

ACTRAV Policy Note on Green Jobs

Background

In 2007 UNEP, the ILO and the ITUC established the Green Jobs Initiative¹, a partnership joined by the IOE in 2008. The Initiative was launched in order to promote opportunity, equity and just transitions, to mobilize governments, employers and workers to engage in dialogue on coherent policies and effective programs leading to a green economy with green jobs and decent work for all. ILO work on “green jobs” has attracted significant interest among constituents and development partners and is gaining momentum.

Recently the greening of the economy has also been endorsed by many governments and social partners as a component of the stimulus packages in response to the crisis. During the Governing Body discussion on the crisis held in March 2009 the Secretary General of the ITUC, Mr. Guy Ryder, stressed the importance of ensuring that all actions in relation to the crisis “*is done in a manner which is supportive of a just transition to a low-carbon sustainable future and contributes to a successful conclusion of the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December*”. He continued by saying that “*this is business which cannot be forgotten at this moment of crisis, it is business which cannot just be adjourned.*”

Green jobs have also been recognized as an important element of the response to the current financial and economic crisis by the UN Secretary-General with his call for a Global Green New Deal, by the recent G20 summit, and by the ILO.

In a longer-term perspective, the ILO Strategic Policy Framework 2010-2015 includes green jobs as a key component of sustainable enterprises, societies and economies. In the P&B 2010-11 green jobs features as one of the three areas for “knowledge and product development work in emerging areas to prepare for technical cooperation programmes.”²

Climate Change, New Production Systems and Green Jobs

ACTRAV sees the ILO’s work on “green jobs” as an element of its work to address employment and labour market issues in relation to climate changes and new ways of production. The direct effects of climate change as well as the indirect effects of adaptation and mitigation measures to address climate changes have an enormous impact on employment and the labour market.

With a wide definition of green jobs we might say that all jobs that contribute to environmentally sustainable development are green. It might span over all sectors and industries and cover all workers as not only new jobs in the “clean” energy sector are developing, but also when other sectors are getting “greener”. In the process of transition to a low carbon society it is important no to forget the social dimension of sustainable development.

The “greening” of the economy is a positive step towards a cleaner planet. With the right social policy framework it should also lead to an economy that works for all – an economy which includes decent work and workers’ rights as international requirements in a worldwide climate change regime.

¹ <http://www.ilo.org/integration/themes/greenjobs/lang--en/index.htm>

² *Green Jobs: towards a global ILO programme Knowledge Sharing and Strategy Workshop for ILO staff*, Turin, 6 to 8 May 2009.

ACTRAV Priorities

ACTRAV highlights four elements as important for the ILO in its work on “green jobs”:

- Its Decent Work **Agenda** (DWA)
- Its tripartite **structure** and the issue of governance
- Its **focus** on “Just Transition”
- Its technical cooperation **activities** in relation to capacity building

The Decent Work Agenda (DWA)

The ILO’s Decent Work Agenda (DWA) is crucial in relation to transitions and changes in the labour market due to climate change and a new model of growth.

ACTRAV promotes the importance of looking at the issue of “green jobs” in an integrated manner. All employment related activities of the Office may include an element of “green jobs” – or a sustainable environmental component, supporting sustainable development in general.

However, what is important for the ILO is the social component of “green jobs”. The ILO must ensure that “green jobs” are decent jobs – jobs that are safe, provide an adequate income, are based on rights, provide social protection and training opportunities. We must not forget the social aspect of green jobs creation. In order to be sustainable they should not only fulfil economic growth and environmental concerns, but also social dimensions. This is at the heart of ILO’s work.

As “green jobs” are not necessarily high-paying jobs, respecting good labour practices or unionization, ACTRAV will promote social dialogue and the organization of workers in “green jobs” in order to improve negotiations of good wages and working conditions.

ACTRAV will pay attention to sustainable environmental practices and green jobs in relation to outcome 10 of the P&B 2010-11 “*Workers’ have strong, independent and representative organizations*”. ACTRAV will report on number of workers’ organizations that, with ILO support, include Decent Work Agenda in their strategic planning and training programmes that covers the area of green decent jobs.

ILO’s Tripartite Structure and the Issue of Governance

We are in a period of transition, searching for the policies and the leadership that can take us into a sustainable development path, where social and environmental dimensions of globalization should become an integral part of economic policy-making. Transitions in employment structures and in workplaces are central to this process. Facing up to the challenge of climate change involves a broad spectrum of labour market institutions and interventions in which the ILO can claim expertise³.

One of the comparative advantages of the ILO in dealing with the issue of climate change and “green jobs” is its tripartite structure and its work in promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining.

As a lot of the climate change effects come from unsustainable production and consumption models - often generated within industrial sectors and enterprises - trade unions and

³ ILO, 2008, *Employment and Labour Market Implications of Climate Change*, GB.303/ESP/4

employers' organizations have a critical role to play in addressing the negative effects of production.

The fact of cooperation and being fairly well organised and representative at the work place makes them a valuable ally in green jobs initiatives - not least in the areas of boosting efficiency in the use of energy and raw materials through better work organization and of retraining and retooling the global workforce to seize the new opportunities and to master the transition to green production and consumption.

ACTRAV promotes the inclusion of issues related to climate change in already existing tripartite bodies such as for instance occupational safety and health committees, as well as the use of national and international labour standards and collective bargaining agreements (both at enterprise-, sectoral- and national level) for environmental action.

ACTRAV promotes the involvement of the social partners in decision making in relation to green jobs strategies and policies at all levels and work to increase ratification of governance standards such as Convention N°. 87, on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (1948) and the Convention N°. 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (1949), as well as promotion of mechanisms set forth in Convention 144 for those countries having ratified it.

The ILO should continue to engage with political processes, and include decent work concerns in the climate change negotiations and the post-2012 framework and in the UN-system response to climate change.

ACTRAV will promote the involvement of trade unions and support their participation in these foras.

Just Transition

There is no doubt about the fact that climate changes will have enormous impact on employment and the labour market. It is important that adaptation and mitigation measures are developed in such a way as to ensure decent work.

In order to find solutions for the negative social consequences climate change policies might have on people and their income, several questions need to be addressed and included in policy debates and decisions:

- What will happen to workers and workplaces in weather sensitive sectors in the different regions of the world?
- What alternative jobs are there for laid-off workers?
- What are the working conditions (wages, health and safety, working time, etc.) in the new jobs created? Will they be decent?
- What kind of unemployment benefits for workers laid off and workers in transition between jobs are in place?
- What kind of education and training initiatives are provided for workers who want to change?
- What will happen to workers who have to migrate because jobs or even land do not exist any more?
- Who will finance the social costs of environmental change and how will it be done?

The challenges and answers to these questions are important to address as they might provide tools for a socially “just transition”⁴.

ACTRAV will promote the inclusion of these concerns in all ILO activities as well as the involvement of the social partners in policy decisions and decision making bodies at all levels (workplace, national, global) in order to better address these concerns. *“Substantial evidence exists that environmental transition happens fastest and most efficiently when workers are involved, so that those affected by environmental policy are secure in the knowledge that their views and needs are being fully considered and responded to. Involving employee representatives, such as trade unions, in the planning of environmental measures – as advocated by Just Transition – is one way to make better use of employees as drivers of environmental change.”*⁵

Capacity Building

Skills development for green jobs and just transition would be very important and would be linked to awareness raising and capacity building of constituents.

As the World Watch Institute report⁶ indicates *“shortages of skilled labour could put the breaks on green expansion”*. It continues to stress *“In both developing and industrialized countries there is an increasing need for what some have termed “green collar” training.”* This is especially important for people in disadvantaged communities – providing a ladder out of poverty and connecting green jobs with social equity.

ILO will have to pay attention to the fact that the developing world would need specific assistance and skills development as well as technology transfer from developed to developing countries to address the problems of climate change. Moreover, it would be important for the ILO to look at the gender issue of climate change. Women are increasingly being seen as more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change because they represent the majority of the world’s poor and are proportionally more dependent on threatened natural resources. What is more, women tend to play a greater role than men in natural resource management – farming, planting, protecting and caring for seedlings and small trees – and in ensuring nutrition and as care providers for their families. Yet, in the long run, no one – women or men, rich or poor – can remain immune from the challenges and dangers brought on by climate change⁷.

ACTRAV through its technical cooperation programmes will stress the need for assistance to developing countries and vulnerable groups and will cooperate closely with its unit in the International Training Centre in Turin to develop specific capacity building courses for trade unions on “green jobs” issues as well as components of “green jobs” issues which might be integrated in other general courses.

ACTRAV will, through the Global Union Research Network (GURN), continue to provide better access to research networks, enabling unions to develop analytical capacity for public debates and policy formulation, including on green jobs.

⁴ L. Olsen, 2009, *Climate Change Impact on Employment and the Relevance of International Labour Standards* (to be published)

⁵ Trades Union Congress (TUC), 2008. *A green and fair future, for a just transition to a low carbon economy*. London: Touchstone.

⁶ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_098503.pdf

⁷ ILO, 2009, *Green Jobs: Improving the Climate for Gender Equality Too!*

ACTRAV will insist on the promotion of decent work country programmes based on a balanced articulation of the four strategic objectives and tripartite participation at country level also in relation to “green jobs”. The DWCPs role as vehicle for ILO activities and cooperation within UNDAF (UN Development Assistance Framework) and with other partners to promote our Decent Work Agenda, should also be highlighted in relation to both the creation of new green jobs and transition from “old” jobs to “new”.

To facilitate education and training to address climate change challenges ACTRAV will promote the implementation of Convention N°. 142 on Human Resources Development (1975) and Convention N°. 140 on Paid Educational Leave (1974) especially in relation to vocational training and time off to be able to follow and attend courses and activities in relation to re-tooling of skills.