



Green Jobs for Youth in Africa's Plastic Waste Recycling Sector: Key Recommendations

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This insight paper is the result of a collaborative project by the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment and The INCLUDE Knowledge Platform into the role of green jobs in the future of work for youth in Africa.

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To strengthen the evidence-base for policymakers and practitioners, the research partnership between the Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE) and the INCLUDE Knowledge Platform dives into the green jobs potential for youth in Africa's plastic waste recycling sector.¹ The resulting report reveals four concrete pathways for green jobs for youth in Africa's Plastic Waste Recycling Sector. These interconnected strategies for green finance, green innovation, and green awareness are interlinked and culminate in the overarching green sector alignment pathway. **The interlinkage underlines that leveraging the potential of green jobs for youth in plastic waste recycling necessitates a collective endeavour from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners at all levels.**

The recommendations stemming from this research are outlined below and aim to assist stakeholders in propelling these opportunities forward. These recommendations are grounded in insights derived from a literature review and two case studies examining plastic waste recycling initiatives in Kenya, and offer a strong foundation for stakeholders invested in fostering green jobs in waste recycling. However, **their successful implementation demands a context-specific approach, adapting to the diverse policy landscapes and practical realities prevalent across the African continent.**

Specifically targeting employment opportunities for youth, these recommendations underscore that **youth employment policies and initiatives to create green jobs in waste recycling must ensure that youth's perspectives and their varying identity markers that shape their decent employment opportunities are taken into account** as well as their potential to gain new skills and increase their job prospects along the waste recycling value chain.

Green Finance: Recommendations

Increase finance and funding opportunities for new innovative solutions and scaling. Additionally, provide fees and subsidies for recycling and decent work initiatives.

¹Find more information about the collaborative research partnership between INCLUDE and CFYE: [green jobs for youth and the future of work](#).

- **Government:** subsidize waste recycling initiatives and improve the business climate by facilitating a conducive tax and policy environment.
- **International donors:** continue to make funding and grants available for supporting and piloting innovative technical and social innovation to promote green jobs.
- **Finance institutions:** make funding more accessible to increase scaling and improve recycling infrastructure. Commercial and development banks should design essential financial products to capture and support the economic potential of this sector.
- **International governmental organizations:** strengthen subsidies and financial mechanisms internationally in conjunction with supporting policies for conducive global plastic recycling value chains

Green Innovation: Recommendations

Promote and facilitate the adoption of innovative solutions, knowledge exchange, and technical skills to enhance the effectiveness of plastic waste recycling and utilize social and digital innovations to improve the working environment within the sector.

- **Recycling enterprises:** develop effective and innovative recycling approaches for (previously unrecycled) waste and provide technical skills training on innovative methods for employees simultaneously.
- **International donors:** provide knowledge and mentoring on technological innovations in waste recycling through linking African recycling initiatives with experts in the field.
- **Knowledge institutions:** facilitate effective knowledge development and foster international collaboration to build and strengthen expertise in innovative recycling technologies.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** Advocate for and strengthen the capacity of communities, governments, and businesses to adapt and utilize innovative and circular waste recycling principles through training and programming.

Green Awareness: Recommendations

Raise awareness of all actors and the general public around the positive impact of waste recycling on the economy, well-being and the environment.

- **Governments:** Create awareness around the potential of waste recycling and the important role of waste workers through media campaigns and community involvement
- **Civil society organisations:** Initiate awareness campaigns and support existing waste picking initiatives to inform communities that recycling can provide an income and has a positive impact on the environment.
- **International governmental organizations:** Create awareness around the potential of waste recycling for the economy and the climate and strengthen conducive policies for green innovation and green finance.
- **Knowledge institutes:** Build and strengthen the evidence base around green jobs for youth in waste recycling to inform awareness raising initiatives and supporting policies and structures.

Green Sector Alignment: Recommendations

Create an efficient and fair plastics recycling ecosystem that acknowledges the rights, duties, and competencies of all actors.

- Ensuring equal and active participation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes is crucial for promoting decent and green jobs in waste recycling. This includes specifically incorporating the perspectives of **diverse youth and informal waste workers**. Their insights and lived experiences into decent work are pivotal for devising strategies aimed at enhancing the quality of work within waste recycling.
- Collaboration among **international governmental organizations, national governments, NGOs, and the private sector** is essential to establish and implement tailored policies that address specific contexts. For instance, it's crucial to ensure the effective functioning of mechanisms like plastic credits, subsidies and carbon taxes, and to develop national standards for green finance in order to guide financial institutions in incorporating environmental considerations.
- **Strengthening multi-stakeholder** shared learning processes to collectively share and co-create diverse innovative technologies and social interventions aimed at addressing social and environmental challenges in a specific country context.
- Raising awareness and promoting the value of waste workers, combating social stigmas linked to their profession, and enhancing work conditions require joint efforts from all stakeholders. **Public education** on waste recycling should commence in schools and through **NGO** campaigns. **Knowledge institutions and international government organizations** must reinforce evidence and policy development, while the **government and private sector** should partner to offer decent employment opportunities.

About INCLUDE:

INCLUDE is an independent knowledge platform initiated by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2012, to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and effective policies. The platform is made up of researchers, development practitioners and policymakers, promoting evidence-based policymaking on inclusive development, with a focus on Africa.

About CFYE:

The Challenge Fund for Youth Employment is a 7-year programme funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed by Palladium, VSO Nederland and Randstad. The Fund aims to create a prosperous future for 230,000 young women and men in the Middle East, North Africa, Sahel & West Africa and Horn of Africa. This will be achieved by supporting youth employment initiatives in these regions. There is a key role for private sector in achieving this goal. Initiatives will offer youth, particularly young women, opportunities for decent work that delivers better prospects for personal development, is productive, and offers a stable income, social protection and safe working conditions.