

▶ BRICS + and ILO Cooperation

May 2024

▶ BRICS and ILO's Development Cooperation

Development cooperation between governments, BRICS partners, and the ILO has grown in recent years. The BRICS' large economies enable them to facilitate dialogue and cooperation, strengthening partnership for common development and advancing cooperation under principles of openness, inclusiveness, solidarity, and mutual assistance. Originally, the BRICS included Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and now it has expanded to five new members in 2024.

▶ BRICS New Members

At the BRICS summit held in Johannesburg in August 2023, leaders approved the inclusion of new member states. Effective January 1, 2024, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates will officially join BRICS, marking a significant geopolitical shift and expanding the group's influence. Saudi Arabia has also been invited to join but has not yet formally accepted. For the ILO, this expansion opens new avenues for multilateral engagement, particularly in Africa and with Arab partners, including GCC countries



▶ Brazil

In March 2009, the ILO Director-General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil signed the "Complementary Agreement to the Technical Cooperation Agreement with Latin American and African Countries for the Implementation of the ILO - Brazil Partnership Programme for the Promotion of South-South Cooperation. Brazil has thus contributed to the ILO the past 20 years in a very comprehensive way, focusing on the new South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) Programme, signed in June 2023, that covers the topics of Decent Work and Social Justice in the following areas: Gender and Race Equality, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work; Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at Work and Jobs and Social Protection. Brazil is working towards its BRICS presidency in 2025 and currently is presiding the G20. Brazil will also host the COP 30 during the upcoming year.

Brazilian Presidency of the G20 will feed the BRICS presidency in 2025

"Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet" is the theme of the agenda proposed by Brazil for its **G20 Presidency**, which began on December 1, 2023. The agenda focuses on the following three overarching goals: (1) social inclusion and the fight against hunger and poverty; (2) energy transitions and the promotion of sustainable development in its economic, social, and environmental dimensions; and (3) reform of global governance institutions. The ILO is cooperating under the following task forces: establishment of a global alliance against hunger and poverty; global mobilization against climate change; and the following working groups: employment, development, empowerment of women, trade and investment, energy transitions; environment and climate sustainability; framework; sustainable finance, environment and Trilateral Cooperation is also a priority area under the Development Working Group and the ILO is a key player in the G20 side event in Salvador that is discussing more inclusive development cooperation.



► Russia

Russia currently holds the presidency of BRICS, and [contributed \\$20 million in 2012-2021 for the ILO-G20 training strategy](#). This included projects on skills and peer learning for CIS countries, Viet Nam, Jordan. The projects enhanced skills and employability development systems and addressed country-specific priorities. Since the adoption of the [ILO Governing Body Resolution GB.344 in March 2022](#), no additional funding has been provided to the ILO.

In 2024, the following priorities for the Employment Working Groups (EWG) were established:

- 1: Development of a system of vocational guidance and lifelong professional education for the entire population;
- 2: Platform employment: the role in the labour market and the problems of regulating the work of platform workers;
- 3: Ensuring safe work and social security for employees;
- 4: Development of social support for citizens of the BRICS countries: Modern tools of social policy.

► India

In November 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the V.V Giri National Labour Institute, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the ILO's International Training Centre (ITCILO) to collaborate on research, training, education, publications, and other opportunities on labour-related issues (a renewal of its 2012 MoU). The agreement covers: a) the implementation of collaborative training programmes and research into training methodologies and techniques; b) the development of training modules; c) the exchange

of faculty members for skills upgrading, knowledge, and information sharing; and d) the implementation of labour studies joint courses. India collaborates with the ILO and UNOSSC to address climate change and apprenticeships in the Caribbean. An SSTC project between India, South Africa, China, Ethiopia, and Switzerland from 2022–2023 focuses on apprenticeships. The RBTC-funded project between India and Brazil enabled the exchange of good practices, promoting social protection and income redistribution. Moreover, India took the Presidency of the G20 between December 1, 2022, and November 30, 2023.



► China

The collaboration between the ILO and China has a long history. The first MoU signed in 2001 between the ILO and China deepened cooperation in developing labour market policies and institutions in line with international labour standards. This partnership has grown stronger in recent times due to the South-South and triangular cooperation programmes in the areas of employment, skills development, and social protection. China has contributed a total of US\$9.53 million all together (5.57 SSTC, 1.17 UNDESA China Peace Programme, and 2.78 to JPO) between 2014 and 2023. In December 2022 and 2023, the ILO and China signed partnership agreements promoting the Global Development Initiative (GDI), focusing on South-South Cooperation in employment and social protection, respectively. The South-South partnerships support the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda with a focus on high-quality employment, public employment services, entrepreneurship development in ASEAN and social protection in Laos and Kenya.



► South Africa

Since March 2014, South Africa has financed three domestic ILO Programmes in public infrastructure and employment policy planning, focusing on the development and promotion of appropriate employment-intensive investment policies for Skills/Capacity Development through Direct Trust Funds with a total budget of US\$ 24 million from 2014 to 2024. South Africa has also contributed as a development partner to the ILO through the IBSA Fund (India/ Brazil / South Africa). In September 2023, the Ninth Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment took place in Durban, South Africa, under the theme “Ensuring decent work, dignity, and respect for all”, with the support of the ILO and the International Social Security Association (ISSA). The Director General of the ILO, Gilbert F Houngbo stressed that “growing inequalities and labour market insecurities are hindering global economy recovery and that ”in the BRICS, framework political commitments are needed to make decent jobs a reality for all”. He also mentioned that the South-South programme of the ILO will contribute to the BRICS Network on Productivity Ecosystems.



The Ninth Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment, Durban, South Africa 2023



The 9th Meeting of BRICS Ministers of Labour and Employment (LEMM) took place in Durban, South Africa, on September 29, 2023, with the International Labour Organization's support. The meeting aimed to address common labour and employment challenges by focusing on promoting labour rights, universal access to social protection, closing the skills gap in the informal economy, and building sustainable enterprises. During the LEMM, the ministers adopted an Outcome document committing to respecting decent work for all and achieving social justice. The BRICS LEMM document also includes references to the BRICS productivity platform launched by South Africa with ILO support. The Director General of the ILO, Gilbert Houngbo, had key interventions focusing on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and Social Protection. The Secretary General of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), Marcelo Caetano, highlighted the role of South-South Cooperation in achieving universal social protection.

Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work in the BRICS Countries: The South African Presidency has proposed the creation of a collaborative platform for BRICS Productivity Ecosystems in the context of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025. This initiative will support BRICS in putting in place an evidence-based, integrated, and long-term strategy aimed at achieving a virtuous cycle between productivity growth and decent job creation.

Building Sustainable Enterprises is one of the topics promoted during the South African presidency. It highlights the importance of productivity growth and decent work creation for

for achieving inclusive growth and emphasizes the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to address productivity and decent work. The goal is to understand the countries challenges and introduce the concept of “Productivity Ecosystems” as a potential solution. Siphon Ndebele, South Africa, Employment Working Group (EWG) representative stressed the importance of placing productivity at the centre of the BRICS activities in the current and future presidencies of BRICS. This led to a South-South cooperation project in the biennium 2024-2025.



Labour & Employment Ministerial Meetings (BRICS LEMM)

9th Meeting, Durban, 2023: Under the presidency of South Africa, the outcome document of the Durban LEMM highlighted the importance of supporting a South-South network of productivity ecosystem, fundamental principles and rights at work, and digitalization. Among other commitments, the document highlighted achieving universal access to social protection. The new members were also welcomed as observers.

8th Meeting, China, 2022: Under the theme “Foster High-quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development”, the meeting included topics such as promoting green jobs for sustainable development, developing skills for a resilient recovery, and protecting workers’ rights in new forms of employment.

7th Meeting, India, 2021: Focused on four key pillars of labour and employment policies: promoting social security agreements amongst BRICS nations; formalisation of labour markets; participation of women in the labour force; and gig and platform workers.

6th Meeting, Russia, 2020: The meeting discussed the development of a preventive safety and health work culture; poverty alleviation through social and economic transformation; and the future of work in the digital economy. The “Declaration for the BRICS Leaders reaffirmed the importance of social protection.

5th Meeting, Brazil, 2019: Under the theme “BRICS: Economic Growth for an Innovative Future”, the meeting discussed and addressed the inclusive future of work and promoting productive employment for a sustainable social security system.

4th Meeting, South Africa, 2018: An MoU on Cooperation in the social and labour sphere was signed to facilitate knowledge sharing and joint programme implementation among BRICS countries on labour and employment, social security, and social dialogue.

3rd Meeting, China, 2017: Established the BRICS Network of Labour Research Institutes to facilitate a better understanding of labour market issues. The network aims to assist member countries in sharing knowledge and implementing joint programmes on labour and employment, social security, and social dialogue. Also, the meeting established the BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework, supported by the ILO and ISSA through a BRICS Virtual Liaison Office.

2nd Meeting, India, 2016: Focused on four key pillars of labour and employment policies: promoting social security agreements among BRICS nations; formalizing labour markets; promoting women’s labour force participation; and understanding the role of gig and platform workers.

1st Meeting, Russia, 2016: Declared the importance of the expansion of BRICS coordination and cooperation in the promotion of quality and inclusive employment, strengthening intra-BRICS dialogue, and the exchange of experiences and information on labour and employment issues.

Contact details

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22

Switzerland

Emerging and South-South Partnerships

Unit, PARTNERSHIPS

T: +41 79 5931355

E: partnerships@ilo.org

ilo.org/partnering-development

www.southsouthpoint.net