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# Green Jobs and a Just Transition for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific

Highlights



# Green jobs in the Asia-Pacific region

Green jobs are both a mechanism to achieve sustainable development and an outcome of policies to pursue sustainability. They provide the double dividend of more employment and a better environment. Green jobs are decent jobs in economic sectors and activities which help reduce negative environmental impacts by: reducing energy and greenhouse gas emissions by using renewable energy; minimising energy, waste and pollution to protect and restore ecosystems; and supporting activities that assist resilience and adaptation to climate change.

The *Green jobs and a just transition for climate action in Asia and the Pacific* report shows the vital importance of assessing and planning for a just transition to move the region towards a low carbon future. The impacts of climate change threaten the unique and expansive biodiversity and ecosystems, both of which contribute significantly to economic activity and livelihoods across the region. Climate change will exacerbate existing pressures of rapid urbanization, agricultural expansion and intensification, and the need for carefully balanced

natural resource and environmental management. These pressures have the potential to negatively affect the region's ability to develop sustainably and achieve the goals under the United Nation's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

On the positive side, the ILO has identified that by 2030 an additional 14.2 million (net) green jobs could be generated in the Asia-Pacific region. However, this forecast assumes that the region will shift to renewable energy sources, that energy efficiency standards are increased in building and construction, and that transportation shifts to (renewable) electric sources. Accessing this green job growth requires policy planning and implementation, including for policy coherence, industrial innovation and change, and the upgrading and reskilling of workers and young people to take advantage of these new jobs.





# Just Transitions in the region

Enabling a just transition, and planning for this transition, means that the opportunity offered by sustainable development and green job creation from de-carbonisation and adaptation also results in better jobs and decent jobs. It also means that those workers, firms, local regions and sectors affected by the need to de-carbonise and adapt to climate change receive the support, information, training and capacity they need to successfully transition. Green jobs and decent jobs need to be planned for, as they will not necessarily occur automatically or in the volume required unless just transition planning takes place. The ILO stands ready to assist by helping to guide and build capacity to develop just transition plans.

Any direct investment specifically targeting decarbonisation, such as in renewable energy and climate resilience infrastructure, also needs to explicitly consider the employment dimension.

The challenge in this sphere is to activate local job markets and provide local workers with the skills to take up the opportunities presented by the green economy. The importance of creating permanent local employment within these projects should be a key component of any funding or investment undertaken in the Asia-Pacific region. Such strategies will provide for a just transition to emerge from these investments, ensuring that local communities have tangible personal engagement and receive the full range of benefits from these projects.

The report highlights how the Asia-Pacific region is at a crossroads where better jobs can be developed in response to climate change. The region can accelerate its transformation through job creation related to clean energy and climate change mitigation activities - if the local populations, especially younger people, are given the right skills and training.

These lenses highlight the complex and interactive drivers that both support and inhibit green job creation. These drivers include technology, innovations in products and processes, and



The report examines the experience of green jobs through three different lenses:

- a geographical analysis of green jobs and a just transition in a specific region;
- a sectoral analysis of green jobs and a just transition in the textile and garment industry; and
- the development of policy coherence to support a just transition at the national level.

industrial systems operating at a range of geographic levels, from the local to the global. Policy systems are also operating at these multiple levels, combining local ambitions and needs for development and adaptation, with national commitments to global agreements (for example, the Paris Agreement).

At the geographical level, the Pacific region, including the eleven ILO member States (referred to as the Blue Pacific Big Ocean States or BPBOS) have a high susceptibility to climate change impacts. However, they also see opportunities for green and decent job development, which can help transform this region. The impact of climate change and increased natural disasters in the region is investigated, including the impacts on the labour force in the region. The actions that need to be taken to create green jobs, and jobs for particularly vulnerable communities and employment sectors include establishing appropriate and suitable levels of training for these jobs. There is also the importance of knowledge-sharing and joint policy development across the BOS.

At the sectoral level, the textile and garment industry in Asia provides an example of the scale of transition required in global value chains. This sector is particularly significant for many Asian countries in terms of employment numbers, female employment rates, participation in worldwide production systems and direct foreign investment. However, the sector also creates significant negative environmental impacts through its resource intensity in water and energy use, as well as the use and disposal of toxic chemicals.

The sector generates large quantities of highly polluted wastewater, and is highly carbon intense in its transportation needs due to its globalized supply chains. These environmental impacts affect local communities and decent work; climate change will further compound these impacts. Cleaner production activities in the sector will require significant investments in new policies, technologies and patterns of industrial development.

Future jobs will need to be created with the guiding principles of a just transition, which are designed to promote decent work on a large scale and to ensure social protection for vulnerable employees. The ILO guidelines for a Just Transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all include mechanisms for social dialogue between governments and workers' and employers' organisations during policy-making processes. Two countries are acting as pilot cases and have applied the Just Transition guidelines into their policy responses - the Philippines and Uruguay – and have highlighted the ongoing challenge of policy coherence for a Just Transition.





# Report conclusions: the way forward

The report identifies a number of immediate actions to support a just transition and create green jobs in Asia and the Pacific:

- **Data collection and analysis of green jobs** – there is a need across the region to have a consistent measurement of current levels and sectors in which green jobs exist, and to map the potential for green job creation. Data sources need to be locally specific and data collection, including future data collection, needs to occur at the national, and ideally sub-national levels. This may require the creation of proxies or indexes to estimate green job growth potential, if national statistical collections do not currently support this type of analysis.
- **Mapping supporting policy and industry needs for green job creation** – accessing green job growth will require changes in policy at national and local levels, but also changes in industrial processes and activities. Awareness of and proficiency in how to initiate and successfully achieve these activities is essential. Knowledge in the form of best practice case studies, knowledge sharing dialogues and information sources and platforms are needed to ensure this expertise is developed and shared across the region.
- **Institutional capacity building for just transition planning** – planning for a just transition represents a new activity for governments, industry sectors, employers and workers. The capacity to undertake this planning is not necessarily pre-existing in all organizations. As the two pilots show, planning for a just transition also relies upon a high degree of policy coherence for success. Investments are needed in building knowledge and capacity across organizations. This includes documenting and sharing experiences in planning for a just

transition, identifying characteristics and success criteria for this planning, and developing tools, training, advice and guidance on adopting just transition planning.

- **Linking employment and labour markets to Nationally Determined Contributions and commitments to international agreements** – action to address climate change and de-carbonise economies provide a significant driver for green job creation. However, many commitments to international agreements, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement are made without references to employment and the implications these commitments will have on labour markets, and the related skills and training needs and institutions.

The process of planning and enacting a just transition is complex, and time and resource intensive. It requires all constituents and civil society partners to develop new capacities, and to collaborate and coordinate activities to achieve the positive outcomes that a just transition can provide. Through social dialogue with partners, and leading research and data collection, the ILO will continue to generate and share knowledge through new tools and dissemination of best practice, to enable this transition in the Asia-Pacific region.





# About this publication

This report is the culmination of research and input from a range of worldwide sources. These inputs include numerous reports developed for various Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, especially COP 23 under the Presidency of Fiji, the creation of the ILO Employment and Environmental Sustainability Factsheet series for each of the 36 Asia-Pacific countries, and work developed in collaboration with constituents in different Asia-Pacific countries.

The report is divided into five chapters. **Chapter 1** discusses green jobs. Green jobs are central to sustainable development and resource productivity, and provide mechanisms to respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion. Green jobs create decent employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and help build a low-carbon sustainable society. **Chapter 2** looks at the eleven Blue Pacific member States (the Blue Pacific Big Ocean States or BPBOS) of the ILO in terms of their high susceptibility to climate change impacts. **Chapter 3** examines the textile and garment industry in Asia highlighting employment and environment persistent challenges. **Chapter 4** discusses how the ILO Just Transition Guidelines also include mechanisms for social dialogue between governments and workers' and employers' organizations during policy-making processes. **Chapter 5** offers some conclusions for the way forward.

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### Chapter 1

Green jobs and a just transition in Asia and the Pacific

### Chapter 2

Climate change and decent work in the Blue Pacific Big Ocean States

### Chapter 3

A just transition in the textile and garment sector in Asia

### Chapter 4

Implementing the just transition guidelines - Policy implications

### Chapter 5

Conclusion: The way forward





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**Decent  
Work**



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