



Skilling for Green Careers focussing on Sustainable and High Impact Sectors

"I think it would be beneficial for youth today to demand more from educational institutions, not only universities, but also high schools and vocational technical institutions. These institutions need to provide young people with skills to both be successful in the job market and have a career with green purpose. Because, as a generation, we are insecure on both counts."

—Vladislav Kaim, UN Secretary General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change

Background

The global shift towards sustainable development has driven the emergence of the *green economy*. The International Labour Organization (ILO) projects a potential 24 million new jobs by 2030 driven by global efforts to combat climate change. A further 6 million jobs could be unlocked by embracing circular economy principles, moving away from linear "take-make-waste" models to embrace reuse, recycling, and resource efficiency. As per the green jobs handbook of Skill Council of Green Jobs, India alone has the potential to create 35 million green jobs by 2047.

Realizing the full potential of this green economic transformation hinges on a critical factor: bridging the global green skills gap. This gap between the required skills and available talent is a critical barrier to realizing the potential of the green economy. Existing training programmes and educational institutions often lag behind the rapid evolution of green technologies and practices, resulting in a stark mismatch between employer demands and job-seeker qualifications.

Renewable Energy, Waste Management, Electric Vehicles, Sustainable Textiles, and Green Construction will drive green growth in India and host the highest number of green jobs, especially in urban and peri-urban areas.¹

A staggering 40% of global employers struggle to find workers with adequate training for green jobs. This skills deficit, highlighted by the ILO, is mirrored in the Indian context, where only a dismal 2% of the workforce possesses formal skill training. Further exacerbating the issue, the Govt. of India's Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) reports even fewer are specifically trained for green jobs. A survey by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) paints a stark picture: 55% of Indian companies lack awareness of green job potential, further hindering the sector's growth. Integrating green skills into core academic programmes is crucial to preparing future generations.

Plenary Session Overview

This plenary session will explore the opportunities, challenges, policy imperatives and way forward with respect to the critical importance of sustainability education as the key driver for filling the skills gap for green jobs. The discussion will evaluate the efficacy of the existing sustainability education infrastructure (formal and informal education sector, degrees, courses, vocational programs and institutions) in upskilling and addressing the skills gap and provide recommendations for a way forward. The session will also explore key high-impact sectors and their unique green skills demands, and formulating pathways to bridge the gap.

Fashion, responsible for **10% of global carbon emissions and 20% of wastewater**, requires an urgent shift toward sustainable production. Skills training that emphasizes sustainable design, material sourcing, waste reduction, upcycling, repair, and consumer awareness, will enable the sector's projected growth of **2.5 million jobs in India by 2030**.

Tourism's heavy dependence on healthy ecosystems necessitates responsible growth underpinned by skills in ecotourism, community-based tourism, and sustainable hospitality management. Prioritizing skill development in areas such as environmental impact assessment, conservation practices, community engagement, and ethical business operations can unlock the sector's estimated potential of **over 5 million jobs in India by 2030**.

The session will further examine the skills needed in other vital sectors: **renewable energy** (requiring skilled technicians, engineers, and installers to meet India's ambitious target of **500 gigawatts by 2030**); **sustainable agriculture** (demanding knowledge of conservation practices and ecological principles); and **waste management and recycling** (necessitating a skilled workforce for sorting, processing, and resource recovery, ensuring decent work within the sector).

The panel will involve the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Skill Council of Green Jobs (SCGJ) which is the nodal agency tasked with skill development for green jobs in India, policy makers, educators and industry participants.

UNEP, a longstanding partner in promoting sustainability education, has consistently curated sessions around green skilling at the International Conference on Sustainability Education. At the 6th ICSE, UNEP's partnership will add value to the overall discussions and the resulting key recommendations. For instance, the session on mainstreaming sustainability education emphasized integrating sustainability into educational curricula, crucial for raising awareness. The session on ecosystem services, biodiversity, and forest ecosystems highlighted the critical role of biodiversity in sustainable tourism, stressing the need to conserve natural landscapes, these sessions underscore UNEP's commitment to promoting sustainable practices

Objectives

To analyse the dimensions of the global and Indian green skills gap, providing compelling data and evidence and to delve into sectoral skills demands in high impact sectors such as fashion, tourism, renewable energy, waste management and beyond.

Outcomes

1. Enhanced understanding of the scale and urgency of the green skills challenge.
2. Identification of best practices for bridging the green skills gap in high-impact sectors.
3. Actionable recommendations for strengthening education curricula, policy frameworks, and industry-driven initiative

References:

- 1- A report from Skill Council for Green Jobs: Gearing up the Indian Workforce for a greener economy