

Our World, Our Work

Accelerating Youth Jobs and Inclusive Green Economies

Event Report: Kicking Off EDC's Our World, Our Work Initiative



12.05.22



www.edc.org/OWOW



“Young people are the most integral part of building and growing the green and blue economy, but they need access to skills, resources, and networks so that they may effectively contribute. We cannot wait a moment longer to prioritize youth in this transformation, so they can best leverage their skills and shape their futures.”

—Melanie Sany, Director of International Youth Programs at EDC



Event photography by Ricky Altizer

Executive Summary

Today's climate crisis is both a moment of crisis and a moment of opportunity.

Today's climate crisis is both a moment of crisis and a moment of opportunity. COP27, the most recent meeting of global leaders, activists, and civil society organizations, put the dire consequences of climate change in sharp relief.

Young people will be disproportionately affected by climate-driven erosion of their ecosystems and of traditional sources of work such as fishing, farming, and manufacturing. At the same time, across almost every sector, new green and blue jobs will be created—in smart agriculture, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and more.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) predicts a net increase of at least 18 million jobs from the transition to clean energy and an additional 7 million jobs from the circular economy. EDC seeks to prepare youth to seize these opportunities and to catalyze this transformation.

This meeting was convened as part of Our World, Our Work, a 10-year initiative to ensure 1 million young people (60% young women) between the ages of 18 to 30 are employed or self-employed in decent, inclusive, sustainable green and blue jobs. EDC utilizes a systems-strengthening approach that prioritizes youth agency, placing their needs at the center of national and international conversations and actions between key stakeholders, such as governments, the private sector, education institutions, and civil society.

Fifty-nine in-person meeting participants and 16 virtual participants represented a wide cross-section of organizations, including green entrepreneurs, private sector companies, education, employer associations, funding agencies, implementing and advocacy organizations, international organizations, and academic institutions.

Our goals for the meeting were:

1. Learn from each other about key opportunities and challenges in catalyzing youth employment in green and blue economies
2. Identify opportunities for collective action among our organizations
3. Identify additional partners not represented at the meeting

 **75**
PARTICIPANTS

Our Takeaways



Youth must be central to discussions, program design and implementation, and climate change advocacy. They are already engaged on the front lines of climate change and are redefining what it means to be climate educated. By strengthening their access to skills, mentorship, resources, and networks, we can capitalize on their creativity and innovation.



Youth should be supported with **entrepreneurship training and upskilling**, including through unconventional and nonformal training approaches; **soft skills development; financing;** and **connections to markets.**



Collectively, these efforts can spur **"climate confidence"** among youth and other actors, contributing to belief that real change can occur.



More dialogue among a diverse set of actors is needed. This meeting scratched the surface of the conversations that need to happen at global, regional, national, and local levels. We should find ways to continue the dialogue with a wide cross-section of actors.



Cross-sectoral collaboration is essential—by governments in supporting education institutions to better anticipate skill needs and by the private sector in supporting continuous upskilling and reskilling of their workforce.



We must **engage more employers and industry associations**, particularly **micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises**, in seeking ways to integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations into their work and identify a future pipeline of talent. Likewise, it is important to **engage multilateral organizations** and identify synergies with their efforts.

Our World, Our Work can serve as an organizing entity for the work that needs to be done. EDC will develop a dynamic roadmap to share with participating organizations, inviting their contributions and engagement.

Keynote Panel: Youth Inclusion in Green and Blue Economies

What will it take to ensure youth are included in, and benefit from, transformation towards blue and green economies?

PANEL:



Rebecca Leber
VOX Media
MODERATOR



Dymus Kisilu
Founder and CEO,
Solar Freeze, Kenya



Daniel Baker
Managing Director,
Growth Markets –
Accenture Development
Partnerships, Accenture



Kathryn Stratos
Deputy Director for
Climate & Cross-Sectoral
Strategy, Center for
Environment, Energy &
Infrastructure, USAID



Melanie Sany
Director, Youth and
Workforce Development,
Education Development
Center

Panelists acknowledged that climate change is ubiquitous and affects everything we do. **Our response requires a focus on sectors where emissions or vulnerabilities are already high, as well as addressing climate change and sustainability as cross-cutting issues in our collective work.** As an example of this approach, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) participation in this event was a collaboration with the education team.

Decarbonization will have a significant impact on youth employment. Ensuring decent pay and safe working conditions as we support the transition to green and blue economies will be critical. Some of the key challenges and barriers for youth include the **digital divide**, with limited access to technology and high costs of connectivity. In some areas, there may be insufficient jobs available for youth, and many emergent jobs will require higher skill levels. However, companies are becoming more transparent in their ESG commitments, and consumers are helping to drive change.

Many strategies foster youth inclusion and benefits from the transformation to green and blue economies: supporting entrepreneurship training, using unconventional and nonformal training approaches to upskill youth, strengthening soft skills among youth, and securing aggregators to mobilize youth and connect them to markets, as Solar Freeze has done in Kenya. (*see page 6*)

A critical starting point will be to ensure that youth have the technical skills and knowledge to address climate action—in other words, climate confidence.

Youth are passionate about the integration of climate change and employment. Today's climate heroes are young people. We need to support them with skills and mentorship.



Photo Courtesy of Solar Freeze



Solar Freeze, Kenya

Solar Freeze was founded by Dymus Kisilu in Kenya to address the challenge of post-harvest loss in a sustainable way. Solar Freeze located mobile, solar refrigeration units in local communities that could be rented by small holder farmers for a small price. In addition, Solar Freeze helped connect farmers to markets they were previously unable to reach. As the company rolled out its products, they found youth were passionate about the new technology and noticed a gap in the market for solar technicians capable of repairing equipment.

Based on these insights, Solar Freeze started Each One, Teach One—a four-month training program to train solar technicians that can support not only Solar Freeze equipment repair, but also the growing number of solar technologies available in rural areas across Kenya. These technicians offer their services as independent contractors through a gig economy model and are available at community levels. This is just the beginning. As founder Dymus Kisilu noted, there are 450 million smallholder farmers across Africa faced with post-harvest loss, so they are just scratching the surface. To expand at scale, they need to partner with governments, funders, and other actors to do so.

Think Global, Act Local: The Case of Indonesia

How can we strengthen collaboration across ecosystem actors, translate policies to action, and connect youth to emergent opportunities to address climate change in Indonesia?

PANEL:



Abigail Hollingsworth
Senior Vice President,
Environmental, Social and
Governance, Bank of America
MODERATOR



Fajar Kelana
CEO, Banoo Indonesia



Sattiya Langkhapin
Chief of Party, Bank of
America Race and
Environment Project,
Indonesia



Tanah Sullivan
Head of Sustainability,
GoTo, Indonesia



Steve Sikra
VP and Head of the
Americas, Alliance to
End Plastic Waste

Overall, panelists concluded that governments need to support education institutions to better anticipate skill needs. The private sector needs to support continuous upskilling and reskilling of their workforce. To ensure the necessary pace of change, additional dialogue and collaboration are needed between government, the private sector, and education institutions.



Indonesian youth are aware of what is happening in climate change, and the talent is there. We just need to mobilize it!

Across Indonesia, actors are tackling the issues of climate change and youth employment in different ways:

- + EDC, with support from the Bank of America, is connecting indigenous youth with jobs in the green economy and providing the skills and supports necessary to help them succeed.
- + Banoo Indonesia, a young start-up company, has developed a technology to improve water quality for small-scale fishing. The use of technology is making traditional economic sectors more appealing for youth. Banoo employs 15 youth and is planning to hire more.
- + GoTo, the largest technology company in Indonesia, is building sustainable practices within the company itself and across their network of 15 million merchants (mostly small and medium-sized enterprises). They are playing a leading role in redefining value for customers, merchants, and the broader ecosystem.
- + Indonesia is a flagship country for the Alliance to End Plastic Waste (AEPW), a membership-driven network that seeks to end plastic waste. AEPW and its members are working with local actors to put in place a solid waste management system to support recycling and the circular economy. They are driven by a sense of common responsibility, with each member believing they can achieve more collectively.

The program offers three things youth need to be successful:

1. Security in the form of improved livelihoods
2. Dreams that connect them to something greater than themselves
3. Love, in the form of mentors who provide emotional and practical support and help them engage in blue and green activities in their communities



Photo Courtesy of Banoo Indonesia

Small-Group Discussions

Addressing Gaps and Opportunities for Collective Action



The event identified four key issues for discussion that are critical to accelerating youth employment in green and blue economies.

+ Linking Supply and Demand
+ Investment and Financing

+ Mobilizing the Talents of Youth
+ Moving from Policies to Implementation and Learning

The following pages are some of the key takeaways and actions from the dialogue.

Linking Supply and Demand

How can we better connect the skills of young people with the demand of green and blue industries across all skills levels?

There are a number of issues affecting skill training for youth for the green and blue economies. These include low capacity and lack of investment in education institutions, low foundational skills and soft skills among youth, the digital divide, and family influence in career decisions. Suggestions from focus group participants included the following:

Local Ecosystems

- + Job opportunities and ecosystems are highly localized. Labor market information, particularly at local levels, is key.
- + Policy is often perceived as the right entry point, yet implementation and funding do not always follow. There is a need to address this challenge from the bottom-up—with better partnerships and collaboration.

Skill Development

- + Learning is a continuum. There is a need to keep skills from becoming stale, including short-term training. Education systems need to become more adaptable, from early education to higher education.
- + Technology can democratize access to training and jobs. Youth need to learn how to learn.
- + Work-based learning, including short term, contract-based digital work can expose youth to work and help reduce the risk of hiring youth with limited experience.

Entrepreneurship

- + For self-employment, youth need to be integrated into value chains and national economic strategies.
- + Provision of more seed funding and innovation challenges are needed to unlock youth's innovation potential.

Learning

- + There is a need to link research and innovation with higher education.
- + There is also a need for continuous communications on achievements, accomplishments, and concrete actions to demonstrate what is possible.



EDC Action Recommendations

1. Support local labor market assessments to help determine the magnitude of employment opportunities in green and blue jobs and associated skills gaps.
2. Train youth in technical, transversal, digital, and STEM skills necessary for employment in emergent green and blue economies.
3. Support education institutions to engage with the private sector and government to anticipate skill needs and adapt skill training programs.
4. Support short-term upskilling and reskilling programs for youth, in collaboration with the private sector, and strengthen certification systems and green skills standards.
5. Document, disseminate, and promote successes in bridging the skills divide in green and blue economies.

Investment and Financing

What is needed to catalyze investment in green and blue industries that are inclusive of youth?

There are different investment models that are relevant to advance green and blue industries. Suggestions from focus group participants included the following:

Private Sector Models

- + GoTo in Indonesia is investing 1 percent of its share value in supporting start-ups, often youth-led, to fit within their supply chain and meet ESG requirements. Private investors in Indonesia are also raising capital (USD \$100 million) for climate investment.
- + There is also a need for mentor capital, not just finance. Chambers of commerce can play a unique role in connecting businesses with mentors.

Meeting ESG Requirements

- + There is growing interest from companies in carbon offset projects. However, this requires good data to address greenwashing concerns and enhance credibility.
- + GoTo did a baseline emissions audit and set targets toward decarbonization. As part of this effort, they established a joint venture to produce electric bikes and batteries.
- + USAID is funding projects to work on verification of data, including climate resilient farming. Verification of carbon offsets can also be a business opportunity for youth.
- + Chambers of commerce can have a role in helping companies understand what ESG is and how to improve sustainability practices, although enforcement is still an issue.
- + Defining and tracking blue and green jobs are essential. Many companies make pledges, but there is limited means of accountability.

Foreign Investment

- + Governments can provide incentives for climate change initiatives and to attract foreign investment.
- + There is a need for long-term horizons and patient capital in investment and financing.
- + Investment should be targeted strategically where emissions are the greatest.



EDC Action Recommendations

1. Support youth green entrepreneurs through training, access to inclusive finance, and incentives.
2. Support innovation challenges with private sector companies and investors to identify new ideas to address climate challenges in key sectors.
3. Support youth businesses to understand ESG considerations and integrate and measure sustainability practices within their enterprises.
4. Train youth for employment opportunities as sustainability managers, advisors, and assessors.

Mobilizing the Talents of Youth

How can we leverage the leadership talents of youth to ensure just and sustainable economic transformations and shifts in parental and community attitudes?

Youth Climate Leadership

- + We need to work with youth as experts and on equal terms. Strategies, road maps, and plans should be developed intergenerationally rather than by one for another, with each generation holding equal weight through the exchange of knowledge and expertise.
- + Youth are capable and are already driving change. Local youth are already climate smart heroes and are working on community-oriented culture change.

Redefining Climate Education

- + We must redefine what it means to be climate educated. Education is not the only measure of youth capacity. Academia has a big role to play, but there are inconsistencies in prioritizing how universities educate their students on climate knowledge, and more opportunities are needed for continuous learning, and upskilling and reskilling are required. We should also be learning from youth themselves about their needs and how those needs can be successfully addressed.
- + Education must be balanced with a recognition of the skills youth already have and use in their communities, both in classifying skills and matching these skills to jobs. A lack of formal education misrepresents youth's actual talent and capacity to drive change for themselves and their communities. Youth also have the capacity to quickly learn, especially as digital natives and with the surge in digital tools and technologies.

Incentives

- + Social media is critical in bringing young people together, allowing them to share their experiences and identify opportunities for partnership.
- + Youth participation requires proper incentives. Youth can't always be asked to volunteer their time.
- + More seed funding is needed from the private sector to support incubators, innovation competitions and challenges, and other ideas to enable youth to bring their own solutions to the fore.

Resilience Building

- + Social service providers have a key role in addressing the skills capacity and resource gaps of youth.



EDC Action Recommendations

1. Connect youth organizations and climate activists to dialogues at local, regional, national, and global levels.
2. Strengthen youth climate leadership through skill training and experiential learning opportunities in the public, private, research, and nonprofit sectors.
3. Provide platforms for youth to amplify their successes and encourage climate behavioral change among peers and within their communities.

Moving from Policies to Implementation and Learning

What is needed to shift from declarations to implementation, and how can we fill evidence and knowledge gaps?

There is significant potential for green and blue transitions within many sectors across Africa. The green energy boom with solar has generated significant private investment and helped create jobs and employment.

In Ghana, plastic and electronic waste management is a huge sector, and a large e-waste disposal system has been developed. Smart agricultural development is critical across the continent. The blue economy is important, not just in marine settings, but also in freshwater bodies such as the Lake Victoria Basin in Kenya. States are developing pro-blue and green policies to generate opportunities for partnership. In Jamaica's fisheries, for example, buy-in has been increasing. They are moving from wild fisheries to aquaculture.

Climate adaptation and mitigation strategies are being mainstreamed into other sectors. Focus group participants identified a number of actions to support these transitions underway:

Evidence-Based Decision-Making

+ Better data is needed for decision-making as well as evidence-based policies that involve the participation of youth and vulnerable groups. In some cases, higher education institutions are engaged in providing this data.

Policy Implementation

- + The challenge is that policy is slow moving and often lacks the resources for implementation.
- + Implementors should be pushed to incorporate climate change to ensure the implementation of climate change policies.
- + There is a need for better collaboration and coherence in policies and programming across regions.

Capacity

- + System actors require strengthened capacity to take localized, relevant, and resilient approaches.
- + There is a need to raise awareness; communicate the reasons for new climate change policies or regulations; ensure that fees and penalties are in place; and change behaviors.



EDC Action Recommendations

1. Develop a research and learning agenda to support policymakers. Identify and fill knowledge and evidence gaps to advance systems transformation.
2. Strengthen the capacity of government, the private sector, micro and small and medium-sized enterprises, educational institutions, and civil society organizations to integrate sustainability considerations and practices.

Closing Address



Manik Roy

Climate Change and Environment Policy.
Director, U.S. House of Representatives

Manik noted that there has never been a better time for a career in clean energy and climate change. **Commitment from lawmakers, public support for investments, and climate champions are ensuring new commitments are durable.** Government attention and investment has created business excitement. He noted that spending of this sort has its own momentum, particularly as people get jobs, communities reshape, and new businesses and jobs are created. More jobs also lead to political sustainability.

“Climate change is real. Seeing its impacts in the United States and around the world makes it hard to deny. It is becoming more obvious to the public that we need to address this challenge.”

As next steps, we have identified high-level actions to advance youth employment and self-employment in green and blue economies.

- 1. Keep youth energy and voices at the forefront of future conversations.**
This includes identifying youth climate leaders, engaging them in the Our World, Our Work Advisory Committee, providing a central role for youth in planning and leading subsequent dialogues, and strengthening youth leadership capacities in EDC’s youth and workforce development programs.
- 2. Integrate climate change into EDC’s youth and workforce development programs and expand this work across different countries**—in collaboration with government, the private sector, and other actors—to contribute to our goal of ensuring 1 million youth are employed in green and blue jobs.
- 3. Organize regional consultations that engage a cross-section of stakeholders** to identify strategies to advance youth employment in green and blue economies. The first regional convening will take place in Asia in the spring of 2023, with a second consultation planned for Africa in the fall.
- 4. Develop a research and learning agenda** to address knowledge and evidence gaps on challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned in supporting youth employment in green and blue economies.



ONE MILLION

Our goal is for 1 million young people (60% young women) between the ages of 18 to 30 to be employed or self-employed in decent, inclusive, sustainable green and blue jobs over the next 10 years.

EDC welcomes collaboration with youth, civil society organizations, funders, companies, employer associations, and universities to build momentum toward its goal of 1 million youth in green or blue jobs.



For further information on Our World, Our Work,
please visit www.edc.org/OWOW.

To discuss opportunities for collaboration, please contact Nancy Devine
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