



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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youthXchange

Green Skills and Lifestyles Guidebook



United Nations
Environment Programme



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The YouthXchange *Green Skills and Lifestyles* guidebook, which focuses on the challenges, opportunities and good practices related to green economies and societies, is the second in a series of thematic guidebooks. This series is produced for young people and people working with young people, educators, teachers, trainers and youth leaders around the world.

For more information on the YouthXchange Initiative: www.youthxchange.net

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youthXchange

Guidebook Series

Green Skills and Lifestyles



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International
Labour
Organization



UNEP
United Nations
Environment Programme

Foreword

The 2012 *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* (Rio+20) was clear: a green economy needs green skills to work. In Rio de Janeiro, countries agreed to implement green economy policies in ways that drive equitable growth and poverty eradication, with a focus on young people, women and the poor. A successful transition to a green economy will be one that builds on two pillars – job creation and youth involvement.

The stakes are high. Today, young people under the age of 25 are the largest generation of youth in human history. They represent half of the world's population, living mostly in developing countries. An estimated 33,000 young people are expected to enter the job market every day between now and 2050. This generation is highly educated, but they face steep barriers in securing decent jobs, entering and remaining in the labour market. With nearly 75 million unemployed young people around the world, they are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults.

Education about the green economy is essential to enable young people to participate fully in the

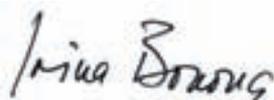
transition to a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy. Many young people are aware of the green economy, but they need more information to understand how to make it real – locally, nationally and internationally.

The *YouthXchange Green Skills and Lifestyles Guidebook* fills this gap. Developed by UNEP and UNESCO, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), this Guidebook helps young people connect the talk about the green economy, green societies and green jobs to their lifestyles. It focuses on the skills required to make these transitions – providing case studies and insight on green jobs and the skills they will require in terms of social innovation and entrepreneurship, the role of different stakeholders (government and private sector) and life skills.

Young men and women are already driving change across the world. We must provide them with the skills they need to create new lifestyles and develop green jobs. Building a green future must start with training and education. It must start by listening to young people, by engaging their creativity and acting together.



Mr Achim Steiner
Executive Director
UNEP



Ms Irina Bokova
Director-General
UNESCO



Mr Guy Ryder
Director-General
ILO

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1. The YXC Guidebook Series

The *YouthXchange Green Skills and Lifestyles Guidebook* is the second in a series of thematic guidebooks supporting the UNEP/UNESCO YouthXchange (YXC) Initiative. The first guidebook was on climate change and lifestyles. This initiative was created in 2001 to promote sustainable lifestyles among young people (15-24 years) through education, dialogue, awareness-raising and capacity-building. The series is produced for young people and the people working with them, such as educators, teachers, trainers and youth leaders around the world.

"The ever increasing environmental issues that face our world should be seen not as threats, but as chances to work together to ensure that our future on earth is protected."

Krystal Schara (16), United States of America

The YouthXchange guidebooks provide young people with ideas, actions and starting points towards a sustainable world. With nearly half of the world's population under the age of 25, most living in developing countries, just imagine the impact of young people as change agents in adopting more sustainable lifestyles. If we add together our small steps, we will move towards lifestyles that help sustain our planet, our global and our local communities.

Aims of the YXC Green Skills and Lifestyles Guidebook

- Explore the links between the development of, and transition to, an inclusive green economy;
- Inform young people about what an inclusive green economy is and introduce actions required to achieve it;
- Help young people consider how a green economy can help create more sustainable lifestyles.

"Green economy is an urgent need to reach sustainable development around the world for our generation and for generations to come."

M. Ihsan Kaadan,
UNEP Tunza Youth Advisor for West Asia

The opportunities of a green economy

It cannot be denied that the multiple economic crises around the world are threatening jobs and lifestyles. However, there are also opportunities. The International Labour Organization (ILO) suggests that up to 60 million jobs could be created in the transition to a green economy. Young people can seize the opportunities this presents by creating their own employment opportunities, as the case studies in this guidebook demonstrate. They show how young people rise to the challenges of:

- Creating green job opportunities;
- Developing learning and training opportunities for green skills;
- Adapting and developing skills for a sustainable future;
- Taking action by being part of the conversations about achieving inclusive green economies;
- Adopting lifestyle choices that contribute to a green economy and more sustainable communities.

This guidebook is designed to inspire young people to create their own part of a new green economy, and support those already working towards a transition to a sustainable future. This transition needs more than the support of governments and business – young people must be part of the dialogue and activities to make this sustainable future a reality. Young people can contribute to fostering new types of employment, increasing demand for environmentally friendly products, and creating new products and services.

The YouthXchange Green Skills and Lifestyles Guidebook can be downloaded from
www.youthxchange.net

and the UNEP and UNESCO websites at
www.unep.org and www.unesco.org

2. What is a green economy?

What are the attributes of a green economy? How do we define employment differently? How does a green economy help make society more sustainable?

“Green economies must include everyone. No society, no man or woman can be left behind. We must all protect the planet for the future we want.”

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Green economy

A green economy can be seen as a pathway to sustainable development, which is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In a green economy, the environment is a determining factor of economic production, value, stability, and long-term prosperity, as a source of growth and a spur to innovation. The question is – what does a green economy look like?

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a green economy as “one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.” It is an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in income and employment are driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. These investments need to be catalysed and supported by targeted

natural capital as a critical economic asset, as a source of public benefits, especially for the poor whose livelihoods and security strongly depend on nature.

A green economy is not a substitute for sustainability. *There is however a growing recognition that, to a large extent, restructuring the economy is key for achieving sustainability.* It is part of sustainable development, a way to achieve a resource-efficient, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable world. It is an economy that responds to the issues of climate change, the need for “closed-loop systems,” meaning for example that we can reuse and recycle through the life cycle of products, and also redesign these products in order to minimize waste and pollutants and other environmental impacts from their production to their use and end of life.

As stated in The Future We Want, the outcome document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in June 2012 in Brazil, everyone has a role to play in implementing a green economy. This can be a government creating policies that encourage green economy, businesses recognizing their long-term future is in managing the resources they rely on sustainably or young people creating their own community actions.

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