



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

## Mainstreaming Kenya's National Climate Change Action Plan into the Labour Sector<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction:** The vision for Kenya's labour sector is a globally competitive and adaptive human resource base that will meet the requirements of a rapidly industrialising economy. This will be accomplished through life-long training and education. As a priority, a human resource database will be established to facilitate better planning of human resources requirements in the country. Furthermore, steps will be taken to raise labour productivity to international levels. Other steps will include the establishment of new technical training institutions, as well as the enhancement of closer collaboration between industry and training institutions.<sup>2</sup> These areas provide an opportunity for mainstreaming climate change into the labour sector.

**Risks and Impacts:** Climate change will impact the labour sector in direct and indirect ways. The effects on the economy – including on employment – could be catastrophic if ambitious measures are not taken to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change can impact employment and the labour sector in various ways, discussed below.

- Climate change will affect jobs in rural areas where agricultural production is expected to decline because of increased water stress, changing climatic patterns and reduced farming areas. Indirect effects on jobs in rural economies could be experienced in the agro-processing industry, transport services, and non-agriculture-related commerce which depends on the revenues of agriculture (such as small shops in rural communities).
- Increased frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events can affect urban employment because damage to transport, industrial infrastructure and settlements impacts the ability of workers to commute and to find alternatives when workplaces have to close.
- Workplaces may be moved to areas less exposed to environmental risks (for example, further away from the sea). In a globalized economy, it is hard to predict whether these displacements will take place within a country or across borders.
- Future climate change is expected to exacerbate the occurrence and intensity of future disease outbreaks and may increase the spread of diseases (see the Health sector briefing note), which could impact the health of workers. The working conditions of outdoor labourers, such as construction workers, could worsen because of rising temperatures.
- Increased awareness by consumers in developed countries might lead to changes in consumption patterns, with impacts on export-oriented sectors, such as the flower industry. Consumers may consider the emissions associated with the import of cut flowers, leading to reduced demand and potential job losses in Kenya.
- While some sectors will experience job losses, the transition to a low carbon climate resilient development pathway can include a shift to green jobs - where the economy, companies and workplaces promote decent work that:
  - Reduces consumption of energy and raw materials;
  - Limits GHG emissions;



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- Minimizes waste and pollution; and
- Protects and restores ecosystems.
- New jobs will be created in the construction sector as a consequence of infrastructure investments, such as development of renewable energy projects (geothermal, wind turbines, solar plants); and building and upgrading of coastal defences, flood protection and drainage systems. Buildings, infrastructure and homes will need to be climate proofed, and political decisions that promote these strategies can help generate new job opportunities.

**Recommended Actions:** Generally speaking, there are two kinds of climate change policies in terms of their positive effects on employment: policies that *avoid job losses* by changing the elements of production affected by climate change (such as changing crops); and policies that *create jobs* by preparing the country for climate change and following a low carbon pathway (such as large infrastructure projects). The following recommendations have been identified to deal with climate change impacts on the labour sector:

- *Social dialogue and encouraging a “Just Transition”:* The International Labour Organization’s Just Transition introduces the notion that the transition to a greener economy has to be inclusive of all stakeholders, and that the unavoidable employment and social costs of the transition have to be shared by all. The concept of Just Transition addresses a series of questions. Who will lose out? What support will be provided to workers and communities that are on the losing end? What skills will be needed in the new sectors? How do we ensure that the new jobs are decent jobs? Social dialogue will have to be at the heart of the process and governments, beyond regulating the emissions of greenhouse gases, will have a critical role in promoting industrial and social policies that lead to the creation of productive and decent employment.
- *Sector-specific actions:* Adaptation policies in the agriculture and forestry sectors need to focus on expanding non-farming activities and crops that are able to face greater variability in weather conditions. In the tourism sector, the vulnerability of workers can be reduced through policies that focus on the development of different tourist activities or the promotion of economic diversification. These actions aim to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on sectoral activities and the employment opportunities they generate.
- *Training and skills development:* Workers need to be trained in green processes and technologies to encourage the uptake and development of new technologies and to realize the potential of green investments. Educational leave for workers to acquire new skills might be needed.
- *Social protection:* Social protection schemes, including active labour market policies (such as social insurance and public employment guarantee schemes, job-creating public works programmes for the unemployed and working poor, income maintenance and job placement services) are needed to ensure justice during the transition to a low carbon climate resilient economy. Policies and programmes will be needed to avert or minimize job losses, to provide income support and to improve the employability of workers in sensitive sectors.
- *Local analysis and economic diversification plans:* The effects of climate change are unlikely to be uniform across counties, and no county will be left unaffected. Local analysis is needed to inform economic diversification plans for counties, examining the positive or negative employment effects of climate change and exploring options to promote decent jobs.

**Conclusion:** Climate change will impact the labour sector in direct and indirect ways. A potential impact is job losses, with the greatest risk in the agricultural sector, which provides more than 70 per cent of informal employment in the rural areas of Kenya.<sup>3</sup> But, investment in adaptation and mitigation projects (such as renewable energy and flood control), and political decisions to promote local employment could help to provide new jobs. Education and training will be critical to develop a skilled workforce, and governments can promote industrial and social policies that lead to the creation of productive and decent employment. Measures are needed to take advantage of the beneficial effects, including new green jobs, and to minimise the negative impacts of climate change on the labour sector.



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<sup>1</sup> The information in this briefing note is derived from an International Labour Organisation (ILO) resource. See: ILO. 2010. "Climate Change and Labour: The Need for a 'Just Transition'." *International Journal of Labour*, 2(2). Geneva: International Labour Office.

<sup>2</sup> Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2007. *Kenya Vision 2030*. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.

<sup>3</sup> Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2009. *Agricultural Sector Development Strategy 2010-2020*. Nairobi: Government of Kenya.