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DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

GREEN JOBS: FROM POVERTY REDUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY IN INDIA

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Context

- Recent **World Bank** findings on **India's poverty decline and iFOREST's green-jobs assessment** highlight the potential of environmentally sustainable employment to support inclusive growth and **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

About Poverty Reduction in India and Beyond

- **Poverty** refers to the inability to meet basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare and education. It is broadly measured through two approaches:
  - **Monetary Poverty:** Based on income or consumption expenditure relative to a specified poverty line.
  - **Multidimensional Poverty:** Captures overlapping disadvantages in health, education and living standards.

India's Progress in Poverty Reduction

- According to recent **World Bank's *India Poverty and Equity Brief* :**
  - **49.6 crore people** escaped poverty between 2011–12 and 2023–24, measured against the lower-middle-income poverty line of **$4.20 per day (2021 PPP)**. The poverty rate fell from 57.7% to 16.1%.
  - **Extreme poverty**, measured at $3 per day (2021 PPP), declined from 27.1% to 2.6%.
  - Rising consumption, social transfers and expanding employment contributed to this progress.
- However, escaping poverty does not guarantee economic security. Higher wages, productive employment and social protection are essential to prevent households from slipping back into deprivation.

What Are Green Jobs?

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines **green jobs** as decent employment opportunities that help protect or restore the environment, whether in traditional industries or emerging sectors.
- They contribute to reducing emissions, improving resource efficiency, controlling pollution, restoring ecosystems and strengthening climate resilience.
- Examples include solar technicians, EV mechanics, battery-recycling workers, energy auditors and workers involved in agroforestry or mangrove restoration.
- Green employment supports three interconnected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): **SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).**

India's Emerging Green Employment Opportunity

- **Expanding Green Economy:** India's commitment to Viksit Bharat by 2047 and **net-zero emissions by 2070** is opening new employment opportunities.
  - According to **iFOREST's 2026 report**, *India's Green Jobs Moment*, emerging green sectors could support **98.5 lakh jobs by 2030 and nearly 1.3 crore by 2035**.
  - These are projections, dependent on investment and workforce preparedness.
- **Demographic Dividend:** India's large young population provides a valuable workforce for emerging industries.
  - Over 27% of Indians belong to the 15–29 age group. In 2025, around 17.3% of youth were graduates, with educational attainment among young women (17.9%) exceeding that of young men (16.7%).
- **Transferability of Existing Skills**: iFOREST's occupational assessment suggests that about **71% of assessed thermal-power job roles** have medium or high skill transferability to renewable energy and green hydrogen.
  - Similarly, about 90% of conventional automobile roles show such transferability to electric mobility.
  - Electricians, machine operators and technicians can therefore enter several green occupations through targeted reskilling.

Key Issues and Challenges

- **Technical Skill Deficit:** Only 5.3% of young Indians have technical education, while approximately 5% have received formal vocational training.
  - **iFOREST** estimates that direct employment in major green sectors could increase by around 4.5 lakh annually.
  - However, dedicated green-skilling programmes have cumulatively trained only about 81,000 individuals, indicating inadequate training capacity.
- **Quality of Training and Employment:** About 43% of formally trained workers have completed courses lasting less than six months, which may be insufficient for specialised technical occupations.
  - Moreover, a **World Resources Institute (WRI)** study highlighted contractual employment, limited social protection and barriers facing poorer workers and women in renewable energy employment.
  - Thus, **green employment needs to provide decent wages, safety and job security** to produce lasting poverty reduction.
- **Unequal Transition:** Workers dependent on coal and conventional industries risk displacement, while rural youth and women may face limited access to training, finance and employment networks.
  - It makes a *just transition* essential, ensuring that environmental progress does not deepen existing inequalities.

Existing Policy Foundation in India

- **PM-SETU:** A 60,000-crore scheme to upgrade 1,000 government ITIs through industry partnerships.
  - About 13,856 ITIs with approximately 20.08 lakh seats nationwide.
- **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana:** Targets rooftop solar installations in one crore households, creating opportunities in installation and maintenance.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** With an initial allocation of 19,744 crore, it supports clean hydrogen development and associated skilling.
- **Skill Council for Green Jobs:** Supports industry-linked skill development for emerging green occupations.
- The ongoing revision of the **National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** offers an opportunity to integrate green skills into mainstream vocational education.

Way Forward: Connecting Green Investment With Workforce Development

- Modernise ITIs through specialised laboratories, trained instructors, updated curricula and industry-led apprenticeships.
- Introduce advanced technical programmes alongside short bridge courses, with emphasis on practical skills, certification and placement outcomes.
- Establish a National Green Jobs and Skilling Mission, supported by state-level plans that reflect local employment opportunities.
- Improve access for women, disadvantaged communities and workers shifting away from fossil-fuel industries through affordable training, financial assistance and recognition of existing skills.
- Track employment quality, wages and career progression rather than measuring success solely through training enrolments.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Green jobs offer an opportunity to transform India's achievements in poverty reduction into sustainable economic prosperity. Discuss the potential of green employment and examine the challenges in ensuring a skilled workforce and a just transition.

Source: IE

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