Unlocking Nigeria's Green Remote Work Potential

POLICY BRIEF

Executive Summary

Nigeria faces a dual crisis of high youth unemployment and mass emigration of skilled professionals, with over 8,000 medical workers migrating between 2021 and 2024 and over 93% of the workforce trapped in informal employment[1]. Amidst these challenges, a global shift toward green and digital economies is creating demand for climate-aligned roles—such as ESG reporting, solar diagnostics, and carbon accounting—that can be performed remotely. This shift presents a unique opportunity for Nigeria to leverage its digitally savvy youth and emerging tech infrastructure to generate decent green jobs without losing talent to physical migration[2]. To realise this potential, the National Inclusive Green Jobs Act (NIGJA) proposes a suite of strategic reforms. including legally defining green jobs and green remote work under labour law, mandating job tagging and data reporting on digital platforms, introducing tax incentives for companies hiring Nigerian remote workers, and establishing training and job placement hubs that connect Nigerian youth to green work opportunities globally.

These policies are enabling rather than restrictive: they support foreign and local employers alike, clarify tax and legal frameworks, and help build trust, transparency, and inclusion in Nigeria's remote workforce ecosystem. They also address structural barriers such as broadband inequality, verification gaps, and algorithmic bias on platforms.

1.0 Introduction: Harnessing Climate-Aligned Digital Employment to Tackle Youth Unemployment, Brain Drain, and Informality

NIGJA complements the existing National Talent Export Programme (NATEP) by providing the structural backbone to support Nigeria's position as a trusted supplier of climate-smart services globally. Together, NIGJA and NATEP can build a robust ecosystem for exporting sustainability talent, addressing barriers such as broadband inequality and digital exclusion while reducing the pressures driving mass emigration.

By aligning NIGJA with NATEP, Nigeria can strategically position itself as a trusted global provider of climate aligned digital services. This will not only reduce youth unemployment and mitigate the drivers of migration but also strengthen Nigeria's reputation as an outsourcing destination for sustainability talent[3]. By leveraging digital platforms, diaspora networks, and partnerships with foreign employers, Nigeria can transform its labour surplus into an exportable green skills advantage, anchoring the country's economic future in a fairer and greener global economy.[4]

> *Over 93% of Nigerians remain in the informal sector, with 85.2% self-employed, often out of necessity rather than entrepreneurial ambition[5]*

[1]National Bureau of statistics . "Nigeria Labour Force Survey Q2 2024." Nigerianstat.gov.ng, 2024. https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary.
[2]Remote Work Statistics, "Number of Freelancers 2025 (by Country and Industry)," Genius, September 16, 2024, https://joingenius.com/statistics/number-of-freelancers/.
[3]World Bank, "Remittances to Countries in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings Bounce Back in 2022," World Bank Blogs, November 2023, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/peoplemove/remittances-countries-fragile-and-conflict-affected-settings-bounce-back-2022.
[4]Ibid
[5]National Bureau of statistics , "Nigeria Labour Force Survey Q2 2024," Nigerianstat.gov.ng, 2024, https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary.

2.0 Background and Problem Statement

Nigeria's youth labour market is at a critical juncture. While the Q2 2024 unemployment rate for youth declined to 6.5%, this masks persistent underemployment, informality, and a reliance on precarious self-employment. Concurrently, skilled migration is accelerating. Between 2021–2024, over 8,000 health professionals emigrated to the UK, with similar losses across banking, IT, and education[6]. This "Japa" wave reflects Nigeria's struggle to retain talent in the absence of robust, future-fit employment opportunities.

3.0 Opportunity: The Rise of Remote Green Work

Globally, climate change is driving job creation in new areas like carbon accounting, ESG reporting, and solar IoT monitoring. Green remote work is emerging as a hybrid solution: it allows Nigerians to work for global employers while remaining in-country, reducing brain drain and boosting local economic inclusion.

FSD Africa forecasts 3.3 million green jobs in Africa by 2030. Nigeria, alongside Kenya and South Africa, holds the largest potential share due to its population, English proficiency, and growing digital infrastructure.[7]

4.0 Definition and Scope

Green remote work includes decent employment conducted digitally that supports environmental sustainability, climate resilience, or the low-carbon transition. Key categories include:[8]

- **Technical roles:** Solar diagnostics, remote energy monitoring, renewable systems integration
- **Professional services:** Climate finance, ESG reporting, sustainable procurement
- **Digital support:** E-learning content on climate literacy, green helpdesk roles, carbon footprint analysis

These jobs can be carried out via international platforms (e.g., Upwork, Fiverr) or locally through Nigerian platforms (e.g., Jobberman, SeamlessHR) and digital learning environments (e.g., Coursera, IRENA Academy).

5.0 Key Barriers

Despite this opportunity, several constraints limit Nigerian youth access to remote green employment:

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[7]Adedotun Oyeniyi and Adedotun Oyeniyi, "How the Japa Phenomenon Is Reshaping Nigeria's Workforce and Families," The Nigerian Inquirer, January 20, 2025, https://inquirer.ng/2025/01/20/how-the-japa-phenomenon-is-reshaping-nigerias-workforce-and-families/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
[8]FSD Africa and Shortlist, "Forecasting Green Jobs in Africa (2024).Pdf," Google Docs, 2024, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KU0-2UKaOQx0QscvxYy1AtDqdN8MAB8t/view.
[9]Ibid .p.7

Barrier	Description
Legal Vacuum	Nigeria's labour laws do not formally recognise remote or green digital roles. This limits protections, employer responsibilities, and eligibility for incentives.[9]
Access Inequality	Only 48.1% broadband penetration (2025), with significant rural-urban gaps. Infrastructure vandalism and power issues exacerbate digital exclusion.[10]
Discrimination on Platforms	Nigerian gig workers often face statistical and algorithmic discrimination based on nationality or gender.[11]
Lack of Onboarding & Verification Systems	Absence of standard onboarding processes, ID verification tools, and remote fraud safeguards erode trust in Nigerian freelancers.
Low Platform Visibility	Unlike Bangladesh and the Philippines, Nigeria lacks coordinated promotion of its digital workforce globally.

Image: Comparative Insights on Green Remote work from Bangladesh, Kenya and the Philippines[12]

[9]German Institute for Global and Area Studies , "Digital Platforms in Africa: The „Uberisation" of Informal Work," Giga-hamburg.de, 2019, https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/digital-platforms-in-africa-the-uberisation-of-informal-work?utm_source=chatgpt.com.
[10]Adenike Adeodun, "5 Challenges to Broadband Access in Nigeria," The Nigerian Patriot, January 27, 2025, https://patriot.ng/2025/01/27/5-challenges-to-broadband-access-in-nigeria/.
[11]Bama Athereya, "Bias In, Bias out : Gender and Work in the Platform Economy," in IDRC Research Results (IDRC , 2021), https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/items/7d8e2f97-b1dd-49ad-9843-a0480f5f80eb.
[12]Bama Athereya, "Bias In, Bias out : Gender and Work in the Platform Economy," in IDRC Research Results (IDRC , 2021), https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/items/7d8e2f97-b1dd-49ad-9843-a0480f5f80eb.

6.0 Policy recommendations for NIGJA

1. Legally Define Green Remote Work

Update labour regulations to:

- Recognise remote green jobs (e.g. carbon accounting, solar diagnostics) as formal employment.
- Extend social protections (e.g. insurance, pensions) to platform-based and freelance green workers.
- Reference international standards (e.g. ILO Green Jobs Guidelines, UN Digital Labour Principles).

2. Mandate Green Job Tagging and Platform Data Reporting

Require digital labour platforms to:

- Tag jobs by sector, carbon alignment, duration, and wage tiers.
- Submit regular anonymised data to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity.
- Partner with blockchain providers to build trustworthy, transparent, and traceable work histories.

3. Introduce Fiscal Incentives for Remote Green Hiring

- Offer incentives for Nigerian youth hired into certified remote green roles.
- Offer incentives to domestic and international companies hiring remotely in green sectors such as corporate tax deductions
- Align with existing treaties on double taxation and green investment incentives (e.g., Companies Income Tax Act, Pioneer Status).

4. Launch Green Remote Work Incubation Hubs

- Provide platforms for Nigerian workers in green remote skills to be linked with employers. This could be by providing for partnerships with private sector actors or by setting up physical and virtual training hubs. Focus areas could include IoT for clean tech, ESG software tools, climate data science, green digital content.
- Include diaspora mentoring and linkages to international work platforms.
- Pilot portable health and pension schemes for gig and remote workers.

Diana Mutheu, "GIZ Launches GDIH to Drive Kenya's Digital and Green Transition : TechMoran," TechMoran, December 3, 2023, https://techmoran.com/2023/12/03/green-and-digital-innovation-hub-gdih-officially-launched-during-kenya-innovation-week-2023-commonwealth-edition/.
BillionBricks, "Circular Economy and Remote Work in the Philippines - BillionBricks | Net-Zero Homes," BillionBricks | Net-Zero Homes -, January 30, 2025, https://billionbricks.org/blog/circular-economy-and-remote-work-in-the-philippines/.

7.0 What the policy recommendations do

Recommendation	Purpose	Effect on Foreign Companies
Legal Definition of Green Remote Work	Brings remote green work under labour law protection (e.g., rights, benefits, data privacy)	Gives foreign companies clarity and confidence about legal status of Nigerian remote workers
Job Tagging and Data Reporting	Requires platforms (local and foreign) to track green job categories and metrics	Enables transparency and better matching; may require minor compliance updates, not barriers
Tax Incentives for Hiring	Offers tax relief and clarity on remote worker taxation	Encourages foreign companies to hire more Nigerians by simplifying compliance and reducing risk
Green Remote Work Partnerships/ Incubation Hubs	Trains Nigerian workers in green remote skills; links them with employers	Expands talent pipeline for global employers; no restrictions on hiring from abroad

8.0 Strategic benefits

Strategic Objective	Impact
Reduce Brain Drain	Keeps skilled workers in-country while allowing global participation
Create Inclusive Work Pathways	Opens new employment channels for women, youth, and rural communities
Grow Green Service Exports	Builds Nigeria's competitiveness in ESG reporting, climate consulting, and sustainable finance
Strengthen Climate Transition	Supports Nigeria's 2060 Net Zero goals through human capital development

9.0 Conclusion

Green remote work represents Nigeria's untapped engine for inclusive development. With the right legal recognition, targeted incentives, and institutional coordination under NIGJA, Nigeria can reposition itself from a net exporter of talent to a climate-smart digital workforce hub.