

# Green Skills and Green Jobs Youth Consultation

Report prepared for UN Environment Programme by  
SOS-International, on behalf of the Green Jobs for Youth  
Pact Youth Advisory Group

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# 1.0 Foreword

**From Zamzam Ibrahim, Director, SOS-International and member of the Youth Advisory Group for the Green Jobs for Youth Pact**



As the Youth Advisor representing SOS International on the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, this global consultation was pivotal in allowing us to engage students and youth in redefining green skills and jobs. The Green Jobs for Youth Pact is an initiative combining the strengths of three UN agencies: the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The pact aims to address the green skills deficit and promote a just transition to a low-carbon, circular economy by creating one million new green jobs for youth and greening one million more.

Recent research from LinkedIn highlights a 15.2% increase in jobs requiring green skills, despite a global slowdown in overall job growth. The growth rate of green jobs is now twice that of non-green jobs, indicating a clear trend: the green economy is not just a concept for the future but a present reality.

However, even more concerning is the gap between this growing demand for green jobs and the readiness of our future workforce to fill them. Studies indicate that while many young people are eager to work in green jobs, they are not being adequately prepared nor taught the necessary green skills. Only one in eight workers currently report having green skills, with this gap being even more pronounced among women and minorities.

This gap represents a significant challenge but also a tremendous opportunity. To achieve a just transition to a sustainable economy, we must invest in education and training that equips our youth with the necessary skills. This means integrating green skills into our educational systems and providing continuous learning opportunities for all workers.

Aligning our education systems with the needs of our planet is essential. Programs and curricula must reflect the realities of our ecological crisis and the requirements of a green economy. Initiatives such as the 'International Green Learning & Skills Accelerator' are crucial in plugging this gap by bringing different stakeholders together.

To the young people reading this and to those who led and participated in this consultation, your drive and determination are inspiring. Your commitment will be the driving force behind this transition.

To educators, policymakers, and industry leaders: I urge you to prioritize this alignment. Invest in green skills education. Support policies that facilitate continuous learning. Create pathways for young people to enter and thrive in green jobs.

Nothing good ever happens in isolation; the urgency of this collaboration is even more evident today. Therefore, by working together, we can shape policies and initiatives that guarantee a smooth and fair transition for all, creating a just and sustainable society where no one is left behind.

## 2.0 Key partners



**SOS-International is a coalition of student-led organisations. We represent 21 members with over 3.5 million students worldwide.**

**We support student and youth groups globally to lead on sustainability and social justice. We connect, strengthen and scale impactful initiatives – so together we can go further, faster.**



**UNEP is the leading global authority on the environment.**

**UNEP's mission is to inspire, inform, and enable nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.**



**The Green Jobs for Youth Pact is a Stockholm+50 legacy initiative bringing together the combined strengths of three UN agencies, International Labour Organization (ILO), UNEP, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to tackle the green skills deficit and advance the just transition to a low carbon and circular economy.**

# 3.0 Introduction

This consultation was conducted between April - June 2024 by SOS-International and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as part of the Green Jobs for Youth Pact (GYJP). The GJYP is a collaborative initiative by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), working with young people, governments and other partners to create meaningful learning and employment opportunities by 2030.



**Explore how youth define and understand green skills and green jobs around the world**



**Develop shared understanding of green skills and jobs through the adoption of a youth definition**



**Empower and support young people to advocate for green jobs**

# 4.0 Methodology



**Global youth representatives were identified to lead consultations and engage with youth representatives across their regions to be able to speak on behalf of youth. Each region was co-designed with the respective youth lead and therefore there is variation in the methodology in each.**

**SOS-International identified youth leaders in each of five regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America.** To ensure the consultation truly reflected the perspectives of youth in each region, we worked with the youth leaders to tailor the workshop to suit their needs. Each was delivered in slightly different styles, taking into account the methods of engagement that young people felt was most appropriate.

**In each region, youth fed back on their views on and understanding of green skills and jobs,** including the following questions:

- How do you define "Green Skills"?
- What are some jobs that you would consider to be "Green Jobs"?
- Why do we need to see young people more involved in shaping understanding of green skills and green jobs?
- Green jobs are.....

**They also developed calls to action for the following three stakeholder groups:**

- Formal education system (schools, colleges, universities)
- Employers and industry
- Policymakers at a local, regional, and/or national and international scale

**Youth responses were collected in a number of ways, including in-person and online workshops, conferences and online surveys.** Where workshops were held, these followed a format that included:

- Introduction to the just transition and how it relates to green skills and green jobs
- Why a youth definition matters and existing ones
- How young people understand the terms 'green skills' and 'green jobs'
- What young people think policy-makers, educators, and employers can do

**All participants were aged 18-35 and were predominantly university students, or recent graduates. At least 1108 participants were engaged across 56 countries.** 55% of participants identify as a man, 46% as a woman, 3% identified in another way and 3% preferred not to say.

Limitations: due to the devolved, youth-led design of this consultation, methods varied slightly between regions. This was intentional, however does result in slight variation in data sets, engagement, and reach between regions.

# 5.0 YOUTH PERSPECTIVES



# 5.1 Headline consultation outcomes

The following 'headline outcomes' are the themes which strongly emerged globally throughout the entire consultation.

## **Young people understand green skills to be interdisciplinary and inclusive of both technical and 'softer' skills**

Possibly unlike wider sector narratives around green skills, the youth engaged in the consultation stated consistently that green skills should not be considered only as technical skills. Although they recognised the absolute importance of green skills, young people also strongly recognised the need for soft skills, like critical thinking and systems thinking, to be considered essential green skills. One participant remarked that green skills must be 'more than retrofitting skills', in reference to the types of green skills that typically had seen promoted in their education.

## **Young people see the potential for all jobs to be green jobs**

A consistent theme was that young people felt that all jobs could be green jobs and that a narrow understanding of green jobs specifically as STEM (science technology engineering and mathematics) did not feel inclusive of the diverse and broad range of 'green' careers they may wish to pursue.

## **Youth voice must be at the heart of decision making and solutions**

The appetite from youth leaders globally to take part in this work was very high. Young people want to have a seat at the table, alongside educators, industry and employers, and policy makers, in shaping regional, national, and international work on green skills and green jobs. They felt strongly that their perspectives and lived experiences must inform this work.

## **Joined up action is needed across stakeholder groups**

Young people recognised a disconnect between their educational experiences, industry and employers, and what they saw happening at regional, national, or international policy levels. They wanted to see joined up strategic action and investment across all stakeholders. The specific calls to action for these groups can be found in the next section.

“ **Green skills and green jobs are pivotal in restoring the damage done to our environmental and social systems, and are the only way to create a lasting peaceful and inclusive society with respect for our planet.** ”



# 5.2 Youth definitions for green skills and green jobs

A key activity of the consultation was for young people to collectively contribute to a shared youth definition for green skills and green jobs.

This joint definition through the combined input of all workshops, online and in-person, and surveys conducted throughout the consultation, and represents the collective voice of 1108 participants across 56 countries.

## Youth definition

“As young people across the globe, we have taken part in this consultation to explore and re-define green skills and green jobs, through our lens. Our collective perspectives, combined with our inherent stake in the present and the future, make us invaluable allies in the quest for sustainable solutions to the planet’s most pressing issues. We have the right and the responsibility to participate in decisions and debates on topics that effect us. To ensure environmental justice is served, our voices must be heard.”

The shared collective youth definition of ‘green skills’ and ‘green jobs’ is as follows:

A yellow rounded rectangular box containing a yellow circle on the left with the text 'Green skills' and a paragraph of text on the right.

### Green skills

**Green skills are the necessary knowledge, attributes and competencies to create a fairer, more sustainable future for all. Green skills are interdisciplinary, and must include both technical and soft skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, systems thinking and digital skills. Green skills are a golden thread that weave through multiple knowledge systems, including STEM, as well as the arts, humanities, and local and indigenous ways of knowing.**

A pink rounded rectangular box containing a red circle on the left with the text 'Green jobs' and a paragraph of text on the right.

### Green jobs

**Green jobs are roles that promote sustainability, aim to conserve the environment, and respond to the climate and ecological emergency. Green jobs will foster a sustainable future for ourselves and for future generations. We recognise that almost all jobs can be oriented towards being a green job, and sustainability knowledge should be considered a necessity for every job description.**

# 6.0 CALLS TO ACTION



STUDENTS  
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# 6.0 Calls to action

After developing the 'youth definitions' for green skills and green jobs, young people participating in the consultation went on to discuss what enabling actions could be taken by three key stakeholder groups. These groups were: educators and the education system; industry and employers; and policy makers, at a regional, national and global level.

The calls to action summarised on the subsequent pages reflect the collective voice of consultation participants, and outline tangible changes that can enable more young people to develop green skills and to access green jobs.



Pictures from the Europe workshop in Twent, Netherlands.

# 6.1 Calls to action: educators

**Include sustainability and green skills within mandatory educational programmes and establish green educational indicators.**

**Promote educational content that recognises and incorporates diverse, traditional knowledge into the education system.**

**Create links for students and graduates to understand the breadth of environmental/sustainable job opportunities, and appreciate the relevance of their discipline to such career paths.**

**Provide access to quality education on the climate and ecological crises from the very first levels of education.**



## 6.2 Calls to action: employers and industry

**Invest in green skills and green technologies with a local focus.**

**Put an emphasis on sustainability at all levels and through all departments, not having sustainability in a 'silo' in the organisation.**

**Foster links with universities, colleges and schools for students and graduates to gain access to understand and access sustainability and environmental roles.**

**Invest in the skills of existing staff, through internally reskilling and upskilling at all levels, including mid and late career professionals.**

**Ensure that green jobs are good quality, decent jobs with good working conditions, fair pay, and progression and learning opportunities.**



## 6.3 Calls to action: policymakers

**Drive investment in educational and economic reform to support education institutions and employers and industry in the just transition.**

**Actively include youth in decision making and put youth voice at the heart of governance structures.**

**Adopt inclusive decision making processes in which youth organisations, communities and civil society can participate in equitable power conditions with other stakeholders.**

**Prioritise information produced by local communities to inform the environmental and social impacts of public policies.**

**Incentivise and fund community-led economic initiatives and activities, especially in regions with where environmental conservation is needed.**



# 7.0 REGIONAL REFLECTIONS



# 7.1 Regional reflections: Africa

**Youth Lead:** Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor (Ghana)

**Participants:** 500+ in-person, 380 online survey, 30 countries

**Methodology:** in person workshop at the Inaugural Green Jobs and Skills Development Workshop, Nairobi, Kenya. Online survey disseminated by the All Africa Students' Union.



**55%** of online survey respondents felt that green skills were most important, and **31%** felt green skills were important when addressing the environmental challenges in their country.

## What do you consider to be green skills?

Responses were closely aligned with skills that help to prevent environmental destruction, advance sustainability, become eco-friendly and foster conservation. Responses often included noting that green skill means technical knowledge, expertise and abilities that enable the effective use of green technologies and processes in professional settings.

## What are green jobs?

Responses centered around roles that promote sustainability, aim to conserve the environment and respond to climate change. The industries that respondents felt associated with green jobs included energy, agriculture, manufacturing and mining. Similarly to other regions some respondents noted that green jobs do not relate to any industry in particular and green skills could be integrated into all jobs. With the growth of sustainability departments in most major corporates, green skills are becoming more of a department of every industry rather than a single industry.

## Calls to action:

While the current education system is making strides towards integrating green skills, there is still significant room for improvement. The transition to a greener economy requires a concerted effort to update and expand curricula, foster industry partnerships, and provide students with ample practical experience. Additionally, raising awareness about the importance of sustainability and green careers among students and educators is crucial for driving interest and commitment to these fields. Continued investment in green education and training will be essential to equip the future workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in an evolving job market and to address the environmental challenges our country faces.

“ In the next 15, 25 and 50 years current youths are to be the working population of the future, what are stakeholders doing to nurture a quick transition to green skills and jobs among the youths? ”





## 7.3 Regional reflections: Europe



**Youth lead:** Quinn Runkle, SOS-International and Peter Kwasi Kodjie, AASU alongside Bismark Amefianu Kudoafor, AASU

**Participants:** 25, 8 countries

**Methodology:** in person workshop at the SOS-International Sustainability Summit, Twente, Netherlands

### What do you consider to be green skills?

Sharing practices, problem solving, innovation, digital skills, long term thinking, interdisciplinary thinking, sustainability, undervalued, jobs that make the world a better place, listening, holistic thinking, adapting, more than just retrofit.

### What are green jobs?

All jobs are required to have information about green, a necessity for every job description, professions which actively work towards sustainable goals, the only way to a long term inclusive and just society with respect for our planet.

### What are your call to actions for key stakeholders?

Educators - Teachers need to know about the urgency of climate action, be trained and be able to convey this to students

Policy makers - Create a green curriculum to prepare students for green jobs and green skills

Employers and industry - creative practice in design, need to reimagine the labour force.

“ Green skills and green jobs are the only way to a long-term, inclusive, and just society with respect for our planet. ”



# 7.5 Regional reflections: South America

**Youth leads:** Catalina Lema Casallas (Colombia) , Sofia Luna Quispe (Peru)

**Participants:** 27, 6 countries

**Methodology:** stand-alone online workshop



## What do you consider to be green skills?

Hard and soft skills that allow you to understand ecological dynamics from systemic/ complex vision, and based on that understanding seek comprehensive and integral solutions. Hard/ technical skills are needed, but we also have to do a deep reflection on those soft/ human/ eco-centric skills that are required.

## What are green jobs?

How jobs related to the social sciences can have an impact on the preservation of the environment, by working in areas of resolution of environmental conflicts, which are the majority of ongoing conflict in our countries.

## What are your calls to action for key stakeholders?

**Policymakers:** South America identified the need for governments to incentivize the transition towards greener jobs from a territorial and locally focused perspective.

**Educators:** Identified that there is a class privilege in the opportunity to acquire greener skills from an early age and lifetime.

**Industry and employers:** Participants mentioned the existing gender gap in jobs in general, and also green jobs. Most community work towards protecting the environment is volunteer work and most of the workforce of these initiatives are women, as opposed to a majority of men getting green jobs worldwide.

“ We conclude that almost all jobs could be orientated towards green jobs as long as we reflect on the labor paradigm in exploitative environments and the link with (new) eco-centric thinking. ”

# 8.0 SUMMARY



## 8.1 Next steps

The definitions developed through this consultation will be used by the Green Jobs for Youth Pact (GJYP) to inform its wider work and upcoming initiatives. This consultation has served to ground green skills and green jobs in young peoples' regional contexts, and redefine the terms using language of young people. The GJYP Youth Advisory Group will continue to support the pact, through initiatives like this, and through engaging youth and civil society, education, government, and private sector partners.

One exciting new development in support of the Pact, is the International Green Learning and Skills Accelerator (IGLSA). The IGSLA aims to address the critical need for integrating green skills into education and workforce development. It has been designed in collaboration with Times Higher Education (THE), UNEP, and SOS-International in support of the Green Jobs for Youth Pact. The aim of the Accelerator is to build a new coalition of actors to fast-track the provision of green skills by education institutions in collaboration with employers, youth and government.

The GJYP YAG will continue to work with the three stakeholder groups outlined here (educators, employers/industry, and policy makers) and look forward to established broad, multi-stakeholder partnerships across the public and private sectors.

More information on the IGSLA can be found here: [www.timeshighereducation.com/green-skills](http://www.timeshighereducation.com/green-skills)



## International Green Learning & Skills Accelerator

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## 8.2 Acknowledgements

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The Green Jobs for Youth Pact is a joint initiative by UNICEF, ILO and UNEP to support a just transition and boost decent jobs for youth in a sustainable economy.

The three UN agencies are working together with young people, governments, social partners, employers' and workers' organizations, education entities, and the private sector to:

- create 1 million new green jobs.
- assist in the greening of 1 million existing jobs.
- enable at least 10,000 young green entrepreneurs to start a sustainable business.



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