

# The Talent Gap Threatening Global Delivery

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**The Project Management Institute's recent warning that Africa's green energy ambitions could falter without a deliberate investment in project-management capability captures a far broader concern. Around the world, the delivery of critical infrastructure, energy and transformation programmes is at risk from a deepening shortage of skilled project professionals.**

PMI's *Global Project Management Talent Gap Report (2025-2035)*, released earlier this year, forecasts that global demand for project professionals will rise by as much as 64 per cent by 2035, equating to a shortfall of nearly 30 million qualified practitioners. Regions with the fastest-growing economies – Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and parts of Latin America – face the most acute challenges, with development pipelines expanding faster than workforce capability.

## The delivery deficit

Project management underpins the execution of national strategies and corporate transformation alike. Yet PMI estimates that around 10 per cent of global project investment is lost annually through poor performance – an inefficiency that translates into billions of dollars of waste. Where capability is thin, projects overrun, benefits diminish, and confidence erodes.

Sub-Saharan Africa illustrates this imbalance starkly. PMI projects that the region will require between 1.6 million and 2.1 million additional project professionals by 2035 – a rise of up to 75 per cent. At the same time, the continent's green-energy transition is accelerating, demanding sophisticated planning, governance and coordination. As PMI's Managing Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, George Asamani, recently observed, "If climate investments continue to outpace human investments, the gap between ambition and delivery will only widen."

## **A global pattern**

This imbalance is not confined to emerging economies. The Association for Project Management (APM) in the UK reports that more than half of employers struggle to attract and retain qualified project managers. Similar trends appear in OECD data, with shortages most acute in construction, infrastructure, IT and healthcare – sectors fundamental to growth and resilience.

Ageing workforces compound the issue. PMI estimates that over four million project professionals will retire or exit the profession by 2035. Without robust succession and training pipelines, the deficit will deepen, constraining both public- and private-sector delivery capacity.

## **Translating existing talent**

A significant proportion of the skills required already exist within the labour market. Many technical and operational professionals possess transferable competencies—planning, stakeholder management, safety oversight, and multidisciplinary coordination – that align closely with project-management disciplines. Asamani’s example of South Africa’s coal-sector workforce illustrates this potential: structured retraining could redeploy experienced supervisors into renewable-energy delivery roles, preserving livelihoods while meeting new industrial demands.

Similar approaches are taking shape across other regions. Nigeria’s redeployment of oil-and-gas engineers into solar projects, Kenya’s geothermal expansion, and Morocco’s retraining of mining specialists for hybrid energy systems demonstrate that targeted reskilling can deliver rapid results when aligned with national development plans.

## **A professional imperative**

The modern project professional operates in an environment of unprecedented complexity – hybrid delivery models, cross-sector dependencies and rising stakeholder scrutiny. Technical competence alone is insufficient. The emerging priority is professional breadth: financial literacy, strategic alignment, and an understanding of sustainability and digital transformation.

For leaders and PMOs, talent must now be treated as a delivery risk. Capability planning should sit alongside cost, schedule and scope in every major-project business case. Those organisations that invest in people – through training, structured development and knowledge transfer – will secure a decisive advantage in execution and resilience.

The global skills shortage in project management represents more than a labour-market imbalance; it is a structural threat to growth, decarbonisation and innovation. As PMI’s research underscores, the world’s capacity to deliver on its ambitions depends not solely on funding or technology, but on the availability of skilled professionals who can turn vision into reality. The coming decade must therefore be one of deliberate talent transformation – where investment in human capability keeps pace with the scale of our aspirations.