

► BRICS ILO Cooperation



July 2026

► BRICS and the ILO: Cooperation between emerging partners

BRICS cooperation with the ILO has grown significantly in recent years, driven by a commitment to mutual respect, understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, and consensus. Following major expansions since 2024, with Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab States (UAE), and Indonesia, the bloc now brings together 11 major developing countries alongside a growing network of officially designated partner countries. For the ILO, this represents an opportunity to expand multilateral work across all regions and strengthen relations with emerging global partners. Recent BRICS presidencies have closely aligned with these goals. In 2025, Brazil's Presidency prioritized Global South cooperation and partnerships for social, economic, and environmental development. In 2026, India assumed the presidency and set its priorities on resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability, with China scheduled to take over the chairship in 2027.

India

India's long-standing membership in the ILO anchors its institutional cooperation, which is further driven by regional South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) initiatives. A key milestone is India's first direct funding agreement for the Feasibility Study for an International Reference Classification of occupation by skill and qualification requirements. Rooted in G20 commitments and presented to the BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) in 2026, the project leverages AI and text-mining data to develop a prototype for harmonizing occupational classifications. By establishing a global reference system, it aims to enhance labour market transparency, improve skills needs anticipation, facilitate cross-border skills recognition and talent matching, and support skills-based migration across G20 countries and beyond.

► Indian Presidency of BRICS

Under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," India's BRICS Presidency focused on advancing social security, enhancing women's workforce inclusion, promoting skills development, and leveraging digital technologies for the EWG and the Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting (LEMM).

Priority I: Advancing social security and formalization of labour markets

The LEMM discussions looked at how to strengthen cooperation in order to extend social security coverage to all workers, facilitate access to adequate benefits, improve coordination to protect migrant workers and ensure the portability of rights and benefits, strengthen sustainable and equitable financing strategies, and deepen knowledge exchange through existing BRICS cooperation mechanisms. Acknowledgement has been made on the importance of promoting labour market formalization.

Priority II: Enhancing women's participation and inclusion in the workforce

The BRICS discussions recognized the importance of increasing women's participation in the labour force for achieving inclusive, sustainable, and resilient economic growth. As also mentioned in the Gender Equality at Work resolution adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2026, the discussion stressed the need to focus on investing in the care economy, expanding access to skills and lifelong learning, closing gender pay gaps, preventing and eliminating violence and harassment in the world at work, supporting women's entrepreneurship, and increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making.

Priority III: Cooperation on employability, skills mapping and development

BRICS members recognized that technological acceleration, just transition, and demographic changes are reshaping labour markets. Skills development is therefore a cornerstone of decent work. Launched under India's G20 Presidency, the Feasibility Study for an International Reference Classification is a vital step toward a common skills and qualifications framework. By standardizing future taxonomy, the project aims to align national systems, improve job-matching, and boost enterprise productivity. Ultimately, it enhances labor market transparency and mobility while increasing employability for job seekers, particularly youth and women, in an interconnected global economy.

Priority IV: Leveraging digital technologies for unorganized workers, including gig and platform workers

The debate recognized the transformative role of digital technologies in workers' welfare. The BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework, the BRICS Social Security Virtual Liaison Office (VLO) and BRICS CONNECT (covering all four priorities) provide a unique platform for exchanging experiences, sharing innovations, strengthening institutional capacities and promoting evidence-based policymaking.



► The BRICS Social Security Virtual Liaison Office (VLO) and BRICS CONNECT

The VLO is one of the key tools that the 2026–27 RBTC-SSTC BRICS project aims to operationalize, serving as a permanent, user-friendly pillar for SSTC, anchored in the ILO's normative framework to enhance knowledge exchange on social protection and links with digital transformation, and employment services. Through a streamlined digital interface, the platform will provide tripartite constituents across BRICS+ member states with real-time access to a dynamic repository of relevant evidence-based policy briefs, publications, and national good practices. While primarily optimized to ensure systematic and high-impact policy coordination among BRICS+ members, select resources will also be made available to the broader Global South for wider scalable learning.

Building on the VLO, BRICS CONNECT seeks to advance cooperation through tangible, action-oriented outcomes. Launched under India's 2026 BRICS Chairship, the initiative will prioritize its initial focus areas while maintaining the flexibility to integrate new priorities under subsequent presidencies. The dimensions of BRICS CONNECT are aligned with the four priority areas i.e. advancing social security, enhancing female labour force participation, cooperating on employability and skills mapping and leveraging technology for workers' wellbeing. Each priority contributes to strengthening institutional capacities, promoting knowledge exchange, and supporting targeted interventions in their respective domains.

Brazil

Over the past years, Brazil has actively collaborated with the ILO to promote Decent Work and Social Justice, driven by the SSTC Programme signed in 2023. This partnership focuses on advancing gender and racial equality, protecting fundamental rights at work, enhancing occupational safety and health, and expanding jobs and social protection networks. Brazil further amplified this agenda during its 2024 G20 Presidency by highlighting trilateral cooperation, allowing the outcomes of its Climate Change Working Group to directly enrich the Just Transition discussions under the subsequent BRICS Presidency. The long-standing alliance was firmly reaffirmed at the 12th Annual South-South Review Meeting in 2025, where Brazil announced a new fund to support future joint initiatives, and renewed in June 2026. Brazil is also one of the pilot and advisory countries under the project on the feasibility study for an International Reference Classification.

China

The ILO and China share a long-standing partnership, reinforced by SSTC and voluntary contributions to the ILO's Development Cooperation Programme. Recently, both parties signed multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to deepen collaboration on labour market policies, employment, social protection, social justice, and decent work. In recent years new SSTC partnership agreements were signed between the ILO and MOHRSS on skills development, employment and social protection against the background of the GDI, bringing benefits to tripartite constituents in Asia & the Pacific as well as Africa. In 2025, the ILO joined the "1+10" Dialogue in Beijing to promote equitable global governance. The latest 2026 MoU focuses on strengthening special equipment safety and occupational safety and health (OSH), implemented under the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative (GDI).

Russian Federation

The Tenth LEMM in 2024 in Sochi focused on enhancing labour market development across member nations. Ministers committed to strengthening vocational guidance, skills training, OSH, and lifelong education to equip workers with future-relevant skills. The meeting culminated in a declaration outlining strategies to improve employment services, promote decent work, and address global labour market challenges.

South Africa

South Africa has contributed as a development partner to the ILO through the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Fund. During the Ninth LEMM in 2023 in Durban, the South African Presidency proposed the creation of a collaborative platform for BRICS Productivity Ecosystems, within the framework of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership.

► The BRICS Bank, the New Development Bank (NDB)

New Development Bank was established with the purpose of mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging market economies and developing countries, complementing the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global growth and development.

From 2023-2025, the ILO sent representatives to the annual meeting of the NDB to strengthen engagement and support for the BRICS members.

► Labour and Employment Ministerial Meetings (BRICS LEMM)

12th Meeting, India, 2026: This meeting took place on 15-16 July 2026 under the theme “Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,” and reaffirmed the priorities on social security, women's empowerment, skills development and a fair digitalization.

11th Meeting, Brasilia, 2025: This meeting provided an important engagement towards the Just Transition & AI agendas.

10th Meeting, Sochi, 2024: This meeting provided a valuable opportunity to build consensus on policies for a human-centered future of work, as set out in the ILO's Centenary Declaration.

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. It also welcomed the new members 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; formalization 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; social protection and the future of work in the digital economy.

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 and 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, 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. It also established the BRICS Social Security Cooperation Framework, which includes the VLO.

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.

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