

# SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION IN THE WORLD OF WORK

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**Title of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) good practice:** BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work Country Studies: Brazil, China & South Africa

**Countries involved (please add more than one country):** Brazil, China and South Africa

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| <b>South-South Objective (s)</b>                                                            | The initiative aims to document and promote policies, programmes and practices that strengthen the nexus between productivity growth and decent work in BRICS countries. It responds to the shared challenge of boosting inclusive, sustainable economic growth while ensuring quality jobs, better working conditions, and social justice. By developing a knowledge base and policy recommendations, the initiative supports BRICS in designing systemic approaches that integrate macroeconomic, sectoral and enterprise-level drivers of productivity and decent work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>South-South Cooperation between institutions and countries to achieve the objectives</b> | <p>The BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work initiative is a joint effort led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and BRICS labour ministries to strengthen the link between productivity and decent work through research, dialogue, and peer learning.</p> <p>It builds on the outcomes of the 9th BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (Durban, 2023), where the ministers endorsed a platform for South–South cooperation on productivity and decent work, and on Brazil's 2025 BRICS Presidency theme, "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for Inclusive and Sustainable Governance."</p> <p>The initiative mobilizes research teams from Brazil, China, and South Africa, each mapping their national productivity ecosystems—policies, institutions, and practices—to identify how inclusive productivity growth can be aligned with social justice and sustainable development.</p> |
| <b>Effectiveness of the South-South / peer learning methodological approach</b>             | The studies take a common Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work lens to enable comparative learning across the BRICS. This horizontal approach allows for wider participation of multiple stakeholders—governments, employers, workers, academia—at macro, meso, and micro levels. Peer-to-peer engagement occurs through shared methodologies, national consultations, and a high-level BRICS seminar for exchanging findings and best practices. The process enhances collective ownership and reinforces South-South learning by embedding national realities into a common analytical framework.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Innovation</b>                                                                           | The initiative introduces a systemic, ecosystem-based approach that integrates productivity and decent work across three levels: enterprise, sector, and macroeconomic policy. It is innovative in linking productivity growth with social dialogue, labour standards, and structural transformation, rather than treating them separately. By combining research with policy dialogue, it generates actionable recommendations tailored to each country while allowing cross-country comparability. The approach emphasizes inclusiveness, coherence between economic and social policies, and the use of productivity data for evidence-based reforms.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>South-South Sustainability</b>                                                           | <p>Sustainability is ensured through institutional ownership by BRICS governments and research institutions, alignment with national priorities, and embedding in the emerging <b>BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work Platform</b>. The platform will continue knowledge-sharing beyond the studies, supporting ongoing peer learning, policy coherence, and dialogue among social partners. The integration of research findings into BRICS Labour and Employment Ministers' processes will strengthen political commitment.</p> <p>Brazil's study shows that productivity growth is constrained by informality, uneven technological adoption, and regional inequality. Yet, the country's</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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|                                                       | <p>National Productivity and Competitiveness Council, along with digitalization strategies and skills training for MSMEs, has shown progress. The study highlights social dialogue, industrial policy coherence, and green jobs initiatives as key levers for inclusive productivity growth.</p> <p>China's research focuses on the transition from quantity-driven to quality-driven growth. The country's success in combining technological upgrading, human capital investment, and industrial diversification offers valuable lessons for other BRICS. However, challenges remain in addressing labour market segmentation and ensuring that productivity gains translate into higher job quality and social protection.</p> <p>South Africa's report identifies persistent productivity and employment challenges linked to inequality, infrastructure deficits, and skills mismatches. Despite this, its strong institutional and legal frameworks—such as the Labour Relations Act, National Development Plan, and social dialogue mechanisms—provide a solid foundation. The study emphasizes coordinated action among government, employers, and workers to implement productivity-enhancing and job-creating reforms through South–South partnerships.</p> <p>Across all three countries, findings underline that productivity and decent work must evolve together—requiring ecosystem-wide approaches that integrate economic, social, and technological dimensions. The studies provide evidence-based recommendations and a comparative framework for peer learning under the emerging BRICS Productivity Ecosystems Platform.</p> |
| <b>South-South Adaptability</b>                       | <p>The approach is adaptable to other regional or national contexts, especially the rest BRICS members, where productivity and decent work are central to development goals. Its flexible, demand-driven methodology—identifying trends, analysing barriers, and co-designing policy solutions—allows adaptation across different economies. Conditions for transferability include strong stakeholder engagement, government commitment, functioning social dialogue, and reliable productivity data systems. The ecosystem lens ensures that lessons learned in BRICS can be tailored and scaled to other regions, including Africa, Latin America, and Asia.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>South-South Results</b>                            | <p>Establishment of the first evidence base on productivity–decent work linkages across BRICS. 3 country studies (Brazil, China, South Africa) identifying good practices and policy recommendations. Strengthened South-South cooperation through joint research and dialogue. Preparation for the creation of the BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work Platform as a permanent knowledge-sharing mechanism. Strengthened institutional cooperation among labour ministries, national research institutions, and the ILO, including peer review workshops and policy dialogues. Enhanced capacity for evidence-based policymaking, particularly in skills development, MSME productivity, digital transformation, and social protection. Contribution to the BRICS Declaration (2025) on inclusive and sustainable governance, with productivity ecosystems recognized as a strategic pillar for joint action.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>Funding Sources</b><br>Explain the origin of funds | <p>RBTC-SSTC (Contribution from ILO's regular budget)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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### Materials and Web-links



[BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work: Internal Peer Review Workshop – South-South Meeting Point](#)

[Decent Work and Productivity in the BRICS: the Case of Brazil – South-South Meeting Point](#)

[BRICS Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work Country Studies: an analysis from China – South-South Meeting Point](#)

[BRICS & Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work: The Case of South Africa – South-South Meeting Point](#)