



International Labour Organization

Green jobs in Namibia: Opportunities for job creation in the green economy

“Our focus on promoting the green economy in Namibia is motivated by the need to improve and create a harmonious balance between the well-being of our people and the imperative of industrialisation, job creation, the utilisation of our natural resources for the benefit of our people and the need to ensure sustainability and environmental conservation.”

– President Pohamba



René a Drum

There is increased awareness that the current economic model is inefficient. It fails both in delivering decent jobs on the social and economic level and in terms of environmental sustainability. This has been acknowledged in the recent discourse on the green economy which puts environmental sustainability including adaptation and mitigation at the forefront. This brief touches upon the social and economic dimension within the wider framework of the green economy.

What is a green economy?

A green economy is an economy which has low carbon emission, is resource efficient, and is socially inclusive. A green economy is a means towards achieving sustainable development. The development path should maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and as a source of public benefits. This is especially important for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend on nature. The key aim for a transition to a green economy is to enable economic growth and investment while increasing environmental quality and social inclusiveness. A green economy is therefore an economy that results in “improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.” (UNEP 2010).



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In Namibia, the Green Economy Dialogues, held in 2011, opened the debate for a national approach to green growth and clean development. The Green Economy Dialogues responded to an increased awareness regarding sustainable development and climate change in Namibia. There is a fear that the fragile natural resource base may be degraded and over-exploited as Namibia continues its process of industrialisation. At the same time, new clean technologies, especially in renewable energy, are attracting more and more interest from consumers.

Social challenges in Namibia

- Current unemployment in Namibia stands at 51.4%, while unemployment of youth aged 15–19 is at 84%.
- An estimated 70% of the population does not have access to electricity.
- 55.8% of the Namibian population survives on less than US\$2/day.
- Inequality in Namibia is amongst the highest in the world.

Environmental challenges in Namibia

- Fossil fuels provide 68% of total energy production while only 21% comes from renewable energies.
- Solid waste increases by 10% per year.
- An increase in extreme weather events has been observed and is expected to continue.
- An increase in average temperatures has been observed and is expected to continue.

Towards green jobs

To address unemployment (the social challenge), the country needs to move towards an economy that creates a significant number of new jobs. Green jobs offer a way of generating decent work whilst simultaneously achieving environmentally sustainable economic and social development (environmental challenge). Green jobs reduce the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors, to levels which are ultimately sustainable. They contribute to reducing the need for energy and raw materials, to avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, to minimising waste and pollution, and to restoring ecosystems like clean water, flood protection and biodiversity. For the ILO, the notion of green jobs summarises the transformation of economies, enterprises, workplaces and labour markets into sustainable practices providing decent work.

What are green jobs?

'Green jobs' are jobs which help to reduce negative environmental impacts, ultimately leading to environmentally, economically and socially sustainable enterprises and economies. More precisely, green jobs are decent jobs that:

- Reduce the consumption of energy and raw materials
- Limit greenhouse gas emissions
- Minimise waste and pollution, and
- Protect and restore ecosystems.

Green jobs need to be decent, which is often particularly challenging in occupations in waste management, agriculture and other precarious employment relationships. For that reason it is imperative that the decent work approach is taken when looking at green jobs. Decent jobs are jobs which ensure basic human and labour rights, social protection and the right to exercise social dialogue for workers.

Green jobs, as described here, match the ambitions of the Namibian National Development Plan 4, which calls for people-centred economic growth based upon the principles of sustainable development. Furthermore, green jobs should not be seen as separate from the green economy, but rather as one of the basic enabling factors to achieve it.

Identifying green jobs is not always that easy, since green jobs vary in colour from very light green to dark green. But what is sure is that green jobs, irrespective of the shade of green, can be found and created in a wide area of sectors. In Namibia, these are typically in agriculture, mining, transport, renewable energy and the hospitality industry amongst others, involving all levels of skills, from engineers and technologists, to blue collar workers.

This background brief is part of an Information Campaign on crucial elements in greening the economy, from the perspective of workers, employers and the government. Subsequent briefs will touch upon Green Skills, Green Entrepreneurship, Green Jobs Assessment and Policy, and finally some sectoral perspectives on Green Jobs.



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How will the green economy transform the labour market?

Much debate and attention has been given to the question of job creation in the green economy. Over-optimistic approaches vied with negative views on the job creation potential of the green economy. It is certain however, that the move towards a greener economy is likely to lead to changes in employment and income, with positive and negative effects occurring at the same time in terms of employment creation.

Based on different country studies, it is estimated that globally, the net gain of job creation through the greening of the economy will be around 0.5 to 2%. In general, the greening of the economy will affect employment in at least four ways:

1. Additional jobs will be created, for example in the manufacturing, installation and maintenance of solar water heating or renewable energy devices;
2. Some employment will be substituted, for example through the shift from fossil fuels to renewables, or from land filling and waste incineration to recycling and reusing;
3. Certain jobs may be eliminated, without direct replacement, for example when packaging materials are discouraged or banned and their production is discontinued; and
4. Many existing jobs, such as those of plumbers, electricians, metal workers and construction workers, will simply be transformed and redefined when day-to-day skill sets, work methods and profiles are adjusted to new requirements and green technologies.

For more information:
www.ilo.org/green-jobs-programme

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