

Green Jobs

“For millions of workers, no income means no food, no security and no future... As the pandemic and the jobs crisis evolve, the need to protect the most vulnerable becomes even more urgent.”

International Labour Organization, Director-General, Guy Ryder

Green jobs¹ are core to the United Nations’ and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)’s response to COVID-19 recovery packages. Amid all the loss and tragedy of the pandemic, **hundreds of millions of people** have lost their jobs as a result of the *Great Lockdown*. Building back better means creating jobs that take our economies one step further towards the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, by accelerating and scaling up sustainable consumption and production.

COVID-19 and Green Jobs

By the end of April 2020, 2.3 billion workers were living in countries with mandatory or recommended closures. Global working hours in the second quarter of 2020 are expected to be 10.5 per cent lower than in the last quarter, equivalent to a decline of 305 million full-time jobs.²

Four sectors have experienced the most drastic effects: food and accommodation (144 million workers); retail and wholesale (482 million); business services and administration (157 million); and manufacturing (463 million); totalling 1.25 billion workers around the world and representing almost 37.5 per cent of the global workforce.³

The effect on small and medium sized enterprises is especially severe, particularly because of higher levels of vulnerability and lower resilience related to their size.

Sixty-one per cent of the world’s workers are employed in informal sectors and most, if not all, are left out of basic labour and social protections.^{4 5} Women are especially vulnerable as an estimated 70 per cent of the women’s employment in low income economies is in the informal sector.

UNEP’s Response

UNEP is committed to supporting countries as they recover from COVID-19 by focusing on sustainable consumption and production, green and decent jobs and just transition. UNEP can help countries to:

Adopt an integrated approach to economic recovery and job creation with a long-term view to enhance resilience.

Building tomorrow better will demand an integrated approach to economic recovery that leaves no one behind, mitigates future threats to lives and livelihoods—including from climate change and degradation of nature—and advances the 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a globally agreed framework that can guide the revival of economies and jobs.

UNEP will repurpose its outreach on sustainable living and smart choices, focusing on insights from the response to COVID-19 and the emphasis on health, well-being, and relationships, including with nature; and using low carbon lifestyle challenges and campaigns to support healthier working lives.

¹ Definition: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/news/WCMS_220248/lang--en/index.htm

² <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/covid-19/>

³ ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition, ILO, 29 April 2020

⁴ Bonnet, F., Vanek, J., & Chen, M. (2019). Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical brief. *International Labour Office, Geneva*. <http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20the%20Informal%20>

⁵ The COVID-19 crisis: income support to informal workers is necessary and possible, OECD April 2020

Links to successful programmes

Through the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, together with the International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organizations and United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNEP is supporting countries to develop integrated policies that address the immediate challenges of creating jobs and long-term prosperity, as envisioned in the Agenda 2030. To support policymakers, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy has produced the [Green Jobs Training Guidebook](#), which focuses on measuring and modeling social and employment outcomes of climate and sustainable development policies. The model can be used to measure the impact of COVID-19.

Through the [One Planet Network](#), a multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development, formed to implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes, UNEP generates collective impact through six programmes that are key to a green COVID-19 recovery: tourism; food systems; buildings and construction; consumer information, lifestyles and education; and public procurement.

Provide targeted support for micro and small-scale enterprises to build resilience through sustainable and responsible value chains.

UNEP will work through its global and regional programmes to stimulate recovery of micro and small-scale enterprises through partnerships with UN agencies, finance, government and private sector institutions. UNEP has several inter-agency flagships, such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, One Planet network, [Global Opportunities for Sustainable Development Goals](#), and [Green Growth Knowledge Platform](#), which can support efforts to reach small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as they build circularity and resource efficiency into recovery efforts and business plans.

UNEP will support countries and SMEs to revitalize markets and value chains for green and sustainable products⁶, using high impact partnerships such as the One Planet network Programmes and the

[Global Network for Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production](#) with the UN Industrial Development Organization.

Links to successful programmes

In partnership with the Resource Efficient and Cleaner Production Network⁷, UNEP has supported small and medium-sized enterprises to build more resilient value chains by adding sustainability at the core of their business strategy:

- By working on joint sustainable solutions to common problems, significant shared gains can be achieved with better commercial, environmental and social value;
- With lower production costs through greater material or production efficiency, minimized waste, optimization of distribution channels and reduced lead-time;
- Good relationships through the value chain approach help develop proactive communication on emerging challenges and risks to adapt; and
- Producers that rely less or not exclusively on import supplies (for example, by sourcing certain materials locally or through on-site recycling) are less prone to the crisis.

<http://unep.ecoinnovation.org/success-stories/>

Work with the financial sector to play an integral positive impact role.

Accelerate UNEP's work with the financial sector to help economies recover from the crisis. In the short-term, this would mean providing the liquidity funding that companies need to stay solvent and maintain employees on the payroll. In the mid-term, this would mean helping governments channel a combination of stimulus funding and private capital towards new forms of development that assist communities in building back better.

UNEP Finance Initiative members are supporting companies to sustain their business during and beyond the crisis, in line with the Principles for Responsible Banking⁸.

Green fiscal reforms can also channel public finance for Sustainable Development Goal-aligned labour

⁷ <https://www.recnnet.org/>

⁸ <https://www.unepfi.org/banking/bankingprinciples/responsible-banking-in-the-covid-19-crisis/>

market recovery and reallocate scarce resources towards priority relief measures. Governments could, for example, use the unprecedented oil price drop to remove inefficient, environmentally harmful subsidies, like fossil fuel subsidies, to create fiscal space, incentivize increased green economy activity and jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Link to successful programmes

As custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 12.c.1 (amount of fossil fuel subsidies per unit of Gross Domestic Product), UNEP supports countries in monitoring and reporting the indicator. Other green fiscal policy options like environmental taxation (e.g. carbon taxes) and green budgeting can also contribute to environmentally sustainable COVID-19 relief and recovery, helping create jobs and revenue, while contributing to various Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement and preserving the macro-economic stability of countries.

UNEP supports countries on green fiscal policy reform through the Partnership for Action on Green Economy and through the Green Fiscal Policy Networks, a collaboration between UNEP, the International Monetary Fund and German *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* for knowledge exchange and country dialogue on green fiscal policy experiences and best practices. This work will also be supported through UNEP Finance Incentive's [Responsible Banking and Positive Impact Finance](#).

Way Forward

UNEP is committed to using its expertise and global platforms and networks to provide immediate support to countries in their response to the COVID-19 crises; and will continuously evaluate opportunities with UN agencies, the One Planet Network, the financial sector and other partners to support countries towards a green recovery that advances sustainable consumption and production through circular approaches and other means to create green and decent jobs.

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