

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CENTERING YOUTH IN GREEN
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

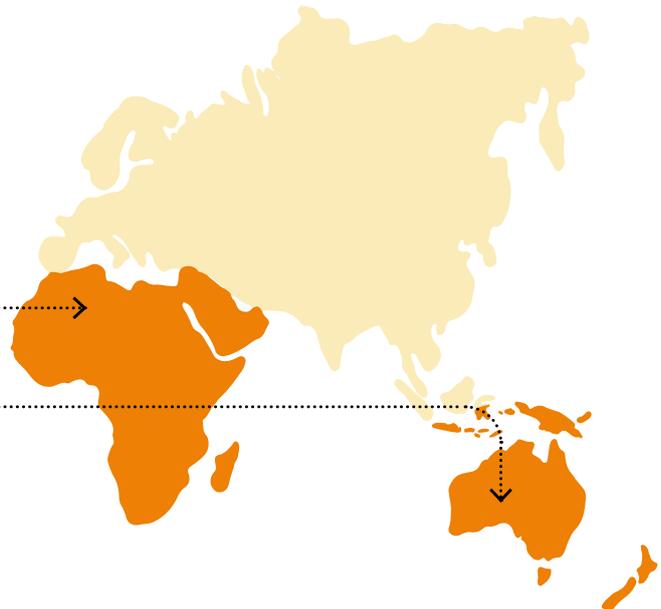


Why this Action Guide?

By 2050, it is estimated that at least 47 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, Northern Africa, and Western Asia will experience a 62 percent increase in their youth population, accounting for more than 150 million additional youth globally (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).



+62%
YOUTH POPULATION BY 2050



At the same time, governments and the private sector are mobilizing billions of dollars to shift to more sustainable economic practices to address the escalating climate crisis. These investments promise to have a substantial impact on “green job” growth and creation, with projections ranging from 6 million jobs created along the agricultural value chain on the African continent alone (Mungai et al., 2018) to 1.2 billion jobs in ecosystem services supporting farming, fishing, forestry, and tourism globally (Cook and Taylor, 2020). In addition to jobs in greening sectors, green entrepreneurship provides youth with a promising avenue to innovate new roles and create jobs we cannot yet imagine.

But what is at stake if the world’s growing population of youth is unable to find decent green jobs as they enter the labor market? Today, more than 71 million youth are unemployed (Nishimura and Rowe, 2021). Tomorrow, this number could increase substantially if efforts to promote the

transition to a green economy leave young people behind, especially young women, Indigenous youth, and other historically marginalized young people. To facilitate a “just transition” to a green economy, international development organizations (IDOs), including donors and implementing partners, must understand how well youth are being introduced to green job opportunities, the degree to which they are feeling prepared to pursue such opportunities, and the extent to which these opportunities are responding to their lived realities. From a Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective, this means identifying the enabling factors that can support youth in accessing green skill-building and green job opportunities, as well as understanding the normative and structural barriers that can prevent youth from reaching their potential in a green transition. From here, IDOs can better support green workforce development among young people by responding to the priorities of youth seeking viable livelihoods and meaningful green futures.

The intended use of this Action Guide

The goal of this Action Guide is to provide practical and actionable guidance to IDOs on how to better respond to the diverse needs of young people as their countries undergo complex transitions to a greener economy. This Action Guide draws on the findings from a literature review as well as insights from consultations with 16 young people¹ (seven females, nine males — five from Latin America and the Caribbean, five from Southeast Asia, five from Sub-Saharan Africa, and one from North America), as well as project staff and youth participants from 10 Chemonics-implemented projects² (three

projects based in Southeast Asia, three projects based in Latin America and the Caribbean, four projects based in Sub-Saharan Africa). The Action Guide is intended for IDOs to help inform their design and implementation of international development programs related to youth green workforce development. The Action Guide provides a youth-centered perspective on how economies and societies are changing in response to climate change, and how IDOs can better support young people's desires to build livelihoods for a more sustainable future.



16 YOUNG PEOPLE

Seven females, nine males — five from Latin America and the Caribbean, five from Southeast Asia, five from Sub-Saharan Africa, and one from North America

1 — The Action Guide was informed by 16 young people, including seven females, nine males: five from Latin America and the Caribbean, five from Southeast Asia, five from Sub-Saharan Africa, and one from North America.

2 — Further, Action Guide development included interviews with participants from 10 USAID-funded, Chemonics-implemented projects: three projects based in Southeast Asia, three projects based in Latin America and the Caribbean, and four projects based in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key Messages

1

While green job opportunities across sectors will emerge for young people, there are many barriers to entry.

These include but are not limited to normative barriers, including restrictive gender norms, which can prevent young people from seeking green jobs, and structural gaps and roadblocks, including young people's lack of supportive services or the lack of finance and collateral for accessing loans.

2

A breadth of green skills will help young people navigate a greening job market and a changing climate.

Green skills range from specific technical skills required for jobs in a green economy, to more holistic "green life skills" that can help youth apply a green lens to any job, to transformative skills that can help young people tackle persistent systems of inequality that perpetuate unsustainable practices in their communities, workplace, the workforce, and society (Kwauk & Casey, 2021).

3

Building an enabling environment for youth to thrive during the climate crisis will require significant systemic shifts.

These include proactively introducing young people to climate change and sustainability issues, sensitizing youth to the interconnectivity of nature with all aspects of life and work and ensuring young people's early exposure to green livelihood and green entrepreneurial opportunities. Innovation hubs, funding, capacity building, resources, and social networks will be vital to support young green entrepreneurs in turning their climate and sustainability ideas into reality. Further, opportunities for youth participation in policy and decision-making will help create important feedback loops centered on youth needs and perspectives.

4

For youth and future generations to truly benefit from a green economy, a just transition is necessary.

A majority of the jobs created in a green transition are expected to occur in traditionally male-dominated technical sectors, which means that intentional measures must be taken to ensure that women and girls are not further marginalized by a greening economy (Saget, et al., 2020). Moreover, Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge and practices play an important role in promoting climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is imperative that policies and practices for protecting and rehabilitating the environment also safeguard and redistribute power and resources back to Indigenous communities.

Youth recommendations for the international development community

These recommendations are synthesized from 16 youth consultations and 10 Chemonics' project team interviews.

1

Improve the responsiveness of IDOs to youth needs

This not only means centering youth needs and perspectives at all stages of international development work, but also engaging young people as agents of change and not just as program participants and beneficiaries. Improving IDO responsiveness requires targeted training programs to meet youth where they are, rather than telling them where they should be.

2

Streamline and simplify funding mechanisms for youth

As a key barrier for young green entrepreneurs and youth-led organizations, finance must be made accessible to young people to secure funding, qualify for grants, and compete for bids. To empower young people to be change agents, IDOs must rethink how grant applications are designed, how money is distributed, and how competitive funding processes are carried out.

3

Intentionally integrate environmental sustainability, justice, and inclusion into project design.

These shifts will require the international donor community to establish clear monitoring and evaluation measures and IDOs to develop robust plans for measuring and reporting on activity progress in ways that include young people in the process, throughout the project life cycle.

4

Improve collaboration across IDOs and local government to promote sustainability.

Partnerships help avoid duplication and unnecessary conflicts and promote the redistribution of resources to address other youth needs. On a practical level, international partnerships with national and local governments also help to ensure youth ventures are supported by and comply with local laws and regulations.