

Acknowledgements



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Contents

Foreword	4
Glossary and definitions	6
1. Introduction	10
1.1 Background	9
1.2 Macro trends	15
2. The urban opportunity	18
3. Cities leading by example	26
Drive the creation of good, green jobs for all	26
Develop a green, inclusive, and diverse workforce	31
Invest in data and evidence	36
Partner with local, national, and international actors	39
Engage in mayoral advocacy and diplomacy	42
4. Recommendations	44
5. Conclusions	56
Annexes	60
Endnotes and references	66

Foreword



Mayor Sala,
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New research conducted in ten Global South cities across Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South-West Asia forecasts that over 8 million people could be forced to move to those cities, from within their own countries, as a result of worsening climate impacts by 2050. Yet this scale of movement is not inevitable, nor does it have to translate into suffering for those forced to move; climate change is the real crisis of our time, but how people move and adapt their lives – including through migration – does not necessarily need to be. What is clear is that urgent action is needed now, to reduce emissions and increase investment in adaptation, including resilient livelihoods.

As we work with partners to adapt to climate change, protect the most vulnerable, and welcome those who are forced to move to our cities, limited attention has been paid so far to how migration and climate policies can benefit from one another, ensuring a fairer and faster green transition for all. Climate investments can create jobs for both those at risk of forced migration – allowing them to adapt their livelihoods – and those already on the move; meanwhile, labour migration can benefit green and just transition efforts in destination cities, and support local climate goals.

Three years ago, we and our fellow mayors from the C40-Mayors Migration Council Task Force came together to raise awareness about the urban dimension of climate migration and accelerate global responses. As members of this group, we have been calling on national and international leaders to urgently ramp up the urban climate resilience investments needed – to avert forced movement wherever possible, but take people out of harm's way when adaptation is unviable, as well as to

ensure protection for those who are forced to move. Yet we know that inclusive action on climate and migration cannot be achieved without considering livelihoods, and without including everyone – both socially and economically – as agents of change in the green transition.

In 2022, C40 mayors – including members of this task force – joined together in calling for a common effort to create 50 million good, green jobs by 2030. These jobs, to be created through bold climate mitigation and adaptation action, must also be made accessible to those who need them most – including migrants and refugees. Two years later, mayors are already delivering on this commitment, with nearly 16 million good, green jobs existing across 74 C40 cities, and clear evidence that green and just recovery will create three times more jobs than the alternative, high-carbon scenarios.

Urban investment in good, green jobs can foster economic inclusion, avert forced displacement and migration in the first place, and help cities accommodate rapid urbanisation. Take the example of Africa: only 3 million formal jobs were created in 2020, against 12 million young people entering the workforce in the same year. Unemployment and poverty are key drivers of domestic and international migration, but lack of investment also notably fuels economic informality and particular social challenges, such as out-migration and “brain drain”, for young people.

To counter these cycles, the city of Accra has been working to recognise, include, and partner with the informal sector – which accounts for 80% of Ghana’s employment, and in which migrants are overrepresented – in its local green transition strategies. This has provided an opportunity to include rural newcomers from climate-change-affected areas of Ghana, improving working conditions and access to social protection for local workers and young people.

Migrants’ economic contribution can also be critically harnessed to achieve a green and just transition in places of transit and destination. In many countries, growing demand for green labour and skills is hampered by a shortage of workers; this is delaying the green transition and costing millions of dollars every day in lost economic outputs. For instance, a gap of 7 million green energy workers by 2030

could lead to a temperature rise of 0.1°C by delaying progress on the construction of renewable assets for clean energy. Workforce equity assessments carried out in Milan, among other C40 cities, show that new arrivals and migrant communities are already contributing to local green transition efforts in key sectors like construction. Building on this evidence base, the City of Milan is developing a public policy programme focused on creating good green jobs and reducing energy poverty, the Action Plan against Energy Poverty, improving energy efficiency and at the same time boosting employment of women, youth and migrants in the sector.

Despite these locally developed efforts to address global challenges, domestic and international migrants continue to face significant climate impacts, as well as barriers to accessing decent employment opportunities – including green jobs – across all regions. Here again, cities are leading the way. In 2022, amid an unprecedented surge in arrivals from the US’s southern border, Washington, DC established a new Office of Migrant Services. This aims

not only to support the unique needs of newcomers, but also to tackle some of their challenges – such as access to transportation, housing, and language courses – and calls on the federal government to reduce the timeframe and hindrances of applying for work permits.

As mayors delivering and thinking proactively about inclusive solutions, we must also not overlook the deeper inequalities of our cities and the global injustices that drive migration. We recognise that we have the potential to either redress or entrench these injustices and inequalities through our green transition policies. It is critical that efforts to economically include newcomers go hand in hand with measures to protect and support all workers – especially those at the frontline, who are more likely to be affected by the green transition – and that solutions to leverage labour migration do not

perpetuate dependencies, by eroding Global South countries’ human capital.

With 2024 likely to be the hottest year ever on record, no one benefits from delayed climate action. Humanity cannot afford more missed opportunities. Based on the learnings and insights from this piece of research, we call on our partners around the world – from central governments to international organisations and businesses – to take these urgent actions:

- Consult, partner with, and support cities and mayors – of both rural and urban municipalities – when there is opportunity for the development of integrated solutions across migration governance and climate policy. Focus on creating good, green jobs and resilient livelihoods for all, as a way to deliver a fairer and faster green transition.
- Drastically increase climate investments that contribute to creating good, green jobs in cities, ensuring inclusive and equitable access for those who need them most. This includes upfront finance for skills training, livelihood support and social protection and other “soft” and “wraparound” services that are normally overlooked in climate financing but are critical for the success of climate action. Harnessing opportunities for people to stay where they are – by reducing regional unemployment and poverty – while simultaneously fostering the economic inclusion of migrants within countries of transit and destination, is critical to averting, minimising, and addressing climate change.
- Ramp up urban workforce development programmes in cities, ensuring that a growing demand for green labour is met with a qualified, inclusive and diverse workforce. These efforts should support the training, upskilling, and reskilling of marginalised groups – particularly migrant workers – along with women, young people, and frontline workers.

Climate change is the crisis of our lifetime, but if we deliver on sustainable solutions for frontline communities, and decent, green livelihoods for all, it does not need to be. No one benefits from delayed action on climate.

Glossary and definitions

- **Asylum seeker:** People who flee their home country to seek sanctuary in another country. Upon arrival, they must officially apply for asylum in the host country; once granted, this affords them formal recognition as a refugee, along with legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that their fear of persecution in their home country is well-founded in order to be granted refugee status ([UNHCR](#)).
- **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
- **Building retrofit:** Describes the alteration of an existing building to improve its energy efficiency or reduce its energy demand, through the installation of solar panels, heat pumps, and other measures.
- **Climate migration:** Refers to the movement of people who – predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive alterations in the environment due to climate change – are obliged, or choose, to leave their habitual place of residence. This may either be a temporary or a permanent move, and either within a state or across an international border ([IOM](#)).
- **Climate resiliency:** The capacity of a community, business, or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover (adapt, reorganise, and evolve) from a disruption related to climate change ([C40, 2023](#)).
- **Decent work/employment:** Opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, providing safe and stable working conditions, social protections, and freedom of association and social dialogue, among other measures to ensure wellbeing and livelihood ([ILO](#)).
- **Demand-side incentives:** Incentives that aim to create favourable conditions that encourage the participation or integration of vulnerable or migrant groups, which could include financial assistance, job opportunities, education, or access to other services.
- **Economic inclusion:** The process of ensuring that all people have equal opportunities to participate in economic activities, regardless of their circumstances. This can include policies that increase access to jobs, education, and financial services for marginalised groups.
- **Equity:** Refers to fairness and justice. It is distinct from *equality*, which means “providing the same to all”. In contrast, *equity* is about recognising that we do not all start from the same place – and that we must therefore acknowledge and make adjustments to these imbalances. The process of achieving equity is ongoing, requiring us to identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures ([C40, 2023](#)).
- **Frontline communities:** People who experience the first, and often the worst, effects of climate change. Due to existing and historical racial, social, environmental, and economic inequities, they typically have limited resources for adaptation.
- **Frontline workers:** Individuals who are critical in maintaining essential services, such as health care, emergency services, food supply, and public safety, particularly for migrant communities. They play a vital role in the daily lives of many individuals and families by serving as a link between these communities and host countries ([IOM](#)).
- **Good, green jobs:** There is no universal definition of a “green” job. For C40 good, green jobs include those that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG),

protect nature, and improve wellbeing, while providing fair wages, safe working conditions, and stable employment. For more information, see [here](#).

- **Informality:** Refers to individuals, households, activities, or firms in terms of their relationship to the *informal economy*, typically with respect to production, employment, consumption, housing, land, or other services ([WRI, 2018](#)). The informal economy is the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state. The concept originally applied to self-employment in small, unregistered enterprises, but has expanded to include waged employment in unprotected jobs ([WIEGO](#)).

- **Internally displaced persons (IDPs):** Someone who has been forced to flee their home due to internal strife, natural disaster, and so on, but never crosses an international border. These individuals seek safety anywhere they can find it – in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, and the outdoors. IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government ([UNHCR](#)).
- **Intersectionality:** How multiple aspects of a group or individual (e.g. race, gender, age, income) combine, overlap and *intersect* – and therefore shape which people will be impacted by a change in policy, and how they will be affected by the change ([C40, 2023](#)).



- **Just transition:** The economic and societal process needed to transform economies to be low carbon, resource efficient, socially inclusive, and equitable. It involves maximising the social and economic opportunities of climate action, while minimising and carefully managing any challenges – including through effective social dialogue among all groups impacted, and respect for fundamental labour principles and rights ([ILO, 2024](#)). For more information on how to achieve a just transition in cities, see C40's toolkit for city leaders, *Achieving the Just Transition* ([C40, 2023](#))
- **Labour market policies, including active and passive policies:** Government programmes that intervene in the labour market to improve the job-matching process and the
- market's overall functionality. Active labour market policies typically help people who are unemployed or inactive to find work, and support the underemployed as well as employees looking for better jobs. Passive labour market policies fund unemployment benefits and early retirement ([ILO, 2023](#)).
- **Labour mobility:** The movement of people for the purpose of employment, between sectors and occupations, but also between countries and cities (referred to as *labour migration*) ([IOM, 2024](#)).
- **Migrant:** Typically refers to the legal and immigration status of a person who changes their place of usual residence – whether within a country or across an international



- border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. Categories include expatriates, documented or undocumented migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers ([IOM, 2019](#)).
- **Push factors:** Describe the reasons that individuals might emigrate from their homes, such as poverty, lack of social mobility, violence, or persecution.
- **Redeployment:** The process of moving an employee from one role to another within the same company.
- **Refugee:** Someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group ([UNHCR](#)).
- **Remittances:** Private funds, usually understood as money or goods that migrants send back to families and friends in origin countries, and are often the most direct and well-known link between migration and development ([Migration Data Portal, 2024](#)).
- **Reskilling:** Programmes provided by governments, non-governmental organisations, and/or industry bodies, working with employees who are already established within the workforce to equip them with new skills – typically to enhance their hireability in a new economy. Note that *many organised labour entities and workers fear that reskilling will not lead to jobs with the same pay and benefits as those being replaced*. See also: **upskilling** ([C40, 2023](#)).
- **Social inclusion:** The process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity ([World Bank](#)).
- **Soft and formal powers:** Local governments possess a combination of *formal* powers (such as legislative or fiscal authority) and *soft* powers (such as convening and partnership building). Used in isolation or combined, these can be highly effective in institutionalising solutions, both for a green and just transition and for migrants' economic inclusion ([C40, 2022](#)).
- **Underemployment:** A measure of the total number of people in an economy who are unwillingly working in low-skill and low-paying jobs or only part-time because they cannot get full-time jobs that properly utilise their skills and experience.
- **Upskilling:** Training programmes provided by governments, non-governmental organisations, and/or industry bodies, designed to help employees update their skills in their existing vocations or professions and ensure their ability to compete in a changing economy. Many upskilling programmes also focus on workers whose positions are in jeopardy of being phased out due to automation and technology. See also: **reskilling** ([C40, 2023](#)).
- **Urban heat island effect:** Urbanised areas experience higher temperatures than outlying rural areas due to how well infrastructure (such as buildings, roads, etc.) absorb and re-emit the sun's heat more than natural landscapes.
- **Workforce development:** The definition of *workforce development* varies, depending on perspective: governments, schools, and businesses all use this term to mean something slightly different. The common denominator is that workforce development improves workers' skills to facilitate long-term success. It includes activities such as job training, reskilling, and inter-personnel and management skills training with the aim of developing a highly skilled workforce in the long term. **Reskilling**, **upskilling**, and **redeployment** are all part of workforce development, but have shorter-term objectives ([C40, 2023](#)).



1. Introduction

Credit: C40

1.1 Background

By 2050, up to 216 million people are expected to be internally displaced by adverse climatic events – and most of these journeys will lead into cities, compounding urbanisation trends.¹ This is driven partly by the threat to people's livelihoods, with 800 million jobs globally – nearly one quarter of the world's workforce – being at risk from the combined effects of climate change and unplanned green transitions, particularly in Africa and Asia.²

Climate change as a driver of migration is increasingly being researched and documented. Yet limited attention has been paid so far to how people on the move, and labour migration in particular, can positively contribute to climate action – and how migration and green transition policies can complement one another, benefiting people, the planet, and the economy.

The green transition is already bringing opportunities and changes in the world of work – the emergence of new industries and occupations, the transformation of existing jobs into greener ones, and the phase-out of others that are more carbon intensive, with socially just solutions for communities they support. Global forecasts for green employment growth range from 18 million to 65 million net new jobs by 2030.³ These opportunities are unevenly distributed across geographies and skill sets, but particularly concentrated in urban areas.

Meanwhile, under-investment in climate action and a lack of related institutional capacity, especially in the Global South, is stunting growth and preventing the development of local, resilient livelihoods. Countries and cities with higher levels of climate action are expected to see an increase in the number of jobs available and experience structural changes in the labour market, such as shortages of workers and skills.

Conversely, countries with lower levels of climate investments are expected to see limited transformation in the world of work, while facing persisting climate externalities – including climate-driven displacement and job losses.⁴

Labour mobility is already being shaped by climate change, and climate action and a successful green transition depend on the local availability of skills and on workforce mobility.⁵ Across cities and countries, people on the move already play a vital yet under-recognised role in delivering a transition to a net-zero economy.

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Migrants already make up a significant proportion of the urban workforce in key greening sectors, such as transport, manufacturing, construction, and services.⁶ This, in turn, is being reflected in increased interest in skilled migration policies in destination countries. It also generates demand for local, occupation-specific programmes⁷ – including in the informal sector, which represents 85% of the workforce in some Global South cities.⁸ At the same time, there is also broad recognition that efforts to economically include newcomers must go hand in hand with measures to protect and support all workers – especially those at the frontline, who are more likely to be affected by the green transition.

All these trends are critical for cities and urban areas, where most migrants and refugees live and work, and where most good, green job creation needs to occur to meet climate targets. As this policy brief shows, mayors are leading the way in the development of innovative solutions, both working in tandem with national counterparts and leveraging city-to-city cooperation.

Brazil



In **Brazil**, there is a significant and growing green employment sector highly concentrated in southern cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (C40 Cities, [local media reports](#), and [UNHCR](#)).

These sectors are expected to engage a high proportion of internal and external migrants – particularly in those dominated by informal employment – but there is limited available data at a local, granular level. Many migrants and refugees from neighbouring Venezuela are concentrated in the [northern Amazonian regions](#), which are poorer and closer to areas of deforestation, and not yet able to create the same opportunities as the larger cities in the south. More attention is needed to directly and indirectly enable both domestic and foreign-born migrants and refugees to access the rapidly emerging green economy in major urban centres. This is an issue that has been taken up by the UNHCR and other service providers [since 2020](#).

USA



Similar trends are observed in the **USA**, where foreign, non-US-born workers are over-represented in sectors that will be essential for the [green transition](#) – including

natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations – and in production, transportation, and material-moving occupations. Many of these workers are naturalised citizens of the US, especially in business and high-skilled, science-related sectors. Clustering is seen in most industries, with non-US-born workers typically occupying lower-skilled and/or lower-paid [positions](#). Foreign-born green job workers are also twice as likely to be self-employed compared to US-born workers in key sectors, but have not formalised the structure for their business, suggesting to researchers that their self-employment was partly linked to [limited options for employment](#) in established firms. Research [shows](#) increasing demand for these positions – notably in the trades and production, but also in the [health and care sector](#) – in large centres of urban activity.



Credit: Meg Hawgood Sullivan

Drawing from existing literature, key informant interviews, and consultations with C40 member cities, this policy brief seeks to foster integration between green transition efforts and migration and labour market policies, with a local perspective on green job creation and economic inclusion. Building on the vision of the C40-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors' [Action Agenda on Climate and Migration](#),

the document also contributes to a broader narrative and policy shift on climate migration – looking at migrants not only as victims of climate impacts or beneficiaries of aid, but as active agents of change in a green and just transition. Although climate change is a crisis, the way in which people adapt – including through human and labour mobility – does not need to be.

In this new emerging space for policy coherence, the brief is structured as follows:

Section 1 the introduction, including the current Background section – establishes a conceptual understanding of the relationship between climate change, human mobility, and the green and just transition. Focusing on the entire migration spectrum, the section also takes stock of the key barriers that migrants face to accessing decent employment, including good, green jobs.

Section 2 Zooming in on the urban dimension, Section 2 provides evidence and arguments for why a local perspective is needed on these topics, and demonstrates why cities are simultaneously on the frontline of challenges and at the forefront of solutions.

Section 3 Drawing from these arguments, Section 3 identifies areas of opportunity where cities and mayors can lead by action, showcasing existing best practices and highlighting opportunities for replicability and scalability.

Section 4 outlines recommendations for national governments, intergovernmental organisations, businesses, and private donors. Suggestions focus on ways to better support, consult, and partner with cities, to deliver faster, bolder, and more inclusive solutions that are good for the planet, good for the people, and good for the economy.

1.2 Macro trends

It is increasingly recognised that climate change drives and shapes human mobility, and that bolder action is needed across the spectrum of mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, to avert human displacement, take people out of harm's way, and protect those who are forced to move. Yet these discussions have, to date, focused mainly on

the adverse effects of climate change on human mobility, or how the latter can present a viable adaptation strategy. Missing from the debate so far is a focus on the positive contribution that labour migration can have in a green transition,^{vi} or how climate action can foster economic inclusion, across and within countries of origin, transit, and destination.

This section identifies some of the main trends at the intersection between labour migration

and a green and just transition at the global level, and how these translate locally, impacting cities and frontline communities. Targeted action is needed for a green and just transition that leaves no one behind; here, at the nexus of the climate and the migration space, is a two-fold opportunity:

Investments in climate action that creates good, green jobs with decent labour standards can positively influence human mobility

patterns – both by tackling the economic drivers of migration and by fostering the economic inclusion of people on the move, in cities of origin, transit, and destination.

Labour migration and the positive contribution of migrants to the economy can be positively leveraged to address labour market needs in countries of transit and destination, including in sectors with shortages of green labour and skills.



Credit: sara hylton / Climate Visuals Countdown

Macro trends


Unemployment, underemployment, and poverty continue to be major push factors for cross-border migration.

In lower-income countries, the number of formal jobs created every year is only a fraction of the millions of young people reaching working age over the same period. Not only does this contribute to unemployment and poverty – two of the main root causes of migration globally – but it also fuels economic informality and a “brain drain” of higher- and mid-skilled workers. In Africa alone, 12 million young people entered the labour force in 2020, against a total of 3 million formal jobs created over the same year. Africa is also among the world’s fastest-urbanising regions, with over 80% of its employment characterised as informal. The region’s working-age population will grow by 796 million in the next three decades.^{vii} City-focused climate investments will be critical to accommodate urban growth, build urban resilience, and ensure decent employment for both rural migrants and vulnerable young people.


Climate change is rapidly emerging as one of the main drivers of human mobility, especially internally and towards cities.

In 2023, there were more than 75 million internally displaced people worldwide. Of these displacements, 7.7 million were the result of natural disasters, which accounted for 56% of new internal displacement that year.^{viii} Downscaling research carried out by C40, the Mayors Migration Council, and the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative also suggests that most of these internal movements will inevitably lead to cities, compounding existing urbanisation processes and rapid demographic growth.^{ix}


Development- and climate-finance gaps in lower-income countries perpetuate climatic and economic root causes of migration, leaving cities at the forefront of responses.

With only six years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations has warned that urgent steps are needed to close the development-financing gap – now estimated at US\$ 4.2 trillion annually.^x This would also include ramping up climate finance flows towards Global South countries, for and by which only 2% of global climate finance is currently committed.^{xi} The adaptation-finance gap – currently estimated to be between US\$ 194 billion and US\$ 366 billion per year^{xii} – is particularly critical for Global South cities, where climate impacts are more severe and coping capacities are lower. In these cities, adaptation investments have the potential to create employment, while building resilience and tackling climate drivers of migration.

Macro trends


In middle- and higher-income countries, growing – yet still insufficient – climate finance is increasing the demand for green labour, especially in larger urban economic hubs.

Global climate finance reached US\$ 1.3 trillion on annual average in 2021/2022 – nearly doubling from 2019/2020 – yet cities still face significant barriers in accessing these resources. Most of this growth was associated with mitigation-related investments, and remains geographically concentrated in a handful of countries.^{xiii} This in turn shapes the expected scale of good, green job creation. Although part of these skills gaps can be filled by new entrants in the workforce and by prioritising the reskilling of existing workers, others are likely to remain unfilled, especially in countries with aging demographics.


Labour and skills shortages are already delaying the green transition, fuelling inflation, and costing businesses in lost economic output.^{xiv}

Growing levels of climate investment in middle- and higher-income countries – which are disproportionately responsible for the causes of climate change – are already being met with labour and skills shortages in key occupations for the green transition, especially in major urban areas. In the US, an estimated 1 million electricians will be required in the coming decades, with current training programmes unable to replace workers leaving the sector.^{xv} Overall, the Boston Consulting Group estimates the skills gap in the green economy will rise to 7 million by 2030.^{xvi} Estimates of the number of workers in need of training also vary significantly,⁴ but there is growing recognition that workforce development is a key challenge for a successful green transition, especially in cities. According to the International Organization of Employers, no country experiencing labour shortages in green sectors has enough domestic talent and skills to sustain the right level of climate action. This suggests that increased labour mobility will be required to fill these gaps.^{xvii}


The economic benefits of migration are increasingly documented, yet migrants continue to face barriers⁵ to accessing decent employment – including good, green jobs.

In receiving countries, migrant workers are already positively contributing to an emerging green economy, often meeting labour shortages and playing a major part in maintaining the productivity of critical sectors.^{xviii} However, individual and institutional barriers continue hindering migrants’ meaningful and equitable participation in the labour market. These barriers seem consistent across low- and high-carbon sectors (see Annex 1). In sending countries, remittances – US\$ 860 billion in 2023^{xix xx} – are the primary source of external finance, exceeding foreign direct investment and international aid combined. This constitutes an important potential resource for development and climate adaptation.⁶

2. The urban opportunity



Cities can be key actors for an effective green and just transition in the context of climate migration.

From a spatial and demographic standpoint, urban areas host a disproportionate share of the global population – including migrants and refugees – as well as of economic activities, assets, employment, and services.

From a public policy standpoint, although local governments are not legally mandated to set national migration governance or national green transition strategies, they have critical powers – across all policy areas – to deliver high-impact and innovative solutions. Cities are leading the way in achieving these outcomes, leaving no one behind and ensuring a fairer and faster transition for all.

It is in cities that the fight against climate change will be won or lost. With 70% of global primary energy consumption and 60% of global greenhouse gas emissions concentrated in urban areas,^{xxi} phasing out fossil fuels and accelerating adaptation action in cities is essential to limiting global heating to 1.5°C and building resilience. With 2023 being again the warmest year on record, there is a clear urgency to help cities fulfil their leadership potential in climate action, while creating decent job opportunities that are good for the environment, good for the people, and good for the economy.

Cities are where most of the world's population live and work, and also the main destination for migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons globally. Of the global population, 56% currently live in urban areas, where seven out of ten people will be located by 2050. Most urban demographic growth in the next two decades is forecasted to happen in Africa and Asia, fuelled by fast-paced rural-urban migration and compounded by worsening climate impacts. However, if properly managed and planned for, urbanisation can also contribute to thriving economies in cities, driving growth and raising returns on skills investments.^{xxii}

Cities are major economic and employment hubs for both local residents and migrants. With 80% of global gross domestic product (GDP) being produced in urban areas, cities are responsible for most economic growth, innovation, and job creation in almost every country. Moreover, some of the economic sectors wherein a higher share of good, green jobs exist today – and where the potential for future green job creation is higher – are also spatially concentrated in urban settings. Cities therefore tend to have a higher, and increasing, share of green jobs – the demand for which is growing comparatively faster than that in the labour market overall.⁷

Climate impacts are driving migration towards megacities, especially in the Global South, and compounding existing urbanisation trends.

Current and future climate displacement is creating an additional demand on urban services, infrastructure, and labour markets that are often already stretched by contingent climate events. According to C40 analysis on future climate migration projections (2030-2040-2050), climate change will emerge as a major driver of domestic migration across Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Brazil, and Colombia – with larger urban areas within these respective countries being the main destinations for migrants.

Box 1: Leading mayors are delivering against their good green jobs commitments

C40 analysis estimates that nearly [16 million jobs](#) already support the transition to a green economy across 74 cities in five regions, including direct and indirect green jobs. Together with additional [C40 analysis](#) and external sources, this gives a clear indication that green investments are boosting demand for materials and inputs, and increasing jobs in supplier industries.

The analysis also shows that green jobs are high in sectors strongly influenced by local climate policies – for example, waste, transport, electricity generation, and the construction and buildings sectors provide more than 25% of total green jobs.

However, it also clearly indicates that sectors with the greatest potential for transformation are unequally distributed across population groups – highlighting that climate action presents an unprecedented opportunity for a more inclusive economy.

Note

Graph includes data for 74 cities, date ranging from 2019–2022. The chart represents how green jobs are distributed across the sectors of the economy studied (for example, 16.4% of the total green jobs in these cities come from the construction sector). For visibility purposes, “Others” includes all other employment sectors (from the ISIC-4 classification).

Source: Publicly available data (2019–2022) compiled by Circle Economy for C40 Cities.

Figure 1

Distribution of green jobs across sectors of the economy

Construction: 16.4%

Transportation and storage: 16.2%

Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles: 15.6%

Manufacturing: 7.9%

Agriculture, forestry and fishing: 5%

Professional, scientific and technical activities: 4.9%

Administrative and support service activities: 4%

Other service activities: 3.8%

Education: 3.7%

Water supply; sewerage, waste management: 3.6%

Public administration, compulsory social security: 3.4%

Financial and insurance activities: 3.3%

Human health and social work activities: 3.2%

Accommodation and food service activities: 3%

Information and communication: 2.3%

Electricity, steam and air conditioning supply 1.1%

Others: 2.8%



Box 2: Projected rural-urban migration and implications on city workforces

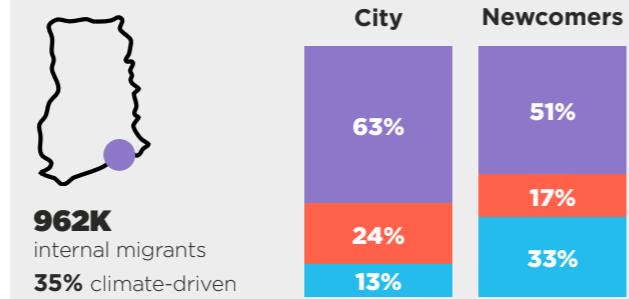
Leveraging new gravity modelling to supplement this research, C40 and partners have analysed urbanisation, climate impacts and emissions scenarios for ten global south cities. These are **projected to receive up to 18.5 million internal migrants by 2050**, on top of natural demographic growth. Based on the study, **between 24%-66% of total expected internal displacement** towards these cities will be driven by climate change, if emissions surpass the levels set by the Paris Agreement.

This first-of-its-kind analysis also examines the future workforce composition of these cities and compares how these will relate to the skills profile of working-age internal migrants moving into these urban centres by 2050. Newcomers are expected to have a higher prevalence of primary sector skills than the projected urban population, bringing both challenges and opportunities for local governments to address:

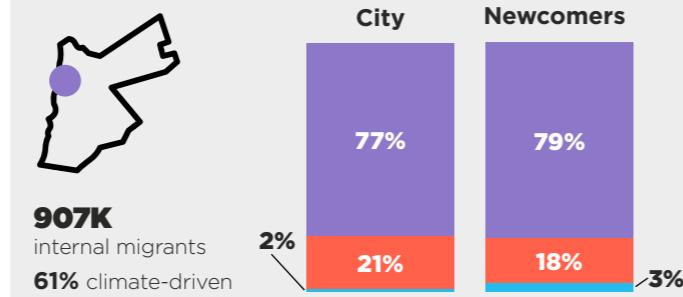
- On the one hand newcomers' skills in primary sector activities offer an enormous opportunity for cities to grow an urban bioeconomy, including reforestation programmes for successful adaptation, urban agriculture and nature-based solutions that many of the cities' studied are already ramping up, as part of their climate action plans.
- On the other hand, new arrivals and existing residents are both likely to experience the need for upskilling and training to access a range of employment and livelihood opportunities as a result of green and digital transitions, urging significant investments and action in urban-specific workforce development programmes for all.



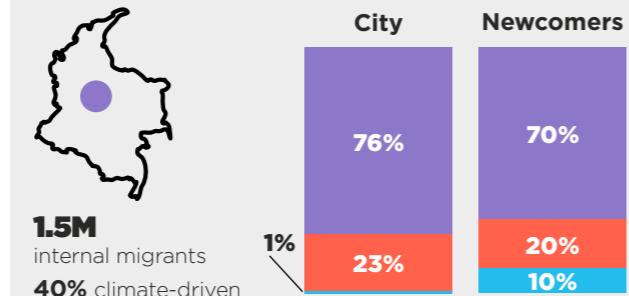
Accra, Ghana



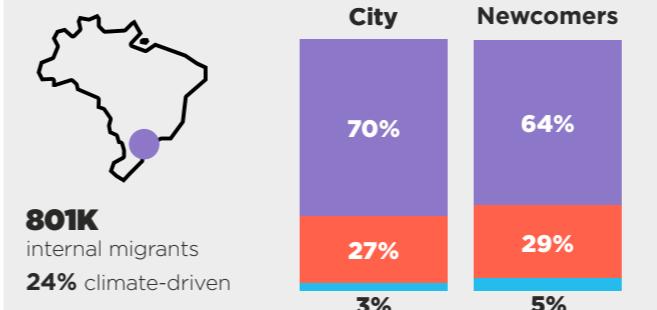
Amman, Jordan



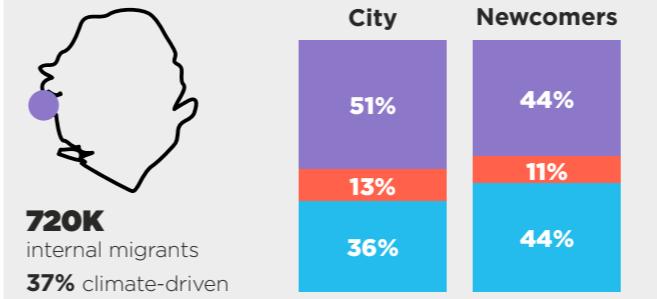
Bogotá, Colombia



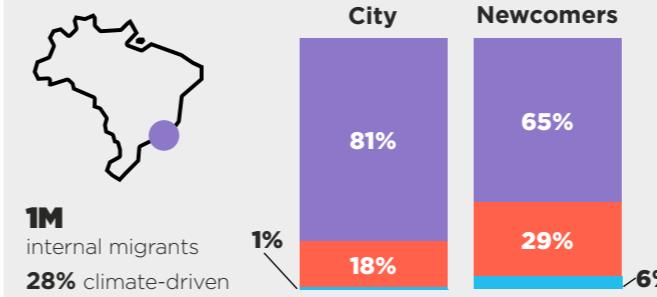
Curitiba, Brazil



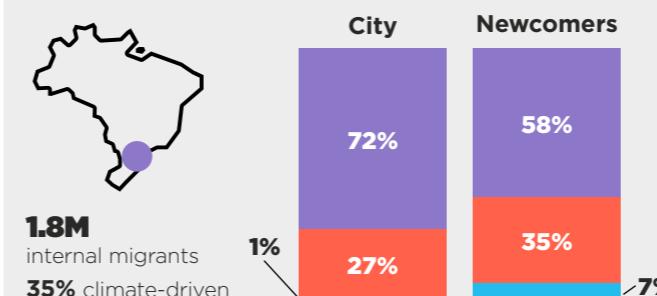
Freetown, Sierra Leone



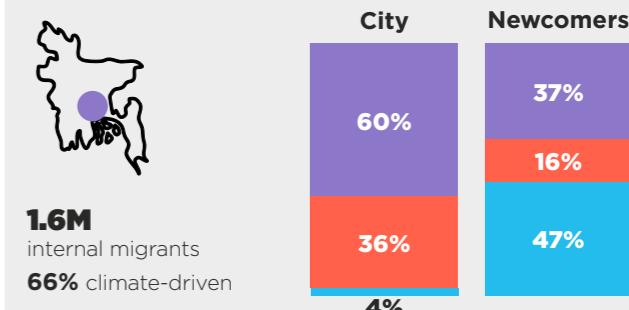
Rio, Brazil



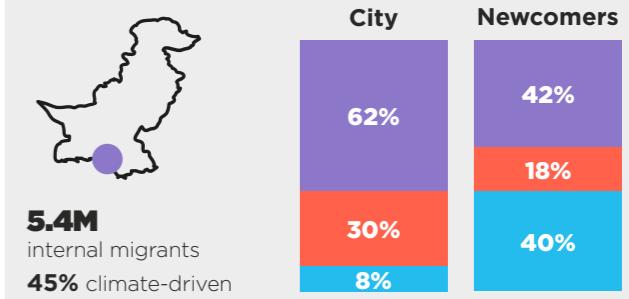
São Paulo, Brazil



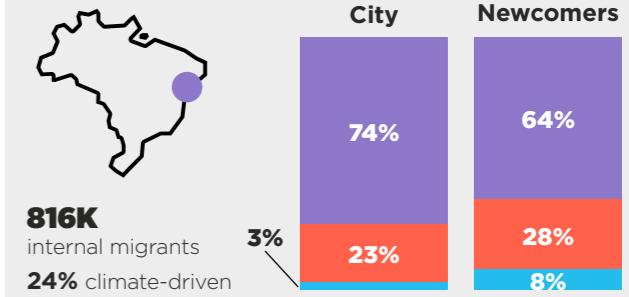
Dhaka North, Bangladesh



Karachi, Pakistan



Salvador, Brazil



For each of the ten cities studied, the following graphics showcase, by 2050: a) the total number of internal migrants projected to move into each city; b) the estimated share of those moving as a result of climate impacts, c) the projected labour profile of internal migrants of working age per economic sector, and d) the projected workforce composition of each city studied. For more detailed information about the methodology used, please refer to [New Urban Landscapes: Climate Migration Projections in Cities \(2024\)](#).

Box 3: Cities, as major destinations for all migratory movements, are aware and acting



Cities consulted by C40

Sixteen cities across five regions were consulted by C40 and partners, using a combination of structured surveys, group discussions, and consultations with city staff from different municipal departments (see map above for a full picture of cities involved).

Key findings include:

- All cities identified themselves as main destinations for migrants and refugees. Global South cities stated they experience rural/domestic inflow of migrants, often coupled with high economic informality and unemployment rates. The majority of Global North cities reported international and asylum/refugee inflow, as well as lower levels of unemployment.
- Finance, governance, and data remain key issues for the majority of cities across all regions, in both climate and migration policy spheres. Challenges include the need to ring fence a higher share of municipal budgets; securing higher budgetary allocations from national governments; and accessing better and more disaggregated data to inform local responses.
- Challenges and opportunities significantly differ across regions – 88% of Global North cities identified workforce development as a key priority, sometimes in relation to skills and labour shortages in green sectors; while four out of seven Global South cities put major emphasis on the role of the informal sector and the need to engage informal workers – and migrants among them – in green transition efforts.
- Despite limited mandates and resources, cities are already taking action on the priority areas identified. This includes workforce development efforts targeted to historically disadvantaged communities, including migrants and refugees; engagement of informal sector workers, with a focus on livelihood opportunities and better social protection; and national and international advocacy, focused on removing barriers to newcomers accessing decent work and achieving self-reliance.

To conclude, **local governments hold critical knowledge of both labour market contexts and local patterns of social exclusion.** This means they are uniquely placed to engage communities that are historically excluded from dialogue and decision-making.

Although the green transition is a global trend, its labour market implications and distributional effects are inherently local.^{xxiii} As the closest level of the public administration to residents and front-line communities, local governments are critically positioned to deliver inclusive solutions: facilitating dialogue between relevant labour market actors – private sector, unions, workers, and so on – and ensuring that challenges posed by the green transition do not exacerbate social divides, but rather present equal opportunities for the most vulnerable, including migrants and refugees.

The next section of this policy brief details how cities and mayors can do just this, through a combination of formal and soft powers, and working in coordination with national governments.



3. Cities leading by example

Credit: ILO

3. Cities leading by example

Despite growing recognition of climate migration as an urgent issue of global concern, policy responses remain siloed and insufficient. Cities are uniquely placed to address these challenges and are already showing leadership to create policy coherence among the spheres of migration, climate action, green jobs, and social protection.

When it comes to climate action that is just and equitable, cities are already demonstrating leadership, by cutting down GHG emissions faster than their national counterparts,^{xxiv} and accelerating critical adaptation solutions needed to save lives. COP28 marked historical recognition of the critical role of cities and subnational actors in fighting climate change, with over 70 national governments signing the CHAMP initiative, committing to enhance cooperation between national and subnational governments in planning, financing, implementing, and monitoring climate strategies to maximise climate actions.⁸

In terms of migration responses, local governments have an equally positive track record of welcoming

and including people on the move, regardless of their legal status. In many cases, this exemplary approach charts the path for national and intergovernmental actors to follow. Moreover, since social and economic inequalities are more pronounced in urban contexts, mayors have a first-hand understanding of the social benefits of economic inclusion

Cities and mayors are also leading the way by tackling these issues jointly.

– and also the costs of exclusion. The critical role of local governments in delivering the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees is increasingly recognised and corroborated by growing levels of city-led action, including on the economic inclusion of people on the move, via green and just transition policies.^{xxv}

As evidenced by the work of the C40-Mayors Migration Council's Task Force,⁹ cities and mayors are also leading the way by tackling these issues jointly – particularly by investing in urban resilience, enhancing urban inclusion, and fostering urban transformation.

Whether at the point of origin, on the transit route, or at the destination of human mobility patterns, cities can:

Drive the creation of good, green jobs for all, using climate investments to enhance the inclusion of people on the move, young people at risk of moving, and other vulnerable residents, while meeting cities' climate action targets.

Develop a green, inclusive, and diverse workforce, harnessing migrants' economic contribution, as part of wider strategies of skills building for all urban populations.

Cities can also use their formal and soft powers to deliver **inclusive actions on three cross-cutting areas relevant to this agenda**, notably by:

Investing in data and evidence that informs local plans, forecasts future labour market needs, and makes the case for stronger national and international support, including by leveraging city-to-city cooperation or strengthened coordination with the national government.

Developing local, national, and international partnerships to help meet green and just transition goals, leaving no one behind.

Engaging in mayoral diplomacy and advocacy, to influence national and global finance and policy outcomes in favour of local governments and frontline communities.



Drive the creation of good, green jobs for all

Key findings

- Locally led green transition efforts are already resulting in good, green jobs in cities, and there is great potential for further growth. In the Global South, the growth of these job opportunities can help both to accommodate fast-paced urbanisation and to tackle economic drivers of migration.
- Tailored humanitarian and development funding designed to meet city climate goals is critical to support cities – in both sending and receiving countries – to create green jobs and livelihood opportunities, for both newcomers and

Urban investments in climate actions that generate good, green jobs – either in the form of employment, self-employment, or other livelihood-generating activities – offer critical opportunities for the economic inclusion of people on the move, across the whole migration spectrum.

In the Global South, inclusive climate action that creates good, green jobs through critical mitigation and adaptation activities presents an unmatched opportunity to **tackle key economic drivers of migration**. This in turn will contribute to averting brain drain and preserving Global South countries' human capital, including in the context of fast-paced urbanisation. For example:

► **Freetown (Sierra Leone)** has leveraged international funding to promote **good, green jobs and green entrepreneurship opportunities for rural migrants and**

local residents. This will, in turn, unlock broader social, economic, and environmental co-benefits for host communities, and increase their resilience to future climate impacts. Critically, international support needs to be tailored to meet a city's joint climate and economic inclusion goals, not one or the other.

- By aligning their good, green job creation strategies with active labour market and social inclusion policies, cities can leverage local green transition efforts to also foster the economic reintegration of migrant returnees. Some cities may require support to establish the policy, infrastructure, or investment needed for this action.

vulnerable young people. Amid unabated rural-urban migration, increasingly driven by climate change, Freetown has used different sources of international funding to create [40 entrepreneurial teams](#) of waste collectors, who critically contribute to cleaning streets and public spaces. Not only has the programme created new green jobs for local young people and rural migrants to the city, but it has also led to the closure of informal dumpsites, improving livelihoods and public health in Freetown's informal settlements. C40 research projects that Freetown will receive up to 270,000 climate migrants – nearly half of the country's total – by 2050, underscoring the importance of locally led initiatives that address climate and migration holistically.

► Similarly, through resources from the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF), **Monrovia (Liberia)** provided employment as well as vocational training

and entrepreneurship programmes to internally displaced young people and migrant women. Employment opportunities included the implementation of climate adaptation measures and nature-based solutions, whereby young people planted over 20,000 [mangrove and coconut trees](#) to protect vulnerable coastline from soil erosion and storm surge and help mitigate the urban heat island effect.

In countries of transit and destination for international migrants and refugees, livelihood-generating policies can critically **sustain the economic stability of both newcomers and local urban residents**, while also producing social, economic, and environmental co-benefits for host communities at large. Key informant interviews indicate that although this does take place in cities, current donor and international support may not always be designed to meet both climate and economic inclusion goals. Ensuring that future support is designed with both policy areas in mind would offer cities a unique opportunity to propose, demonstrate, and scale integrated solutions. For example:

► **Nairobi (Kenya)** is fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for migrants, refugees, and IDPs through its [CHOICE Innovation Hub](#). Startups established and supported through the City of CHOICE range from a woman-owned farm-to-table restaurant to a tree nursery employing 15 migrants and refugees. Through these services, Nairobi is not only connecting young migrants and refugees with income-generating opportunities, but also fostering environmentally conscious efforts in a range of sectors.

► **Amman (Jordan)** has used funding by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to promote green infrastructure rehabilitation through [cash-for-work programmes](#). The

scheme employs disadvantaged Jordanians and refugees to construct hiking trails and picnic areas, thereby conserving biodiversity, furthering adaptation to climate change, and securing migrant wellbeing.

Other cities have also been working to mainstream the economic inclusion of newcomers within multi-sectoral municipal plans. For example:

► **São Paulo (Brazil)** developed a multi-sectoral plan for immigrants' inclusion in the local economy. The city's [Municipal Plan of Policies for Immigrants](#) includes plans to promote decent work, employment- and income-generation schemes, and professional training. The strategic goal is to strengthen immigrants' rights to decent work by ensuring they receive equal treatment and opportunities in comparison to other workers. This includes integrating the immigrant population into the formal job market, fostering entrepreneurship, the promotion of awareness-raising campaigns on labour exploitation, and the expansion of street vendors'/entrepreneur immigrants' access to public spaces.

► In **Canada, Toronto's** Newcomer Strategy is another example of a comprehensive plan that focuses on the integration of and support for newcomers, including immigrants and refugees. The strategy includes various initiatives aimed at improving access to services, enhancing social inclusion, providing pathways to residency, and supporting [economic opportunities for newcomers](#). Although not specifically focused on green sectors, these cross-sectorial strategies provide a key framework for the city to connect migrants to formal employment opportunities, including as part of its good, green job-creation efforts.

Finally, cities in countries of origin are also taking action to **support the economic**

inclusion and reintegration of the diaspora and returning migrants in their emerging green economies. For example:

► **Quezon City (Philippines)** has been collaborating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to enhance the capacity of its [Migrant Worker Resource Centre](#). This aims to strengthen reintegration services for migrant returnees through skills development, job consultations, gender-responsive support, and legal aid, thereby investing in and facilitating migrants' economic reintegration. In parallel, the city has been significantly expanding its urban farming programmes, as a way to reduce

agriculture-related emissions, enhance food security, and create more sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable groups. The programme is already benefiting over [4,100 urban farmers and still growing](#).

To conclude, many of the examples shared here involve cities setting climate action and investment goals that drive green-job creation, accompanied by workforce development efforts targeted at migrants, refugees, returnees, and other marginalised communities. They show how cities are building direct pathways to good, green jobs and simultaneously expanding economic opportunities for businesses and municipalities. These efforts are unpacked in more detail in the next section.



Credit: C40



Develop a green, inclusive, and diverse workforce

Key findings

- As the closest level of the public administration to residents, cities are uniquely placed to connect vulnerable groups – including migrants and refugees – with in-demand sectors and occupations. This is especially the case for sectors that are already facing – and will most likely continue to face – shortages of workers and skills, as cities move away from the use of polluting fossil fuels.
- By using their formal powers, local governments can crucially intervene on a broad set of urban services that are essential to the equitable and meaningful integration of migrants, refugees, and other historically disadvantaged groups into the labour market.

ensure a truly just and locally tailored green transition for all, including for migrants and refugees. It will also help ensure that the transition is built on a broad base of public support, thereby contributing to its effectiveness and success.

Workforce development will be a key component of the green transition, with urban centres across all regions facing the greatest challenges to ensure that all residents – including migrants – have access to reskilling and upskilling programmes. Cities in the Global South and in lower-income countries, which have high levels of informal employment, face particular challenges around anticipating skills gaps and securing related funding solutions. Meanwhile, migrants and refugees continue to face significant individual and institutional barriers to accessing decent employment; and in the Global North, many countries will experience rapid demographic decline and an aging population over the next two decades.

Amid this context, **paid apprenticeships, formal education, and paid training programmes**, are all key ways in which cities are addressing mismatches between the supply and demand of labour and skills – including in green sectors. Often stretching beyond their legal

responsibilities, many local governments are already offering comprehensive training and outreach programmes for vulnerable young people and adults – including migrants. This contributes to meeting cities' local labour market needs, as well as helping to reduce inequalities in employment. For example:

► **Milan (Italy)** has a long track record of **working with local businesses to foster training for and labour market integration** of vulnerable individuals – including migrants and asylum seekers, among others. The city recently expanded these services to the sustainable mobility supply chain.

► Meanwhile, **Bristol (United Kingdom)** is centring disadvantaged communities and migrant workers through a just transition by **ensuring that jobs are secure, well-paid, and unionised**; provide good training; and are open to people from [all backgrounds](#) and areas of the city.

Box 4: Growing the workforce needed for building retrofits in the USA

In the United States, retrofits have been identified as a key area of opportunity for mitigating urban emissions, of which buildings account for 50-75%. US cities surveyed by [C40 report](#) a consistent increase in demand for retrofits, but their implementation is being hampered by severe skills gaps.

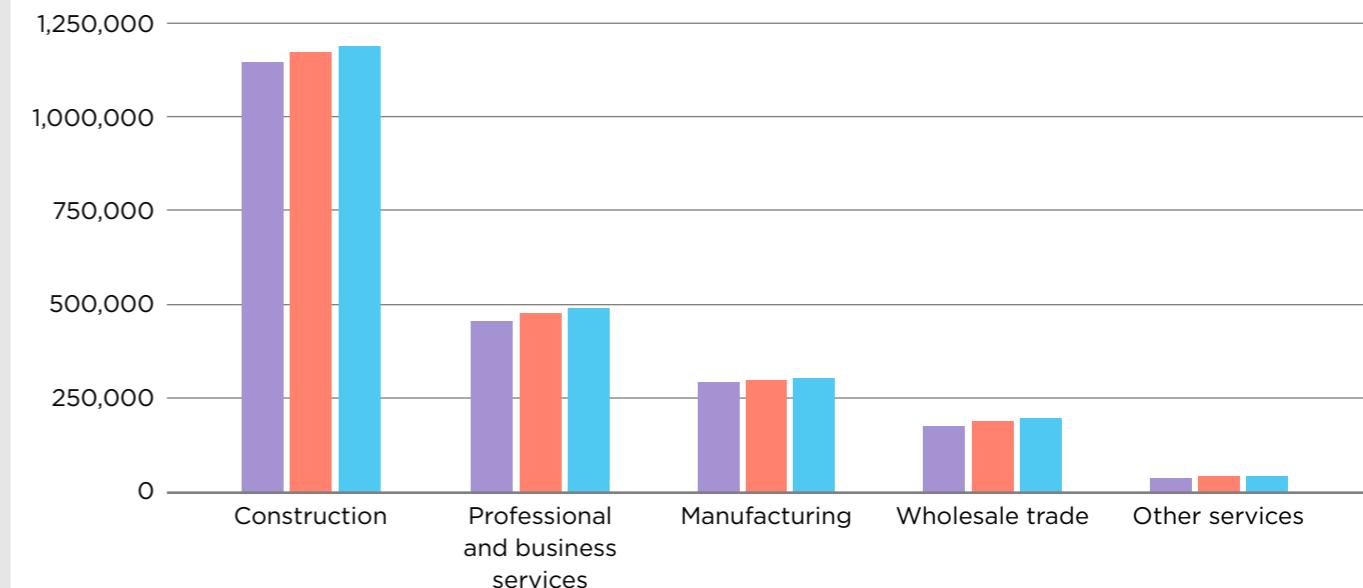
Key skills profiles vary, with some roles requiring specific, locally recognised qualifications, and others where no formal qualifications are needed (see graphics

below). Cities and stakeholders, including businesses, report that this skills shortage is undermining confidence to invest in retrofits.

Meanwhile, the construction sector continues to lag behind national averages for diversity and representation; tightened immigration policies, for instance, have [cut in half](#) the number of immigrant workers now entering the sector. In addition, those immigrant workers who do join the workforce typically experience discrimination, lower wages, and poorer working conditions.

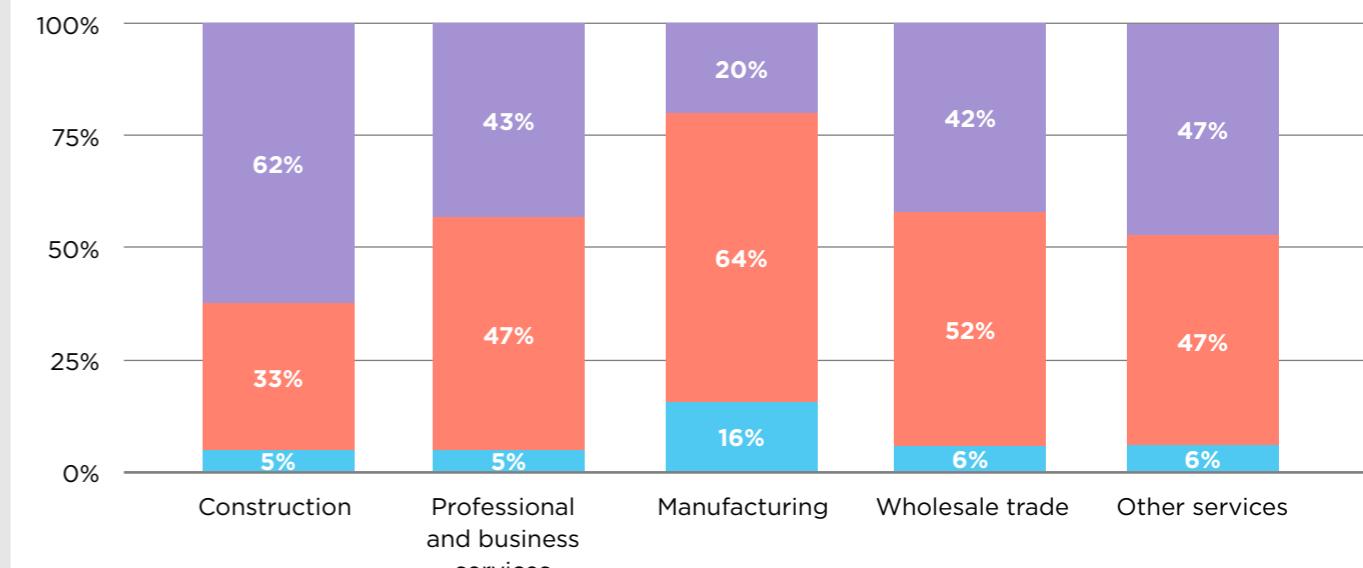
Sampling of Building Retrofit-Related Occupations, Wage, and Educational Requirements

Job Title	Occupation Openings 2022-23 Annual Average (in Thousands)	Median Annual Wage (2022)	Typical Education Needed for Entry
Construction and building inspectors	15.7	\$64,480	High school diploma or equivalent
Electrical and electronics repairers, commercial and industrial equipment	4.4	\$64,030	Postsecondary nondegree award
Electricians	73.5	\$60,240	High school diploma or equivalent
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	37.7	\$51,390	Postsecondary nondegree award
Solar photovoltaic installers	3.5	\$45,230	High school diploma or equivalent
Insulation workers, floor, ceiling, and wall	2.7	\$45,380	No formal educational credential



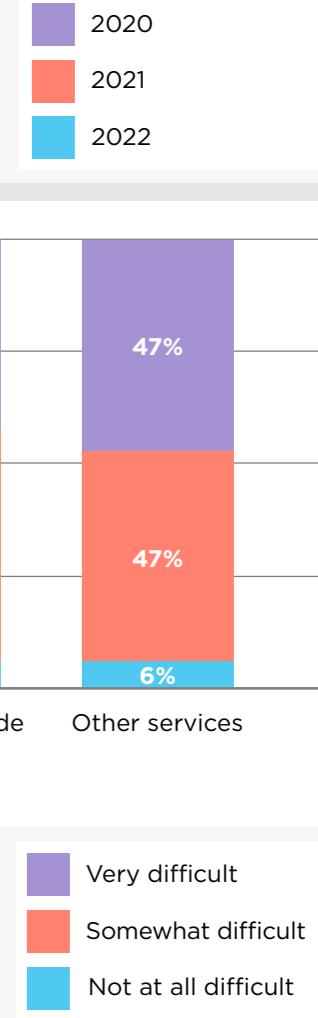
Energy efficiency employment by industry, 2020-2022

Data sourced from U.S. Energy and Employment Jobs Report (USEER)



Energy efficiency hiring difficulty

Data sourced from U.S. Energy and Employment Jobs Report (USEER)



► Through its [REBUILD programme](#), the city of **Philadelphia (United States)** has signed a memorandum of understanding with the building trades for the latter to provide **apprenticeships for historically disadvantaged groups**. The programme also encourages the creation of permanent jobs for BIPOC apprentices.

These types of services and solutions do not usually focus exclusively on green-sector occupations, instead covering a broader set of skills. Yet they present significant opportunities for replicability in the context of a green and just transition, amid growingly recognised shortages of skills and labour.

Active labour market policies are equally vital for local governments and businesses to navigate the green transition effectively,^{xxvi} as labour mobility across occupations, sectors, or industries could reclaim more than 70% of jobs potentially affected by the transition.^{xxvii} Related solutions can also specifically target migrants and asylum seekers, both to enhance their economic self-reliance and sustain labour supply in occupations with shortages. For example:

► For example, **London (United Kingdom) expanded access to its adult education programme to support under-represented groups, including refugees, access skills training**. Through removing long residency requirements for migrant Londoners, individuals on long-term immigration schemes are able to access training from their first day in the capital and people seeking asylum are fully funded to enrol onto skills courses. Additionally, by widening funding support for Londoners who are not in employment and are unable to evidence state benefits, individuals who were previously locked out of funded training can access adult education. This is particularly the case for Londoners with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF). These changes are expected to remove barriers for an additional

[400,000 Londoners](#), who are now able to access funded training opportunities, which will improve not only workforce development, but also social integration in London. In parallel, the Greater London Authority's [Skills Bootcamps for Londoners](#) - an initiative that invests approximately £20m each year to support Londoners to gain jobs in the city's key sectors, including green and digital - provides municipal-level connection between local green industries and workers. In Wave 5 of this programme (2024-25) up to £5.8m will be invested in supporting up to 1635 Londoners into jobs in green sectors.

► **Madrid (Spain)** also exemplifies this approach, partnering with the [UNHCR](#) to provide **training and employment** financed by a national grant for skills development and labour integration. The project is training 61 people, most of whom are from a migrant background, in a 12-month course that includes theory-based lessons alongside nine months of paid practical experience on construction sites to retrofit four public buildings.

► **New York City (United States)** conducted in-depth, in-person **surveys with nearly 40,000 adult asylum seekers** in the city's care, to identify and support individuals who are eligible to apply for [work authorisation](#).

In addition to both active and passive labour market policies, local governments are also intervening in a broad set of services that - while not directly related to employment - are instrumental to facilitating migrants' inclusion in the labour market. Even in countries where they have the right to work, asylum seekers still face significant barriers to accessing decent employment opportunities, most notably due to challenges around **language and access to transportation**.^{xxviii} Local governments have a direct role to play in tackling these barriers. Solutions can include the provision of language courses; food security programmes; and accessible childcare, enabling equitable access

to jobs for vulnerable women; cities can also design public transportation systems that are accessible to and affordable for disadvantaged communities and lower-income groups - among which migrants are overrepresented. Examples in this area include:

► Through its [Global Cities Fund project](#), **Accra (Ghana)** has integrated over **450 migrant waste workers into the formal economy** and facilitated their access to healthcare, childcare, and financial inclusion services.

► Similarly, in **Washington, D.C. (United States)**, the city's **Office of Migrant Services** inaugurated by Mayor Bowser in [2023](#) provides support with reception, respite, meals, temporary accommodation, urgent medical needs, transportation to final destinations, connection to resettlement services, translation services, and other needs to ensure migrants are economically stable.

Annex I reviews some of the key institutional and individual barriers that migrants and refugees face in accessing decent employment

- including good, green jobs. It then shows how cities are well placed to address some of these barriers, thereby supporting an inclusive and just transition to a green and thriving economy.

Finally, public procurement can also be leveraged as a powerful tool to encourage economic inclusion and workforce diversity. For example:

► In **Curitiba (Brazil)**, the city's [Solar Pyramid project](#) encourages a minimum number of female workers to diversify the heavily male-dominated construction industry.

► **Montréal (Canada)** has developed a [Responsible Procurement Policy](#), requiring procurement processes to ensure equitable representation of marginalised communities.

These demand-side incentives can be effective tools to leverage the untapped potential of historically disadvantaged communities, including vulnerable newcomers, in the context of both domestic and international migration.





Invest in data and evidence

Key findings

- Workforce equity assessments can critically inform municipal planning and programming, enabling cities to quantify the distributional effects of green transition policies, and leverage the untapped labour market contribution of historically disadvantaged groups – such as women, young people, and migrants.
- Data-informed projections of good, green job creation and related labour supply can help forecast workforce development needs. This is particularly critical in cities

and major urban areas, where the bulk of green investments are taking place and where shortages of green labour and skills are likely to be most acutely felt and inform both local and national migration and labour policy.

- Context-specific data and evidence on both migration flows and future workforce development needs can crucially build the case for increased financial and technical support for cities, from both national actors and international donors.

Access to disaggregated data on migration flows, workforce composition, skills in demand, or migrants' participation in the labour market, among others, is critical to any public policy intervention – in both the green transition and migration policy spheres – at all levels of governance. Yet, this information is often scarce and limited at the city scale, or it lacks comparability due to different operational definitions. Evidence gaps are also further compounded in cities characterised by high levels of informal employment; this is especially the case in the Global South, where up to 78% of the workforce is employed informally, including the majority of migrant workers and people on the move.^{xxix}

Despite limited resources and capacity, several local governments are already taking action to **bridge local information gaps**: leveraging their contextual knowledge, involving local communities, and working with partners to develop data-informed solutions. By investing

in data and evidence, cities can better plan local interventions – taking into account the distributional effects of green transition investments – forecast future labour market needs, and make the case for more national and international support. For example:

► **Milan (Italy) quantified the equity impact of good, green job growth on different demographics, including migrant workers.** Through a [workforce equity assessment](#), the city assessed the equity impacts of job growth tied to green investments for different demographic groups, including foreign-born workers and non-Italian citizens, in the labour force. The analysis estimates that Milan could support the creation of 50,000 good, green jobs by 2030, mainly in the manufacturing and construction sectors – the latter of which is characterised by higher representation of migrant workers. Building on this positive contribution and pursuing key common priorities of two strategic municipal

documents, namely the Air Quality and Climate Plan and the Labour Pact, the analysis prompted the city of Milan to develop a public policy programme focused on creating good green jobs and reducing energy poverty. The Action Plan against Energy Poverty, currently under development, aims to tackle energy poverty as a multidimensional issue, generating both environmental and social benefits: in addition to improving energy efficiency, it will help address deepening inequalities and strengthen community-wide cohesion by supporting families experiencing socio-economic hardship and fostering the economic inclusion of women, youth and migrants.

► Similar [analysis](#) conducted in **Phoenix (United States)** focused on the equity impact of mitigation and adaptation interventions, **estimating the effects of future labour shifts on various demographic groups**. For example, it predicted that women will occupy only 35% of adaptation- and mitigation-related green jobs on average – which is below the city's workforce average. The findings equip the city administration with data to ensure that, with the right policies in place, green jobs supported by climate actions can be decent and of good quality.

► **Auckland (New Zealand)** conducted a green employment [analysis](#) that examined how the workforce participation of Māori and Pacific peoples could be affected by sectoral changes during the transition to low-carbon. The study informed city plans to focus on upskilling the Māori and Pacific workforce as sectors transition towards lower emissions to boost the economy and people's wellbeing.

Data collection processes, including participatory needs assessments and consultations with frontline workers, also have the potential to **build ownership and trust among frontline communities**, such as informal workers, including migrants. Furthermore, it can often

represent a first step towards full recognition of these residents as key actors in local green transition efforts. By driving this recognition, cities also have an opportunity to create future avenues to formalisation, thereby expanding social protection and decent working conditions. For example:

► **Bengaluru (India)** has fostered **informal workers' participation through inclusive needs assessments and qualitative data collection processes**. With support from C40, the city [engaged](#) waste workers – including migrants – who are marginalised, vulnerable, and often excluded from consultative or decision-making processes, to assess gaps in the bulk waste management system. The insights compiled from stakeholder engagements revealed that informal migrant workers are the most vulnerable among labourers, with limited support available to address low wages, unsafe working conditions, and a lack of job security. This prompted recommendations for the city to develop comprehensive waste management solutions to tackle these problems, including legal recognition for migrant workers.

► A similar approach was taken by the city of **Accra (Ghana)**, where stakeholder consultation and data collection on informal waste pickers paved the way for the registration of over [200 informal workers](#) in the **national social security scheme**. This served as a pilot initiative to demonstrate the effectiveness of social insurance in bolstering workers' resilience when they cannot work due to socioeconomic shocks or climate impacts, such as heat and flooding.

Forecasting demographic projections and the demand for green labour and skills can also prepare cities to develop locally tailored workforce development plans – training workers, including migrants, to meet labour demand in emerging green and digital sectors,^{10,11} or make the case for related national support. City leaders

can leverage context-specific data, including in collaboration with national or international data set,¹² to plan for their green jobs potential. Globally, cities are already finding innovative ways to estimate labour demand and anticipate changes in workforce trends. For example:

► **Sydney (Australia)** utilised artificial intelligence to [analyse green skill demand](#) in online job advertisements and assess the current state and potential of its green economy, identifying growth opportunities for key emerging sectors within the city.

► Similarly in **London (United Kingdom)**, [job postings](#) have been used as indicators of the shifting employer demand for green jobs and skills. This fills a critical knowledge gap and supports preparations for the labour needed to meet the city's net-zero ambitions.

When local governments invest in locally disaggregated data – including on good,



green jobs and a just transition for all – it can pave the way for increased dialogue with, and support from, national counterparts. For instance, a first-of-its-kind analysis on the potential for good, green job creation in **South African cities** – carried out by C40 and the cities of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Durban, Tshwane, and Cape Town, in [2021](#) – showed how these cities can play a vital role in delivering green jobs and an equitable and sustainable recovery from COVID-19¹³. This evidence was instrumental in **building local-national dialogue** on a green and just transition, involving leading cities, the South African Local Government Association, and the Just Transition Presidential Commission.

Altogether, data and evidence can enable local leaders to better anticipate future labour needs, inform policies and plans (taking into account distributional impacts of investments), and make the case for additional external support towards a just transition.

3. Cities leading by example

Partner with local, national, and international actors

Key findings

- City-to-city cooperation and skills partnerships – on both domestic and international scales – has promising potential for piloting innovative solutions that leverage regular migration to address local labour market needs – including in the context of good, green job creation.
- By partnering with frontline workers and unions, cities and mayors can champion

equity and decent work for all in a green and just transition, modelling behaviour for national actors and businesses to follow.

• Cities and mayors can play a critical convening role in partnering with the private sector and creating an enabling environment, where the demand for good, green jobs increases and the supply of a diverse and inclusive workforce is ensured.

Cities are already harnessing their convening powers to forge partnerships on good, green jobs, the just transition, and migration issues – whether with other municipalities in rural and semi-rural regions, national and international counterparts, or other relevant local labour market actors. These partnerships can be categorised as **a) city-to-city cooperation; b) collaboration with businesses; and c) collaboration with unions and workers**.

City-to-city cooperation – whether on an international or a domestic scale – is increasingly being acknowledged and documented as an emerging area of city leadership. Local governments can be key players in the localisation of national and multilateral agendas, such as the Paris Agreement, the CHAMP initiative, or the Global Compacts on Migrants and for Refugees, through the related Call to Local Action. They can also pioneer innovative partnerships on new frontier issues, such as circular migration and complementary employment pathways. For example:

► **Milan (Italy) engaged in international city-to-city partnership on skills and circular mobility.** Within the framework of the Mobility Partnerships between the European Union, Morocco and Tunisia, the municipalities of Milan and Turin (Italy), together with local actors in Béni Mellal-Khenifra, Tangier (Morocco), and the Cities of Tunis and Sfax (Tunisia), jointly developed the project '[MENTOR: Mediterranean Network for Training Orientation to Regular Migration](#)'. Building on detailed blueprints for a global skills partnership, MENTOR offered new opportunities for the professional growth and development for high-skilled young Moroccans and Tunisians and made available guidelines and recommendations on traineeships, study visits, the selection of young candidates for traineeships, and awareness raising and information campaigns on temporary and circular migration targeting youth in Tunisia and Morocco. This multi-stakeholder initiative seeks to develop sustainable cooperation and dialogue across governance levels (local, regional, national) in Italy and its partner countries, responding to labour market demands, including in green sectors.

► Similarly, the **Cities of Solidarity Initiative** brings together local authorities from across Latin and Central America, to address the needs of migrants, refugees, and other displaced people through [social and economic integration](#). As part of this initiative, Guatemala, Argentina, and Uruguay each held a National Cities of Solidarity Meeting, where municipalities convened and shared challenges and innovative solutions for protective mechanisms and the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs.

► In Andalusia, Spain, the [Move_Green project](#) allows for cross-border cooperation between businesses and supports the expansion of renewable energy and green sectors in Morocco. The project is a three-year **circular mobility and skills training** scheme providing tailored professional training to at least 36 young Moroccan graduates, in areas relating to renewable energy and the green economy. To facilitate their integration, trainees take Spanish lessons, attend seminars on circular migration and co-development processes between Andalusia and Morocco, and gain practical experience and networking opportunities with Andalusian companies. Participation in the scheme enhances trainees' employability upon their return to Morocco, and encourages business partnerships among actors in green sectors.

Mayors and city leaders can **work in tandem with frontline workers, local cooperatives, and unions**, as well as engaging with diaspora communities, both in countries of origin and of destination, to expand employment opportunities with a focus on decent work and improved social protection. For example:

► Under Mayor Sackey's leadership, **Accra (Ghana) has pioneered an engagement process with informal workers, including migrants**. The city launched an unprecedented dialogue process with informal workers

to create informal waste management cooperatives, integrating the latter in its service-delivery systems, thereby recognising their economic contribution, and ultimately [expanding social protection](#). The city has also offered capacity-building programmes in health and safety, financial literacy, road safety, and traffic regulation, which help to improve the quality of life and jobs for informal waste workers, while deepening collaboration and partnership between the city and the informal sector to support a just transition.

Finally, cities and mayors can also play a critical convening role when it comes to **engaging businesses and private-sector leaders**, who are essential stakeholders for an enabling environment conducive to both good, green job creation and workforce development to match local labour market needs. In fact, public-private collaborations can be critical in engaging new workers and creating pathways to employment. When businesses properly train and support the labour force, it benefits both the private sector and the local economy. For example:

► With support from the Mayors Migration Council's [Global Cities Fund](#) for Migrants and Refugees, **Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) is partnering with private companies and sustainable waste processing cooperatives** to strengthen its waste management circular economy. In particular, the city trained over 200 migrants and refugees in the waste value chain and supported five new sustainable waste processing cooperatives, linking them to contracts with private companies. Through this project, the city has fostered collaboration between the informal and private sectors, while empowering local communities.

Businesses too are driving similar responses by their own initiative, as a way to respond to shortages of skills and labour. For example, the **Berlin startup "Montamo"** has developed an

innovative green training scheme for migrant workers, offering hybrid courses in [heat pumps and solar panel systems](#) in several languages. The company utilises digitalisation to qualify employees faster than conventional training. This allows readily available trainees to quickly make career changes in the energy sector, and supplies the workforce to meet green labour demands in the city.

► Partners can also mutually uplift and support each other's shared agendas to achieve common goals. **Buenos Aires (Argentina)** has collaborated with the United Nations Human Rights Council and the L'Oréal Foundation to **promote employment of women migrants**, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless individuals, and others with international protection needs

in the digital tech sector. The [Nosotras Conectadas](#) project provides training in technological skills, integrating vulnerable women into a historically male-dominated sector and addressing both gender and socioeconomic disparities.

Whether through city-city networks, informal-sector collaborations or public-private partnerships, cities globally are already developing local, national, and international partnerships to open dialogue on the green and just transition, and integrating policies towards a future where no one is left behind. Although not all of the examples here focus on migrants' and refugees' access to good, green jobs, they do showcase opportunities for scalability and replicability in the context of labour migration and a green and just transition.



Credit: ILO



Engage in mayoral advocacy and diplomacy

Key findings:

- By using their soft powers, mayors can influence policy and finance outcomes in favour of cities, frontline communities, and people on the move; expand safe and regular employment pathways; and improve the economic inclusion of migrants in key green sectors.
- Public-facing initiatives such as financial commitments, political positioning, and coalition building can be powerful tools in mobilising actors to address inequalities within the green labour market, particularly for frontline groups.

Cities can leverage mayoral advocacy and diplomacy to influence national and multilateral policies in support of cities, migrants, and frontline communities, urging national governments to find solutions to shared migration and climate challenges. This could entail **calls for opening safe and regular employment pathways**, based on skills and labour market needs, or pushing for the greater economic inclusion and regularisation of migrants in key green sectors wherein labour market needs are concentrated, thereby further advancing the just transition.

Local government actors can exemplify this by effectively wielding their soft powers through symbolic actions and the formation of coalitions. For instance, the Mayors' Dialogue for Solidarity – led by ODI – accomplishes this by fostering dialogue and collaboration among cities, to promote more inclusive policies and practices that address the needs of migrants and support their successful integration.^{xxx} The

- By uniting their voices, cities can put issues on the political agenda, – shifting narratives, leading by example, and defining a pathway for national governments and international actors to respond to the intersectional challenges of climate and migration. There is growing justification for mayors to engage in national and multilateral fora and discussions on global trends that are most acutely felt locally. In both the climate and migration policy spheres, subnational leaders are increasingly recognised in the decision-making process at all levels of governance, and international leaders are drawing on the expertise of these local players to inform and justify the adoption of new policies.

Climate Migration Council,¹⁴ a group of leaders with a shared commitment to putting people at the centre of climate action and to accelerating global solutions to climate-related migration, similarly provides a platform for locally elected officials to raise their priorities to national and international leaders on climate migration issues. For example:

- In 2024, **43 Cities for Action mayors and county executives called on the US State Department of Homeland Security to automatically extend employment authorisation for immigrant workers**,

preventing potential job losses due to processing delays. The [open letter](#) advocates for the right to work, and for fair and humane immigration policies that strengthen local economies and support immigrant communities.

- At the 2023 Africa Climate Week, **12 C40 cities shared a unified commitment to**

address climate action and create green jobs, including for migrants.

The [call to action](#) focuses on advancing the just transition, by committing to increasing accessibility to green jobs and public services for marginalised communities, including migrants, informal workers, and those experiencing poverty. The cities pledged to prioritise a just transition through the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and climate financing, among other actions.

- By uniting their voices, mayors have demonstrated the ability to **put frontier issues of climate and equity onto political agendas** – shifting narratives, leading by example, and defining a path for national governments and international actors to follow. This was the case for the [C40 Global Mayors COVID-19 Recovery Task Force](#) – calling for a green and just recovery from the pandemic – and the [C40-Mayors Migration Council Task Force on Climate and Migration](#), whose positive role in accelerating global responses to climate change and migration was recognised by the UN Secretary-General.¹⁵

Public-facing initiatives – whether political positioning or financial commitments – can also serve as powerful advocacy tools to inspire and mobilise local, national, and international leaders to act – including on the impact of green labour initiatives on addressing inequalities. For instance, as part of a commitment to the [Labor Rights United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement](#), five Mexican cities have been instated as labour attachés to ensure support from the US, Canada, and the ILO in progressing Mexican labour law reform. In line with this agreement, [the US has awarded US\\$ 3 million to the ILO](#) to advance protections for migrants' labour rights – particularly for Mexican nationals participating in US temporary foreign worker programmes.

Finally, communicating the impacts that migrant workers have on the local economy

can also promote social cohesion, minimise exclusion and adverse impacts, and galvanise public support for labour law reforms or local ordinances that ensure migrants are equitably included in the green workforce. When **New York City (United States)** welcomed [over 100,000 new arrivals in 2024](#), the city published a fact sheet to dispel fear and share facts about how immigrants strengthen the economy. The city of **Accra (Ghana)**, undertook a billboard campaign exercise backed by surveys of community residents and informal workers, to **understand local perceptions of the informal sector**. This process was instrumental in signalling the city's position on informal waste sector integration, presenting informal waste workers as active contributors to waste management in Accra. Local funding is also crucial for ensuring communities have access to decent employment opportunities with ample social protections. Cities can benefit from strong alliances with stakeholders, forging a path for potential funding, and unionising leaders to meet climate goals (such as NDCs). Concerted efforts like this not only support an inclusive green transition but also position cities as influential players in shaping related policy and finance outcomes.

4. Recommendations

Building on the city-led best practices explored above, this section identifies five priority areas where national governments, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral development banks, businesses, and the donor community can work with cities to ensure a fairer and faster green transition for all, while addressing migration, including climate migration.

First, from a public policy perspective, it is essential to recognise that while cities and mayors are highlighting the need for joined-up policy, and are finding solutions, many of the key policy and finance levers lie with national governments, or heavily rely on national and international finance flows. In this light, preconditions for successful policy action will include:

Consulting, partnering with, and supporting mayors on the development of integrated policy solutions, across the climate, workforce development, and migration spheres.

Increasing climate and development finance, which is needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and ensuring that resources are directly accessible by cities and local communities.

Investing in localised and disaggregated data that focuses both on the opportunities of inclusive climate action and on the unintended consequences of inaction.

In the context of a green and just transition, it is also important that multi-level responses do not overlook global injustices and the deeper inequalities that underpin these trends, at all scales of governance. In particular:

- efforts to economically include newcomers must go hand in hand with measures to protect and support all workers – especially those frontline workers who are more likely to be affected by the green transition – and

- solutions to leverage labour migration must not perpetuate dependencies, by eroding Global South countries' human capital and fuelling brain drain.

With this in mind, and based on C40-led research and consultations with both member cities and subject-matter experts, the following recommendations are intended to ensure that responses are fit for cities and their most vulnerable residents – including migrants and refugees – but also that existing city-led solutions can be successfully replicated and taken to scale, benefiting people, the planet, and the economy.

Box 5: Findings from key informant interviews

- For this research, C40 interviewed 15 stakeholders and subject-matter experts from multilateral organisations, city staff, workers and employers' associations, think tanks, and NGOs, from across the migration, climate, and labour market policy spheres. This was instrumental to the task of mapping challenges and opportunities for city-led action, assessing the urban relevance of the topic and discussing levers for policy change at the national and international levels. The inputs collected through this process have directly informed the content of this policy brief. Key insights included the following:

- All interviewees agreed that **the nexus between labour migration and green transition is an emerging area of policy interest**, with clear evidence that migrants can and do make a significant contribution to greening our economy. Likewise, all agreed that, with the right enabling conditions, labour mobility and

the green transition can act as pathways for increased climate resilience in origin and destination countries. However, there is still limited awareness and understanding of what solutions mean in practice, at all levels of governance. Several interviewees also highlighted that opportunities at the nexus can be tempered by domestic political contexts.

- Overall, there was significant consensus that **green transitions will require workforce development**, and that it is unlikely workforce needs will be met through current domestic labour markets or current training mechanisms. There is recognition that skills development is not happening at the scale and pace needed, likely requiring new entrants into the workforce, especially in countries that are also facing demographic change. The importance of anticipating workforce and skills needs was highlighted as a recommendation by seven of the ten stakeholder organisations.



- All interviewees identified actions and roles for cities, with nuances depending on the category of stakeholder. **Cities are on the frontline of challenges and play a key role in delivering solutions** – in both the climate and migration policy spheres – but they often lack adequate powers and resources to act at scale. Several interviewees highlighted that cities can and do interpret their powers and mandates broadly, giving them greater latitude to develop context-specific responses. A majority of the interviewees also noted that cities could go further in anticipating and signalling their future workforce needs for a green transition, and thereby catalyse other stakeholders to act at the climate-migration nexus.
- Across all the interviews, stakeholders identified **cities and mayors as key actors in convening and customising responses to the challenges of migrants' economic inclusion** and the green and just transition.

Informants consistently cited that cities are uniquely placed to foster dialogue with businesses, unions, and workers, creating an enabling environment where everyone can thrive.

- Decent work remains a major concern when it comes to migrants' economic inclusion**, especially in contexts with a higher share of informal employment – whose critical contribution to the green transition remains largely under-recognised. The interviewees highlighted similar themes in relation to access-to-work rights and quality of employment in both Global North and South countries; however, the scale of informal employment in the Global South underscored the need for significant action on employment quality alongside green and inclusive economic development.





1. Invest in city-led climate action that creates good, green jobs in cities of origin, transit, and destination.

With cities at the forefront of green job creation, investing in city-planned climate action that is designed to ensure jobs are accessible to all, delivers maximum return on investment and development goals. National and international actors can achieve this by delivering against their localisation commitments, specifically:

- **Accelerating the localisation of development and humanitarian funding, with a focus on good, green job creation.** This is proving instrumental both in accommodating rural-urban mobility and in tackling economic drivers of migration. Currently, only 1.2% of global humanitarian funding goes to local actors – including local governments – against a commitment of 25% made in 2016.^{xxxii}
- **Ensuring that climate finance supports good, green job creation in cities and is directly accessible to local governments, thereby**



Credit: Neil Palmer /WRI

facilitating decent livelihood opportunities for all, including people on the move. Despite the fact that 70% of global infrastructure to be built by 2050 will be in urban areas,^{xxxiii} climate finance flows to cities (US\$ 384 billion in 2017/2018) fall far short of the need – estimated at US\$ 5.4 to 4.5 trillion.^{xxxiv}

- **Investing in instruments that go directly to cities, such as the Mayors Migration Council's Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees and C40's Inclusive Climate Action Fund,** to support innovative solutions, demonstrate proof of concept, and build the case for fiscal feasibility. Evidence from these funds confirms that migrant workers are already contributing to employment sectors that are key for urban green transitions (such as waste management, nature-based solutions and food systems), and shows opportunities for replicability in other sectors, such as buildings and transport, among others.

The Mayors Migration Council's Global Cities Fund (GCF) for Migrants and Refugees

The [GCF for Migrants and Refugees](#) is the Mayors Migration Council's response to the unmet needs of cities as they support migrants, refugees, and displaced people in the face of today's pressing challenges – including climate change, poor working conditions, unemployment, and lack of economic inclusion and stability. With an active pipeline of 28 city grantees, the US\$ 8 million fund has helped establish precedents of fiscal feasibility for city governments that are often disregarded by donors with low risk tolerance. Many cities have utilised this vehicle to advance a green and just transition,

creating good green jobs, offering training and entrepreneurship opportunities in green sectors, and improving conditions for informal workers through decent employment and access to ancillary services. More than 90% of cities that have fully implemented their GCF projects have used their success as a proof of concept to unlock additional international, national, and/or local investments and expand their projects towards a more inclusive green economy. *C40 is a strategic partner of the GCF, along with the IOM, UNHCR, UCLG, UN-Habitat, and Metropolis.*

C40 Cities' Inclusive Climate Action (ICA) Fund

The C40 ICA Fund is designed to help cities develop and implement climate projects with equity and inclusion principles at their core. Building on the successes of phase one of C40's Global Green New Deal Pilot Initiative, the [ICA Fund](#) was launched in response to the unmet needs of cities as they navigate interlinking global crises, with a focus on: a) strengthening existing programmes, policies, and projects by making them more equitable and inclusive; b) enabling cities to unlock broader, long-term organisational

and financial buy-in for inclusive climate action; and c) providing a platform to showcase cities leading on inclusive climate action. The fund has so far been supporting six pilot projects across five regions and a broad set of thematic areas related to good, green jobs and equity – from training women in public sector green jobs in Bogotá, to engaging informal workers in Dar es Salaam's organic waste management sector (with complementary support from the GCF, see above).

National governments

MDBs

Private sector

2. Ramp up urban workforce development programmes in cities, ensuring that a growing demand for green labour is met with a qualified, inclusive, and diverse workforce.

Skills development is a crucial component of a successful green and just transition – to ensure not only that climate investments are met with adequate workforce readiness, but also that new good, green jobs are equally accessible for all. It is in cities where the bulk of labour demand is concentrated and it is in cities where most of the global population seek sources of livelihoods, including migrants and refugees. Working hand-in-hand with the private sector, national governments and multilateral development banks should:

- **Drastically increase investment in education and training** that prioritises workers in non-green sectors, women, young people, migrants, and other marginalised groups, in line with the principles of a green and just transition.



National governments

Inter-governmental organisations

Private sector

3. Remove barriers for migrants to access employment, prioritising green urban sectors where shortages of labour and skills are most acutely felt.

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers continue to face significant barriers to accessing decent work, including in green sectors.

This is despite growing evidence that the green transition is being hampered by skills and labour shortages – especially in cities – and that new entrants into the green workforce will be needed to fill these gaps. Working in close collaboration with the private sector, national governments and intergovernmental organisations should take action to:

- **Reduce the legal barriers to newcomers' obtaining work permits – and make the process faster.** This will facilitate pathways towards self-reliance and economic inclusion, while also reducing pressure on local and regional governments in charge of delivering social assistance and related welcoming services.

- **Improve international recognition of educational qualifications – including through bilateral migration agreements.** This can tackle “brain waste” among migrant workers, including the prevalence of over-qualification. For instance, across Europe, immigrants with foreign degrees are 22% more likely to be over-educated compared to native-born workers with similar degrees.^{xxxv} Often, these skills are relevant to green sectors where shortages of skills are already faced.

- **Strengthen local governments' technical and financial capacity to deliver those services that are critically relied upon for the economic inclusion of newcomers.** These include both programmes aimed at facilitating labour market integration (e.g. language courses, training, paid apprenticeships) and a broader set of urban services (e.g. housing, transportation) that are critical to support the self-reliance and economic inclusion of newcomers.





4. Establish labour pathways focused on green skills and urban sectors with higher demand for labour, unlocking benefits for both countries of origin and of destination, including for climate migrants.

Investments in climate action are already driving the demand for labour in the green sectors, especially in urban areas. While some skills can be provided by new entrants and by reskilling the current workforce, there will be gaps that cannot be filled, due to demographic change and competing demands within the economy. By improving the alignment between immigration and green transition policies, national governments should work with businesses and intergovernmental organisations to:

- **Develop green skill mobility partnerships¹⁶ and talent pools that are connected to local shortage occupation lists and developed in partnership with cities and businesses.**

For instance, India and Germany signed an agreement to increase green-skilled migration and support integration of skilled workers from India into the German solar industry. This was based on recognised shortages and surpluses of solar panel installers in Germany and India respectively.^{xxxvii} The European Commission's new talent pool also presents a positive step in this direction, aiming to attract non-EU workers to fill shortages of green skills,^{xxxviii} but it should also strengthen the inclusion of regional and local governments to assess needs and support labour market insertion.

- **Develop safe pathways for climate-vulnerable communities**, working in partnership with local governments to ensure people-centred and rights-based movement before and after climate-related disasters.^{xxxix} For instance, Australia and Tuvalu recently signed the first bilateral agreement on climate mobility,^{xli} recognising the threat of climate change to Tuvalu and providing a special visa arrangement to allow several hundred Tuvaluans to work, study, and live in Australia each year. With the pacific island community in Australia concentrated in several [municipalities](#) within metropolitan centres, including Melbourne, and strongly represented in the [manufacturing and construction](#) sectors that are undergoing transformation to green and net-zero technologies, municipal governments are well placed to advocate for essential programmes and support services.
- **Partner with cities and businesses to pilot circular mobility programmes** that can harness the potential of green skill transfers and green remittances. For instance, an IOM programme in Morocco promotes sustainable rural development by favouring diaspora members' investments in agroecology. Similar city-led programmes like MENTOR II offers examples for replicability in the context of green mobility partnership schemes.¹⁷

Case study

Colombia's regularisation of millions of Venezuelan migrants

In 2021, the Colombian government, responding to the needs of the more than 2 million Venezuelan migrants in the country, implemented a new and innovative mass regularisation decree: the Temporary Statute of Protection for Venezuelan Migrants (TPSV). This granted regular legal status to Venezuelans, allowing them to remain in Colombia for ten years and granting them access to health, education, and employment services. The decree also sought to address the high levels of informal employment among the migrants (72-80%) [compared to the local population](#) (47%), by encouraging employers to hire Venezuelan workers. Emphasising the importance of removing accessibility barriers for strengthening local economies, studies have shown that

more Venezuelan migrants in Colombia are finding work in better-paid sectors in the formal economy – likely due in part to their regularisation through the TPSV. The decree also improved school enrolment for Venezuelan children in Colombia, with 463,000 students enrolled by 2021 – a 13-fold increase from 2018. Significant progress has been made overall, with Venezuelans contributing US\$ 529.1 million to the country's GDP in 2022 – almost [2% of the total national tax revenue](#).^{xxxvi} Yet there is still more action needed, particularly to ensure that Venezuelan migrants' educational milestones and qualifications are recognised in Colombia. While 90% of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia are employed, only 18% work in the field they originally trained or qualified for.



Credit: Justin Kase / Alamy



5. Work with cities to promote decent working conditions, social protection, and dialogue, starting by driving recognition of informal workers – including migrant workers.

Evidence from city-led solutions shows that green transition policies have the potential to either advance the economic inclusion of migrants, or further entrench their marginalisation, if not properly informed by equity considerations. This is particularly the case for the informal sector, which in many cities represents a high share of employment within certain sectors (e.g. construction, transportation, food supply, and waste management), and wherein migrants are overrepresented. Acknowledging these structural inequities, national governments – especially ministries with responsibility for labour and social protection – and relevant intergovernmental organisations should:

- **Recognise the informal sector as an essential contributor to local and national green transition processes.** Cities have a solid track record of driving these shifts from the bottom-up, shaping a culture of respect for informal workers, and expanding access to social protection in collaboration with national counterparts. This has been particularly the case in Global South cities like Accra (Ghana), Lagos (Nigeria), or Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), where forward-looking climate action plans are offering concrete examples of how the public administration can build and strengthen partnerships with the informal sector, delivering millions of good, green jobs and leaving no one behind.^{xlii}
- **Establish social dialogue and inclusive participatory processes that engage businesses, unions, and informal workers** – including migrants and displaced people – to co-design and -deliver inclusive climate action and just transition plans. Mayors have a positive track record of playing a convening role with both the private sector and trade unions in the context of good, green jobs creation, and can critically support these processes from the bottom-up.^{xliii} For instance, the city of Ekurhuleni has launched South Africa's first local Just Transition Commission, which serves as a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue, ensuring all voices – including communities, workers, businesses, government, young people, and academia – are considered in local just transition planning.^{xlii}
- **Strengthen the protection, ethical recruitment, and safeguarding of all workers, including migrant workers** – including, but not limited to, workers in sectors relevant to the green transition and migrant corridors impacted by climate change. This requires a comprehensive approach, recognising that irregular migration can increase the risks of exploitation.



5. Conclusions



The intersection of climate change, labour migration, and the green transition is an emerging area of policy interest that presents challenges and opportunities across regions, but especially in cities.

Policy discussions have, to date, focused mainly on the adverse effects of climate change on human mobility, or how the latter can present a viable adaptation strategy. Missing from the debate so far is a focus on the positive contribution that labour migration can have in a green transition, or how climate action can foster economic inclusion, across and within countries of origin, transit, and destination. Although cities are unequivocally on the frontline of these challenges and at the forefront of related responses, urban-focused discussions on solutions have remained largely unaddressed.

Building on these premises, and drawing from the lived experience of cities in both the Global North and the Global South, this policy brief has taken stock of how global trends in climate change, green transition, and labour migration unfold in urban settings, providing clear arguments for locally led, inclusive, and integrated responses.

On the one hand, investments in climate action that creates good, green jobs with decent labour standards can positively influence human mobility patterns, both tackling economic drivers of migration and fostering the economic inclusion of people on the move, in cities of origin, transit, and destination.

On the other hand, labour migration and migrants' positive contribution to the economy can be positively leveraged to address labour market needs in countries of transit and destination, including in sectors with shortages of green labour and skills.

As this brief has shown, cities and mayors are already leading by action, leveraging their soft and formal powers, despite limited mandates and resources. Section 3 provided a comprehensive review of city-led solutions, which can be replicated – leveraging city-to-city cooperation – and taken to scale, if cities are provided with adequate support from national governments, businesses, and international donors.

Cities and mayors are already leading by action, leveraging their soft and formal powers, despite limited mandates and resources.

In addition to leveraging data, partnerships, and mayoral diplomacy, these solutions entail ambitious good, green job creation for all – averting migration in the first place where possible, and fostering the economic inclusion

of migrants and refugees where movement is unavoidable – as well as bold, locally led workforce development that harnesses migrants' contribution to the green economy and addresses labour market needs, including shortages of skills.

Moreover, leading mayors are ensuring that efforts to economically include newcomers go hand in hand with measures to protect and support all workers – especially those frontline workers who are more likely to be affected by the green transition – and that solutions to leverage labour migration do not perpetuate dependencies, by eroding Global South countries' human capital and fuelling brain drain.

However, in order to ensure that change happens at the scale needed, significant investment, capacity building, and policy shifts are needed at the national and international level.

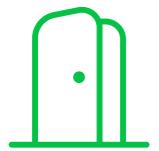
We conclude with a summary of the recommendations presented by this policy brief – five key messages for national governments, businesses, unions, intergovernmental organisations, and multilateral development banks:



Invest in city-led climate action that creates good, green jobs in cities of origin, transit, and destination.



Ramp up urban workforce development programmes in cities, ensuring that a growing demand for green labour is met with a qualified, inclusive, and diverse workforce.



Remove barriers that prevent migrants from accessing employment, prioritising green urban sectors where shortages of labour and skills are most acutely felt.



Establish labour pathways focused on green skills and urban sectors with higher demand for labour, unlocking benefits for both countries of origin and of destination, including for climate migrants.



Work with cities to promote decent working conditions, social protection, and dialogue, starting by driving recognition of informal workers, including migrant workers.



Credit: Daniel Castellano

Annexes

Annex I

Below is a non-exhaustive list of **institutional** and **individual barriers** cutting across different levels of government and representing challenges faced by people on the move, at all stages of their migratory journey, including both domestic

and international movements. The table was designed recognising the intersectional nature of discrimination and that some people may face one or more barriers, including other barriers not listed here.

Institutional barriers		
Barrier	Description	Local governments' role in addressing barriers
Access to pathways	Legal migration processes are typically defined and managed by national governments who prescribe the type of migration available including permanent, seasonal or part of specific programmes, such as skilled migration, refugee resettlement, and the requirements for migration, among others.	Typically not mandated to offer legal migration pathways, local governments can facilitate skills exchange partnerships, and articulate the demand for specific skilled workers for their green transition plans, in partnership with businesses and unions. This can build arguments for change in national legislations and/or inform national assessments of migration and skills needs.
Right to work	Asylum seekers, refugees and some categories of international and domestic migrants often struggle to access decent work in practice, despite protections in international and many domestic legal regimes. This creates a wide range of challenges including poor labour standards for those who turn to the informal economy, as well as lower incomes and living standards, and much greater dependency on aid.	Not typically legally mandated to intervene on labour standards, local governments may nevertheless have powers to offer cash for work schemes especially in city owned/operated assets/ sectors and public works or similar as well as soft powers to influence national-level discussions. Local governments have also taken action to set locally-identified living wage standards, including in law. Sub-national governments have also taken legislative actions to address discrimination in hiring, where powers permit.

Access to social protection and services	Access to social safety nets and public services is often defined and directed at a national level and is essential for migrants to settle into new communities. Migrants' legal status can impact the levels of access they have to social protection and other services .	Cities and local governments may have varying mandates and resources to provide social protection and access to key social, education and health services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Cities can step into these roles more by actively reducing barriers to access to services through using their formal and soft powers to expand eligibility for services and support. There is a growing movement toward localisation and equitable access to localised social protection services.
Burdensome and unpredictable migration processes	Unclear, lengthy, costly and complex migration processes can slow social and economic inclusion of people on the move, increasing risk of poverty and exploitation. As above, these are typically managed at a national level but may be delegated in some countries/regions.	Not typically legally mandated sub-national governments including cities may have formal powers or opportunities to advise migrants and help them navigate these processes, including avenues to legal pathways.
Recognition of skills and education titles	Recognition of foreign education qualifications may be carried out at national or subnational levels depending on the country. Unclear and lengthy skill recognition processes can hinder access to employment outcomes -with migrants working in less skilled occupations. Migrants are more likely to work in jobs that are lower than their skill level .	Cities may not be legally mandated on education policy, but they can leverage their formal powers to help migrants secure realignment and recognition of their qualifications, in some cases regardless of their residence status. Cities can also play a role in building awareness in the private sector who are looking to employ migrants about qualification recognition and rights to work.
Access to transportation	Access to transportation - especially public transport - is considered as one of the main barriers for accessing employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, including migrants. Powers and funding related to public transport and transport policy is often a shared responsibility of national and sub-national governments.	Cities are often responsible for, and have formal powers on, urban transportation, ensuring all residents - including newcomers - can benefit from accessible, clean and affordable transport, which is essential to access jobs.
Discrimination	Hiring practices of businesses can be discriminatory, uncertainties/ lack of awareness around skill/ qualification recognition can limit businesses employing migrants. Anti-discrimination legislation is typically set at a national level.	Cities can leverage their proximity to residents to tackle discriminatory practices and build inclusive narrative in both the labour market and the community at large. Cities can set their own procurement practices and locally-adapted wage and labour standards in some countries.

Individual barriers

Barrier	Description	Local governments' role in addressing barriers
Language	Language skills are essential to access employment opportunities at all levels of skills and they can delay migrants' access to decent employment. See above regarding education, adult education and migration policy.	Cities and sub-national governments may have powers to deliver or set policy to support inclusive language courses that can better equip newcomers to access employment, and ensure access.
Financial costs of migration	High recruitment and establishment costs can limit rapid integration especially if establishment and lack of skill recognition lead to migrants working in less skilled/ secure work. Financial requirements, support packages and/or tax and other relief may be set at national level for refugees and under migration policy.	Cities are not typically mandated to address this but have a broad range of powers and means to engage migrants on entry into the city on financial and other needs and challenges, including working with the informal sector.
Limited pathways to access networks	Formal and informal networks are critical in accessing employment as well as information about jobs and housing. Both for those migrating within between and within countries.	Cities are not typically legally mandated to address this, but may have formal powers to set up advisory services and one-stop shops that also connect newcomers to employment.

Annex II

Building on desktop research carried out by C40, the following table provides an overview of shortages of skills and labour in sectors that are key for the green transition, based on available information. The fact that these analyses are

not carried out consistently throughout or on a regular basis hinders cross-country comparisons or longitudinal analyses, but provides a good snapshot of existing and projected gaps.

Country	Labour and Skills Shortages	Related Migration Policy Context
Canada	High demand for skills is estimated in trade, transport, manufacturing, utilities, sales, and services. These sectors need mid-to-high skilled workers, often requiring upskilling or green skill shifts. Initial changes will primarily impact higher skilled roles, like managers in engineering, architecture, utilities, and manufacturing	Canada has a number of skilled mobility programmes in place; including the talent programme for refugees with Australia, UK and US, as well as skilled migration programmes such as the Provincial Nominee Programmes and the Atlantic Immigration Program .
Australia	Shortages have been identified across key occupations within renewable energy - including civil, electrical, and mechanical engineers, construction managers, electricians, and transmission line workers. Up to 80 percent of renewable energy jobs are currently in design, manufacturing, and installation, but by 2030 almost 50 per cent of those jobs could be in operation and maintenance.	Australia's skilled migration programmes use skilled occupation lists to govern eligibility criteria. Recently, the Australian Government committed to invest AUD 19.7 million in skills assessments until 2023-24 to support migrants into priority jobs (OECD, 2023). These do not focus on green sectors, there is potential to use this mechanism to do so.
US	Largest labour shortages include construction and manufacturing occupation; expanding opportunities for occupations that do not require 4-year college degrees. Top growing occupations are the ones with low entry requirements, with typical short or medium term on-the job training, which can be accessed by any workforce.	Migration policies to support the green transition have so far been little discussed in the US. A 2024 study by CGD found that changes would likely come through existing schemes, for example, through an update to Schedule a; the H-2B visa; or the J-1 visa.

UK	<p>Construction, transport and storage, and manufacturing are identified sectors with the highest reskilling and alignment needs for transition; and concentrated in the London, South East, and North West Regions. p/reskilling needs for technical skills are identified in</p>	<p>The UK's point-based system, and its reliance on visa- and work-sponsorship systems do not actively support the green transition, at present.</p> <p>While willingness to consider migration as a complement to the domestic labour force is growing, increased regulatory burdens on employers and migrants following the UK's departure from the EU makes Britain an uncompetitive destination.</p>	Mexico	<p>Expanding solar PV and onshore wind capacity will increase the demand for high skilled professionals and engineers and low to medium skilled technicians. At least 46% of the total direct jobs for solar PV and 26% of the total direct jobs for onshore wind will require highly skilled workers. At the country level Mexico has appropriate workforce available, mobilising skilled people to states with high renewable energy potential is a workforce challenge.</p>	<p>Mexico has one of the most complex migratory contexts in the world, with extremely high migration flows of a mixed nature. Generally speaking, migration policy in Mexico still lacks coherent actions to promote full integration of people entering the country. Mexico City is exceptional for having implemented its own migrant support programmes to better facilitate the inclusion of the migrant population.</p>
South Africa	<p>The bulk of job creation in the renewable energy sector is in mid to high-skilled occupations (70% or more), although employment is also created at other skill levels.</p>	<p>South Africa is both a country of origin and destination. While there are various migration policies in place, none seek to facilitate or proactively benefit the green transition through this mobility.</p> <p>There are reports of ad hoc projects recruiting international workers, or sending domestic workers abroad for training, however, there does not yet appear to be proactive engagement with countries of destination or origin to promote labour mobility for the green transition.</p>	Philippines	<p>The Philippine Green Jobs Act (GJA) establishes a framework to support green jobs creation and skills development priorities in clean energy, transport, sustainable tourism and green buildings. The GJA also supports various initiatives, such as the Training for Work Scholarship Programme (TWSP) and the Emergency Skills Training Programme. These programmes aim to retrain and upgrade the skills of marginalised groups such as unemployed youth, indigenous groups, and retrenched workers.</p>	<p>Emigration is central to the Philippines economy and development. It has a comprehensive migration management system and several initiatives to facilitate sustainable development through green policies and jobs, including: Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) such as the TWSP, which is also available to returning migrant workers. However, there is limited recognition of the effect of emigration and the loss of skilled labour and corresponding strategies to attract skilled workers from abroad to support the country's green transition.</p>
India	<p>Workforce requirements for meeting domestic renewable energy targets will require mostly semi- and low-skilled technicians, especially for the solar sector, but also highly skilled experts (more than 20%) with skill demand varying across different project stages. Across other sectors, high GJ potentials are found in sectors like EV, Textile, Construction, and Waste Management (especially electronic waste).</p> <p>India is also positioned to be a significant source of international skilled labour for green transition especially in Solar PV, with significant investments in green-skill training mechanisms.</p>	<p>India is the largest origin country for international migrants and it has actively sought agreements with 30 countries in need of labour. Some existing agreements with Germany, Austria and Australia for skilled mobility partnerships, focus on green sectors. Bilateral agreements have also focused on skills recognition and harmonisation.</p> <p>For instance, India and the UAE have a skill harmonisation programme in place, creating a network of Trade Test Centers to deliver assessments in benchmarked qualifications. India also has mutual recognition of qualification agreements with the UK and Australia.</p>			

Endnotes

1. Projections by the World Bank estimates that up to 216 million people will be displaced within their countries, due to climate impacts. Most of these movements will happen across sub-Saharan Africa (86 million), East Asia and the Pacific (49 million), and South Asia (40 million) ([World Bank, 2021](#)). A growing body of evidence produced by C40 Cities, the Mayors Migration Council, and the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative supports the assumption that most of these movements will inevitably lead into urban areas, especially in fast-urbanising countries of the Global South.
2. Analysis carried out by Deloitte projects that around one quarter of global jobs (around 800 million) could be at risk from unchecked climate change ([Deloitte 2022](#)).
3. Projections about green job creation vary widely depending on definitions and methodologies used. The Global Climate Action Summit estimates the creation of 65 million low-carbon jobs by 2030, based on accelerated action and investment ([GCAS, 2018](#)). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 18 million net green jobs will be created by 2030 from the energy transition to achieve the Paris Agreement target ([ILO](#)). Additional ILO research estimates that transition to a circular economy can create over 7 million net new jobs ([ILO, 2019](#)), and green policy measures for energy efficiency, clean energy, and clean transportation can create 8.4 million jobs for young people aged 15-29 years by 2030 ([ILO, 2022](#)).

4. The [ILO](#) estimates that 100 million workers will require reskilling (2019). The [World Economic Forum](#)'s projections indicate approximately six in ten workers will require skills training by 2027, but only half of these workers currently have access to adequate training opportunities.
5. At the individual level, barriers can include specific skills, level of education, language, wellbeing, and employment capability. At the institutional level, these may relate to legal bases for decent work, availability and accessibility of labour market information, recognition of skills and qualification, and accessibility of workforce development programmes, among others. The table below provides an overview of these barriers, with a connection to the different categories of people on the move.
6. For example, certain countries develop non-resident deposit and diaspora bonds to attract funds from their non-resident citizens, which can be channelled to [economy and development programmes](#).
7. OECD. (2023) [Job Creation and Local Economic Development](#).
8. The [Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships \(CHAMP\) for Climate Action](#) is an initiative endorsed by 72 countries during COP28.
9. The mayor-led Action Agenda on Climate and Migration, released by the C40-Mayors Migration Council Global Mayors Task Force in 2021, identifies three key priority areas - a) urban resilience, b) urban inclusion, and c) urban transformation - where cities are already delivering responses on climate migration, and where more national and international support could help bring these solutions to the scale needed.
10. LinkedIn. (2022) [Global Green Skills Report](#).
11. C40 Cities. (2022) [How to measure current and potential green jobs in your city](#).
12. The Brookings Institute projected that 17 million infrastructure workers would leave the US workforce in the next decade due to retirements, job transfers, and other labour market shifts, with only 15 million new employees entering the workforce. Data such as this can prompt policymakers and local leaders to work urgently on workforce development programmes and policies in preparation for projected labour gaps ([Brookings Institute, 2022](#)).
13. C40 Cities. (2021) [C40 Cities launches research on South Africa green jobs](#).
14. The Climate Migration Council is an initiative supported by Emerson Collective. Its full list of members - which includes leading mayors, among other elected officials - is available [here](#).
15. The UN Secretary-General's [Report on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration Report 2022](#) recognises the role of the task force in accelerating responses to climate migration.
16. There are several types of skills-based migration or mobility partnerships (SMPs) tested across regions. Most of the existing models have not focused on green skills, but they could be expanded in this direction, amid growing labour and skills shortages in green sectors (see Annex II for a review of existing evidence). To adapt these successfully to the growing urban and rural green economies, agile immigration services and pathways will be needed. In addition, cities are well placed to play a critical role in three primary areas for improvement: a) linkages between

destination and origin countries to establish and scale up new SMPs, focusing on green occupations and skills, as well as scaling up the integration of workers and employers representation within these processes; b) building capacity for fair and ethical recruitment, notably support for public employment services that are often hosted or funded at subnational level; and c) early and ongoing dialogue between places of origin and destination, to make sure initiatives serve their interests and anticipate trends, and that integration and support are enabled and do not trigger concerns over brain drain.

17. MENTOR II is a circular mobility scheme that offers professional traineeship opportunities to young Moroccans and Tunisians in northern Italy. Building on results from its predecessor project MENTOR I, this multi-stakeholder initiative seeks to apply a territorial approach to develop sustainable cooperation and dialogue across governance levels (local, regional, and national) in Italy and its partner countries.
18. In 2021, a joint statement by 12 C40 mayors and the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation called on other urban leaders and trade unionists to lead a decade of climate action, bringing forward generations of [good-quality jobs](#).

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