, and solar water heating systems at household and business level. Youth and unemployed were mentioned as the main target groups of solar installation training programmes.

Mr. Mika Vehnamäki, Senior Economic Advisor, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland, stressed the role of the private sector as the real engine of growth and job creation, especially in new emerging economic sectors, such as renewable energies.

Mr. Steve Bass noted that particular attention is needed towards the informal economy workers and collectives (e.g. waste pickers collectives, brick-making collectives, small businesses associations, local producers, i.e. the whole spectrum of informality), taking into account that they represent from 60 to 80 percent of workers in developing economies and therefore must be at the starting point on greening efforts.

3. Good Practices, Insights and Lessons Learned

State-of-the-art knowledge and good-practice examples

- There is emerging evidence from *ex ante* and *ex post* assessments as well as country experiences that green economy approaches can lead to positive employment outcomes through the creation of new jobs and the improvement of the quality of existing jobs, both in formal and non-formal sectors. In Mauritius for example, a green job assessment helped measure the potential

to create more and better jobs through greening production and production processes. This helped inform policy goals and establish targets for new employment creation.

- However, such employment gains are not achieved by default, but by design and require appropriate policies and measures at the national, sectoral, local and enterprise level. It appeared that in many countries, green economy approaches with dedicated objectives to stimulate job creations feature in national development strategies and policies. For example, in Senegal, green economy and green jobs objectives feature in national strategies for economic and social development.
- The combination of research, political commitment and stakeholder engagement and ownership appeared as central to many of the good practices discussed. For example, in South Africa, research by the Industrial Development Cooperation which indicated that most of the employment creation potential was in the renewable energy sector, the commitment of the government to create 6 million jobs, and the involvement of civil society, in particular trade unions which created ownership were critical success factors.

Identified key actors and policies that contribute to positive employment outcomes

- All actors in society have a role to play to ensure a job-rich transition to greener economies. Governments can create a supportive enabling policy and regulatory framework by putting employment as a national cross-sectoral strategy.
- The private sector plays an equality important role, acting as the real engine of innovation, growth and job creation, particularly in new emerging economic sectors, such as renewable energies.
- Civil society organizations, including all associations that give voice to people and local communities and contribute to making the green economy inclusive and just. Employers' and workers' associations that constitute the skeleton of the labour market can help ensure tripartite engagement and ownership to monitor and support effective implementation of national strategies and policies.
- It was recognised that social enterprises often contribute to a dual mandate of boosting local economic development with social inclusion.
- Engagement of financial institutions (national and international) is essential to facilitate green investments.
- The need for upgrading skills and building human capabilities implies that national training institutions have important functions to assess and address skill gaps, mismatches and retraining needs.
- Finally, local authorities can enhance the effective implementation while stimulating ownership and participation at all levels of society. In this context, the process towards democratisation and

decentralisation in certain countries was mentioned as an important parameter for policy change.

Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing and Learning

- Participants felt that there exists a wealth of policy experiments which can be shared for learning and potential replication with the help of global networks for assessing, sharing and mapping including through the use of social media and South-South cooperation mechanisms.
- Starting with small but concrete initiatives often leads to good outcomes and opportunities for scaling up. In the case of Mauritius, building on small scale successful initiatives such as targeted subsidies for small renewable energy producers at household level helped to “prove the case” and expand programmes on a larger scale.
- An interest was expressed on the need for experience sharing on the tax regime as a potentially powerful tool to transform economies, combined with appropriate incentives and subsidies to stimulate jobs creation and the greening of enterprises.
- Participants pointed to the importance of establishing baselines and indicators to compare the green economy pathway with business as usual model results. In addition, concepts such as “green development” were referred as associated notions to the transition to greener economies.

4. Key Take Home Points/Recommendation

- Jobs are central and crucial to the green economy. Evidence from countries reveals that green economy approaches have resulted in positive outcomes from creating jobs and improving working conditions and skills in the non-formal sector, to building capacities for the skilled and unemployed youth and building resilience to disasters.
- Greening the economy in ways that creates more and better jobs requires a proactive strategy based on convergence of efforts (political, social, environmental and economic), participatory governance structures, and policy and regulatory action by governments for mainstreaming in national and local development frameworks.
- Building the business case for green jobs through the provision of incentives and subsidies, shifts in taxation and the easing of regulatory impediments is deemed necessary to create more hospitable conditions, particularly for the private sector to make the transition. The adoption of the social enterprise model to maximize human and environmental well-being is considered particularly useful for countries with a large informal and SME base. 'Indigenous' approaches are also needed, for instance, as every country needs to carry out an assessment and develop customized green economy/green jobs strategies.
- All jobs can be or become green(er). Greening the economy refers to the broad category of work to be done in a range of productive activities across sectors, whether formal or informal. It refers

to creation of new jobs but also to the upgrading of existing jobs. Furthermore, green jobs need to include decent working conditions for them to be beneficial for the environment and contribute to social inclusion. This calls for more attention to be paid to informal work, which represents 60 to 80 per cent of the jobs in developing countries, in addition to low-income farming.

5. References

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More publications are available on the ILO web page: www.ilo.org/green-jobs-programme