

Gender-Responsive Green Growth: Green Jobs and Skills Development

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Introduction

The green economy transition process will affect more than half of the global workforce.¹ It will result in job creation, substitution, elimination, transformation, and redefinition, bringing benefits for some workers to the detriment of others.² Women have lower labour force participation than men and are significantly underrepresented in sectors predicted to experience green growth. This disproportionately exposes them to negative impacts of the economic restructuring. In light of the global commitment to gender equality, women’s economic empowerment, and a just transition to a green economy,³ it is imperative that any donor interventions focused on green jobs and skills development are gender-responsive.

Green jobs are jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment, in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. The concept of green jobs also refers to the employment effects or impact including on working conditions or decent work, the change in employment

profiles and the levels and types of skills required, with implications for skills development. **Gender-responsive green jobs** are those that are equally accessible to women and men, and account for gender differences in barriers to accessing, and the impacts of, green jobs. **Gender-responsive skills development** refers to approaches to skills development that account for differences in the needs and constraints to accessing such training of women and men.

This Guidance Sheet sets out the case for incorporating gender-responsive approaches to green jobs and skills development in donor programmes; provides examples of how such approaches have been integrated into existing donor-funded activity; and offers recommendations for future programmes.

Why is gender relevant to green jobs and skills development?

- **There is a well-established gender gap in economic participation in key green economy sectors.** Women are underrepresented in key sectors of the green economy due to a complex range of supply- and demand-side constraints and socio-cultural norms. For instance, women account for 9% of the global workforce in construction and 12% in engineering.⁴ Existing constraints to economic participation may restrict women’s participation in green jobs going forward and proactive steps must therefore be taken to address them.
- **Women are concentrated in lower-skilled, lower-paid, and lower-quality jobs, and informal employment,** so are more vulnerable to job losses resulting from the transition to a green economy. Indeed, it is estimated that two billion (61%) of the global employed population earn their living in the informal economy. While informal employment is a greater source of employment for men than for women at the world level (63 vs 58%), in developing countries the percentage of women workers who are informally employed (92%) is substantially higher than the percentage of men workers (87%).⁵

¹ [ILO/UNEP, 2012.](#)

² [UNFCCC, 2016.](#)

³ [UNEP, ILO, IOE and ITUC, 2008;](#) [UNFCCC, 2016.](#)

⁴ [Research Outreach.](#)

⁵ [WIEGO, 2019.](#)

- There are gender differences in access to skills development and in skill levels. Social norms and expectations regarding marriage, child bearing, and domestic responsibilities can lead to little value being placed on girls' education and employment. As a result, they experience less access to skills development than their male peers. Additionally, gender stereotypes regarding professions can influence the educational and vocational training choices made by girls, which in turn influences their opportunities for future employment in green jobs.
- There is an opportunity to take a targeted approach to develop the skills of girls in particular in science, technology, and engineering. Data suggest that there is a strong positive association between the average amount of schooling a girl receives in her country and her country's score on indices that measure vulnerability to climate-related disasters.⁶ With the right strategies and incentives, girls and women can be encouraged to train in male-dominated professions, such as science or engineering. This can contribute to gender equality and address the shortage of professionals in these areas which may otherwise limit the growth of green economy sectors.



⁶ Brookings, 2017.

How has gender been integrated into existing green jobs and skills development programmes?

Box 1 provides examples of four programmes that take a gender-responsive approach to green jobs and skills development. These programmes were launched only recently, so we do not yet know what impact they have had.

Some programmes have taken a **gender-mainstreaming approach** (e.g. the ILO and FAO projects in Box 1), and others a **women-targeted beneficiary approach** (e.g. the EBRD, and UNIDO and UN Women programmes). All focus on the creation of green jobs for women as entrepreneurs, rather than as employees, and there remains a lack of documented interventions that work directly with companies to address their gender equality practices to improve opportunities for women as employees in green industries. Moreover, there is a lack of women-targeted skills development for green jobs, with the exception of the energy sector.

Box 1: Relevant project plans

- The ILO's [Green Enterprise project](#) began in 2017 and seeks to enable innovative green, growth oriented SMEs owned by young women and men in Zimbabwe to access business development services and expand their activities. It uses annual competitions to identify such enterprises and provides 75 of them with financial and technical support to develop and create more and greener jobs. Another 500 SMEs receive training and capacity building services. The project has a target of creating 1,000 green jobs, 50% of which are for women.
- Launched in 2019, the EBRD's new [Programme for Supporting Renewable Energy and Promoting Gender Equality](#) seeks to identify challenges that prevent women's participation in the renewable energy sector in Egypt, as well as potential skills mismatches. Through infrastructure financing and complementary technical assistance, the Programme works with the Egyptian authorities to overcome these issues.

Box 1: Relevant project plans continued

- FAO's [Green Jobs for Rural Youth Employment](#) started in 2019 in Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and East Timor and aims to provide green jobs in rural areas and agricultural sectors for youth, and assist governments in their transition to the green economy by fully utilizing the developmental potential of rural areas and agricultural sectors. It adopts a gender-sensitive approach through:
 - applying a gender-inclusive value chain mapping tool that embeds considerations about the differential roles of, and impact on, women and men;
 - adopting an ethnographic approach in its country scoping missions to understand the gender context of the project implementation sites;
 - aiming to have half the participants in the green entrepreneurship and employment skills development activities be women;
 - providing training on gender leadership to all participants; and,
 - incorporating gender as an evaluation in the selection of proposals for funding.

- UNIDO and UN Women's 2019 [Economic Empowerment of Women in Green Industry Programme](#) aims to effect change and empower more women to take on leadership roles in green industries as entrepreneurs or industrial professionals in Cambodia, Peru, Senegal, and South Africa. During its initiation phase, the Programme has mapped women's workforce participation and the percentage of women-owned enterprises. In its forthcoming implementation, the Programme will conduct in-depth gender analyses and green industry diagnostics. These will include an assessment of opportunities, constraints, and possible policy measures to increase women's leadership in green industry and green entrepreneurship, as well as the identification of recommendations and specific measures to redress gender imbalances in selected industrial sub-sectors where women have high impact. It will also identify what is needed in terms of government, civil society, and private sector stakeholder capacity building, and accountability, oversight, and dissemination mechanisms for institutional gender mainstreaming initiatives.

**Lessons learned and recommendations for future programmes**

Below are some recommendations to consider when incorporating a gender-responsive approach to green jobs and skills development. See Box 2 for resources to assist with adopting these recommendations.

Design

- ✓ Take a qualitative approach to understand and honour the specificity of the gender dynamics and context in each country and project site.
- ✓ Place any intervention in the context of the international commitments made by partner governments to a *just transition*.⁷
- ✓ Identify the differential lifecycle-related needs, risks, and opportunities for girls and boys. In turn, adopt specific strategies targeting girls' life skills for a green economy in recognition that approaches to skills development will be different from those focused on boys. This may include forming partnerships with non-traditional policy stakeholders, practitioners, and donors to address some of the social norms-related barriers that may impact girls' future participation in the green economy.
- ✓ Identify existing research on sector-specific challenges to women and girls' employment in the green economy sectors of focus in any intervention, as well as the youth dimension.
- ✓ Draw on existing country- and sector-specific data on women's economic participation in the labour market, including in the informal sector.

⁷ A *just transition* refers to moving towards a sustainable society in a way that is as equitable as possible ([UNEP, ILO, IOE and ITUC, 2008](#)).

- ✓ Check the status of key employment and gender-related ILO conventions and legal barriers to women's economic participation (detailed in [Women Business and the Law 2019](#)) to identify what kind of programmes are most needed. For any intervention focusing on jobs in agriculture, account for potential legal and customary norm-related barriers (e.g. related to inheritance or land registration processes) that mean women have lower levels of ownership of property and land.

Implementation

- ✓ Collaborate with industry associations in green sectors to close the green jobs skills gap through developing their own gender-responsive skills development strategies and trainings, and in doing so ensure that vocational training is aligned with market demand.
- ✓ Conduct green sector market assessments to provide information on which skills are in high demand in the local labour market and the predicted needs and number of new entrants that a given sector can accommodate, as well as the current profile of women's participation in these sectors and associated constraints.
- ✓ Take into account the family needs of both women and men, for instance by organising training at times and locations compatible with family roles.
- ✓ Consider incorporating a gender quota, or fixing a minimum participation rate of women, for participants in mixed training programmes.
- ✓ Run training programmes specifically targeting girls and/or women.
- ✓ Incorporate a focus on gender in any skills development training content, for instance, the position of women in family farming and rural society.
- ✓ Incorporate approaches to support national partners in collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data on the employment effects of the green economy on women and men. Also support initiatives to collect sex-disaggregated data on participation in education and vocational training in key sectors of the green economy.
- ✓ Consider adopting a [women's café approach](#) to engage with women workers in a green sector to

ensure they know their employment rights and to address constraints to economic participation.

- ✓ Work with companies in green economy sectors to make their workplace policies and practices more gender-sensitive. One approach may be to engage with green sector signatories of the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and work with them to apply the [WEPs Gap Analysis Tool](#).
- ✓ Incorporate approaches to educate male family members on the value of training and employment for women.
- ✓ Create a peer support network of women in green industries where women have lower levels of participation, to provide them with the reassurance they need in their respective workplaces going forward to maintain their economic participation.

Monitoring and evaluation

- ✓ Go beyond measuring the number of women and men trained and the quality of the training process to also consider the link to employment. As such, consider collecting sex-disaggregated data on net "employment" as an outcome of any green jobs initiatives.
- ✓ Make gainful employment a performance indicator for training providers, stimulating them to coach trainees and to utilize their networks to support women participants to find jobs. Explore using a results-based financing mechanism so that payment for training services is conditional on the successful employment of graduates.
- ✓ Gather sex-disaggregated quantitative baseline data on any differences between men and women in employment within different sectors at project initiative as well as qualitative data from women and men on the reasons for any employment trends and gender-segregation.
- ✓ Conduct qualitative analysis of skills development participants' perceptions on indicators such as empowerment, integration and recognition in society, decision-making power, control over revenue, self-worth, freedom and personal fulfilment.
- ✓ Be realistic in setting targets for green jobs creation. It may not be feasible to achieve gender-equal targets based on the gender context and starting point.

Box 2: Resources

- **Transition to a green economy**
 - [Just Transition of the Workforce, and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs](#), UNFCCC
 - [Guidelines for a just transition toward environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all](#), ILO
- **Lifecycle of women and girls**
 - [Three platforms for girls' education in climate strategies](#), Brookings
 - [Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage](#), UNFPA and UNICEF
- **Sector-specific considerations**
 - [Opportunities and Constraints for Women's Employment and Entrepreneurship in Renewable Energy](#)
 - [Youth and Agriculture: Key Challenges and Solutions](#), FAO
 - [National gender profile of agricultural and rural livelihoods](#), FAO
 - [Women and Men in the Informal Economy – A Statistical Brief](#), WIEGO
 - [Illustrative Guidelines for Gender Responsive Employment Intensive Programmes](#), ILO
 - [Gender and Sustainable Forest Management – Entry Points for Design and Implementation](#), Climate Investment Funds
- **Accessible training**
 - [Gender and Vocational Skills Development](#), SDC
- **General**
 - [Gender Equality and Green Jobs](#), ILO
 - [Green jobs: Improving the climate for gender equality tool](#), ILO
 - [Green Jobs and Women Workers - Employment, Equity, Equality](#), Sustain Labour
 - [A Gender Perspective on the 'Green Economy'](#), Women Rio+20 Steering Committee
 - [Gender equality at the heart of decent work report](#), ILO
 - [Assessing Green Jobs Potential – A Practitioner's Guide](#), ILO
 - [Green Jobs – Towards a Low Carbon World](#), ILO



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