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## GREEN JOBS FOR YOUTH

BOOSTING DECENT JOBS FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE, GREENING THE ECONOMY

THEMATIC PRIORITY OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DECENT JOBS FOR YOUTH





# 1 Decent Jobs for Youth – the global initiative for action

## 1.1 Objective

**Decent Jobs for Youth is the global initiative to scale up action and impact on youth employment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.** Launched in 2016 with the endorsement of the executive heads of the United Nations, Decent Jobs for Youth is a unique platform for partners to address fragmentation and catalyse effective, innovative and evidence-based action at country and regional levels.

## 1.2 Partners

**Decent Jobs for Youth brings together the resources and expertise of multiple partners to create linkages that maximize the effectiveness of youth employment investments.** The initiative recognizes the important roles of governments, social partners, the UN System, youth and civil society, the private sector, regional institutions, parliamentarians, foundations, academia and the media in promoting decent jobs for youth. The partners of Decent Jobs for Youth subscribe to 15 guiding principles, which steer their actions and investments on youth employment.

## 1.3 Strategy



**Building a strategic alliance** to advocate, ensure policy convergence, stimulate innovative thinking and mobilize resources



**Scaling up evidence-based action and impact** across eight thematic priorities in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



**Sharing and applying knowledge** by capturing, analysing and sharing best practices, highlighting innovative approaches and facilitating learning



**Mobilizing resources** by securing high-level commitments from national, regional and international actors

## 1.4 Priorities for action

**Eight thematic priorities to make a difference in the lives of young women and men – and in our world.** Thematic plans identify areas for enhanced action and impact on decent jobs.



Green jobs for youth



Digital skills for youth



Quality apprenticeships



Youth in fragile situations



Youth transitioning to the formal economy



Youth in the rural economy



Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment



Young workers in hazardous occupations

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## 2 Why action is needed

**Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time. It is a cross-cutting development issue that affects every aspect of sustainable development.**<sup>1</sup> The effects of climate change exacerbate existing economic, political and humanitarian struggles and affect human development in all parts of the world. Such effects include a slow, incremental and cumulative degradation of the environment and an increase in extreme weather events. They are particularly evident in climate-dependent activities like agriculture and tourism, where adaptation and mitigation strategies entail significant costs for both the private and public sectors. Therefore, urgent and major adjustments are required to promote more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and to improve natural resource management and rehabilitation.

**Young women and men are particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change on the world of work.** The majority of the world's 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 live in developing countries, in areas where dependence on natural resources and persistent poverty intersect.<sup>2,3</sup> More than 160 million youth are working, but living in poverty. Those young women and men are to a large extent employed in those sectors which are threatened by the overuse of natural resources and climate change, such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The overuse of natural resources and accelerated climate change can lead to massive losses in both rural and urban enterprises and labour markets, further accelerate migration out of rural areas, and ultimately threaten the livelihoods of young women and men.<sup>4</sup>

**Climate change and the youth employment crisis are closely linked. In fact, they must be addressed together to realize a just transition to a low-carbon, environmentally and socially sustainable economy that leads to more and better work opportunities.**<sup>5</sup> The “green economy” is a promising way forward – an economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and that aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment. Greening the economy involves investments in technology, energy, buildings and infrastructure in sustainable ways and will have significant impacts on the world of work, driving job creation and upgrading.<sup>6</sup> Notably, it involves young women and men as agents of change who are increasingly concerned about environmental issues and acknowledge the key role they can play in greening economies.

**Greening the economy does not automatically translate into decent jobs for young people.** With coherent, clear and forward-looking planning and policy frameworks, green economies can be designed to benefit women and men over time, while increasing access to economic opportunities in ways that reduce inequalities and promote social well-being. However, this will take work.<sup>7</sup> Young people may face substantial challenges in gaining access to economic and employment opportunities in the green economy. Sectors such as energy, industry and infrastructure often require certain levels of education and skills that may not be readily accessible to young people. On the other hand, labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture and

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2016). *Scaling Up Climate Action to Achieve the SDGs*.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables*, Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP/248.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP (2013). *Green Jobs for Women and Youth: What Can Local Governments Do?*

<sup>4</sup> ILO (2013). *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session.

<sup>5</sup> ILO (2015). *Decent Work, Green Jobs and the Sustainable Economy*.

<sup>6</sup> ILO (2016). *Create green jobs to realize the benefits of low emission development*.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, UNEP and UN DESA (2015). *Towards Green and Inclusive Prosperity: Building green economies that deliver on poverty reduction*.

## 4 Green Jobs for Youth

construction, which are relatively easy for young people to enter, have become unattractive to them, largely due to the negative perceptions of them as unprofitable.<sup>8</sup>

While being young and female has been shown to serve as a “double strike” in the labour market,<sup>9</sup> climate change is likely to magnify existing gender inequalities. Promoting gender equality in greening the economy requires concerted action and has significant benefits for economic efficiency, social equity and environmental sustainability.

**Coordinated action is needed for green economies to create more and better employment opportunities for young women and men.** Given the specific challenges faced by young people today, creating green jobs for youth must involve a coordinated and multi-faceted effort. While the increasing pressures on future food supplies present clear opportunities for creating sustainable agricultural jobs for unemployed rural young people in particular or employment-intensive jobs for low- and semi-skilled youth in different sectors, a more systemic approach is necessary to make these approaches and certain sectors sufficiently attractive to them.

Creating green jobs in economic sectors with the largest emissions of anthropogenic greenhouse gases – namely energy, forestry, agriculture and transport<sup>10</sup> – jointly with mitigation and adaptation strategies can contribute to reducing the negative effects of climate change, urban and rural poverty and unemployment. If managed well, green growth can provide an opportunity to meet youth employment needs while preserving the environment and making economies more resilient to climate change.

### 3 Evidence and innovations

#### 3.1 What works in promoting green jobs for young people

The transition to the green economy can generate up to 60 million additional jobs globally by 2030.<sup>11</sup> In particular, policies and investments in economic activities such as renewable energy generation or organic agriculture have proven to hold strong potential for future job creation.

##### 3.1.1 Energy and infrastructure

**Renewable energy holds great potential for the creation of green jobs for young people.** In 2016, renewable energy employed nearly 10 million people around the world – a continuous increase from the number of jobs reported the previous year.<sup>12</sup> A recent study in the Middle East and North Africa found that, per level of investment, the sector tends to be less labour intensive, but that when investments in renewable energy are made jointly with those in other infrastructure sectors through employment-intensive approaches like in construction, transportation and sanitation, in which renewable energy serves as a key input, greater employment outcomes can be achieved alongside a reduced carbon footprint.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> IFAD (2016). *Why are rural youth leaving farming?*, <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/04/why-are-rural-youth-leaving-farming/>.

<sup>9</sup> S. Elder and S. Kring (2016). *Young and female – a double strike? Gender analysis of school-to-work transition surveys in 32 developing economies* (Geneva, International Labour Office).

<sup>10</sup> IPCC (2014). *Climate Change 2014: Mitigation of Climate Change*, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg3/>.

<sup>11</sup> ILO (2012). *Working towards Sustainable Development: Opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy*.

<sup>12</sup> IRENA (2017). *Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2017*.

<sup>13</sup> M.T. Gutierrez and ILO (2016). “The impact of improved infrastructure of sanitation on economic growth and employment generation”, in *The Water Report 2016*, SIWI Report No. 37 (Stockholm, Stockholm International Water Institute).

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### 3.1.2 Greening agriculture, stimulating job creation

**Green sectors, such as organic farming and sustainable agriculture or green manufacturing, are more labour intensive than conventional production, eliciting greater employment outcomes.<sup>14</sup>** By 2050, global employment gains in agriculture through sustainable management practices are expected to range from 362 to 630 million jobs.<sup>15</sup> Select green jobs projects in agriculture have demonstrated the possibility of covering a full spectrum of decent jobs created through **green agricultural practices**,<sup>16</sup> which focus on the creation of both farm and non-farm employment such as the jobs found in input supply chains, the post-harvest process and other value-added operations in the food system. These projects also encompass climate-smart technology to mitigate and adapt to climate change, while ensuring that adequate numbers of green jobs are created for vulnerable farmers, such as women, young people and smallholders.

Promising practices also include projects that have contributed to green jobs for young people through facilitating **complementary income-generating activities**. Evidence from Afghanistan shows increased productive employment among young farmers through the commercialization of chicken litter compost to be converted into organic fertilizer. Doing so allowed young chicken farmers to both generate more income and better manage disease control through cleaner facilities. It also meant that agricultural farmers in the area gained access to organic inputs.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.3 An enabling environment, business support services and social dialogue

**Creating an enabling environment and providing appropriate business support services is an effective combination to support youth entrepreneurship and self-employment in the green economy.** Intervention models developed through programmes such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)<sup>18</sup> demonstrate that a combination of a supportive policy-enabling environment, skills development and entrepreneurship promotion can unleash the potential of young people to create jobs for themselves and others. Social dialogue and tripartism are a means to promote better wages and working conditions as well as peace and social justice. They are key success factors to foster cooperation and economic performance, helping to create an enabling environment for the realization of the objective of decent work for young women and men.

### 3.1.4 Employment-intensive investment for young people

**Employment-intensive schemes in watershed management, water and soil conservation, irrigation schemes and flood protection have proven to strengthen climate resilience while creating decent and productive jobs.** Evidence from Haiti shows that the combination of humanitarian assistance and development through employment-intensive schemes leads to positive labour market outcomes. The work focused on six micro-watersheds which were a source for over 320,000 inhabitants, directly providing job opportunities to 9,000 individuals

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<sup>14</sup> Worldwatch Institute at <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/3975> and ILO (2012). *Working towards Sustainable Development: Opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy*.

<sup>15</sup> FAO (2012). *Green Jobs for a Revitalized Food and Agriculture Sector*.

<sup>16</sup> For example: no-till cultivation; “push-pull” farming; skilled labour pest management; organic farming; certification and branding for organic and sustainable produce; agroforestry; improved post-harvest storage and handling practices; farm-to-market food systems; sustainable biofuel production; eco-tourism; sustainable livestock, fisheries and aquaculture management; and research and development.

<sup>17</sup> ILO. Road to Jobs Projects in Afghanistan at [http://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS\\_428968/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_428968/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>18</sup> PAGE is a joint programme established by UN Environment, the ILO, UNIDO, UNITAR and UNDP, currently operating in 13 countries.

of which some 75 per cent were youth, all through labour-intensive activities (e.g. afforestation, anti-erosive ditches, reinforcing bridges, river training of La Quinte River, etc.).<sup>19</sup>

### 3.1.5 Youth platforms

**Young people can be critical actors in the transition to a green economy, but they must be given a stronger voice in global discussions.**

**Establishing youth advisory councils** has proven to be an effective mechanism for accessing young voices, involving them in decision-making processes, and allowing them to develop their own plans around specific areas like employment and empowerment. A virtual platform connects councils and provides access to toolkits and discussion boards.<sup>20</sup>

**Youth portals provide young women and men with key information and resources** on climate change education, training opportunities and public awareness. Promising examples include the Climate Change Information Network (CC:iNet), a web portal that serves as a platform for public participation in policy-making decisions. CC:iNet houses the UNFCCC<sup>21</sup> Youth Portal, which holds information on climate change initiatives, projects, campaigns, tools, websites and publications produced for and by young people.<sup>22</sup> **The use of social media** has also proven effective in strengthening the active involvement of young people in issues related to green jobs.

## 3.2 What are innovative approaches to green jobs for young people?

### 3.2.1 Innovations in energy and agriculture driving green jobs for young people

**Innovations in energy and agriculture can act as drivers for more young people to engage in agrobusiness and other economic opportunities in their communities.** In addition to expanding access to energy, enterprises in the clean energy space – many led by young entrepreneurs – are bringing innovations that connect information and communications technology, energy access and agricultural development. By using mobile banking and electronic payment systems, emerging clean energy service companies (ESCOs) have succeeded in overcoming the critical challenge of paying high upfront costs for solar energy systems through allowing instalments to be paid via mobile money transfers. In addition, many applications have been developed to provide electricity through control systems, allowing for monthly payments (as with grid-connected systems). By charging mobile phones with solar energy and accessing the internet, farmers have been able to obtain weather information and to exchange market information on their products on a real-time basis.

### 3.2.2 Market systems approaches for sustainable job creation

**Using market systems approaches allows the underlying constraints to green jobs for young people to be identified and addressed.** The MozTrabalha project in Mozambique was launched with the aim of creating employment opportunities for women and young people through employment-intensive interventions focused on reducing the environmental impact of production. The project uses a market systems approach to identify and address the key

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<sup>19</sup> ILO. Employment-Intensive Investment in Haiti, <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>20</sup> USAID (2014). *Youth engagement in development: Effective approaches and action-oriented recommendations for the field*.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat.

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF (2013). *Youth in action on climate change: Inspirations from around the world*.

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underlying constraints to productive employment for women and young people in the green economy, so that employment gains can be achieved hand in hand with environmental protection.

### **3.2.3 Increasing water tables and the quantity of jobs through employment-intensive approaches**

**Innovations in clearing invasive alien plants through the Working for Water Programme is an innovative approach to promote green jobs for young people.** The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa, launched in 2004, created over a million work opportunities by 2008, 4.5 million by 2014 and aims to create 6 million further work opportunities in the period 2015–19, of which 55 per cent will target young people aged 16 to 35.<sup>23</sup> The Working for Water programme, an ecosystem based adaptation programme, one of a series of environmental programmes which is part of the EPWP has cleared more than one million hectares of invasive alien plants providing jobs to some 20,000 marginalized people by year, of which 20 per cent were youth. The residual of the plants is used to build eco-furniture.

### **3.2.4 Focusing on high-growth sectors to shape policies towards a green economy**

**Targeted interventions can create green jobs for young people in high-growth sectors.** By working in sectors in which there is already strong market demand, and using this demand to make the policy and business environments both greener and more accommodating to young workers, the Zambia Green Jobs Programme created over 2,000 jobs for young people in the fast-growing building construction sector.<sup>24</sup>

## **4 Action on green jobs for youth**

Effective and innovative approaches do exist to create and improve youth employment in the green economy. However, much larger and more comprehensive efforts are needed to address the youth employment challenge, and to do so in a way that helps mitigate the even more daunting challenges brought about by climate change. Decent Jobs for Youth builds on the capacity of young women and men to drive the transition to the green economy. Close cooperation and involvement of workers' and employers' organizations based on social dialogue and tripartism is a key success factor in promoting green jobs for youth.

### **4.1 Action at the global level**

At the global level, Decent Jobs for Youth focuses on **addressing the need for greater involvement of young people in global decision-making on the green economy.** This involves the following actions:

#### **4.1.1 Amplifying global youth discussions on green jobs**

- Pursue the active involvement of young women and men in global, regional and national dialogues, events and advocacy efforts, including the UN Environment Assembly and the

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<sup>23</sup> Department of Public Works, Government of South Africa, <http://www.epwp.gov.za/>.

<sup>24</sup> ILO. Zambia Green Jobs Programme, [http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/projects/africa/WCMS\\_209922/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/projects/africa/WCMS_209922/lang-en/index.htm).

International Labour Conference, to make the voices of young people heard and reflected in decision-making on the green economy.

#### **4.1.2 Encouraging impactful online and social media exchanges**

- Utilize existing youth platforms to facilitate conversations on how to further integrate young women and men, as well as how to develop them as leaders, in the green economy.
- Leverage social media tools to increase outreach to young people around the world and stimulate further networking among young people on green jobs.

### **4.2 Action at the national level**

At the national level, Decent Jobs for Youth focuses on **stimulating job creation for young women and men in green sectors**. This involves the following actions:

#### **4.2.1 Identifying market constraints to unleash job creation in the green economy**

Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for transitioning young people into the green economy, Decent Jobs for Youth mobilizes and allocates resources towards conducting market systems analyses in targeted sectors and value chains, with a focus on youth employment and/or green jobs. Such analyses examine key market functions, such as business development services, skills training, information flows, regulation and public policies. They will inform the design of specific private and public-led interventions to help young women and men access employment opportunities – both as employees and as entrepreneurs – in green sectors and drive their future growth. Specific measures include:

- Conduct market systems analyses in key green sectors and value chains with high potential for job creation.
- Based on market systems analyses, develop concrete intervention proposals and mobilize resources to scale up action on green jobs for young people.

#### **4.2.2 Stimulating youth-focused employment-intensive green growth**

Based on findings from the market analyses, Decent Jobs for Youth works with national policy-makers on (i) which national policies are hindering green jobs for young people and why; (ii) the business case for how national policies and programmes can be adapted to facilitate more inclusive, greener and stronger economic growth; and (iii) a proposal for adapting current policies and enhancing public works programmes that will ease youth unemployment, sensitize young workers to environmental issues and strategies, and strengthen the economy. Specific measures include:

- Develop country-specific business cases for adapting current policies and programmes, particularly in employment-intensive infrastructure (green works), energy and food production.
- Foster collaboration with champions in the public and private sector who will drive forward needed investments and policy changes.
- Strengthen technical assistance on youth employment and green jobs at country level, depending on the requirements of national partners.

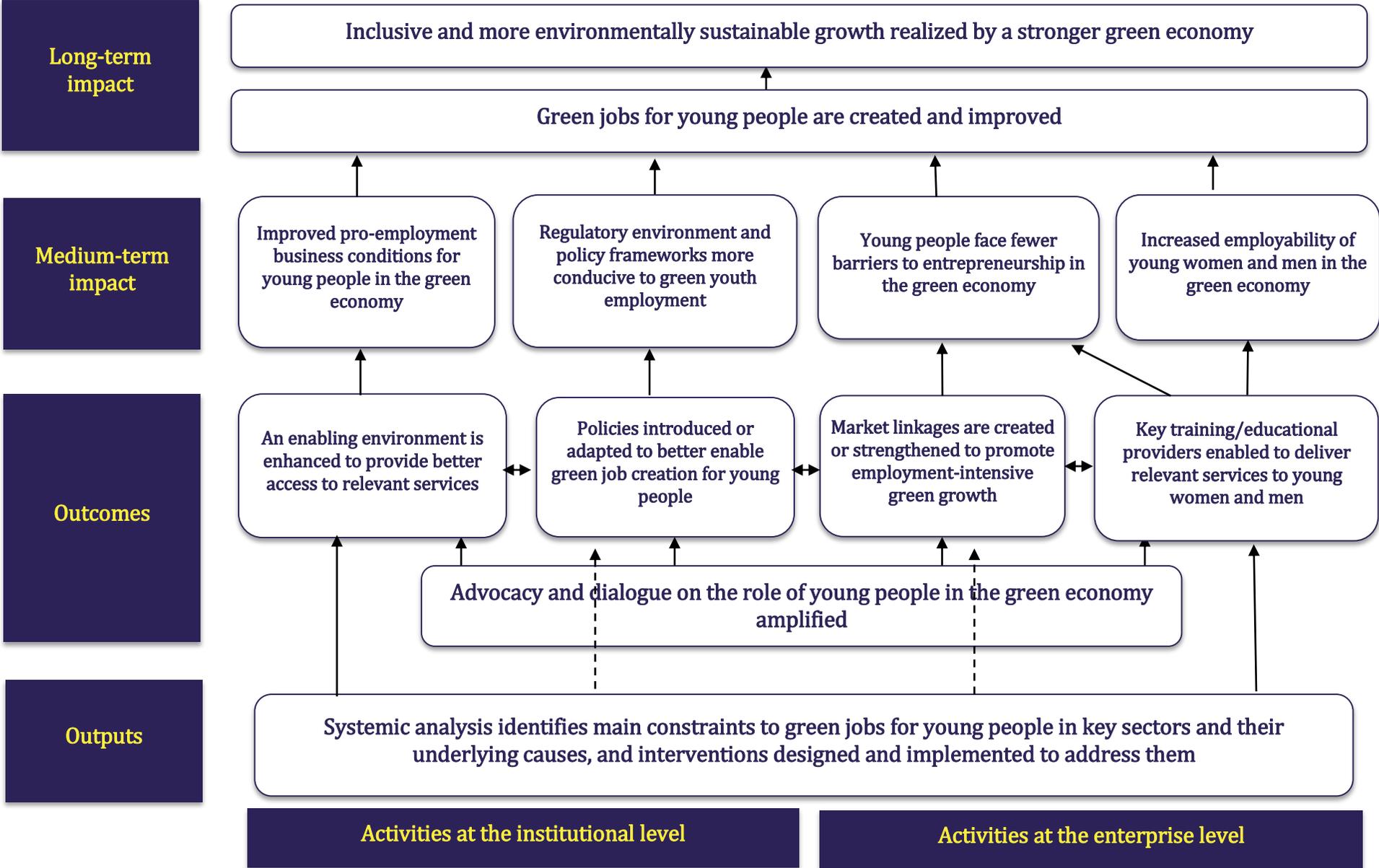
### 4.2.3 Fostering demand-driven skills development in the green economy

Decent Jobs for Youth conducts in-depth analyses to understand and close the skills gaps between young people and employers in green sectors and to better gauge which entrepreneurial skills are demanded by the market. Collaboration with schools, universities, national labour-based institutions and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions aims to integrate relevant skills development into educational programmes.

Specific measures include:

- Conduct skills gap surveys to understand what specific skill sets employers in the green economy demand, but young women and men typically lack. Develop key recommendations for closing the gap.
- Collaborate with national service providers/training institutions that have the capacity and incentives to incorporate better skills development/matching, entrepreneurship and information services into their current service portfolio.
- Strengthen cooperation with national education agencies to develop and implement a plan for integrating green skills into schools or apprenticeship programmes.
- Strengthen national certification schemes to ensure conformity with training programmes.

How change happens – a simplified theory of change





# SCALING UP ACTION & IMPACT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

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