

The United Nations World Water Development Report 2016 on ‘Water and Jobs’ Main Messages

Opportunities for employment growth and decent jobs are reliant on the sustainable management of water resources and the provision of water supply and sanitation services

No water, no jobs

1. Three out of four jobs that make up the entire global workforce are water-dependent.
2. The farming, fisheries, and forestry sectors alone, which are among the most heavily water-dependent, employ nearly one billion people.
3. Water scarcity and disruptions in the supply of freshwater threaten jobs in water-dependent sectors and limit the growth potential for decent, high quality jobs across the economy.
4. Efforts to adapt to increasing water stress have to be reinforced in order to avoid dramatic consequences for local employment, with potential follow-on effects to trade and migration.

Better water, better jobs, better lives

5. Access to safe and reliable water supply and sanitation services at home, school and the workplace is critical to maintaining a healthy, educated and productive workforce.
6. Unsustainable water management may severely threaten hard won gains in poverty reduction and job creation.
7. Better understanding of the pervasive role of water resources, infrastructure and services in economic growth and job creation is urgently needed to ensure that employment policies are sustainable.

Investing in water is investing in jobs

8. Investments in water-related infrastructure can be highly cost-effective and generate positive returns across different sectors of the economy.
9. The creation of jobs in water resources management and water supply and sanitation services (i.e., ‘water jobs’) has been shown to produce high returns on investment and generate a significant multiplier effect on job creation in other sectors.
10. Long-term planning and effective financing for improved water management are required before enhanced employment opportunities, economic growth and other related socioeconomic benefits can be realized.

The water-job relationship in a changing world

11. Climate change exacerbates the threats to water availability and will inevitably lead to the loss of jobs in certain sectors.
12. The transition to a greener economy and the emergence of green technologies can generate positive shifts in employment and create opportunities for decent jobs.
13. Innovative learning approaches as well as pertinent vocational and academic training are essential for strengthening the institutional capacity and improve employment opportunities across water-dependent sectors.

¹In 2014, the global active workforce accounted for 3.2 billion people, of which 40% were women.

²Related to wastewater recycling, renewable energy, climate change adaptation and water use efficiency, among others.