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FUTURES

ASEAN Green Jobs Forum 2026

Manila, Philippines. 19-20 October 2026



Seven themes emerged from the Forum as priorities for a green workforce transition

- 1 Definitions**
Developing a common language for green jobs across countries
- 2 Green and Digital**
Leveraging on digital to advance the green transition
- 3 Just and Inclusive Transition**
Protecting those who may fall through the cracks in the green transition
- 4 Social Dialogue**
Engaging workers meaningfully through social dialogue
- 5 Policy Implementation**
Ensuring policies are implemented successfully on the ground
- 6 Multi-stakeholder coordination**
Coordinating across sectors and stakeholders, as the green transition cuts across sectors
- 7 Funding for green transition**
Building a funding case and clarifying who pays for workers' training to meet green jobs demand

Without common definitions and measures, countries cannot plan and measure the workforce they need

- **“Green” jobs and tasks:** Without a definition, countries cannot measure how many green jobs it has or how many workers it needs to train to meet demand.
- **Green skills:** Left unidentified, training programmes and certifications cannot be developed. Workers who already doing green work, are left with skills but no credential, making it difficult for industry to recognise their skills and translate to better opportunities.
- **Shared taxonomy:** Countries define green jobs, tasks, and skills differently, hindering collaboration and peer learning from each other.
- **Accountability:** Lack of common indicators and labor market information hinder progress tracking and accountability.

Green and digital are one shift, so skills must be built together

- **Digital and green moving together:** The green transition is happening quickly and is intertwined with digital transformation.
- **Green and digital skills often developed in silos:** Digital tools are advancing green goals, so building the two skill sets separately wastes the link between them. For businesses, AI, sustainability, digital and automation are not separate trends.
- **Transforming existing jobs:** Much of the future opportunity sits in existing jobs that need new green and digital tasks, so updating jobs matters as much as creating them.
- **Technology may displace workers:** Modernisation and machinery have the potential to displace workers who are already working in traditional green economy sectors.

A just and inclusive transition must protect displaced workers and include informal workers, women and youth

Theme 3 | Just and Inclusive Transition

- **Workers at risk of displacement:** Policies that ignore workers' livelihoods may displace them in pursuit of environmental goals.
- **Lack of social protections for displaced workers:** Workers displaced will need to be supported by social protections and active labor market policies. Often, because of difficult reskilling pathways, displaced workers may not move into new roles.
- **Women, youth, informal workers need to be included:** The transition will need to keep in mind informal workers, women, youth, persons with disabilities, and MSMEs to ensure that green jobs do not widen inequality. Mothers cannot attend training without childcare, and informal workers are left out of protection and training.
- **Informal workers are hard to reach and hard to count:** Policy is hard to translate to informal workers, and they are unclear which indicators suit economies with large informal sectors.

A just and inclusive transition needs social dialogue that is meaningful, not performative

Theme 4 | Social Dialogue

- **Workers' voices come in too late:** Often workers voices come in too late with insufficient time to review policies and proposals.
- **Not everyone is at the table:** Social dialogues may miss out on the groups that are most affected, with under-representation among youth, children, informal workers, and marginalised groups, and select unions involved.
- **Guidance exists but is not used:** ILO guidance is available, but without an agreed process, dialogue stays a formality instead of a cycle of sharing ideas, adjusting and agreeing.

Policy only changes jobs on the ground if it comes with guidelines and enforcement

- **Action plans exist but delivery remains limited:** A number of frameworks and action plans are largely in place with the gap being making existing policy work.
- **No implementation guidelines or guidance:** Well-intentioned policy is applied inconsistently or not at all without guidelines, leading to unintended consequences such as job displacement.
- **Policy domains are designed one by one:** The connections between policy domains matter, not just individual policies. Skills, social protection and industry policy have to work together, or they overlap and leave gaps.

No single actor can deliver, so government, employers and workers must commit together

Theme 6 | Multi-stakeholder coordination

- **Delivery sits across varying government agencies:** Green jobs sits across different sectors, requiring multiple stakeholders even within the government to be involved.
- **Industry and government coordination is lacking:** Employers say they will help shape training but need a clear government roadmap on skills demand, otherwise their willingness stays intent and never materialises into job outcomes. Meanwhile, governments need to hear from industries early on what investments they are making and how much manpower they need.
- **Industry needs to be closely involved in training design:** Training providers struggle to keep pace with industry developments, requiring closer coordination and collaboration to ensure that providers produce graduates that industry wants.
- **Regional coordination needed:** Mapping of where competencies are in the region required to enable mobility of manpower.

The case for greening is clear, but who pays for upskilling is not

- **Clear case for businesses to transition:** Businesses often generate revenue or cost-savings from greening.
- **Unclear case for worker investment:** Firms investing in worker upskilling worry that their workers will leave them, and may prefer to replace them with hires already having those skills. However, if little is invested in training, worker shortage can continue over the long-term.
- **MSMEs lack resources to fund training:** MSMEs require support in recruiting workers with green skills, but lack the capacity and resources to fund and access these workers.
- **Funding for green skills more difficult to obtain:** Education is not bankable, with limited social metrics to measure returns, so green infrastructure gets funded while the workforce does not.

Building on the seven themes, the Forum identified five key recommendations for ASEAN

Recommendations

Definition

Shared regional taxonomy

Develop a shared regional language for green jobs, green skills, and digital skills, while allowing flexibility for different ASEAN member state context.

Green and Digital

Integrated green and digital skills

Promote the concurrent integration of green and digital competencies across ASEAN skills and workforce development frameworks.

Just and Inclusive Transition

Inclusive training access

Develop ASEAN guidance on inclusive training that addresses barriers faced by those who are left behind first: women, youth, marginalized groups, and MSMEs.

Just and Inclusive Transition

Recognition of prior learning

Establish a regional framework for recognizing prior learning, with common principles and pathways that AMS can use to certify skills held by informal and indigenous workers.

Social Dialogue

Meaningful tripartite dialogue

Institutionalize meaningful ASEAN-level tripartite dialogues that engages employees and workers early in the transition planning phase, with documented consultation, shared agreements prior to implementation, and practical implementation guidance.