



GRAY MATTERS CONSULTING - DIGITAL INFOLET ON EXCERPTED NEWS & TRENDS

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Now there are Green Collar Jobs

There is a colourful distinction in the different kind of jobs that exist in the market. White and blue collar jobs have become a passé. Off late, there has emerged another category referred to as green/low carbon.

The phrase 'green/low carbon' has become one of the most used phrases in the lexicon of politicians and Corporates. For some it is emergence of new employment opportunities in a limited job market and a route out of poverty for the marginal people, while for others, particularly for the environmentalists, green/low carbon jobs are crucial for combating climate change. With the attention that these jobs have garnered w.r.t climate change action, it does not come as a surprise that what perhaps began as rhetoric to counter climate negativity is now developing into an area with extraordinary promises.

But not everybody is equally excited by this new category. Some argue that these terms are just trendy phrases that have gained popularity and have ambiguous meanings and connotations with little agreement on what constitutes a green/low carbon job. As terms like low carbon jobs, green jobs, clean energy jobs etc., are often used interchangeably and they often convey a blurred meaning leading to concerns with regard to the parameters that define each of them. Due to the associated ambiguities, common definitions often limit such jobs to certain industries that are generally regarded as green, for example, in the United States green jobs are often defined solely as those related to renewable energy and energy efficiency. The ILO refers to low carbon employment as "economically viable employment which reduces environmental impacts to sustainable levels". While some refer to employment in sectors that 'make up the clean energy economy', including energy efficiency, renewables, alternative transport and fuels as low carbon jobs. The UNEP recognises these jobs as either those that conserve energy or help realise alternative sources of energy and thereby accelerate the transition of global economies to low carbon pathways. However, there is also a wider interpretation of the concept looking beyond energy and linking low carbon issues to a broader set of environmental activities that include conservation and rehabilitation to preserve bio diversity, restore degraded land, combat erosion, remove invasive aliens etc.

Irrespective of the hazy definitions renewable energy investments are expected to rise. This can broadly generate two types of employment opportunities i.e. direct and indirect. Direct employment includes jobs created in manufacturing, design, construction, installation, operation and maintenance of the different components of the technology. Indirect jobs refer to jobs created in the supply chain or those jobs that get created through 'multiplier effect'. For example, there are important jobs such as that of consultants who are key actors in the growth of renewable energy technologies as they play a vital role in the penetration of these technologies. Also professional profiles like those of energy auditors and energy managers are not directly linked with low carbon jobs but they often play an important role in promoting energy efficient technologies. Further it is important to consider that services provided by these indirect jobs are often a pre-requisite for deployment of low carbon technologies.

Of the many sectors that can offer low carbon employment, renewables contribute a significant number. Irrespective of the above arguments jobs in renewable are likely to grow as industries, business and economies by large shift to renewable energy. These numbers are expected to increase in the next few decades as state and national governments have mandated to increase the share of renewable in the energy mix. Also, despite the failure of the climate negotiations at Copenhagen to reach a legally binding treaty to limit GHG emissions, it is widely accepted that action w.r.t construction of windmills, solar power and biomass plants will continue. This will not only have positive implications for energy security but also have environmental, economic, social, and technological development.

It is challenging to gauge the total number of green jobs that exist nationwide. The job of a welder at wind turbine factory is considered as a green/low carbon job, but what about the factory's accountant? First is direct job while latter is an indirect job. India is emerging as one of the destinations with a huge low carbon employment potential. Time to think.
