

AN INCLUSIVE GREEN TRANSITION: ALIGNING SKILLS AND JOBS FOR IMPACT



An inclusive green transition

As climate change fundamentally reshapes economies across all sectors, it presents challenges and opportunities requiring new skills, new jobs, and changes to existing occupations. For Swisscontact, the green transition is an opportunity to align our long-standing work in skills development, employment and enterprise development with the demands of a sustainable future. At the heart of our response lie our **sustainability strategy and our climate change ambitions** that guide our efforts across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) as well as climate change dimensions—both within our operations and across our project portfolio.

Our understanding of an inclusive green transition goes beyond low carbon development, to be a shift towards a new development model that ensures environmentally sustainable and more equitable societies for current and future generations. This requires tackling climate change and its negative consequences such as environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity, while reducing inequalities and promoting socially inclusive and resilient societies.¹

We recognize that a just and inclusive transition does not happen automatically. It requires deliberate action. That's why we are committed to the following ambitions:

- **Support the green transition leads to meaningful employment.** While some sectors may experience efficiency gains that reduce labour demand, others must be supported to absorb new workers and scale sustainably.
- **Ensure that the jobs supported through our interventions meet our definition of decent work:** adequate earnings and productive employment, a safe working environment, and equal opportunity and treatment—free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse.
- **Align training with real economic opportunities.** Many systems still produce skills for outdated occupations or sectors that are not yet viable at scale. We aim to close this gap through labour market-aligned training.
- **Make the green transition accessible to all.** In many of our partner countries, a large share of the workforce operates informally. We strive to ensure that these diverse livelihoods can benefit from the transition, even where access to training, finance, and formal markets is limited.

Swisscontact believes that aligning skills development with evolving labour market realities is essential to making the green transition inclusive, equitable, and effective.

¹ Adapted definition from the European Training Foundation, 2023: Skills for a Green Transition.





Our understanding of green skills and green jobs

At Swisscontact, we move beyond sector-based classifications and instead understand green skills and jobs by their tangible contribution to one or more of the following outcomes:

- **Climate change adaptation**, including resilience-building, disaster risk reduction, or the adaptation of business models and operations to changing climate conditions;
- **Environmental conservation & restoration**, encompassing ecosystem-services management, biodiversity protection, advocacy, and the development of sustainable and regenerative business models;
- **Climate change mitigation**, through innovations such as low-emission technologies and materials, process efficiency, energy savings, or sustainable agricultural practices.

The terms green skills and green jobs are increasingly used in policy, education, and labour market discussions, yet they often lack a consistent and comprehensive definition. As economies adapt to climate and sustainability goals, traditional occupations across sectors will increasingly require new skills, technologies, and business models. This transformation will take different forms depending on the context—from retrofitting infrastructure and decarbonizing transport to advancing climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable urban development, or innovation in the informal economy.

Recognizing that most new green jobs emerge from the transformation of existing sectors rather than entirely new ones, we consider a job or skill **“green or greener”** if a significant portion of its function contributes to one or more of those outcomes.

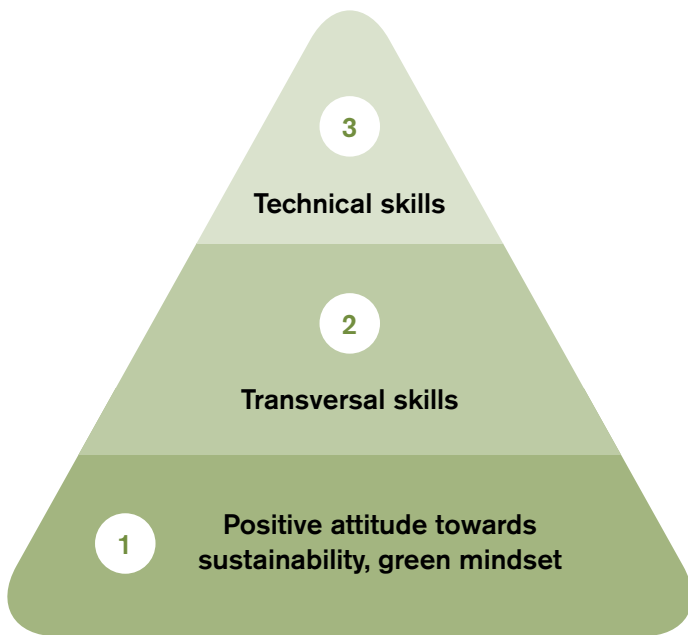
This also means that green skills are not inherently green—it is the context in which they are applied that determines their relevance. For example, finance or marketing skills can support green outcomes when applied in sustainable sectors. Consequently, a variety of skills are needed that contribute to the green transition that are not per se green.



At Swisscontact, we understand green skills as a layered set of competencies that enable individuals to make meaningful contributions to climate change adaptation, mitigation, and environmental conservation. At the foundation lies a **green mindset**—a values-based orientation toward sustainability and environmental responsibility.² Building on this are **transversal skills** such as systems thinking, adaptability, and problem-solving, which are essential across all sectors to support sustainable practices.

At the top are **technical skills** specific to green technologies, processes, and occupations. While only a small share of occupations require highly specialized technical expertise, a much broader segment of the workforce needs strong transversal capacities and knowledge to form a green mindset. This understanding reflects our belief that **technical skills alone are not sufficient; they must be supported by broader competencies to enable a meaningful and inclusive green transition.**

² Adapted from: Pavlova, Margarita. (2017). Green Skills as the Agenda for the Competence Movement in Vocational and Professional Education. 10.1007/978-3-319-41713-4_43.



Source: Own visualization based on The Inter-Agency Working Group on Work-Based Learning & Pavlova (2017).

3. Technical Skills

At the top of the pyramid are occupation specific skills. These skills are tailored to new and existing occupations that enhance their adaptation, mitigation, or environmental impact.

2. Transversal Skills

Transversal skills are applicable across various fields and support the green economy transition & empower employees to adopt more sustainable practices in their tasks. These skills include business and financial skills as well as critical thinking, relationship building and adaptability.

1. Green Mindset

Knowledge and a positive attitude on climate change and sustainability lays the foundation for a green mindset. It ensures the topic receives the necessary attention in the workplace.



Project experience: Building Bangladesh's green consulting ecosystem

When Bangladesh's garment factories faced mounting ESG requirements from international buyers, the message was blunt: "comply or lose your market." But international consultants charged prohibitive fees, creating a critical gap. The project Promoting Green Growth in the Ready-Made Garments Sector (PROGRESS) saw an opportunity to develop local ESG consulting capacity—creating green jobs while serving industry needs.

- The learning challenge was complex. Technical knowledge alone wouldn't create effective consultants; they needed mentorship, business skills, and credibility. PROGRESS partnered local consultants with international firms for hands-on learning, created working groups mixing experts from associations, brands and factories, and supported development of practical services from carbon accounting to sustainability reporting.
- **Critical learning:** Start with the "stick" (compliance threats) rather than abstract benefits and frame any environmental improvements in business terms. PROGRESS worked on two levels simultaneously: strategic market development and operational skills. Early results show 63% of target factories adopting standards, with local consultants establishing viable businesses as cost-effective alternatives to international firms.

Key insight:

Effective green skills development requires embedding learning in real market contexts, not just classroom training.

Our Value Proposition: A systems perspective to green skills and jobs

Swisscontact approaches green skills and jobs through a **systems perspective**. We understand that employment outcomes are shaped not only by individual capabilities, but by the broader economic, institutional, and social environments in which people live and work. That's why we focus on aligning skills development with real labour market dynamics—recognizing that meaningful change requires more than training alone.

Our value proposition is to tackle green skills from both a skills development and economic development perspective—ensuring these are not treated as separate efforts, but as interconnected levers for change. We aim to align skills with real labour market needs, striving to **balance supply and demand**, while keeping environmental sustainability as a guiding principle.

Discussions of the green transition often highlight the creation of new, greener, and more decent jobs. **Yet the most significant employment impacts will come from the transformation of existing sectors.**

Our approach therefore focuses on creating the conditions for resilient, inclusive, and sustainable livelihoods—especially where industries are being reshaped by the transition. We see our role as ensuring that underprivileged and marginalized groups are not left behind. While new green jobs are emerging, many workers face job losses or transformations that they cannot easily access. Our contribution lies in unlocking opportunities—whether in green sectors or other viable industries—through reskilling, social protection, and inclusive policies. And because both green and traditional economies rely heavily on informal labour, we work to promote access to decent work and create adaptive pathways that make the transition truly inclusive and just.

Furthermore, we recognize that meaningful change begins with people and businesses seeing the value in sustainability. That's why we focus on fostering a mindset that embraces environmental responsibility and business opportunities resulting from the green transition, followed by the development of transversal skills that can be applied across sectors. All too often only technical skills are developed without addressing the underlying attitudes or broader capabilities needed to adapt and thrive in a changing economy.

That's why our approach goes beyond isolated training interventions. We work to align efforts across sectors, institutions, and enabling environments to ensure that green skills and jobs development translates into meaningful, decent, and sustainable employment.



Source: Own illustration: Balancing Green Skills Supply and Green Skills Demand to ensure skills development is in line with market developments.



 KOSOVO

Project experience: Adapting when the snow stops falling

Kosovo's mountain tourism businesses faced an existential threat when winters increasingly arrived without snow. Because the project Promoting Private Sector Employment (PPSE) project had worked in the tourism sector for over a decade, it was uniquely positioned to support rapid adaptation. Rather than imposing predetermined "green" solutions, the project followed market signals and business incentives.

- The evidence was clear: ski-dependent businesses were already pivoting to mountain biking and hiking. Some had started investing in solar panels to reduce operating costs. PPSE amplified these organic adaptations through co-financing equipment transitions, bringing international expertise on sustainable tourism, and helping introduce accommodation taxes to fund ongoing sustainability initiatives.
- **The result?** Tourism persisted despite climate challenges, with businesses now offering year-round activities. The project's long-term presence enabled it to sense early changes and respond with strategic resources—demonstrating how evidence-based adaptation beats theoretical climate interventions.

Key insight:

Businesses adapt when economic necessity is clear; successful facilitation amplifies market-driven solutions rather than imposing them.

We don't assume that the green transition equals good, or that training equals employment. We ask hard questions, test assumptions, and adapt based on evidence. Our role is to help shape the conditions under which green skills can lead to real, lasting impact—for people, businesses, and the planet.

Swisscontact's offers for partners in the green transition

We support in understanding labour market dynamics by:

- Conducting green skills and labour market assessments to identify sectoral transformation, workforce implications, and real skills and jobs demand.
- Identifying opportunities and entry points where national strategies and policies align with market opportunities.
- Mapping informal and formal employment dynamics to understand barriers to access and opportunities for inclusion.
- Applying a systems perspective by anchoring change in local systems to ensure long-term impact and scalability beyond individual projects.

We support unlocking employment in the green transition by:

- Identifying green potential in transforming sectors and co-creating market driven sustainable solutions.
- Supporting enterprise development in green markets to create more green jobs.
- Promoting inclusive pathways to green employment by supporting reskilling and upskilling efforts that enable marginalized groups to access new roles.
- Contributing to decent work by promoting safe, fair, and productive employment, particularly in contexts marked by informality and limited access.

We support in building competencies for the green transition by:

- Strengthening competencies for the green transition by prioritizing the development of green mindsets and transversal skills—recognizing that meaningful change requires more than technical expertise alone.
- Engaging with local actors, especially the private sector, to co-design curricula that are match with labour market realities.



 BOLIVIA

Project experience: From waste to business: Bolivia's recycling revolution

Bolivia's Markets for Recycling project transformed scattered waste collection into structured green businesses by working with market incentives. Rather than pushing environmental messages, M4R helped businesses see profit in processing end-of-life tyres, scrap metal, and batteries.

- The systems approach was key. Instead of direct support to individual recyclers, M4R worked through chambers of commerce to strengthen the entire ecosystem. Green businesses like Cademet evolved from basic scrap collection to sophisticated operations. One entrepreneur, Shirley Rosio Jaillita, increased her income by 25% after receiving training in business planning and digital marketing through the project.
- Private sector engagement succeeded because it addressed immediate business needs: access to finance, operational management, and market linkages. Tyres previously abandoned in streets now supply a growing market for synthetic turf maintenance. Scrap metal collectors are joining forces to meet international demand. The environmental benefits—reduced waste and emissions—emerged from pursuing economic opportunities.

Key insight:

Sustainable private sector engagement in green transitions happens when environmental goals align with business profitability, not through advocacy alone.

Six ways to team up for impact

Our development work emphasizes private sector-led, sustainable economic development aimed at improving the quality of life for all in developing and emerging countries. A key focus is to strengthen the skills of individuals and foster the competitiveness of companies. All our projects are underpinned by Systems Thinking and apply Evidence Informed Adaptive Management.

Swisscontact also offers customised advisory, training and research services. Our team of experts provides thematic guidance and strategic support throughout the project cycle as well as in team and organisational development.



01	Contribution to our current projects	Join us in advancing our ongoing initiatives in green skills and sustainable job creation.
02	Joint development of new project	Collaborate with us to launch innovative green skills and jobs projects, fully financed by your organization.
03	Joint development of new project (Public-Private Partnership)	Partner with us and public entities to co-finance and develop impactful projects in green skills and sustainable employment.
04	Consulting and training services	Leverage our expertise in green skills to offer specialized training or conduct essential studies for your team.
05	Free contribution (Donation)	Support our mission financially to boost our capacity in promoting green skills and jobs.
06	In-kind contribution	Provide pro bono services to enhance our projects, whether through technical expertise, equipment, or other resources.

We create opportunities

Swisscontact
SWISS FOUNDATION FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION

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